Florida State University Libraries

Electronic Theses, Treatises and Dissertations

The Graduate School

2006

Crumbling Masculinities: Adaptations, Filtration, and the Crisis of Masculinity

Jared Champion

Follow this and additional works at the FSU Digital Library. For more information, please contact lib-ir@fsu.edu

THE FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY

COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

CRUMBLING MASCULINITIES: ADAPTATIONS, FILTRATION, AND THE CRISIS OF MASCULINITY

By

JARED CHAMPION

A thesis submitted to the
Department of English
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

Degree Awarded:
Fall Semester, 2006

The members of the Committee approve the thesis of Jared Champion defended on July 31, 2006.

Dennis Moore
Professor Directing Thesis

Leigh Edwards
Committee Member

John Fenstermaker
Committee Member

Approved:

Nancy Warren,
Director of Graduate Studies

The Office of Graduate Studies has verified and approved the above named committee members.

To my Mom, Dad, and brothers Jimmie, Ryan, and Zachary

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract………………………………………………………………………………………v

INTRODUCTION……………………………………………………………………………1

CHAPTER ONE:
IMPLICATIONS OF A SELF-PROCLAIMED
'MISSION OF MERCY'…………………………..……………………………………….12

CHAPTER TWO:
FLOWERS AND FRACTURED MASCULINITIES..……………..………………………..37

CHAPTER THREE:
THE "NEW-MAN" IN TOWN……………………………………………………….51

CONCLUSION.………………………………………………………………………66

NOTES……………………………………………………………………………………..54

REFERENCES...…….……………………………………………………………………..55

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH……………..……………………………………………57

ABSTRACT

My thesis project, titled Crumbling Masculinities: Adaptations, Filtration, and the Crisis of Masculinity, addresses the construction of masculinity through what I label "filtration." By building on the work of gender scholars like Michael Kimmel, Judith Butler, and Eve Sedgwick, this thesis seeks to show that society teaches individuals to play gender roles by filtering either feminine or masculine traits accordingly. For example: in general, men are no less emotional than women, but society teaches that masculinity links emotion with weakness, so masculine figures filter emotion to create masculinity. The thesis opens with a discussion of David Mamet's original stage version of *Glengarry Glen Ross* and his subsequent adaptation of the piece to film. This chapter establishes that gender in religious representations, particularly traditional modes of masculinity, is in a period of flux following postmodernity. The following chapter uses a discussion of Susan Orlean's *The Orchid Thief* and Charlie Kaufman's adaptation of the nonfiction work to film in *Adaptation* to show that masculinity is constantly creating itself through the process of filtration. The final chapter in the thesis uses the discussion of filtration to show that socially constructed gender and biological sex are becoming disconnected, yet the masculine/feminine binary still exists and privileges masculinity. In conclusion, Crumbling Masculinities argues that gender is currently in a period of transition, and as such, the thesis attempts through an analysis of the adaptation process to explain the potential of this crisis to shape gender.

INTRODUCTION

Movie history is awash, of course, with fine pictures that have been made from daft or unreadable books; indeed, you are statistically more likely to squeeze a decent movie out of a potboiler than you are out of a novel of high repute.

—Anthony Lane, in *The New Yorker*

I sought to counter those views that made presumptions about the limits and propriety of gender and restricted the meaning of gender to received notions of masculinity and femininity.

—Judith Butler, in *Gender Trouble*

The process of adaptation is always subject to infidelity from the original text as well as a dialogical relationship between texts, regardless of the medium or media involved in the process; that is to say, even an adaptation from an identical textual form, film remakes, for example, will always contain numerous discontinuities from its original. Though less prevalent than adaptations from different formal texts and genres—novel to film, play to film, film to graphic novel, and so on—adaptations from similar forms, such as Bill Naughton's adaptation of *Alfie* from stage to screen or the subsequent remake of the film version, or even David Mamet's transition of his stage play *Glengarry Glen Ross* to film, still exist, and moreover, exist with as many adaptative infidelities as other types of adaptations. The infidelities from the initial text(s) are critical in understanding both the original text's, as well as the newer text's social climate, yet audiences and readers often consider infidelities to be disappointing failures of the newer text. This general perspective on adaptations commonly leads to negligent privileging of the original text by both scholars and the general public. As scholar Brian McFarlane explains, "At every level from newspaper reviews to longer essays in critical anthologies and journals, the adducing of fidelity to the original…as a major criterion for judging the film adaptation is pervasive. No critical line is in greater need of reexamination—and devaluation" (8). The tendency to privilege the original text and the faithfulness of the adaptation can both lead to the oversight of crucial links of the texts to larger social discourses and to the "intertextual dialogism" which Robert Stam[1] describes:

> Adaptations, then, can take an activist stance toward their souce…inserting them into a much broader intertextual dialogism. An adaptation, in this sense, is less an attempted resuscitation of an originary word than in an ongoing dialogical process. The concept of intertextual dialogism suggests that every text forms an

> intersection of textual surfaces. All texts are tissues of anonymous formulae, variations on those formulae, conscious and unconscious quotations, and conflations and inversions of other texts. In the broadest sense, intertextual dialogism refers to the infinite and open-ended possibilities generated by all the discursive practices of a culture, the entire matrix of communicative utterances within which the artistic text is situated, which reach the text not only through recognizable influences, but also through a subtle process of dissemination. (64)

Stam's comments are vital in understanding the critical importance of adaptative infidelity. His work serves to destabilize the privileging of the origin text over the successor.

The subtly problematic element of Stam's argument is his overlooking the transition itself. The passage above emphasizes the importance of both physical texts but neglects any specific attention to the transition. As much as the primary text contains traces of social, political, sexual, and countless other discourses and systems, one can also see the evolution of these factors through a study of the narrative difference in two texts. In this sense, infidelity is something to be appreciated, even celebrated. The inclination to privilege the primary source is no longer valid to the study of the adaptation, and likewise, the devaluing of either secondary text or the shifts away from the original subsequently becomes remiss. Rather, this study proposes that, in terms of adaptation studies, the three—original, remake, and the process by which one text becomes another—rely upon each other, and to overlook any side of the triangle collapses the potential meaning found in the overall system at work, one that ties into countless other discourses and systems. Through an analysis of all sides of the triangle and the interplay between them, the transition becomes a lens by which the critic can observe and analyze the new text in reference to the old and then fully understand the social structures that function behind the textual system. Likewise as Deborah Cartmell articulates, "Perhaps the search for an 'original' or for a single author is no longer relevant in a postmodern world where a belief in a single meaning is seen to be a fruitless quest. Instead of worrying about whether a film is 'faithful' to the original literary text (founded in a logocentric belief that there is a single meaning), [scholars] read adaptations for their generation of a plurality of meanings" (28). In keeping with the paradigm Cartmell establishes, this thesis will scour the different texts for a multiplicity of meaning, and while doing so, will emphasize issues of gender in order to understand an evolving and tumultuous climate for masculinity.

Judith Butler's analysis of gender as a politically loaded social construct plays a crucial role as the following chapters discuss gender and masculinity. Her work opens a discourse that uncovers the connection of gender and biological sex as a product of political representation. She explains that gender has the potential to become "a free floating artifice" (9), and as such, I argue that in many ways both males and females gain access to the privileges and struggles of multiple genders. To qualify: although the following chapters, especially the discussion of *Alfie*, will point to a more mobile notion of gender, one must note that a patriarchal structure is still functional in contemporary society and that unlimited access to gender latitude does not fully exist; in sum, numerous restrictions apply to all individuals as a result of an ongoing binary gender structure. Through the following chapters, I will argue that not only is the disconnection of biological sex and gender eventually *possible*, but it is already occurring on some level. As the divide between the two becomes greater, masculinity, and the men who strive for masculinity, is left scrambling to maintain a cohesive identity. Butler raises a similar question in *Gender Trouble*:

> Gender ought not to be conceived merely as the cultural inscription of meaning on a pregiven sex (a juridical conception); gender must also designate the very apparatus of production whereby the sexes themselves are established. As a result, gender is not to culture as sex is to nature; gender is also the discursive/cultural means why which "sexed nature" or "a natural sex" is produced and established as "prediscursive," prior to culture, a politically neutral surface *on which* culture acts…. This prediscursive ought to be understood as the effect of the apparatus of cultural construction designated by *gender*. How, then, does gender need to be reformulated to encompass the power relations that produce the effect of a prediscursive sex and so conceal that very operation of discursive production? (11)

Butler's comments about masculinity as the result of a larger, "prediscursive" production are helpful here. She argues that the discourse surrounding gender points to a kind of gender determinism based on sexed bodies thus creating yet another problematic structure. Though my thesis makes some shifts away from Butler's claims, it is still necessary to understand her contentions as they are fundamental in the discussion of gender. There is an implied reproducing element to masculinity, or even gender on a larger scale. This thesis will build upon Butler's comments in an effort to not only create a fuller understanding of masculinity in a time of flux,

but also the implications of its self-reproducing nature[2]. In his cogent analysis of contemporary masculinity, Victor Jeleniewski Seidler also points to a crisis of masculinity:

> [W]ithin contemporary society the myths we inherit about who we are to be as men no longer illuminate the lives and relationships we now live. They create a whole range of expectations about who we 'should' be that can be in tension with a different reality we want to live. This is part of the crisis of contemporary masculinities. (49)

The fact that masculinity is reshaping itself is at the very core of the crisis of masculinity. In his study *Messages Men Hear*, Ian M. Harris lists numerous characteristics of masculinity. His list is curious, though, because it makes a demarcation between the ideal masculinity in the time he wrote his study, 1995, and a previous list from Clyde Franklin's 1984 study. Franklin's earlier list, which Harris labels "classical," includes characteristics one might expect: adventurer, tough-guy, stoic, warrior, breadwinner, etc. Franklin's list is by no means surprising. Harris' expanded list—an adaptation in itself, of course—includes several new factors: good Samaritan, nature lover, and most importantly, nurturer, a quality that society has long considered feminine (12-13). Harris' list serves to emphasize masculinity's recently shifting nature. Furthermore, the thesis will uncover a self-conscious, and even frightened effort to maintain traditional varieties of masculinity, particularly through the films *Glengarry Glen Ross* and *Adaptation*. Likewise, the example of the recent reproduction *Alfie* and its predecessors addresses the ground-level value of masculinity, even when women are personifying it.

In order to forward the discourse of gender, the chapters that follow will discuss the implications of masculinity during and following postmodernity. With the understanding that *postmodern*, *postmodernism*, and *postmodernity* are all extremely loaded words, it is imperative to understand the definition, or at least aspect, of postmodernity at work in the following chapters. As Steven Connor explains:

> Postmodernist theory responded to the sense that important changes had taken place in politics, economics, and social life, changes that could broadly be characterized by the two words *delegitimation* and *dedifferentiation*. Authority and legitimacy were no longer so powerfully concentrated in the centers they had previously occupied; and the differentiations – for example, those that had been called "centers" and "margins," but also between classes, regions, and cultural

> levels (high culture and low culture) – were being eroded or complicated…. These erosions of authority were accompanied by a breakdown of the hitherto unbridgeable distinctions between centers and peripheries, between classes and countries. Given these changes, it seemed to many reasonable to assume that equivalent changes would take place in the spheres of art and culture. (3)

Connor's comments speak to the character of gender, as well. When one considers the breakdown of centers and the delegitimization of authority, it is imperative to note the evolving relationship between gender, social centers, and authority. As such, it becomes both a center and authority that postmodernity destabilizes. Whereas males could once find some locus of identity in masculinity, postmodernity shattered not only the locus but the surrounding system, creating a sort of gender-chaos. As Ed Cohen explains in the *Columbia History of the American Novel*:

> Indeed, the attempt to "deconstruct gender" is an attempt both to destabilize the systems of meaning that establish certain forms of ("sexual") desire and behavior as "natural" or "normal" and simultaneously to create a context of affirmation in which new forms of relationship and pleasure can emerge. Thus, when we speak about "constructing gender," part of the project is precisely to call into question something — perhaps the very thing — that many people take most for granted about their lives in order to see if it is possible to begin to live our lives otherwise. (542-43)

The three chapters that follow discuss the crisis of masculinity that ensues as a result of this destabilization. As a note: although *crisis* implies a multitude of negative connotations, within the scope of this study, *crisis* will merely refer to the hasty, and essentially impossible, attempt by masculinity, or even just men, to reconfigure a less fluid identity. Truly, the crisis reveals innumerable possibilities and spaces for previously marginalized and fringe groups, not to mention the men who fall short of typical norms of masculinity.

In order to fully understand the effects of the crisis of masculinity, this thesis begins with a chapter discussing the film adaptation of David Mamet's *Glengarry Glen Ross*. As with much of Mamet's work, *Glengarry Glen Ross* revolves around a breakdown of community. Mamet scholar Dennis Carroll regards the plays as "a shifting demonstration of the way pejoratives of 'business' battle impulses toward 'communion' in friendship or love. For Mamet, 'business' is a euphemism for the selfish propagation of one-upmanship for personal advancement or profit—

and the imperatives of 'business…'" (175). For the salesmen in the film version of *Glengarry Glen Ross*, masculinity and a community of men, though not synonymous, represent the "communion" that crumbles from the attack of "business." In addition, this chapter applies Benedict Anderson's theory of "imagined communities" to reach a fuller understanding of a communal masculinity. Anderson posits that, essentially, communities like that of masculinity, or fundamental Christianity even, are imagined because they have neither clear demarcations or borders, nor do the members ever see a larger cohesive body. Rather, this chapter interrogates the community within the film to uncover a fabricated community where each of the salesmen attempts to cover his own isolation in order to further subvert his own inadequacy.

Although this chapter addresses the core paradoxes of fundamental Christianity in contemporary society, on a deeper level it negotiates one of the most traditional depictions of masculinity, through the figure of Jesus. One must understand that as each man in the film vies for employment and respect in the office, each is also wrestling with notions of masculinity. Blake, played by Alec Baldwin, simultaneously represents Jesus as well as the ideal figure of masculinity: calm, confident, and unshakable. Each of the salesmen finds himself in the impossible paradox of attempting to become more like Blake, all while resenting him as the ideal figure of masculinity. As such, the character Blake, much like the social force capitalism in the stage version, becomes an agent for what Jean Francois Lyotard labels "terror." He explains:

> The capital issue is terror (not war, as Kant thinks). It is the fact that the social bond, understood as the multiplicity of games, very different among themselves, each with its own pragmatic efficacy and its capability of positioning people in precise places in order to have them play their parts, is traversed by terror, that is, by the fear of death. In a way, that has always been the political problem. The question of social bond, when it is put in political terms, has always been raised in the form of a possible interruption of the social bond, which is simply called "death" in all of its forms: imprisonment, unemployment, repression, hunger, anything you want. Those are all deaths. (99)

My discussion of *Glengarry Glen Ross* seeks to add another form of death to Lyotard's list: exposure. The men in the film constantly create themselves according to the model of ideal masculinity Blake presents, and because of this dichotomy, each is essentially protecting himself from exposing his own masculine inadequacy.

The following chapter builds on the notion of exposure through a discussion of the adaptation of Susan Orlean's non-fiction study *The Orchid Thief* into a film titled *Adaptation*. Through a character analysis of Charlie Kaufman, the film's character rather than the literal screenwriter, this chapter discusses the idea that masculinity at the individual level is an act of what I am describing as filtration. As Charlie Kaufman creates his alter ego through the character of John Laroche, he filters both his masculine inadequacy as well as any androgynous or feminine characteristics. The chapter seeks to highlight the ways in which masculinity constantly strives to recreate itself through this process of filtration. Curiously, though, as much as the film serves to highlight masculinity's process of self-creation and recreation, it, too, reveals the entire process as a fabrication.

In addition, the conversion of *The Orchid Thief* into *Adaptation* represents an especially curious dynamic since it is the only piece I am evaluating in this thesis initially written by a woman and subsequently adapted by a man. As such, the film contains the most blatant addition of male fantasy almost to the point of becoming masturbatory for the screenwriter, who satirically includes himself as a character. Though the presentation of his character in the film is not particularly flattering, his addition to the film still displaces the initial characters, Laroche and Orlean, to a secondary role. Despite this dynamic, this study avoids any undue privilege to the authors or auteurs in favor of a more consistent textual analysis. When applicable, the chapters address the screenwriters or authors, but I am basing the main thrust of my analysis solely upon the text and what occurs within it. Inversely, the many incarnations of *Alfie* present an especially fascinating dynamic. Here, Bill Naughton not only wrote the radio play and the initial screenplay, but also, shortly thereafter, published a novelized version of the film[3]. The production of the remake in 2004 brought with it a female co-screenwriter, Elaine Pope, as well as her comments and motives for updating the women in the piece. Again, although this chapter relies upon her comments to gain a complete understanding of the adaptative process, I will be giving privilege precisely to the text. Inasmuch, I will treat textual infidelities as yet another text for analysis, and therefore the focus of the discussion will remain central.

The thesis's final chapter concludes with the analysis of the many different versions of *Alfie*. This chapter argues, with the assistance of Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble*, that the most recent version of *Alfie* displays a chasm opening between gender and biological sex. In order to establish Alfie's role as the feminized, devalued protagonist, the chapter relies upon Jacques

Lacan's ideas of language in relation to self. At the crux of this chapter is the contention that Alfie has been symbolically castrated, according to Lacan, through his disconnection with language, which is glaringly apparent in the update[4]. As Darian Leader and Judy Groves explain about Lacan's theory:

> A symptom, something in your mind or body which intrudes into your life and brings you misery, represents a portion of jouissance, which has come back to disrupt your existence…. [T]hese considerations led Lacan to a new formulation of castration: the emptying of jouissance from the body. And what is the agent of this castration? The symbolic register as such: language. The organism's passage through and into language is castration, introducing the idea of loss and absence into the world. (147-48)

Though Alfie is effectively castrated in the newer version of the film, the women gain considerable amounts of agency. One can understand agency, at the most basic level, as an individual's latitude to make decisions about selfhood and relationships to others. Restrictions on agency, particularly in terms of gender, include the social expectations of a given gender. For instance, expectations of masculinity call for a near stoic repression of emotion, leading to what Sally Robinson labels "emotional constipation" (133). This "constipation" limits Alfie's ability to articulate himself, thus becoming a limitation to his agency.

Through this chapter I posit two conclusions, or possibilities, resulting from the disconnection of biological sex and socially constructed gender: first, this disconnection makes spaces available to marginalized groups, especially those marginalized for differences from the normative sexual standard, and second, though the chasm is in many ways positive, the *Alfie* remake highlights the continued privileging of masculinity through a binary structure. Truly, two majors issues are at work in the latter dynamic. The primary dilemma is the continued privileging of masculinity. Here, one must note that I am not addressing male characters; rather, this film creates nearly all of the masculine characters as women, and as a corollary, feminizes many of the male characters, yet masculinity still determines privilege. Needless to say, at the core of this problem one finds a binary structure which maintains the dynamic. Finally, as the chapters work together to reveal the current crisis of masculinity, an optimism exists. Each of the characters converted, created, or critiqued through the adaptations I am discussing functions to reveal the socially constructed nature of gender, and perhaps, through this uncovering, more and

more marginalized and suppressed individuals will find agency and can finally be able to remove the repressive façade.

CHAPTER 1

IMPLICATIONS OF A SELF-PROCLAIMED 'MISSION OF MERCY': DAVID MAMET'S *GLENGARRRY GLEN ROSS* AND FUNDAMENTAL CHRISTIANITY

Moss: To the law, you're an accessory before the fact.
Aaronow: I didn't ask to be.
Moss: Tough luck, because you are.
Aaronow: Why, because you just told me about it?
Moss: That's right.…You're out, you take the consequences.
Aaronow: And why is that?
Moss: Because you listened.

Blake: 'Fuck you,' that's my name…and your name is 'you're wanting.'

Through the construction of the office space as a masculine sphere, David Mamet's *Glengarry Glen Ross* presents a group of men not only at odds against each other but also against themselves[5]. Each of the characters in the play and the film must create a presentation of himself that walks a curious line between amiability and forcefulness. As the men negotiate their positions in the office, each is also negotiating his own masculinity and personal value. Benedict Nightingale, a scholar in contemporary drama, points to David Mamet's personal experience as well as the influence of Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman* on the two versions of the piece:

> Perhaps [Mamet's salesmen] are also selling the same thing [as Willy Loman]. Nowhere in *Death of a Salesman* does Miller tell us whether we would find stockings or some other goods if we looked into Loman's sample-case….But, as we have already seen, Mamet has reprised the wonderfully suggestive answer that Miller gave when he was asked what Loman was selling: "himself." (90)

As a continuation of Nightingale's comment, when one asks to whom each man is selling, the answer is the same: himself. Both the stage and the film versions show the struggle for identity in a postmodern world that removes borders and delineations that for centuries served to demarcate gendered identities. When David Mamet adapted the stage version to film, he added a character, Blake, who represents the ultimate machismo force. As this chapter contends, the deconstructive nature of postmodernity rattles both the shape of masculinity as well as the most traditional depictions of manhood as seen through a fundamentalist representation of Jesus, for whom Blake is a corollary. At the very core, the adaptation of *Glengarry Glen Ross* reveals a questioning of the very nature of masculinity caused by postmodernity. This questioning manifests itself

through a critique of fundamental Christianity which, arguably, presents and forwards the most traditional constructions of masculinity.

To begin, the American religious climate, much like the gender climate, has been constantly evolving, or devolving as it were, but particularly so in the twentieth century. The recent surge of fundamental Christianity has become a force so strong that it is now impossible to ignore, both in common life and in academia. The boom in fundamentalism began slowly, brewed for some 80 years, and has exploded in the last thirty years. In her exhaustive study of fundamentalism, "North American Protestant Fundamentalism," Nancy T. Ammerman traces the movement's roots to the turn of the twentieth century. She explains, "[The turn of the twentieth century] was a period that shaped [fundamentalists] more than they often realize….The doctrines they emphasize as most important were the ones they had to defend against 'modernism' during that period" (8). As scholar Christian Smith points out, "Evangelicals were virtually invisible on the radar screen of American public life prior to the mid-1970s" (1). This invisibility is a stark contrast to today's abundant fundamentalism of *Purpose Driven Life* self-help books, mega churches, and "What Would Jesus Do?" bracelets. From the formative days of the late 1800's, the self-identified fundamentalists now represent close to 15 percent of the American population, and when one combines these individuals with the doctrinally similar evangelicals, the tally grows to 24 percent of the American population in 1996 (Smith 17). Heather Hendershot's 2004 study *Shaking the World for Jesus: Media and Conservative Evangelical Culture* says the number of evangelicals alone accounts for some 25-40 percent of Americans, a huge increase in just over eight years, and this is to say nothing of the growth of fundamentalism (31). What's more, in the past 30 years, fundamentalists have been able to shift the connotations of mainstream Christianity away from ideas of social welfare and assistance to a country club form of exclusivity, all without losing a façade of optimism. When fundamentalist leader Pat Robertson openly calls for the assassination of a world leader, and his followers juxtapose the ichthus with pro-war messages on their bumpers, notice must be taken. This, of course, is not to conflate a small group of individual fundamentalists with the larger body, but it is to emphasize a fascinating, if not disturbing, religious climate.

As many scholars have shown, American fundamental Christianity gained momentum particularly during the 1980's. In her study *Between Jesus and the Market: The Emotions That Matter in Right-Wing America*, Linda Kintz points to the Republican Party's hijacking of

Christianity, or vice versa, as a primary catalyst for this surge. The connection became solidified through nationally recognizable figures, and according to Kintz, Ronald Reagan became an untouchable icon of sorts, representing an even financial playing field for all Americans:

> Ronald Reagan became the icon of this new conservative national popular [culture] based not on content but effects. Though he was not an authentic cowboy, or a traditional family man, or a churchgoer, the effects of his familiarity with the forms of popular culture, from Hollywood movies and the rhetoric of the common man to the vague language of everyday religious morality, were perceived as authentic. He knew how to speak the language of everyday life and of plain folks Americans…[and] this was true even as he constructed a millionaire populism in which corporations, millionaires, and ordinary people would feel themselves equal within the terms of that familiar Transparent American Subject. (60-61)

Kintz's comment is important for a variety of reasons. First, it highlights that Reagan served as an masculine icon for a raised moral awareness as he simultaneously furthered a "millionaire populism," and through this parallel development, conservative values became intertwined with capitalist interests. Furthermore, not only was this linkage firmly established during this period, it was valorized. By creating a system in which morality and capitalism were bedfellows of sorts, the period surrounding Reagan's terms created a new structure through which conservative values, rather than being *against* social ills, were *in favor* of the financial betterment of citizens and the nation; in effect, financial gain became a moral objective, and, in the case of politics, moral objectives became financial gain.

On initial investigation, the link between fundamentalism and capitalism is not altogether surprising. Religious historian George Marsden points to the period immediately following World War I as a pivotal time in the formation of fundamentalism as both a school of thought and a larger community. He argues that the term *fundamentalism*, at the time of its coinage in 1920, "called to mind the broad, united front of the kind of opposition to modernism that characterized these widely known…volumes" (119). To be clear, fundamentalism formed when fascism was raging violently abroad. Much like the current patriotic fervor, the war foregrounded the values deemed "American" (capitalism, liberty, etc.). Therefore, by centering the coagulation of fundamentalism into an identifiable movement in a period of strong American, and distinctly

related capitalist, fervor, Marsden highlights that, at its inception, fundamentalism was not opposed to capitalist values, but strangely enough, borne of them.

The connection of legalistic Christian values with capitalist methods has not gone unnoticed in literature and other forms of art. With regards to drama, this essay seeks to explore one such response: the film adaptation of David Mamet's *Glengarry Glen Ross.* The focus of the film's critique is very different from that of the play, and thus the transition of the stage version to film serves as an initial link between the satire and fundamentalism. The original play was first produced in 1983, relatively early in the rise of contemporary fundamentalism (Smith 1) and the related connection to capitalism. By the time the film version was produced in 1992, Reagan and the first Bush had each been president, the (now renamed) Moral Majority was a veritable force, and fundamentalism, with the help of capitalist modes, had been gaining speed for nearly two decades. As Nancy T. Ammerman notes, "in 1988, politically active conservative pastors again had the ear of Republican George Bush. By 1989 [Jerry] Falwell could declare his mission was accomplished, that conservative consciences had been raised" (1). Curiously, in the eight-year lag between stage and screen, David Mamet, who wrote the screenplay as well, added a new character to *Glengarry Glen Ross*, and the 1992 version welcomed Blake, whom Alec Baldwin played. At the core of this chapter is the contention that Blake's addition shifts the critique of the piece from capitalism to the more specific fundamentalist Christian-capitalist link.

To fully understand the shift, one must first be aware of the initial implications of the stage version. Scholar Dennis Carroll explains the stage version's critique as follows: "*Glengarry Glen Ross*…[is] 'negative' in the sense that nascent connections between people are destroyed by the self-interest epitomized by 'doing business'" (175). Essentially, capitalism serves as the key to understanding the stage version of *Glengarry Glen Ross* in terms of social critique. In the stage version, business destroys community. The men are unwitting victims of a society that has developed capitalism to an almost pure form and has, as a result, grown callous to the individual needs of its members.

Similarly, as capitalism has developed, Christianity has begun to adopt capitalist modes. Scholarship has explored the intersection of Christianity and capitalism at length. In one such study, *Material Christianity*, Colleen McDannell notes, "While there are certainly Christians who disdain the material world and strive to eliminate visual representations of it from their communities, there is no compelling reason to hold these groups as the standard to which all

other Christians must be compared…. If we assume that whenever money is exchanged religion is debased, then we will miss the subtle ways that people create and maintain spiritual ideals *through* the exchange of goods and the construction of spaces" (6). The import of McDannell's comment is her emphasis on American Christianity's adaptation to a capitalist system, as well as the willingness of faith-based groups to take structural cues from the market. It is also important to note here that Christianity is not necessarily in the middle of secularization, but it has begun structurally to mirror capitalism. Scholar Joel Carpenter addresses the fluidity of conservative Christianity when he explains, "rather than viewing evangelicalism as a throwback, as a religion of consolation for those who cannot accept the dominant humanist, modernist, liberal, and secular thrust of mainstream society, perhaps it is more accurate to see evangelicalism as a religious persuasion that has repeatedly adapted to the changing tone and rhythms of modernity" (qtd. in Hendershot 6). As a note: although confusing evangelicals with fundamentalists is in many ways problematic, the correlation can still be useful to understand the cultures of each as very similar since, as Christian Smith points out, there is a significant overlap of the two groups (17). This study contends that in 1992 when David Mamet wrote the screenplay for *Glengarry Glen Ross*, fundamentalist Christianity and commerce had become so strikingly similar that a mere seven-minute addition to the work by David Mamet manipulates the thrust completely away from capitalism and toward fundamentalism.

The significance of this transition is twofold: first, it emphasizes that fundamentalism has not developed in a vacuum and has made accommodations to postmodernity, and second, it creates a satire that begins by burying itself in the culture of fundamentalism and then eats its way out. This is to say that the critique is at the very core of fundamentalism—the fundamentals—and that to attack these roots, the film develops the characters as fundamentalists; through their construction, the characters expose the fallacious nature of legalistic Christianity from a position *within* the faith. Postmodernity avoids an overarching metanarrative in favor of a variety of fragmented narratives, or as Kevin J. Vanhoozer explains in his essay "Theology and the Condition of Postmodernity," "Yet there are many narratives, and this plurality is what makes the postmodern condition one of legitimation crisis: *whose story, whose interpretation, whose authority, whose criteria counts, and why*?" (10). Vanhoozer's "legitimation crisis" is a constant point of concern for fundamentalists in a postmodern era. If we are to understand that there is no identifiable center, postmodernism then destabilizes traditional interpretations and the

locus of meaning Christians place traditionally in God or Christ is no longer authoritative. Postmodernity's opposition to legalistic Christianity was no doubt disturbing to those in the midst of the conflict. "Postmodernity," writes Kintz, "thus represented a crisis in people's ability to locate any meaning to which they could tie an empassioned commitment" (60). Clearly, postmodernity ravaged the metanarrative quality of fundamentalism and, in order to survive, fundamentalism adapted. Or, as Kintz explains, "In order to link passion to meaning, the reconstruction of everyday life by popular conservatism has thus exploited and reconfigured that sense of unease it helped to produce. In fact the strategy of traditionalist conservatism depends in part on the production of fear against which its own absolutist certainties can then function as an indispensable inoculation" (60). To be certain, postmodernity emphasizes a system in which there is no center and all tangible borders have collapsed; likewise, to survive the dissolution of the larger system of fundamentalism by postmodernism, fundamentalism, like postmodernity, turned inward, thereby creating a circular system free of an identifiable center. Since the "absolutist certainties" then serve as a both beginning and end, cause and effect for fundamentalism, the system has collapsed in a manner that mirrors postmodernity. Ironically, to survive the damage of postmodernity, fundamentalism became strikingly similar to the very force it was trying so adamantly to resist.

One must then begin to understand fundamentalism as a larger community seeking to maintain a cohesive identity, an effort which eventually collapses upon itself. In his recent reevaluation of his previous study, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Anderson describes an imagined community as a group that is only unified in theory, but in reality has no clear distinction as to its members, borders, or even central tenets, but still bears qualities of limitation and sovereignty (6). Anderson explains that Imagined Communities have the following qualities:

> **Imagined** because "members . . . will never know most of their fellow members . . . yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion."
> **Limited** because "even the largest of them . . . has finite, if elastic, boundaries, beyond which lie other nations."
> **Sovereign** because "the concept was born in an age in which Enlightenment and Revolution were destroying the legitimacy of the divinely-ordained, hierarchical dynastic realm . . . nations dream of being free, and, if under God, directly so."

> **Community** because the nation is "always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship." (qtd. in Lo)

Similarly, the film version of *Glengarry Glen Ross* effectively critiques the ways in which fundamentalism furthers a globalist and nationalist agenda by showing both the creation and collapse of these categories within this particular brand of faith. Though the salesmen know each of the other members of their "community," there is still no clear distinction as to who is truly a part of the community and who is on the fringes, namely with regard to Ricky Roma. Though Blake creates the limitations to the community, they, too, become destabilized because the men are constantly seeking to move outside the boundaries of their community and into others, like that of Jerry Graff. The sovereignty of their community is highly combustible in that the same force that created the imagined demarcations of the community, Blake, also threatens to dissolve the community, thus ultimately remitting its own power. And finally, the cohesiveness, or the possibility of cohesiveness, of the community is troubling at best. The film simultaneously throws the men into a common struggle for sales that pits each against his peers. In this structure, the single characteristic that defines the community also serves as the catalyst for the destruction of the community.

Likewise, we must precisely narrow the term *postmodern satire* for the sake of this study and can understand it most appropriately by noting postmodernity's refusal of the transcendental signified, and then satire's self-conscious response as a part of a larger social discourse. In other words, postmodern satire is aware of its inherently fragmented structure as well as its goal of critiquing social structures, and therefore postmodern satire deliberately avoids becoming a part of, or suggesting, any form of true metanarrative. As Steven Weisenburger explains in his study *Fables of Subversion: Satire and the American Novel, 1930-80*:

> The common thread will be the contemporary suspicion of *all* structures, including the structures of perceiving, representing, and transforming. Narratives, especially, are among the most problematic of such structures, and satire becomes a mode for interrogating and counterterrorizing them. Yet postmodern satire is stuck with the very simulacra of the knowledge it so distrusts — stories….The new satires involve much more than mere 'inter-art discourse,' and in many cases, readers must ask just what, if very much, the satirist means for one to salvage. (5)

Fundamentalism, however, is a metanarrative. To fully conceptualize the metanarrative grounding of fundamentalism, one must first understand the initial adoption of the fundamentals. Nancy T. Ammerman begins this explanation when she states, "[Fundamentalists] were willing to argue that certain beliefs were 'fundamental,' and they were willing to organize in a variety of ways to preserve and defend those beliefs" (1). Each of the fundamentals represents a certain truth to fundamentalists and as such points to a fuller, more complete order to the universe. The core of the fundamentals is historical; according to doctrine, truth is revealed as linear history unfolds (or has already unfolded). Therefore, to understand the metanarrative essence of this brand of faith, one needs to look no further than the fundamentals. As Harold Bloom outlines:

> These Fundamentals of the faith have been variously expounded and expanded, but generally reduce to five:
>
> 1. The Bible is always right.
> 2. Jesus resulted from a Virgin Birth.
> 3. His Atonement substitutes for us.
> 4. He rose from the dead.
> 5. He will come again, in a refreshment of miracles, to govern over a final dispensation of a thousand years of peace on earth, before the final Judgment. (224)

The centrality of the fundamentals, however, becomes very destabilized when fundamentalism responds to the metanarrative-resistant nature of postmodernity. At the most basic level, postmodernity has been able to account for the inconsistencies in history which fragmented narratives have caused, whereas fundamentalism has few other alternatives than to cling stubbornly to its founding principles.

Blake, oddly enough, functions as Jesus within the film. Blake, I argue, likely takes his name as an homage to William Blake's "The Marriage of Heaven and Hell." When he establishes a new system in the office, he is undoubtedly serving the same role in history as the fundamentalists' Jesus did. As the Christ-figure, he also represents a depiction of the ideal masculine figure. Like Jesus, Blake establishes a new dispensation. To explain, a core belief of fundamentalism is "that human history has broken down into several periods, known as dispensations, during each of which human beings lived under a different set of divine laws and criteria for salvation" (Bawer 83). Thus, Blake's arrival in a red B.M.W. is not accidental; since

Jesus' blood symbolizes the catalyst for the new historical dispensation, Blake's red B.M.W. is also the "vehicle" of a new covenant, with the salesmen. This interpretation, however, should not be surprising. In the very first lines of his diatribe, he explains, "I'm here from downtown. I'm here from Mitch and Murray, and I'm here on a mission of mercy." As he continues his mission, Blake both creates a system similar to fundamentalism and creates the ideal masculine figure for each of the salesmen to aspire to emulate.

This analysis borrows the definition of conservative Christianity, also known as fundamentalism or legalistic Protestantism, from Bruce Bauer's study *Stealing Jesus: How Fundamentalism Betrays Christianity*. He explains: "Conservative Christianity understands a Christian to be someone who subscribes to a specific set of theological propositions about God and the afterlife, and who professes to believe that by subscribing to those propositions, accepting Jesus Christ as savior, and…evangelizing, he or she evades God's wrath and wins salvation" (5). This definition shows that fundamentalism offers two choices: salvation or damnation. Likewise, Blake establishes a similar system of reward and punishment:

> Good, 'cause we're adding a little something to this month's sales contest. As you all know, first prize is a Cadillac El Dorado. Anybody want to see second prize? Second prize is a set of steak knives. Third prize is you're fired.

Moreover, a person's behavior is imperative to his or her salvation, particularly in terms of evangelism. Within the context of the film, the idea of "sales" is synonymous with evangelism. Interestingly enough, if the men do not accomplish their sales, or evangelism goal, they are fired. The idea of being "fired" for personal failure is especially appropriate in terms of the fundamentalist correlation since the punishment for not living up to one's evangelical expectations on Earth is an eternity in Hell, or simply a permanent "firing." Likewise, the prize of an El Dorado is even more appropriate since El Dorado is a mythical South American city of riches, rumored to be paved with gold. When El Dorado is compared with Heaven of the fundamentalist tradition, the most conspicuous difference is location, yet to the men, sales mean Heaven and failure means Hell.

Thus, Mitch and Murray are representative of God in the fundamentalist sense. The two are responsible for Blake's visit to the office to establish a new dispensation. Of course, this structure furthers the critique of fundamentalism since Mitch and Murray are behind the entrapping structure of this brand of Christianity. Indeed, this structure highlights perhaps the

most problematic nature of legalistic Christianity: if God is all-powerful, omniscient, and benevolent, how then is it that he would create an order by which his own son would have to suffer a brutal death for the sake of humans' sinfulness? As Moss explains, "Threaten a man all you want, you can't whip a dead horse…. Sell $10,000, you win a Cadillac, you lose, we're gonna fire your ass; it's Medieval, its wrong, and *you know who's responsible? It's Mitch and Murray, 'cause it don't have to be this way*" (emphasis mine). Moss is addressing a crucial inconsistency within the fundamentalist system: if God transcends space and time in such a way that there is nothing beyond God's understanding, then why, knowing that man would only end up corrupt and helpless, did God still choose to create such a system? Furthermore, this structure establishes a system where Jesus is not a messenger of God's love for mankind, but a begrudging pawn of the cosmic system. In the film, Blake too notes his own reluctance:

> I came here because Mitch and Murray asked me to. They asked me for a favor. I said "the real favor, follow my advice and fire your fucking ass because a loser is a loser."

To fundamentalism, Jesus' establishment of the new dispensation through his crucifixion and resurrection is truly the pinnacle of history; however, not all Christians interpret the narrative of Christ in this manner. The difference, as Bruce Bawer notes, is that "Legalistic Protestantism sees Jesus' death on the cross as a transaction by means of which Jesus paid for the sins of believers and won them eternal life; nonlegalistic Protestantism sees it as a powerful and mysterious symbol of God's infinite love for suffering mankind, and as the natural culmination of Jesus's ministry of love and selflessness" (6). Through the Legalistic interpretation then creates a very difficult dichotomy. Essentially, although the traditional fundamentalist belief is that Jesus performed his actions out of love for humanity, if one is to believe he died for the sinfulness of man, then the salvation dually represents both Jesus' saving power and man's sinfulness. Through this mode of thinking, Jesus did two things on the cross: he established a new pattern for redemption and showed humans exactly how despicable they are. Therefore, Jesus' death on the cross was necessitated by humankind's own worthlessness. Furthermore, since this system places emphasis on the moment of the establishment of a new dispensation, or system of salvation, the particular focus on salvation is not surprising. Likewise, Blake makes himself known to the salesmen for the sole purpose of establishing a new system of order above them and then leaves.

The emphasis on the dispensations points to another major concern: Legalistic Christianity regards salvation as a primary concern. Terms like *Born-Again* find root in this system of theology. For, to the Fundamentalist, life begins when one is connected directly to Christ and does not occur until one attains salvation through the request of atonement, or one's being "saved." Fundamentalists often point to the "Romans Road" which also borrows "validity" from Paul's experience on the road to Damascus. The Romans Road is a peculiar grouping of verses from the book of Romans:

> But God commandeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. (5:8)
>
> For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God. (3:23)
>
> As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one. (3:10)
>
> For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. (6:23)
>
> For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. (10:13)
>
> That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. (10:19)
>
> (qtd. in Bloom 212)

The Romans Road has become an icon of fundamentalism, and Legalistic Christians often use it to evangelize. One finds it on t-shirts worn in malls, evangelical tracts left on restaurant tables in lieu of a tip, and on wrists through the symbolism of the "witnessing band" in which the wearer arranges a series of plastic beads seemingly at random in order to draw the question: "what kind of bracelet is that?" The wearer then "walks" the other person down the Romans Road, explaining each idea through the symbolism of each bead and knot. Harold Bloom points to this particular privileging of the Romans Road as evidence of the thrust for an experiential faith

(212). It then becomes evident that the "experience" of salvation takes its cues from Paul's Damascus Road experience, especially since prior to conversion, Paul represents the ultimate sinner: one who persecutes Christians. This experience of salvation becomes an epiphany of sorts, or one's realization of the need for forgiveness. The disparity between experience and choice becomes highly problematic when one considers that the fundamentalist "spiritual experience…finds its center in doctrine alone…the competency of the solitary soul confronting the resurrected Jesus" (Bloom 206). Within the terms of tacit consent, however, the only need the men have is to avoid firing, or death. As Blake is delivering the ultimatum, he gives his own version of the Romans Road:

> A.I.D.A. Attention, Interest, Decision, Action. Attention, do I have your attention? Interest, are you interested? I know you are 'cause it's fuck or walk. You close or you hit the bricks. Decision—have you made your decision for Christ? And Action—A.I.D.A.

Blake's system leads to a very problematic notion of agency: if the only two options are death or the system Blake has established, the men are truly not free to decide, or choose, their own faith. Furthermore, his A.I.D.A. is cyclical in nature: it begins with the men first deciding to enter the system and then charges them to continue its propagation. Thus, the speech ends with Blake's own charge to the men: "Go and do likewise. A.I.D.A. Get mad you son-of-a-bitches. Get mad." Much like fundamentalism, if the men choose not to sell their company's credo, they are out of the system altogether. There is no third option; if any of them decide against Blake's "decision for Christ," it is truly "fuck or walk." Also, the system Blake presents creates a situation where the men have little choice to show concern to those around them, particularly the victims of the sales scheme. Bruce Bawer explains, "fundamentalism encourages believers to attend to their own souls (and those of their nearest and dearest) and not to care overmuch for the welfare of others (especially nonfundamentalists)" (63). Likewise, when pondering the ramifications of Blake's A.I.D.A., salesman Dave Moss notes, "It's not right to the customers."

According to this structure, the limits of their own understanding define salesmen, especially their relative nature with respect to the office as metanarrative. Fear of death drives the crucial choices of their lives. As I have emphasized, the foundation of this fear begins its motion on the Romans Road. Belief in the inerrancy of the Bible is one of the fundamentals of fundamentalism. "[F]undamentalism," explains Nancy T. Ammerman, "offer[s] a comprehensive

and satisfying explanation for the complexities of life….If there [are] decisions to be made, then the Bible surely [has] the answers" (28). This intense privileging began in large part as a response to the rise in overwhelming scientific evidence that contested Biblical authority. In the early stages of this belief:

> Archibald Alexander…set out to defend orthodox Calvinism against, on the one hand, the more subjective and individualistic interpretations coming from the revivals of the Second Great Awakening and, on the other hand, the naturalistic assumptions of Deism. He addressed the former by insisting on the authoritative character of the Bible (as over against experience). He addressed the latter by asserting that everything in the Bible was in accord with scientifically verifiable truth. He assumed that science could uncover nothing that could contradict Scripture. The reader rightly led by the Spirit and the scientist rightly led by reason were bound to arrive at the same conclusions. (Ammerman 15)

The ability of fundamentalists to arrange verses out of context in order to create a system of salvation is a by-product of the belief of inerrancy. The danger, as well as the power, of the acceptance of Biblical inerrancy is that any seemingly cohesive arrangements of de-contextualized verses are valued as much, if not more than, the initial passages. In *The Southern Baptists: A Subculture in Transition*, Ellen M. Rosenberg points to the privileging of verses, even when taken out of context, when she explains:

> In the absence of creed, or a set of interpretive rules by which new challenges might be evaluated, [fundamentalists] can hold together only with a core belief structure of extraordinary generality and ambiguity. The Bible fills the need; it becomes a projective test, a protean Rorschach. As the code words have become "Biblical inerrancy," the Bible itself is less read than preached, less interpreted than brandished. Increasingly, pastors may drape a limply bound Book over the edges of the pulpit as they depart from it. Members of the congregation carry Bibles to church services; the pastor announces a long passage text for his sermon and waits for people to find it, then reads only the first verse before he takes off. The Book has become a talisman. (qtd. in Bloom 220)

Similarly, for the salesmen, Blake's A.I.D.A. is an inerrant text from which he intends the men to draw an absolute code of morality, particularly one filled with the ambiguity which Rosenberg

emphasizes: i.e. "*Always* be closing." As Blake explains, "only one thing counts in this life: get them to sign on the line which is dotted." For Blake, any questioning of this value system undercuts its quality of opaque finality.

Therefore, the film version of Mamet's *Glengarry Glen Ross* serves as a postmodern response to Christian fundamentalism. Steven Weisenburger explains the satirical form exemplified in the film:

> The postmodern satirist suspects *all* kinds of codified knowledge as dissimulations of violence, and all of us as potential victims during their exchange. Contemporary, degenerative satire is itself a discourse of violence. It is a means of exposing modalities of terror and of *doing violence* to cultural forms that are overtly and covertly dedicated to terror. Especially in postmodern America, degenerative satire is realist narration backlit by fantastic outrage. (6)

This definition, without a doubt, is ideal for the study of *Glengarry Glen Ross*. In his explanation of postmodern satire, Weisenburger borrows Jean-Francois Lyotard's idea of "terror." Lyotard asserts: "the social bond, understood as the multiplicity of games, very different among themselves, each with its own pragmatic efficacy and its capability of positioning people in precise places in order to have them play their parts, is traversed by terror" (99). In terms of the film, this terror is more specifically the fear of firing, or hell, and the game is the manipulation of the men to accomplish the goals of the larger system. The application of Lyotard's "terror" takes on even more nuance when he explains the games: terror functions through "imprisonment, *unemployment*, repression, hunger, anything you want" (99, emphasis mine). The men embody this terror, as one sees through Dave Moss' conversation with Aaronow:

> I'll tell you what the hard part is—to stop thinking like a goddamn slave…. Mitch and Murray, fuck you. 'Fuck you' is what I say. George, we're men here. And I'll tell you—I'll tell you what the hard part is: starting up. Standing up. Breaking free of this bullshit, this enslavement to some guy, 'cause he's go the upper hand…. [Jerry Graff] said 'I'm going on my own.' And he was free, you understand me?

Though Moss wants to rebel, he also understands that he is helpless to break free of the metanarrative that terrorizes him. The real force of the fundamentalist metanarrative is its power to make adherents, as well as those who are prospects for evangelism, internalize their roles

within the "game." To fundamentalists, the person is a synecdoche for his or her faith. To explain, a person is nothing without faith, since the adoption of doctrine appropriates value. Shelly, like the other men, sees his own identity only in relation to the metanarrative:

> You do not know your job. Do you know that? A man is his job. You are fucked at yours. You hear what I'm saying to you?

The difference between the characters in the film who represent a part of this system (everyone except Ricky Roma) and the one who is free from the terror is that he, Ricky Roma, is able to see himself without the referent of the workplace.

It is then most interesting that Ricky Roma is the single character successful in the sales contest at the end of the play, as well as the only salesman absent when Blake delivers the ultimatum. He alone has the power to develop his own system; thus, his is the only true consenting role in the entire film. Roma dwells in the system of postmodernity that fundamentalism is in large part a response to. Throughout the film, he meanders through the "conditions of postmodernity described by postmodern theory—fragmentation, lack of a center, unease, fear…" (Kintz 61). As one who is not implicated in the cyclical structure of fundamentalism, Ricky Roma is able to explore the limitless range of postmodernity in order to work out a system of his own, free from the confines of fear. Within the film, Roma delivers the vast majority of his dialogue in a bar with James Lingk, sorting out his own theology/philosophy. As he explains to Lingk:

> When you die, you're going to regret the things you don't do. You get befuddled by a middle class morality? Get shut of it. You cheat on your wife? You did it. Live with it. You fuck little girls? So be it. There's an absolute morality? Maybe. And then what? If you think there is, go ahead, be that thing. Bad people go to hell? I don't think so. You think that, act that way. A hell exists on earth? Yes. I won't live in it. Did you ever take a dump that made you feel like you just slept for 12 hours?

Though his final question may seem a bit unusual within the context of his speech, as a foil to the other characters it makes perfect sense. The text affords Roma release and rest since the bonds of fundamentalism do not suffocate him. Unlike the other characters who must toil away tirelessly for fear of firing, he is able to relax and sort out his own beliefs without the overarching pressures. The other men fall into the school that sees the establishment of the new dispensation

as the primary concern of eternity. Roma, on the other hand, is able to see the larger picture, devoid of any single crucial moment:

> The great fucks you may have had, what do you remember about them? I don't know. For me, I'm saying what is it, it's probably not the orgasm….What I'm saying, what is our life? Our life is looking forward or its looking back. That's it. That's our life. Where's the moment? And what is it we're so afraid of? Loss. What else?

For Roma, the act of questioning is acceptable. The fact that he leaves questions unanswered does not shake his tranquility. Somehow, he relishes the mystery of life within this context. Roma is able to address and deconstruct the supernatural without the fear, or terror, of losing his own definition of himself. Upon a close examination of his dialogue, it is highly important to note that he does not take any affirmative stances to create a new system. Furthermore, he is aware of his position within the system as well as others' respective roles. He says to Williamson:

> Who ever told you you could work with men?...What you're hired for is to help us. Does that seem clear to you? To help us. Not to fuck us up. To help men who are going out there to try to earn a living, you fairy.

Roma is genuinely at peace with his rather deistic stance. The metanarrative of faith is certainly not one he has chosen, and the true liberation, then, is centered in his own choice.

The film addresses and critiques their individual struggles with faith through the unique development of well-rounded, Christian characters, which is rare but extremely important. As Hendershot explains, "reducing evangelicals to caricatures does not help us understand their spiritual, political, or cultural agendas" (1). Likewise, reducing fundamentalists to a ridiculous system of formulaic stereo- and archetypes does not establish a rubric for understanding the forces weighing upon the individual fundamentalist. By creating caricature-free characters, the film version of *Glengarry Glen Ross* places itself within fundamentalism, not outside. The real strength, then, is that this critique of fundamentalism begins within the system and then chews its way out, leaving nothing unscathed. The degenerative satire is then inextricably connected to the nothingness at the end of the film. Weisenburger notes:

> At first glance these decidedly postmodern figures suggest a world where the individual subject cannot be heard and has ceased to matter. The human subject

> seems merely a site occupied by various discourses before being swept aside by terrifying, impersonal forces. The initial picture is of an amoral landscape, an axiological wasteland where all the monuments of rectitude have been leveled. (6)

To leave the viewer with a plausible choice at the end of the film would be to commit the same error as fundamentalism: a total denial of agency through the limiting of choice to a binary. Postmodern satire is very self-conscious of its role as social-critic and therefore must resist any urge to corner itself into a metanarrative. Furthermore, when considering this film to be an adaptation, particularly an adaptation of a piece that is very clearly a social critique, one must understand the transforming nature of meaning in a text. As adaptation critic Robert B. Ray explains, "The film adaptation…is not simply a faded imitation of a superior authentic original: it is a 'citation' grafted into a new context, and thereby inevitably refuntioned. Therefore, far from destroying the literary source's meaning, adaptation 'disseminates' it…" (45). With Mamet's addition of Blake to the film, an entire new critique emerged as well, one that included the structures of fundamentalism and masculinity alike.

As the critique moves to address issues of fundamentalism, age becomes another major issue confronting fundamentalists and the salesmen. To be clear, supervisor Williamson says, "I don't make the rules. You don't like the rules, Dave? There's the door." But the men cannot leave the company; they are bound to it by age, each being too old to move to another company. Similarly, within the strictures of fundamentalism, humans are too old from birth to "move to another company," as it were. This doctrine offers humans salvation through Jesus, or death and damnation. Through this structure, one sees that the salesmen themselves are fundamentalists, but not by choice. Each of the characters, with the exception of Ricky Roma, played by Al Pacino, is inextricably linked to fundamentalism by his mere awareness of the system. Since fundamentalism claims itself to be the one true religion and Heaven as the cosmic reward for those "who accept Jesus as their savior and subscribe to the correct doctrines," the system leaves the men no outside options. The fact that they even heard the speech by Blake makes them accountable to the system above them. This system carries significant weight in that it links them to the idea that their own worthlessness had necessitated the establishment of Blake's dispensation. Blake is very clear about the inadequacy of the men when he exclaims, "You can't close the leads you're given, you can't close shit, you are shit. Hit the bricks, pal, 'cause you are going out!" The salesmen quickly internalize this worthlessness, as seen through salesman Moss.

During the tirade, he questions Blake: “You’re such a hero, you’re so rich. How come you’re coming down here wasting your time with a bunch of bums?” Later, however, he is not as confident. He remarks, “Send a guy out there, no support, no confidence.” Regardless of their own belief in themselves, the men are bound to the system above them. They are subjects to the system simply by knowing it is above them.

Furthermore, fundamentalism’s emphasis on the act of evangelism is most curious in light of the fundamentalism’s own lip-service to the idea of justification by faith. Here, the basic premise is that humans attain salvation not by deed but merely by belief in Jesus as savior. However, when the responsibilities of Christians include the act of evangelism, the inconsistency then becomes highly problematic. Blake’s speech, too, shows this element of disparity:

> You see this watch? You see this watch? That watch costs more than your car. I made $970,000 last year. How much did you make? You see pal. That’s who I am, and you’re nothing. Nice guy? I don’t give a shit. Good father? Fuck you—go home and play with your kids. You want to work here-CLOSE!

Blake both discounts the validity of the good works of each and commands them to be successful in other actions. He is completely apathetic to their kindness or commitment to family, but oddly seems desirous of their success in the sales realm. Similarly, fundamentalism charges members to walk a curious line between the understanding of their own worthlessness and empowerment to convert non-believers.

Glengarry Glen Ross begins within the system of fundamentalism and, when the credits roll, leaves the audience with nothing. Not even the character free from fundamentalism is admirable. The characters are painfully un-comical in their attempts to grapple with faith, and their motives are admirable. The genius of the adapation, then, is its power to break the adaptative tendency to sanitize the newer piece, or as Deborah Cartmell explains, “In fact, adaptations offer an escape into another world, a time often portrayed as simpler and happier. These adaptations strip the original text of what is regarded as unpleasant, satisfying a nostalgic yearning for a sanitized version of the past, and are thus escapist in their overall appeal” (26). Truly, as Mamet adapted the film for a later audience, the infidelity that Blake personifies keeps the text alive for a newer social climate. Whereas a nearly parallel film would have been possible considering Mamet had written the original text as a script as well, Mamet’s decision prevents the audience from being able to disqualify the critique as antiquated; therefore the addition of

Blake maintains the resonance of the film's critique. Similarly, adaptation scholar Robert Stam explains the relationship of an original text to its adaptation: "In the broadest sense, intertextual dialogism refers to the infinite and open-ended possibilities generated by all discursive practices of a culture, the entire matrix of communicative utterances within which the artistic text is situated, which reach the text not only through recognizable influences, but also through a subtle process of dissemination" (64). In terms of Mamet's piece, this dissemination regards the notions of masculinity, particularly the traditional constructions of masculinity reflected through Jesus. As the scattering occurs, the characters desperately seek to reconstruct some level of identity, and all efforts are in vain.

In sum, the film adaptation of *Glengarry Glen Ross* shows a significant response to the rise of American fundamentalist Christianity, particularly as it has adopted capitalist modes. The film points to a highly problematic brand of faith, all without discrediting fundamentalists as unthinking and abstraction-needy. By creating a caricature-free critique that seriously addresses the intricacies of fundamentalism, the film is able to fully deconstruct the structure of the faith through a postmodern attack, but by leaving the viewer without a possible "solution" to the satire, the film also effectively breaks apart fundamentalism at its roots without falling into the same problematic structures. Truly, the only exclusive community fundamentalism creates exists purely in rhetoric. Fundamentalism has not grown away from the precepts of (post)modernity simply because the task is impossible. Perhaps more than anything, the film *Glengarry Glen Ross* serves to highlight that the surge of fundamentalist Christianity has not gone unnoticed; truly, artistic responses and scholarly criticisms alike have responded, and both have sought to engage Christianity seriously in a dialogue that will effectively explore religion without a broad and unnecessary dismissal.

CHAPTER 2

FLOWERS AND FRACTURED MASCULINITIES: *ADAPTATION*, *THE ORCHID THIEF*, AND CHARLIE KAUFMAN'S FRAGMENTED MASCULINE DESIRE

Charlie Kaufman: "And, they're still all one person, right?"
Caroline Cunningham: "Well, that's the big payoff."

Charlie Kaufman: "Sounds exciting."

The 2002 film *Adaptation* is, at the most obvious level, an adaptation of the non-fiction work *The Orchid Thief* by Susan Orlean. However, the film is, in many ways, an adaptation of George Axelrod's 1963 production, *Paris When it Sizzles*. Axelrod's film portrays a panicked screenwriter working frantically not only to complete an overdue screenplay, but also to create something original outside of the generic boundaries of traditional Hollywood conventions. Similarly, Spike Jonze's *Adaptation* depicts a neurotic, lonely auteur attempting to write an adaptation of unprecedented form, a study of orchids, while walking the curious line between remaining true to the spirit of the original work and creating a piece suitable for the commercial market. As Henry Bean points out, while *Adaptation* borrows much of the subject matter and character work from Orlean's *The Orchid Thief*, the formal elements such as structure, sequence, and most of all, the inclusion of the screenwriter as a character, are all elements screenwriter Charlie Kaufman borrowed from *Paris When it Sizzles* (20). When one contrasts the three pieces, Orlean's, Jonze's, and Axelrod's, the writer's role in the creation of masculinity becomes strikingly obvious, but particularly so in *Adaptation*. This film, which in many ways is the synthesis of the other two works, fragments the main character's masculinity between three characters: protagonist Charlie Kaufman, his twin brother Donald, and John Laroche. Furthermore, the screenwriter's masculinity is compartmentalized in a tripartite manner: respectively, his own Prufrockian perception of himself, the mirrored twin-other of all that he is not, and finally, the apathetically macho extension of all that he wishes he was. Through an analysis of each, it becomes clear that since gender is a social construct, the creation of masculine figures, as well as feminine figures, is then an imposed act of what I described in the previous chapter as filtration. As Victor Jeleniewski Seidler notes:

> A central myth of masculinity we inherit within modernity is the idea that men do

> not have needs of their own because if they are 'strong' they can get on by themselves. The traditional conception of the macho man who is *in control* of his life and relationships helps to create false expectations and blinds men to injuries they do to themselves in aspiring to live up to these ideals…. If boys continue to feel miserable, this only proves that there must be something 'wrong' with them. *They learn to keep these insecurities secret because they fear that others will only be given grounds to reject them if they find out*. (49 emphasis mine)

Truly, it is not that characters are somehow inherently more masculine than others, but they filter that which is feminine or androgynous in order to create an unmarked masculinity. Masculinity becomes more of a system of suppression rather than creation, and as such, masculine figures seek to cover and disguise anything that others might interpret as weakness. As Ian M. Harris explains, "In a sense, standard bearing aspects of male identity are invisible, buried deep within the male psyche" (56). I contend that the "standard bearing aspects" to which Harris refers are really measures for what "should" and "should not" be filtered in order to construct masculinity.

By understanding the way gender self-consciously constructs itself through filtration, one can then begin to understand the inherently collapsing nature of masculinity. Furthermore, masculine figures are constantly at risk of being exposed for lacking masculinity and thus must seek to subvert any socially questionably elements of selfhood. This pattern, of course, only emphasizes the socially constructed nature of gender, and the difficulty of maintaining a gendered identity. As Judith Butler notes in *Gender Trouble*, "Originally intended to dispute the biology-is-destiny formulation, the distinction between sex and gender serves the argument that whatever biological intractability sex appears to have, gender is constructed: hence, gender is neither the causal result of sex, nor as seemingly fixed as sex. The unity of the subject is thus already potentially contested by the distinction that permits of gender as a multiple interpretation of sex" (9-10). Butler's comment strikes at the very core of the character Charlie Kaufman's screenwriting dilemma: multiple interpretations of his masculinity fragment his subjectivity. Once one understands that the film divides his masculinity between him, his brother, and John Laroche, it becomes even more apparent that the character Kaufman attempts to reconcile, through the creative process, the different forces seeking to shape his masculinity. Considering the unique structure of the film, particularly in terms of the way it constructs masculinity and

subsequently negotiates homosocial bonding, this piece serves to complicate much of the discourse surrounding masculinity.

First, inasmuch as the terms *homosociality* and *homophobia* are problematic, so are the generally accepted definitions of each. Eve Sedgwick, whose insights are fundamental to the understanding of these concepts, explains:

> "Homosocial desire," to begin with, is a kind of oxymoron. "Homosocial" is a word occasionally used in history and social sciences, where it describes social bonds between persons of the same sex; it is a neologism, obviously formed by analogy with "homosexual," and just as obviously meant to be distinguished from "homosexual." In fact, it is applied to such activities of "male bonding," which may, as in our society, be characterized by intense homophobia, fear and hatred of homosexuality. (1)

The constructions of masculinity in the film *Adaptation* complicate Sedgwick's comments by presenting a homosocial relationship characterized not by a fear and hatred of homosexuality, but a desire for fraternity and a united masculinity. Truly, the characters in the film, each a distinct fragment of the character Charlie Kaufman's gendered identity, are pressing for an unattainable unity of self that is constantly negotiating all aspects of selfhood, including gender. Furthermore, as Sedgwick explains, "To draw the 'homosocial' back into the orbit of 'desire,' of the potentially erotic, then, is to hypothesize the potential unbrokenness of a continuum between homosocial and homosexual—a continuum whose visibility, for men, in our society, is radically disrupted" (1-2). Much as Sedgwick's work seeks to destabilize the binary structure separating heterosexuality from homosexuality, this chapter will, too, seek to avoid the error of binary structure by neither interpreting the character Charlie Kaufman as homophobic due to his fantasies about the women characters, nor by labeling him homosexual due to his desire to become more like, or even just to become, John Laroche. Rather, I will discuss the negotiation of the character Charlie Kaufman's masculinity, both on film and in this chapter, as not inherently reflective of his sexual orientation, if sexual orientation even exists. This qualification is not to say, however, that Sedgwick's comments have committed an act of oversight or reduction, as even she recognizes the limitations and flaws of the discourse of homosocial desire (219), yet the term still lends itself to a fuller understanding of intra-male relationships.

Upon a close examination, the evidence that the three primary male figures in *Adaptation* are actually one fragmented self becomes increasingly apparent. While Charlie frustratedly toils away at his unfinished screenplay, his twin brother, Donald, tears through a screenplay of his own. Oddly enough, Donald's piece is of significantly greater importance to the understanding of the fractured masculinity in the film. The film script, a psychological thriller titled *The 3*, moves around the concept that all three of the characters in the film are really one character with multiple personality disorder. Donald describes his screenplay to his brother in terms seemingly impossible to present on film:

> Donald: Okay, so there's this serial killer, right? Well, no, wait. And he's being hunted by a cop. And he's taunting the cop, right? Sending clues who his next victim is. He's already holding her hostage in his creepy basement. So the cop gets obsessed with figuring out her identity, and in the process, falls in love with her. Even though he's never even met her. She becomes, like, the unattainable. The Holy Grail.
>
> Charlie: It's a little obvious, don't you think?
>
> Donald: Okay, but here's the twist: We find out that the killer really suffers from multiple personality disorder, right? See, he's actually the cop and the girl. All of them are him. Isn't that fucked up?

The structure and formation of Donald's film closely parallels that which is actually happening in the larger context of *Adaptation*. The key to understanding the parallels between Donald's film and the current film is to understand which characters in the frame story correlate to those in the framing story. To be clear, Charlie is essentially the cop: he is searching for the different aspects of his persona, and in the process discovers his own fragmented self and masculinity. As he digs through Orlean's book, he finds he is searching for the his own lack which is personified through John Laroche, the corollary character to the woman held hostage. The fact that Laroche's corresponding character in the triad is a woman only adds to the interpretation, considering this character represents all that Charlie loves yet cannot attain, and Laroche's character further develops Charlie Kaufman's character's own inability to connect fully with a traditional gender. His twin brother Donald dually represents the serial killer as much as he represents the mirrored other in the initial film. Charlie alludes to this dynamic in his critique of Donald's project:

> Charlie: On top of that, you explore the notion that cop and criminal are really two aspects of the same person.

The import of Donald's counterpart is he serves to highlight the yin-yang relationship he has with his brother. Subsequently, it emphasizes Charlie's connection with Laroche through Charlie's overwhelming desire to connect and become one with Laroche, who represents his lacking masculinity.

Formalistically, the film constantly attempts to subvert the notion that the three men are really the same entity. Textually speaking, the subversion functions in a twofold manner: first, the film presents the notion that the screenwriter is hoping to accomplish something that no one has ever done before, and second, the film disguises this formal technique by claiming the impossibility of producing a film of this nature. Charlie articulates this dichotomy when he attempts to explain to his brother the impossibility of the production of *The 3*:

> The other thing is, there's no way to write this. Did you consider that? I mean, how could you have somebody held prisoner in a basement and working in a police station at the same time?... Listen closely. What I'm asking is: In the reality of this movie, where there's only one character, right? Okay? How could you…? What exactly would…? I agree with mom. Very taut.

The film's attempt to subvert the notion that the three main characters are in fact one in the same eventually collapses inward on itself. The film escapes the confines of a seemingly impossible character construction by layering narratives and then having the two primary narratives intersect and fuse together. Through this structure, the fragmentation of masculinity becomes increasingly apparent and the façade of a cohesiveness uncovers itself as merely a filtration of the fragmented aspects of masculinity. The film further destabilizes a unified masculinity as the narrative progresses to a point where each representation of masculinity moves closer to a complete juxtaposition, or even melding.

A major consideration of the construction of this form of masculinity is also the creation of heterosexuality throughout the film. Here, masculinity and heterosexuality are inextricably linked, especially through John Laroche, the figure of ideal masculinity: Laroche is brave enough to wander the brutal swamps of the Fakahatchee Strand, smart enough to grow the near impossible orchid, and attractive: "sharply handsome, in spite of the fact that he is missing all his front teeth" (3). When comparing each of these elements from the book's description of Laroche,

one then sees how much the movie manipulates Laroche into being even more masculine and accomplishes many of these shifts through his heterosexuality. Though the previous description is entirely from the book, his movie character is much more appealing to the masculine ideal: he still wanders the swamps, but this time he is able to find *and* cultivate the Ghost Orchid, the one flower he was unable to grow in the book and (presumably) real life; he is still handsome, but this time, he wins Orlean's affections. Essentially, the Laroche in Orlean's study is distinctly masculine, but he still lacks the superhero status he has in the film with the ability to accomplish anything, particularly sexually.

As one considers the creation of masculinity, one must also consider that both *Adaptation* and *Paris When it Sizzles* are commercial ventures, and as such, each has a stake in recreating masculinity according to its era's traditional societal expectations. As Wheeler Winston Dixon explains in his comprehensive study of heterosexuality, *Straight: Constructions of Heterosexuality in the Cinema*, "As contemporary filmmakers push performative sexual display into a new realm of specificity, they also seek to recreate, rather than repeat, the past. These recreations are often tinged with the unreliable pantina of nostalgia and collective memory" (131). Considering that a heterocentric society, in large part, constructs the collective memory, filmmakers seeking to push a film into the public spectrum with minimal resistance truly do have a vested interest in forwarding straight protagonists. Dixon's study addresses the construction of straightness through capitalist modes, and for this reason, his analysis of the Mall of America is particularly poignant when one contrasts it with *Adaptation*. He notes: "The plastic perfection of the [Mall of America] far beyond its putative borders and into the consciousness of corporate American culture, seeking to present life without the risk or danger, relationships without pain or growth, and most of all, the reassurance that, as a member of a heterocentric society, one is part of the ruling elite, which shapes both the desires of and the models for contemporary society" (135). As a commercial piece, normative standards are of increasing import to the film, due to the fact that a heterocentric society establishes much of the audience's expectations. Likewise, Kaufman's own pursuit of masculinity mirrors the desire to find a niche in this normative standard since he is obviously uncomfortable on the fringes of traditional masculinity.

Much like in the film *Paris When it Sizzles*, the protagonist of *Adaptation* is able to create himself through a layering of narratives. Most notably, the characters are each able to create an identity outside of himself in order to filter the elements of self that are compromising to

individual masculinity. This dynamic points to a masculine selfhood that is both fragmented and self-conscious of this fragmentation. As such, it is necessary to note that each of the films functions through a frame structure where the initial story, involving the screenwriter himself, frames the fantasy story where the narrating screenwriter can filter his own insecurities and inadequacies. Furthermore, each of the framed stories functions through an omniscient narration, and, as adaptation scholar Brian McFarlane points out:

> [I]n matters relating to character and to the psychological action involving characters, the situation is more complex. There is, in film, no such instantly apparent, instantly available commentary on the action unfolding as the novel's narrating prose habitually offers…. In a sense, all films are omniscient: even when they employ a voice-over technique as a means of simulating the first-person novelistic approach, the viewer is aware, as indicated earlier, of a level of objectivity in what is shown, which may include what the protagonist sees but cannot help including a great else as well. (18)

McFarlane's comments resonate strongly when considering the masculinity of both Charlie Kaufman and Rick Benson. As each character writes his own story, a tracing of failed and fragmented selfhood becomes increasingly apparent. Benson is an alcoholic and views himself as a failed artist incapable of creating something new. Similarly, Charlie Kaufman seeks to do something new, and in his own attempt, uncovers his lacking perception of identity, and therefore creates a surrogate identity through John Laroche. He begins his adaptation, obviously enough, with the first lines of *The Orchid Thief*: "John Laroche is a tall guy, skinny as a stick, pale-eyed, slouch shouldered, sharply handsome despite the fact he's missing all his front teeth." Although the opening of the book seems, on the surface, as reasonable a beginning to the screenplay as any other, it reveals a stark contrast between Kaufman's own perception of himself and his view of Laroche. Later, in a curious scene of frustration, Kaufman carries on a conversation with Susan Orlean's photograph on *The Orchid Thief*'s dust jacket:

> "I don't know how to do this. I'm afraid I'll disappoint you. You've written a beautiful book. I can't sleep. I'm losing my hair. I'm fat and repulsive."

By highlighting Laroche's own aesthetic appeal, he reveals a further level of his own insecurity, one that is so deep it actually manifests itself physically by inhibiting Kaufman's sleep. The difficulty Kaufman feels then attaches to every facet of his own psyche and reveals an

underlying interconnection of his own self-perception that ties his occupational success, or lack thereof, to his physical shortcomings, whereas the depiction of Laroche shows a handsome man even though he is, by most contemporary standards, far from normative beauty. Furthermore, one must also note that Laroche does not have the same difficulty speaking publicly, writing professionally, and maintaining a positive self-image internally that Kaufman experiences. While in the courtroom, he notes:

> I've been a professional horticulturist for, like, twelve years. I owned my own plant nursery, which was destroyed by the hurricane. I'm a professional plant lecturer; I've given over, like, sixty lectures on the cultivation of plants. I'm a published author, both in magazine and book form. And I have extensive experience with orchids and the asexual micropropagation of orchids under aseptic cultures…. I'm probably the smartest person I know.

And finally, it becomes even more apparent that the character Charlie Kaufman seeks to create a character that overcomes his own social ineptitude with women as he establishes a romance between Laroche and Orlean.

Through the process of layering narratives, the film evolves into an explication of Kaufman's self-involved, and self-indulged, masculinity. Curiously enough, Kaufman is in a position of agency where he can create not only his own world, but those around him. Essentially, the film becomes a piece about the character Kaufman's existence according to himself. A review Henry Bean published in *Sight & Sound* notes:

> This is all the more remarkable given that what *Adaptation* is chiefly about is the protagonist's solipsism, Charlie's desperate effort to climb up out of his own mind and write the screenplay. What makes this so difficult is that, despite all his research into orchids and his sexual fantasies about women, the only thing that really interests him is himself, and anything that distracts him from that is, finally, his torment. (20)

As Bean's comments emphasize, the character Charlie Kaufman's self-construction is of main concern when he assembles the screenplay. Bean continues this analysis by explaining even more poignantly:

> Everyone in [*Adaptation*] is there simply as a neural configuration in Charlie's

> mind. Therefore, although the cast is uniformly good…none of them comes fully alive. They all get sucked into the black hole of the creator.…Charlie's acute discomfort with people, his wish always to return to the gloomy bedroom where he writes, his self-loathing from behind which self-love is always peeking out, his refusal to kiss the very cute violinist who wants him, all turn *Adaptation* into a kind of anti-cinema, a rejection of the worldly actions (car chases, love affairs, killings, people) that constitute the material of most movies. Eventually it comes to seem that the film itself—the camera's cool regard, its appetite for the world—is Charlie's real enemy, as if he can comfortably inhabit only words while images (which reveal his hated body, other people, life itself) threaten to crush him. (20)

For Bean, Kaufman represents more than just an unreliable omniscient narrator; he is the creator of all that is around him. The character Charlie Kaufman's reluctance to include himself in the framed narrative reveals a self-hatred predicated by his shortcomings in the realm of masculinity. Thus, John Laroche becomes a sort of surrogate, living out the life Kaufman has always been too timid to attempt and his brother has been too apathetic to care about.

When considering this creation of masculinity, one must then consider the question of authorship, too, especially since the inclusion of an auteur in the actual film serves to layer not only narratives but authorship as well. So far, this chapter has dealt primarily with the internal story of the film, but from a larger scope, the frame story subverts the responsibility, or connection, of the auteur/author of the screenplay itself. The connection of actual screenwriter to the film is particularly relevant to *Adaptation* as opposed to *Paris When it Sizzles,* considering the screenwriter for the more recent film shares the same name of the filmic counterpart. Ironically enough, this structure actually subverts the notion that there is any genuine connection between the actual screenwriter and the character screenwriter. To explain: though each character, Rick Benson and Charlie Kaufman, is a screenwriter, to confuse the fictional character with the actual screenwriter would be remiss. However, this is to say there is value in interpreting the on-screen characters through the same lens of masculine construction of the frame/framed stories. As McFarlane notes:

> [I]n considering what kind of adaptation has been made, one might isolate the chief character functions of the original and observe how far these are retained in the film version…. By observing these functions…on could determine whether

> the film-maker has aimed to preserve the underlying structure of the original or radically to rework it. Such a study would give a firmer basis for comparison by sorting out what functions are crucial to the narrative: i.e. to the *plot* which organizes the raw materials of the story. (25)

Adaptation, especially when one views it through this lens, complicates McFarlane's interpretation by attempting to *both* preserve the original and its essence, as well as radically rework it by adding the frame story; oddly enough, both stories eventually collapse into one.

Once one understands that masculinity, particularly in the adaptation of *The Orchid Thief*, is both self-creating and self-reflexive, one must then note that masculinity, under this structure, is also self-destructive. Inasmuch as the character Kaufman seeks to construct himself without his own flaws, this effort deconstructs itself by actually highlighting his own masculine shortcomings by juxtaposing the two. Again, *Adaptation* addresses this dichotomy through brother Donald Kaufman's film, *The 3*. During one of the scenes when Donald consults his more successful brother for advice, he notes the newest gimmick he has added to his film:

> "I also wanted to thank you for your idea. It was very helpful. I changed it a little. Now the killer cuts off body pieces and makes his victims eat them. It's kind of like— Caroline has this great tattoo of a snake swallowing its own tail…."

Donald's inclusion of Ourobouros, the snake that swallows its own tail, is especially important since it shows the way masculinity folds in upon itself as it seeks to create its own identity. Similarly, Charlie recognizes that his character represents Ourobouros and, as such, understands the complexity of his own self-creation. Furthermore, as he points out, his explanation for his actions link directly to his self-perception: "The reason is because I'm too timid to speak to the woman who wrote the book. Because I'm pathetic." Though Kaufman initially views himself as an overweight, balding, socially inept screenwriter, his self-perception does not change the fact that on paper, he is able to create the world he longs to exist within. As the author/auteur of his own life, his fantasies and realities begin to melt into one.

As one can see through the example of *Adaptation*, masculinity is currently, and possibly always has been, in flux, negotiating itself according to societal and normative expectations. As such, the male protagonist Charlie Kaufman disguises his own inadequacies through an act of filtration and presents only the most stereotypically masculine characteristics through John Laroche. His self-conscious construction of masculinity then uncovers the construction of

masculinity as just that: a construction. Finally, when one analyzes the adaptation from the perspective of gender as a filter, Charlie Kaufman becomes as much a construction of his own desire to be masculine as he is the repression of his own insecurities which destabilize the whole system of masculinity he creates.

CHAPTER 3

THE "NEW-MAN" IN TOWN:

ALFIE, ADAPTATION, AND GENDER-REASSIGNMENT

What? No, no. I know what you're thinking. If you ooze masculinity, like some of us do, you have no reason to fear pink.

By dissecting the adaptative infidelities of the more recent version of *Alfie* from its parent film and grandparent stage version, one notices not only a severe reconstruction of the women in favor of more empowered, sexually unapologetic characters, but also a masculinity that screenwriters Charles Shyer and Elaine Pope have reevaluated and subsequently reconstructed to present a machismo unflinchingly shaped by femininity. This chapter will both argue that a disconnection between biological sex and gender opens the space for this new machismo, and subsequently, will discuss the ways in which this dynamic resonates within the film. Judith Butler points to the potential for the disconnection of biological sex and socially constructed gender in her crucial work, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*:

> If gender is the cultural meanings that the sexed body assumes, then a gender cannot be said to follow from a sex in any one way. Taken to its logical limit, the sex/gender distinction suggestions a radical discontinuity between sexed bodies and culturally constructed genders. Assuming for a moment the stability of binary sex, it does not follow that the construction of "men" will accrue exclusively to the bodies of males or that "women" will interpret only female bodies. (10)

As Butler continues, she explains not only the disconnection between body and gender but the difficulty of a binary structure between the ideas of masculinity and femininity as well:

> Further, even if the sexes appear to be unproblematically binary in their morphology and constitution, there is no reason to assume that genders ought to remain as two. The presumption of a binary gender system implicitly retains the belief in a mimetic relation of gender to sex whereby gender mirrors sex or is otherwise restricted by it. When the constructed status of gender is theorized as radically independent of sex, gender itself becomes a free-floating artifice, with the consequence that *man* and *masculine* might just as easily signify a female body as a male one, and *woman* and *feminine* a male body as easily as a female one. (10)

Here, Butler describes exactly what occurs in the newest adaptation of *Alfie* in a time when biological sex and socially constructed gender are beginning to separate. Moreover, as this disconnection becomes more and more apparent, spaces then begin to open for marginalized groups, particularly those that find fringe status as a result of sexuality differing from normative standards.

The original film version of *Alfie* first reached theatres in 1966, three years after the initial stage version, and the subsequent film version began showing nearly four decades later in 2004. During the years that separate the versions, the sexual politics that surround gender and race evolved at a dizzying speed. As a note: the stage version and original film version of *Alfie* are extremely similar, so unless I note otherwise, I will be addressing the earlier versions as separate from the recent film version, but as very much similar to each other, particularly in their depictions of women. Today, although issues of equality have yet to reach complete equilibrium, the long-term effects of both the American civil rights movement and women's liberation movement have shaped the shifts of the social acceptability of the muddling of race, gender, and sexuality. Most importantly, this dynamic within the later *Alfie* reveals a redistribution of cultural standards of gender with particular attention to beauty, sexuality, and agency; the privileging of powerful, self-assured, bold women has replaced the former "ideal" of an overly-accommodating, timid, sexually repressed woman. Likewise the screenwriters in the newer version have replaced the steroidal, hyper-macho version of masculinity with by a fashion sensitive, self-reflective male. Still, the presentations of both the powerful femininity and toned-down masculinity still maintain problematic elements in their respective presentations, particularly because, in order to facilitate the empowerment of women and the revision of standards of masculinity, it is possible to argue that the femininity effectively becomes masculine and vice versa.

Also, it is interesting to note the way the stage notes construct Alfie's masculinity, especially considering the stage version shares almost all of its dialogue with the original film, but the notes reveal much of Naughton's attempt to create Alfie. In an early note, Naughton writes:

> [Alfie] talks with a quiet, intimate conviction. He is unfamiliar with the accepted standards of morality, and is unaware of any ironic overtones to anything he does or says. He tells you a thing in his way and you can take it in your way. He is so

> confident that the logic of what he says will be understood that he does not emphasize the fact if something moves him. His voice tends to lose force rather than gain at emotional moments. (4)

Perhaps the most glaring comment Naughton makes about the protagonist is that his voice loses force when confronted with emotion. He protects any displays of perceived weakness by reacting inversely to how one would expect someone to behave when confronted with emotion. Also, Naughton works to create Alfie as much more self-absorbed than the Alfie from the recent film version. Naughton notes: “Alfie, in his usual fashion, does not look at Gilda or even seem to notice her presence” (19). Simply, Naughton’s incarnation of Alfie is much less likeable than the significantly more charming and tragic recent Alfie. At the most basic level, this distinction points to a new revision of masculinity that is the result of the current gender climate.

At the most basic level, Alfie is the feminine role in the new film, and likewise, the women become the new representation of the masculine. The trouble, then, is that much of the reconstruction of femininity is not a reconstruction at all, but a masculinization of female characters. To be clear, what occurs in the revision of *Alfie* is less an empowerment of feminity than a continued privileging of masculinity. Through a close reading and some application of Lacanian analysis, it becomes clear that the structure in the new film creates Alfie as masculine only so much as masculinity and biological sex are linked, and the same is also true for the women in *Alfie*. As a disclaimer: although this chapter revolves around the notion that the new film feminizes Alfie and masculinizes the women, the conversion of the characters to this role is all-encompassing. Truly, there are masculine elements to the original women characters, and there are many points at which they display agency and empowerment, and likewise, the original Alfie is not entirely masculine, and the new Alfie is not entirely feminine. Alfie’s ambiguous gender, however, does not change the complexity of the argument surrounding this film since gender roles, being flawed social constructs, will never fully describe a character beyond that a stereotype.

Since the changes these screenwriters made to the women characters are significantly more deliberate than those to Alfie himself, it is essential to first understand the nuances in terms of the revised female characters before unpacking the corollary male character. Also, though it is impossible to fully decipher which of the amendments to the characters were deliberate and which were incidental to the process of adaptation, tracing the alterations and deviations from the

original still holds particular value. By deconstructing the adaptative infidelities in the film, both intentional and not, one discovers an evolving gender climate. Therefore, through the example of the more recent *Alfie*, it becomes very apparent that gender roles of traditional masculinity and femininity are becoming less intertwined with their biological counterparts, biological sex, and as a result, are opening new spaces for marginalized groups. Yet with all these progressions toward a more accepting gender landscape, the privileging of masculinity is still ever-present, regardless of whether the machismo manifests itself in a male or female character. Simply, the female characters in the new *Alfie* become empowered, and though this shift is a positive amendment from the original, they achieve agency by becoming masculinized; the initial, regressive binary structure is still present in the new film but the disconnection of sex and gender disguises the maintained privileging of masculinity.

During the "Women of *Alfie*" feature on the DVD of the more recent *Alfie*, writer/producer Elaine Pope notes, "When we went back to the original and looked at the characters, we realized the most updating needed to be done with the women because they were a downtrodden lot and it was kind of pre-women's lib. So they took a lot more abuse, basically, than women would today." Perhaps the most noticeable of the alterations is in the sexual freedom the women experience post-transformation. In both films, the character Ruby/Liz is easily the most sexually unapologetic character. (As a note: Shyer and Pope changed the names of the women during the process of adaptation, so when I introduce each in this chapter, I will initially note her as original/updated; likewise, if I mention only one name, the reference is to the specific character from her respective version of the film.) As a relatively older woman, approximately 50 in the new version, Liz is the rogue, female equivalent to Alfie. Her character is, according to the social constructs of gender, an icon of masculinity, especially in the remake. Ruby, though financially independent, owns three hair salons. In the similar stage version, Alfie notes that Ruby "mighta *looked* a hard case—but I'll tell you wot, underneath she was quite mumsie" (64). She is comfortable, maybe even what one could call wealthy, but by no means is she a booming business tycoon like Liz. Liz not only has latitude in the masculine sphere of the business world, but she has authority, so much so, in fact, Alfie takes her his business plan to seek her advice on the matter. Her role in a traditionally masculine position affirms her agency and displaces her devalued femininity.

In addition, Liz's failure to save Alfie from himself, or even attempt to, is particularly poignant when one contrasts it with Amy Aronson's analysis of the transformative power of women's pure love:

> The transformative power of women's pure love has been one of America's most resilient cultural tropes. Except it doesn't work anymore. Because it wasn't really femininity that transformed those bad guys. It was innocence. And once upon a time, women embodied that innocence—on screen and in real life. Not anymore. Feminism change all that. In the movies, feminism changed good girls, innocent and pure, into worldly women… (44)

Not only do Aronson's comments highlight the empowerment the screenwriters have given to the women in updated *Alfie*, it also shows a move away from the condescending tendency to link beauty standards of women to innocence. The antiquation of the nurturing power of women is a subtle example of the reinscription of a masculine-privileging binary, as well as the screenwriters' disconnection of gender from sex. The prior functions by attaching masculine characteristics to characters like Liz, as a form of gender-liberation, but collapses when screenwriters give the feminized characteristics to the devalued Alfie. The disconnection of biological sex and gender, of course is extremely positive, in that in one way or another, women are able to hold positions of authority and agency in films without raising suspicion, and likewise men can show. Truly, society must break the binary structure before femininity will move beyond a devalued state, and masculinity will no longer hold privilege regardless of which characters, male or female, are playing the respective roles of masculinity or femininity.

The Ruby/Liz example is by no means isolated; even many of the other female characters gain a masculinized sexuality, and oddly enough, the original Alfie becomes a tool for the later masculinization of the female characters. During an early scene in the more recent edition of *Alfie*, Dorie gives a pair of her underwear to Alfie following sex. Though this action is not necessarily a marker of a changing sexual climate, or even all that particularly feminine, there is still a very subtle masculinazation that appears in contrast with the original film. During the opening scene of the original film *Alfie*, not to mention the stage version, Michael Caine's character gives the underwear to Dorie's predecessor, Siddie. In many ways, the underwear represents agency, a phallus within the relationship. The shift in terms of which character maintains the phallus is even more apparent when one considers the final scene in each version.

In the first film, Alfie, though confused, is unapologetic about his behavior and even attempts to reestablish his affair with the married Siddie. In response to this ploy, Siddie leaves Alfie with an ambiguous "Maybe," which is actually a much different than the stage version which implies that the two go back to Alfie's car to have sex, thus leaving the audience with a completely cyclical structure. The recent film remake concludes with a glaringly different conversation between Alfie and Dorie. Instead of trying to bring Dorie back into his life, he apologizes after a botched attempt to explain his behavior. Dorie, who in this version has the agency, refuses to acknowledge Alfie's explanation, saying assertively, "I think it has to make sense to you more than me at this point." Here, Dorie remains in control of the power dynamic between the two characters, while Alfie is alone and powerless to consider the ramifications of his behavior. Though both characters show elements of choice and agency in terms of the future of their relationship, Dorie's refusal to participate in Alfie's life following a manipulative affair shows a significant revision from both Siddies.

On the inverse, Alfie is symbolically castrated[2] from the beginning of the movie. To be clear:

> Jacques-Alain Miller has shown how these considerations led Lacan to a new formulation of castration: the emptying out of jouissance from the body. And what is the agent of this castration? The symbolic register as such: language. The organisms passage through and into language is castration, introducing the idea of loss and absence into the world. (Groves 148)

Strictly within the context of his own film, the new Alfie passes into the world of language from the beginning of the film. The new film sees the addition of a "Word of the Day" calendar that surfaces early in the film and continues to appear with each of the major male characters. The most apparent evidence that the linguistic quality of these calendars will castrate not only Alfie, but the other men, is his first pulling the word *ostentatious* from his calendar in the opening scene. The next word on the calendar, though blurred in the background of the first calendar word, is tomorrow's word: *Doomed*. From the very beginning of the film, Alfie is doomed by language. More importantly, Lacan attaches the notion of language to the symbolic, which is subsequently tied to the world of the father. As Colette Soler explains, "In [Lacan's] paternal metaphor, elaborated twenty years earlier, the Name-of-the-Father metaphorized the signifier of the desire of the mother to give it a phallic signified, and thus knotted the symbolic of the

signifier and the imaginary of the signified, with the real remaining apart from them" (236). Through this structure, the realm of the symbolic, language, is tied to the masculine world of the father.

In order to understand this interpretation, it is essential to note that the new Alfie alludes to his being an orphan. Though subtle, there are two points in the new film that allude to Alfie's likely orphaned childhood. The first occurs when he is playing "I never" with Lonette and claims, "I've never made my own bed," to which she replies, "Well, what kind of mama you got?" Alfie's response is an aloof, even solemn, "That's a good question." When discussing Christmas, he removes much of the ambiguity of his orphaned childhood:

> "Personally, I've always suspected that everyone else is having a far merrier Christmas that I am. Not that I've ever actually had a Christmas. But that's a whole other Dickens' story."

The import of Alfie's likely orphaned childhood is twofold: first, it serves to disconnect him from the world of the father and therefore language.

The gender reversal continues when Liz pours Alfie a drink of absinthe from a phallic shaped bottle into his yonic figure glass, all while Alfie discusses her fashion prowess. He notes, "She's a regular fashionista. You don't have to tell this one which slingbacks goes with which frock." The irony of this statement is that while highlighting Liz's fashion sense, he is really uncovering his own ability to pair shoes with outfits. Here, he rather officially claims a comfortable position as a metrosexual, a term Mark Simpson coined in the mid-90's (Flocker xiii). The importance of the metrosexual role, both to society and to the film, is that it muddles the traditionally held assumptions and expectations with regard to the masculine gender. As Michael Flocker explains in *The Metrosexual's Guide to Style: A Handbook for the Modern Man*:

> The oafish, macho caveman who had been lumbering about the planet looking for a woman to club on the head had been banished to the hinterlands forever…. The new breed of man is one of style, sophistication, and self-awareness. He is just as strong and confident as his predecessor, but far more diverse in his interests, his tastes and most importantly his self-perception. Secure in his masculinity, he no longer has to spend his life defending it…. If he is married, it is by choice, not by necessity, and *the walls separating straight men from their gay, fashion-forward*

> *brothers are beginning to crumble*. More and more, young, urban, straight men are appropriating certain elements of style and culture from the gay community… (xiii emphasis mine)

The reference to metrosexuals, of course, is not to claim that there is something inherently feminine about fashion sense, and likewise is not to say there is something inherently un-masculine about homosexuality, but the shift away from the hyper-macho protagonist to a more sexually androgynous protagonist is undeniably significant. This transition reveals the beginning of a disconnect between sex and gender and a more socially accepting environment.

To be clear about the aforementioned point, it is important to note the role that homosexuality plays within both films. Homosexuality is particularly helpful in unpacking the nuances of gender since it problematizes traditional gender roles. Furthermore, the shifts in *Alfie* from original film to remake highlight a changing climate in terms of these roles as well. As Wheeler Winston Dixon explains about society's role in creating social expectations for gender, particularly as they apply to sexuality:

> Allied with this need to "normalize" sexual behavior into a rigidly defined code of behavior is a desire to exile all potentially disruptive forms of social discourse, or at least to contain them within the boundaries of a carefully designed series of sexual and performative tropes…. Thus it is not enough to create a white, heterocentric universe and people it with artificially created constructs to bring it to life. One must also create a perpetual underclass, a racial and sexual underclass that cannot be grudged, and then create human exemplars to people this phantom universe. (55)

Though there is a significant resonance to Dixon's comments, the films highlight a shifting nature of this underclass, if not to a position of privilege, at least away from devaluing. There is a scene in the original film that is absent from the stage version where, during the bar-fight, there is a subtle jab made at homosexuality when two men, frightened by the commotion, cleave to each other. Moments later, the two flee the ruckus for the safety of the women's restroom. In the new film, however, Alfie describes the doctor he visits for his erectile disfunction, named "Miranda," as a "he with a little bit of she thrown in." What is surprising, then, is that Dr. Kulp is able to give Alfie an erection during the examination, and since the protagonist is feminized, his sexuality is unthreatened. Likewise, since the doctor is very clearly feminized, his role is still

peripheral. But the new film sees the addition of bisexual women who seek engage Alfie in a threesome. He explains, "I think it's incredibly unfair that it's acceptable for men to be sexually experimental, then with a woman, if she wants to try something—a kiss or a threesome—that they'd be judged. I wouldn't judge them; and I think if you two were to kiss, I would—I would just—I would just see it as a thing of beauty."

In an even more curious swing of gender recreation, the creators updated Alfie's medical condition. Whereas the two original versions portray Alfie as having an ambiguous pair of "shadows" on his lung x-ray, the new Alfie suffers from impotence. What's more, he suffers from impotence caused by emotional strain. Alfie's overwhelming emotionality hinders his ability to achieve an erection, revealing a disconnection from his physical masculinity. This shift reveals the new Alfie's latitude into an emotional world that the machismo-icon original is incapable of, but to which even the new Alfie gains only partial access. For instance, the original Alfie is unable to articulate or express a vulnerability through emotion, which is why he runs from the house following Lily's abortion and why he throws the food Annie has prepared for him against the wall. For both men, emotion has a somatic effect that manifests differently in each. As Sally Robinson explains in her article, "'Emotional Constipation' and the Power of Damned Masculinity: *Deliverance* and the Paradoxes of Male Liberation," "Damned if they do, and damned if they don't, the men in Boorman's film are caught between the two competing, but oddly complementary, truths structuring masculinity and male experience: male power is secured by inexpressivity, even as inexpressivity damages the male psyche and the male body" (134). The more recent Alfie is much more secure in the emotional realm, especially considering his feminization in the new film. Alfie's emotional latitude is particularly apparent in his interactions with Lonette. Their affair begins when Alfie pays her a visit because he is "supposed to be consoling [Lonette's] devastation." In essence, Alfie becomes a nurturer, and even when his counseling Lonette becomes sexual, he notes, "Trust me, what happens next was the furthest thing from my mind when I dropped by tonight," but he is still unable to articulate his own thoughts and feelings. In Alfie's final comments to the viewer during the remake, he notes:

> I've got to admit, I didn't see it coming. She caught me off guard, alright. You couldn't tell, though, could you? As you've learned by now, I'm rather skilled at hiding my feelings. You see, the things with feelings is, they have this quiet way of sneaking up on you when you least expect it. You know what I mean? Like

> with Liz, who would've thought, of all the women I've known, the one I let my guard down with delivers the knockout punch.

Here, even his stereotypically masculine inclination to repress his emotion collapses as Alfie addresses his feelings immediately following the claim that he skillfully covers them. Furthermore, he masculinizes Liz's emotional impact on his psyche by describing them in boxing terms. Here, Alfie's emotional shifts serve as an initial link to his feminization/demasculinization, and the subsequent masculinization of the female characters.

Perhaps the most curious adaptations the screenwriters made to the film are found in the adaptation of Lily to Lonette. The contrast between Lily and Lonette is visually the most striking considering Lily is a middle-aged, caucasian woman with children, and Lonette is a young, African American woman without children. Though the original film is unclear as to who exactly makes the decision to abort Lily and Alfie's illegitimate child, it is very unambiguous with regards to who is at fault; Alfie explains, "And I thought to myself, 'You know what, Alfie? You know what you done? You murdered him.'" The original Alfie's comments show a striking difference from the remake where not only does Lonette refuse Alfie's company into the clinic, but she then decides not to have the abortion. Ironically, through Lonette's decision to carry the child, the film subtly moves away from a patriarchal system in which the male, Alfie, is responsible for the decision surrounding the abortion, to a more progressive perspective on the sexual politics. Not only does Lonette initiate the encounter, which Lily did not, she also claims a level of agency Lily is incapable of. By omitting any direct discussion of the decision to terminate the pregnancy, the original version's *Alfie* depicts the abortion as an unavoidable circumstance, whereas the new *Alfie* adds discussion of the abortion, as well as Alfie's offer to accompany Lonette into the clinic, something the original Alfie adamantly refused. The agency, then, is in terms of who controls the authority over the fetus. In the previous two versions, Gilda actually asks for Alfie's permission to have the child she is pregnant with. The updated version relocates the sexual and body politics to the person most directly affected: the woman. Alfie no longer decides the pregnancy's outcome, and through this, Lonette claims authority over her own body.

As the recent film concludes, it is important to note both the new Alfie's seeming inability to complete a cohesive sentence, as well as the original's total lack of apologetic demeanor. The newer Alfie's inability to navigate the world of language severs him from the

realm of masculinity, whereas both former Alfies are able to articulate their own thoughts, but not feelings. The trouble then becomes a question of masculine privilege and what happens when the screenwriters assign female roles masculine privilege. Truly, at the end of the new film, Alfie's apology and inability to make the penance he desires makes him a more likeable character, but the shift to a more affectively moving figure presents issues as he is pitiable but not enviable. His new attachment to femininity does not redeem him; rather the connection devalues as the feminine other.

In understanding the film's transition, it is imperative to note that the chasm between biological sex and gender, or at least the beginning of this disconnection, as one sees it in the different versions of *Alfie*, has infinite potential for the positive restructuring of societal expectations of gender. This dynamic, opens spaces for women to be more sexually, professionally, and socially dominant, while men are no longer tied to what Sally Robinson labels "Emotional Constipation," the need to repress emotion to the point that it affects the individual somatically. Also, homosexuality is becoming more acceptable, perhaps to the point that one day the demarcation lines between different sexual preferences will eventually become antiquated and inapplicable. Ideally, however, the separation of gender from biological sex will serve to highlight the social constructedness of the entire system in order that the binary privileging of masculinity over femininity will break down as well. Unfortunately, as one sees through the example of *Alfie*, society still favors masculinity over femininity, regardless of the biological sex of the characters representing each.

Finally, as the disconnection of biological sex and socially constructed gender becomes more and more apparent, gender ambiguity opens new spaces for marginalized groups. Through this structure, a normative sexuality deconstructs itself and social progress moves forward. Yet, society still privileges masculinity over femininity, and this privileging points to the continued binary structure of gender. Until a more accurate structure replaces the binary, allowing for many different genders, the privileging of masculinity is likely to continue. Even as the women in *Alfie* find empowerment through masculinity, one also sees Alfie, himself, losing his agency as a corollary to his feminization. Perhaps as gender separates itself further from biological sex, the binary structure will be uncovered as a socially constructed fabrication, and as such, will be replaced or, even better, removed altogether.

CONCLUSION

The preceding chapters establish a series of lenses for analyzing a tumultuous period in masculinity. As the gender climate in America evolves, adaptations often provide an ideal record of the transition, namely because as adaptations not only do they occupy the times in which they are produced, but they also reveal the shifting social climates separating the pieces. As one understands the life of an adaptation as a cultural marker, the value of adaptative infidelity takes a new level of value as it can serve to bring a new understanding of the film and the environment from which it is borne. Furthermore, adaptations serve to highlight the interconnection of all texts, tangible or not. Through a study of adaptations, texts remain living, fluid entities that carry cultural traces across divides of time, genre, method, and medium. Art becomes a process of evolution and susceptible to, and accepting of, transformation.

Obviously, there are numerous other adaptations that complicate the arguments I have presented in the previous chapters. For instance, *I, Robot*, a recent adaptation of Isaac Asimov's novel, presents a version of masculinity where emotionality is necessary to prove the humanity of the robot Sonny. Sonny essentially represents a foil to Del Spooner, played by Will Smith. In addition to the necessity of Sonny's emotionality, he also serves as the catalyst for Del Spooner's catharsis of grief over a long repressed tragedy. Sonny's example shows not only the potential masculinity free of the filtration holds but also the ability for male homosocial bonds to be constructed without the triangulation through a woman.

The adapation of James Dickey's *Deliverance* serves to highlight the process of filtration, particularly in the character Bobby's case. After the infamous rape scene, the men work to cover Bobby's rape by burying the rapist rather than taking his body downriver to sort the situation out with the authorities. The men, namely Bobby, decide that burying the body is the best decision because he does not want anyone else to find out what has happened to him. Essentially, considering his rape would rob him of some level of masculinity, Bobby chooses to filter this by covering his violation, thus protecting his masculinity.

Likewise, both the stage version and the screen adaptation of *Rent* problematize the ideal of masculinity through the character Angel, a cross-dressing male who serves as the inspiration to the rest of the cast. Her character brings to light a masculinity that, arguably, does not filter anything. Angel is among the few examples in contemporary cinema with the latitude to dress according to either masculine or feminine fashion codes all while maintaining a consistent

gender, or even a gender-free existence. His marginalized status outside of the masculine/feminine binary allows him latitude and agency not available to other men such as Alfie, Mamet's salesmen, or even the character Charlie Kaufman. As Jean Baudrillard has noted, "The liberated man is the man who changes spaces, who circulates, who changes sex, clothes, and habits according to fashion, *rather than morality*" (96). Considering Angel exists on a plane well outside the normative values of gender created by a heterocentric society, she gains access to a green-world of sorts where the dictates of traditional gender no longer apply. Everything down to the pronouns the other characters use to refer to her, a biologically male, androgynously gendered character, complicate the very nature of gender. However, though Angel holds a position of agency in the crisis of masculinity, his position outside the binary still proves limiting.

In contrast with Angel's example, the idea that masculinity is in a state of flux still resonates. Perhaps Angel's example points to a period when all humans will find androgynous gendering and some level of liberation as such. For the men in Mamet's office, the restrictions come from their position within the binary since, inherently, the structure implies some kind of ideal. As the salesmen painfully discover, the ideal is more a construction of their own minds and, as such, can never be reproduced in full, neither by the characters themselves, nor by anyone else. While each tries to "sell" himself, or the façade of masculinity, it becomes clear that each is undoubtedly lacking, except, of course, Ricky Roma who, like Angel, never allows himself to be influenced by the binary. Yet Roma's latitude still limits and, in many ways, emasculates James Lingk. Further, when Roma involves fellow salesman Shelley Levine in role-playing to fool Lingk, he then plays an active role in reinscribing the binary.

The updated character of Alfie, likewise, attempts to model himself after a statue of Aphrodite, only to find himself and his identity more cracked than the sculpture. His male body and feminized gender predicate his inability to move beyond his fragmented selfhood. Physically, his privilege seems almost a given: he is handsome, articulate, goal-driven, and charming; however, he still is not masculine enough to achieve agency in a patriarchal society. Likewise, his female foil, Liz, experiences the exact opposite situation, and her masculinization gives her access to the agency Alfie desires: she is sexually unapologetic, financially wealthy, and casually unfaithful—all failures for Alfie.

As my *Adaptation* chapter contends, masculinity's attempt to create itself consistently fails. Masculinity's process of self-creation does as much to uncover the failure of masculinity as it does to disguise it. The character Charlie Kaufman becomes a new kind of anti-hero: powerful, full of integrity, and completely pitiful. Eventually, the character's self-creation melts into one with his own reality, and his failure to become machismo-loaded John Laroche is more apparent than ever.

Each of the protagonists I have discussed shares the crisis of masculinity, though the crisis manifests itself in numerous incarnations. Whether struggling like the salesmen in *Glengarry Glen Ross* to meet a hated ideal, seeking to gain latitude he has lost through feminization like Alfie, or working hard to filter feminine and androgynous characteristics like *Adaptation*'s Charlie Kaufman, each character represents a different facet of the crisis of masculinity. However, this "crisis" represents a very optimistic future for gender. If the patriarchy maintains itself in any way through the construction of masculinity, then truly, a crisis of masculinity holds the potential to deconstruct the patriarchy as a façade, much like the idea of masculinity that helps perpetuate it.

[1] My work borrows from Robert Stam's with the understanding that he is working under a broad scholarly discourse on dialogism established some years earlier by Mikhail Bakhtin.

[2] My thesis serves as an effort to align a study of masculinity with the previously established modes of feminism and feminist criticism. Though previous discussions of masculinity, particularly that of the Men's Rights Movement, have attempted to strip feminism of its authority and usefulness, my thesis seeks to simply complement feminist work and further open discussions of masculinities while maintaining a deep reverence to feminism. To learn more about the Men's Rights Movement, consult Kenneth Clatterbaugh's study, *Contemporary Perspectives on Masculinity: Men, Women, and Politics in Modern Society*, particularly chapter four, titled "Counterattack: The Men's Rights Movement."

[3] J.C. Trewin's biographical entry on Bill Naughton in the *Dictionary of Literary Biography* makes a passing reference to a radio play titled *Alfie Elkins and His Little Life* from which he based subsequent versions of *Alfie*. In my research, I was able to acquire a copy of the stage play, however, my research did not uncover the radio script, and Trewin's entry appears to be the only reference to it.

[4] Though scholarship on the topic of castration is sparse, one can find a comprehensive history of the subject in Gary Taylor's *Castration: An Abbreviated History of Western Manhood*.

[5] Though the stage version of *Glengarry Glen Ross* was revived in the Spring of 2005, my research shows no evidence of considerable changes being made to the piece prior to production. Considering that much of my analysis relies on the notion of adaptative infidelity and that the stage revival is textually the same, this chapter will only discuss the initial text without any significant reference to the recent revival.

REFERENCES

Adaptation. Dir. Spike Jonze. Perf. Nicholas Cage, Chris Cooper, and Meryl Streep. Sony, 2003.

Alfie. Dir. Charles Shyer. Perf. Jude Law, Susan Sarandon, and Omar Epps. Paramount, 2004.

Ammerman, Nancy. "North American Prostestant Fundamentalism." *Fundamentalisms Observed*. The Fundamentalism Project. Eds. Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby. Vol. 1. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1991. 1-65.

Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. New York: Verso, 1991.

Aronson, Amy, and Michael Kimmel. "The Saviors and the Saved: Masculine Redemption in Contemporary Films." *Masculinity: Bodies, Movies, Culture*. Ed. Peter Lehman. New York: Routledge, 2001.

Baudrillard, Jean. *America*. Trans. Chris Turner. London: Verso, 1988.

Bean, Henry. "Self-Made Heroes." *Sight & Sound*. Mar. 2003: 18-21.

Berger, John. *Ways of Seeing*. London: Penguin, 1990.

Bloom, Harold. *The American Religion: The Emergence of the Post-Christian Nation*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1992.

Butler, Judith. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York: Routledge, 1999.

---. *Undoing Gender*. New York: Routledge, 2004.

Carroll, Dennis. "The Recent David Mamet Films: 'Business' versus Communion." *David Mamet Casebook*. Ed. Leslie Kane. New York: Garland, 1992. 175-90.

Cartmell, Deborah. "Introduction." *Adaptations: From Text to Screen, Screen to Text*. Eds. Deborah Cartmell and Imelda Whelehan. London: Routledge, 1999. 23-28.

Clatterbaugh, Kenneth. "Counterattack: The Men's Rights Movement." *Contemporary Perspectives on Masculinity: Men, Women, and Politics in Modern Society*. Boulder: Westview, 1997.

Cohen, Ed. "Constructing Gender." *The Cambridge History of the American Novel*. Ed. Emory Elliot New York: Columbia U P, 1991. 542-57.

Connor, Steven. "Introduction." *The Cambridge Companion to Postmodernism*. Ed. Steven Connor. Cambridge: Cambridge U P, 2004. 1-19.

Dickey, James. *Deliverance.* New York: Bantam, 1970.

---. *Deliverance*. Dir. John Boorman. Perf. John Voight, Burt Reynolds, and Ned Beatty. Warner, 1972.

Dixon, Wheeler Winston. *Straight: Constructions of Heterosexuality in the Cinema*. Albany: State U of New York P, 2003.

Flocker, Michael. *The Metrosexual Guide to Style: A Handbook for the Modern Man*. Cambridge: De Capo, 2003.

Groves, Judy, and Darian Leader. *Introducing Lacan*. New York: Totem, 1996.

Harris, Ian M. *Messages Men Hear: Constructing Masculinities*. Bristol: Taylor and Francis, 1995.

Hendershot, Heather. *Shaking the World for Jesus: Media and Conservative Evangelical Culture*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1994.

Kintz, Linda. *Between Jesus and the Market: Emotions that Really Matter in Right-Wing America.* Durham: Duke U P, 1997.

Lane, Anthony. "Heaven Can Wait." *The New Yorker* 29 May 2006: 76-78.

Lo, Elaine. “Benedict Anderson.” Fall 2004. 2 Dec. 2004.
http://www.english.emory.edu/Bahri/Anderson.html

Lyotard, Jean-Francois. *Just Gaming*. Trans. Wlad Godzich. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1985.

Mamet, David. *Glengarry Glen Ross*. New York: Grove, 1984.

---. *Glengarry Glen Ross*. Dir. James Foley. Perf. Jack Lemmon, Alec Baldwin, and Al Pacino. Live / Artisan, 1992.

Marsden, George. *Fundamentalism and American Culture: The Shaping of Twentieth-Century Evangelicalism, 1870-1925.* London: Oxford U P, 1980.

McDannell, Colleen. *Material Christianity: Religion and Popular Culture in America*. New Haven: Yale U P, 1995.

McFarlane, Brian. *Novel to Film: An Introduction to the Theory of Adaptation*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1996.

Naughton, Bill. *Alfie*. London: Samuel French, 1963.

---. *Alfie*. Dir. Lewis Gilbert. Perf. Michael Caine, Shelley Winters, Millicent Martin. Paramount, 1966.

Nightingale, Benedict. “Glengarry Glen Ross.” *The Cambridge Companion to David Mamet*. Ed. Christopher Bigsby. Cambridge: Cambridge U P, 2004. 89-102.

Orlean, Susan. *The Orchid Thief*. New York: Random House, 1998.

Paris When it Sizzles. Dir. Richard Quine. Perf. William Holden and Audrey Hepburn. Paramount, 1964.

Ray, Robert B. “The Field of ‘Literature and Film.’” *Film Adaptation*. Ed. James Naremore. New Brunswick: Rutgers U P, 2000. 38-53.

Robinson, Sally. “‘Emotional Constipation’ and the Power of Damned Masculinity: *Deliverance* and the Paradoxes of Male Liberation.” *Masculinity: Bodies, Movies, Culture*. Ed. Peter Lehman. New York: Routledge, 2001. 1-19.

Sedgwick, Eve Kosofsky. *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire*. New York: Columbia U P, 1985.

Seidler, Victor Jeleniewski. *Man Enough: Embodying Masculinities*. London: Sage, 1997.

Smith, Christian. *Christian America?: What Evangelicals Really Want*. Berkeley: U of California P, 2000.

Soler, Colette. *What Lacan Said About Women: A Psychoanalytic Study*. Trans. John Holland. New York: Other, 2003.

Stam, Robert. “Beyond Fidelity: The Dialogics of Adaptation.” *Film Adaptation*. Ed. James Naremore. New Brunswick: Rutgers U P, 2000. 53-78.

Taylor, Gary. *Castration: An Abbreviated History of Western Manhood*. New York: Routledge, 2000.

Trewin, J.C. “Bill Naughton.” *Dictionary of Literary Biography*. Ed. Stanley Weintraub. vol. 13 New York: Gale, 1982. 351-54.

Vanhoozer, Kevin J. “Theology and the Condition of Postmodernity.” *The Cambridge Companion to Postmodern Theology*. Ed. Kevin J. Vanhoozer. Cambridge: Cambridge U P, 2003. (3-25).

Weisenburger, Steven. *Fables of Subversion: Satire and the American Novel, 1930-1980.* Athens: U of Georgia P, 1995.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Jared Champion completed his undergraduate work at Carson-Newman College in Jefferson City, Tennessee. From there, he moved to Tallahassee, Florida to complete his Master's degree at Florida State University. He will be continuing his graduate education in the Fall of 2006 at Syracuse University in Syracuse, New York. His hopes are to complete a Ph.D. and be placed in a tenure track position at a small, liberal arts university where he can continue to develop as both a scholar and an educator.