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THE RHETORIC OF VISUAL FORMS

A Viewer-oriented Analysis
of Selected
Biblical Prints of Women
from
the Renaissance and Baroque periods

Thesis submitted to the Department of Religious Studies,
University of Ottawa, July 1994, in partial fulfilment of the
requirements for the Masters of Arts, Religious Studies

Submitted by:
Janet Tulloch

Thesis Supervisor: Professor Norman Pagé



Janet Tulloch, Ottawa, Canada, 1994



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INTRODUCTION

(I) PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY

This thesis is an examination of the relations between "representation" and "looking" in both a historical and contemporary context. I agree with Mieke Bal when she states that the theme of "looking and being looked at ... is so central to the representational practice of Western culture that it deserves some special attention."¹ The representations and looking I will be doing in this thesis focus on historical Biblical prints of women from the Reformation period.

"Looking", as we know, is the exercise of one of our human senses. In western culture, and in this historical moment, it is generally seen as a mode of response. This has not always been the case. In the not too distant past, the belief that physical vision was active as well as receptive was commonly held. Representations of objects, it was believed, bonded to the soul and were retained in memory.

This understanding of "looking" based on Augustine's theory of physical vision was still prevalent in Europe until well into the 16th century according to Margaret Miles. It accounts to some degree for the widespread belief in the miraculous healing power of icons.

The power of representations to affect the viewer who gazes upon them has regained some currency in the west. This time the dialogue is not framed by religious thinkers, but by cultural and psychoanalytic theorists. My thesis is a critical analysis of the contemporary theory of *the disciplinary power of imagery* as it has been adapted by art historians from the work of Michel Foucault and

¹ Mieke Bal. Reading Rembrandt (1991) 140

Jacques Lacan. *The disciplinary power of imagery* is a phrase I use to describe the potential of imagery to structure and limit the response of the viewer as it has been described by various art historians since the early 1980's. (Bryson, 1983; Marrow, 1986; Camille, 1989; Freedberg, 1989; Wollheim, 1991) This power has been ascribed to all types of representations including sacred and doctrinal images. Richard Wollheim states the case of the disciplinary power of images very succinctly in his essay *What The Spectator Sees*, when he writes: "To be a spectator [of a painting] is not to be a certain person: it is to fill a certain role."² To show that power and control are part of representational strategies in historical art is the project of Michael Camille in *The Gothic Idol*:

Representations, then and now, are not only vehicles of pleasure and reflection but also agencies of power and control. They are wondrous objects of human production and attention, and this very madeness, this intractable interaction with a series of looks and desires, gives them special power and instrumentality.³

That images cannot be considered as benign expressions or ideologically neutral is one of the main claims made by feminist art historian H. Diane Russell in her 1992 exhibition, *Eva/Ave.: Woman in Renaissance and Baroque Prints*.⁴

One of the ways that representation is thought to structure viewer response is in the formation of gendered subjectivities. According to this argument, through the limited visual presentations of male and female figures in imagery, men and women viewers are positioned or instructed by the image to take up particular identities. These identities are then assumed or rejected according to their

²Richard Wollheim. "What the Spectator Sees" in Visual Theory: Painting & Interpretation, (1991) 101

³Michael Camille. The Gothic Idol: Ideology and Image-Making in Medieval Art (1989) 351

⁴H. Diane Russell, Eva/Ave: Woman in Renaissance and Baroque Prints. With Bernadine Barnes. (Washington and New York: National Gallery of Art and the Feminist Press at the City University of New York, 1990) 21

attractiveness for the viewer. The process of repetition of similar images works to make these identities more attractive and desirable.

(II) BIBLICAL IMAGES OF WOMEN

Much work has been published in the area of women, texts and religion, especially in the area of Christianity. The scholarship on women and Biblical imagery however is more recent. Images of the Virgin, Eve, Mary Magdalene, Judith and Susanna are the primary Jewish and Christian subjects for these studies.⁵ This scholarship has been undertaken by both feminist theologians, feminist art historians and feminist cultural theorists.

Within the field of Christian Theology, Margaret Miles, a Professor of Historical Theology at Harvard Divinity School is the leading scholar. Her recent books, Image as Insight (1985) and Carnal Knowing: Female Nakedness and Religious Meaning in the Christian West (1989) provided a place to begin my research. Her 1985 book offered a method of interpretation for religious (Biblical) images using gender as a category of analysis. Her 1989 book made use of poststructuralist art theory to critique the representational practices of the Christian West. In this book, Miles argues that much of western Christian art has subverted what she identifies as the main project of Christianity -- carnal knowing.

The work of Jane Dillenberger has also been prominent in Christian Theology. Using gender as a category of analysis, Dillenberger's essay on "Mary Magdalene" in Image and Spirit in Sacred and Secular Art (1990) illustrates the multivalent meanings different images of the same female figure can carry in different historical and cultural contexts.

⁵See my bibliography under "Women, Art and the Sacred" for specific titles.

Within the Department of Religious Studies at the University of Ottawa, Dr. Elisabeth Lacelle has theorized about Albrecht Durer's print, *The Elevation of Saint Mary Magdalene* (see figure 19) using gender as a category of analysis. In her interpretation of this print, she suggests it is an image of a reconstituted or saved woman in all her vulnerability and capacity for glory. Contrary to Dillenberger's thesis, Lacelle suggests that Durer's print of Magdalene does not signify an abstract concept but rather the image depicts Magdalene as a saved woman in the flesh according to the Christian tradition.⁶

The visual theory of Mieke Bal, professor of the theory of literature at the University of Amsterdam, provided the balance of a non-theological point of view to my research and offered a possible method for image analysis. While Dr. Bal's theory may be characterized as postmodern in that it deconstructs modernist assumptions about imagery, it is uniquely her own. Based on an interdisciplinary approach to imagery, her modified use of semiotics to interpret representations, assigns to images an epistemological integrity which moves the image beyond the mere status of an illustration.

(III) IMAGERY AND THE PRODUCTION OF GENDERED SUBJECTIVITIES

(A) THE PSYCHOANALYTIC CRITIQUE: GENDER DIFFERENCE AND REPRESENTATION

The idea that women are presented differently from men in representation (specifically: historical European art) was first presented forcefully by John Berger in his now classic, Ways of Seeing (1972). The cause for this different treatment according to Berger, is due to the construction of the 'ideal' spectator as male. In

⁶Elisabeth J. Lacelle, "Eva/Ave - Des idées religieuses au XVI^e Siècle". Conference présentée au Musée des beaux-arts du Canada, le 29 novembre, 1992. See p. 24 of the prepared text.

this relationship, images of women, particularly 'the nude' are designed for the purpose of flattering the male viewer. Berger argued that this unequal relationship is damaging because "it still structures the consciousness of many women. They do to themselves what men do to them. They survey, like men, their own femininity." ⁷ The issue of representation and the structuring of consciousness was explored in depth by feminist film-makers in the mid-1970's. Based on Lacan's theory of ego formation, one British film-maker, Laura Mulvey, theorized that the act of a spectator gazing at the projected images on a cinematic screen was reminiscent of the moment when a child first recognized his/her own image in the mirror. Given the importance Lacan attributes to this experience for the development of identity formation, Mulvey theorized that this paradigmatic moment of psychological connection between the self and the image of the self is repeated for a film viewer when looking at representations of the *human form*. According to Mulvey, the projected images of movie stars can be seen as stand-ins for the viewer's own ego-ideal reflected in his/her mirror image. ⁸

Similar to John Berger's observations, Mulvey also theorized an alignment of sexual difference between the image and the spectator. She argued successfully that women in Hollywood-type narrative film were not present to signify real women but rather the sexual desire of the male spectator. "The woman [is an] icon displayed for the gaze and enjoyment of men, the active controllers of the look." ⁹ Mulvey's article (still considered a classic in feminist art theory), generated tremendous discussion in the literature. Her observations on the male control of a powerful symbolic order like the cinema, and the placement of the image of woman within that order, were quickly taken up by feminist theorists in the visual arts.

⁷ John Berger, Ways of Seeing. (London: BBC and Penguin, 1972) 63

⁸ L. Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" in Screen, Vol. 16, No. 3, (Autumn 1975) 9-10

⁹ Mulvey, 13

In 1977 feminist art historian Griselda Pollock published an article entitled, "What's Wrong with 'Images of Women'?"¹⁰ As she relates in a later text (1990), the article was part of an attempt to integrate herself into the theoretical community associated with Screen (of which Mulvey was a member). Like Mulvey, Pollock questioned whether images of women in a symbolic system controlled by the interests of men could ever signify women at all. She concluded in 1990 that "there are no 'images of women' in the dominant culture, [only] masculine significations deployed by body signs."¹¹

Parallel to the occurrence of studies of psychoanalytic theory on representation by feminist art critics, were studies by feminist artists in the 1980's who conducted their own investigations of representation as part of their art practice.

In the work of feminist artists such as Mary Kelly, Barbara Kruger and Cindy Sherman, gender was investigated as an effect of representation itself. These artists continued to refer to Lacanian psychoanalytic theory to underpin their claims.¹² From Mulvey's 1975 critique of cinematic images of women as signifiers of male desire, these artists and others played with these ideas in their art-making as part of their critique of gender difference in representation and its contribution to cultural standards of identity. Based on the work of contemporary visual artists Victor Burgin, Mary Kelly, and Silvia Kolbowski that addresses the issue of representation and sexuality, art theorist Kate Linker writing in 1983 in Parachute, stated that images or representations have the

¹⁰ G. Pollock, as quoted in "Missing Women: Rethinking Early Thoughts on Images of Women". Carol Squires, ed. The Critical Image: Essays on Contemporary Photography, (Seattle: Bay Press, 1990) 202

¹¹ Pollock, 219

¹² In Canada for example, artists such as Mary Scott made images of women without faces overlaying the images of their "absent" bodies with texts. The artist best known for work made within a Lacanian conceptual framework is British artist, Mary Kelly. See her Post Partum Document, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1983.

power to construct identity but "...this structuring is not definitive, the subject is constantly formed and re-formed, positioned and re-positioned *in every speech act* [i.e. in the realm of the symbolic]." ¹³ Linker, whose ideas were also based on Lacanian psychoanalysis, theorized that it is through the repetition of similar images that certain subject positions or identity patterns are 'stabilized'. According to Linker:

Since the fabrication of reality depends on repetition to fix or stabilize meanings, most texts within cultural circulation serve to confirm and reduplicate subject positions. Representation, hardly neutral, acts to regulate and define the subjects it addresses, positioning them by class or by sex, in active or passive relations to meaning. Over time these fixed positions acquire the status of identities and, in their broadest reach, of categories. Hence the forms of discourse are at once forms of definition, means of limitation, modes of power. ¹⁴

Linker argued that representation constructed the masculine subject only, denying subjectivity to women. Given that women do not represent themselves but rather are represented, female sexuality was, in her view, directly controlled through most representational apparatuses.

(B) THE POSTSTRUCTURALIST CRITIQUE: REPRESENTATION AS A DISCOURSE

While some feminist artists and critics analyzed representation using psychoanalytic theory, a small group of male artists, writers and cultural philosophers were beginning to challenge the nature of representation as an apparatus of power relations. Their critique was based on the view that all cultural forms of expression including high art were ideologically grounded. This new view of art was heavily influenced by the writings of Michel Foucault.

Writing in 1982, Craig Owens, a prominent New York art critic and spokesman for this view, stated that poststructuralist art theory

¹³ Kate Linker, "Representation and Sexuality" in Parachute 32, (Fall 1983) 15.
The italics are mine.

¹⁴ Linker, 12

understands "representation [as] an inextricable part of [the] social processes of domination and control."¹⁵ In an important American art magazine, Owens challenged the veracity of the claims made by a reified art and the discipline of Art History. He maintained that far from being a politically neutral fixture, representation, its systems and its apparatuses may be considered as active processes, governed by the exercise of power held by the dominant elites of western culture. In Owens view, Panofsky's legacy of the history of art as a humanistic discipline was finished.

According to poststructuralist art theory the authority claimed by modern art was based on the humanist idea of *universality*. This idea was attributed by modern aesthetics to the *forms* utilized for the representation of vision, *over and above differences in content* attributed to the historical conditions under which art is made.¹⁶ Poststructuralist art theory challenged this notion of universality claiming that its categories are exclusive rather than inclusive and that the humanistic project as a whole is complicit with a dominant and oppressive social and cultural order.

This new criticism had as its objective "the reexamination of representation as a discourse, analyzing the way it produces and enforces knowledge (the institutions and operations which ensure its circulation), making clear how such knowledge is legitimated, and initiating a less exclusive and more generative means for interpreting the products of our culture."¹⁷

¹⁵ Craig Owens, "Representation, Appropriation & Power" in Art in America Vol 70, No.5 (May 1982) 9

¹⁶ Craig Owens, "The Discourse of Others: Feminists and Postmodernism" in The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture (Port Townsend, Washington: Bay Press, 1983) 58

¹⁷ Brian Wallis, "What's Wrong With This Picture? An Introduction" in Art After Modernism: Rethinking Representation. Ed. Brian Wallis (Boston: New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York in association with David R. Godine, Publisher, 1984) XVI

Within poststructuralist art theory, it is the image's status as a mode of discourse which determines its ability to construct gendered subjectivities. Not only does representation construct gender, but in and of itself, it is considered to be gendered.

No representations in the written and visual media are gender-neutral. They either confirm or challenge the status quo through the ways they construct or fail to construct images of femininity and masculinity. ¹⁸

Philosophically, feminist theory applied to art history and poststructuralist art theory had much in common. Both critiques sharply rejected any notion of traditional art historical practice. Both critiques typically viewed all cultural products as "texts", regardless of which media was referenced. Both critiques tended to reject the idea of the author or artist as a guarantor of the meaning of the text or work of art. ¹⁹

During the 1980's, feminist theory in the visual arts conflated the theories of both Lacanian psychoanalysis and Foucauldian poststructuralism to help substantiate its challenge to modernity's view of the image as a neutral, and in the case of great art, transcendent site. However throughout the 1980's and into the 1990's, a tension has remained between feminist cultural theory and these two critiques vis a vis the issue of subjectivity and its relationship to representation.

(C) THE FEMINIST CRITIQUE: GENDER AS A CATEGORY OF CULTURAL ANALYSIS IN REPRESENTATION

Earlier feminist critiques of gender applied to art focused on the missing women artists from the canon of art history. (Harris and Nochlin, 1976; Greer, 1979) The 1980's emphasis on gender grew out

¹⁸Chris Weedon, Feminist Practice and Poststructuralist Theory. (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1987) 101

¹⁹For radical feminists who followed the thought of Mary Daly, this was not the case. Even liberal feminists were not about to adopt the idea of the "death of the author" just as women were finding their cultural voice.

of the recognition by researchers in some areas of women's studies, history for example, that 'women' as a category was becoming problematic. It belied the actual conceptual framework of 'women's history' -- the history of gender (Pleck, 1983); further, the analyses of women's roles in social and cultural history did not successfully reconceptualize mainstream dominant histories. As the focus of attention, women were studied as a class of objects, as the 'Other' (Carr, 1988), as outsiders to mainstream culture. The undifferentiated category of 'women' also potentially glossed over the experiences and histories of women who were not part of a dominant race or class. The study of gender, as an aspect of social identity, became the new interpretative focus.

"Third-stage" feminist art criticism focused on gender analysis as it relates to the interconnections among art, historical context and culture. A summary of the findings of historical studies on Medieval and Renaissance era images of women (Hults, 1982, 1987; Warner, 1983; Silver, 1986; Hodges, 1990; Smith, 1990) may be found in Thalia Gouma-Peterson and Patricia Mathews' "Feminist Critique of Art History" (1987). According to the authors:

"The great variety of female stereotypes, ranging from virgin, mother and muse to whore, monster and witch, have been shown to be signifiers for a male-dominated culture, signifying what is desirable (virgins and mothers) and what needs to be repressed and civilized (harlots monsters and witches). Such images are thus seen as playing a positive-prescriptive and negative-proscriptive role."²⁰

In the case of the study of historical images of women by men, Gouma-Peterson and Mathews recommended that future work on this type of imagery could be studied as "cultural symptoms"²¹ of the 'normative' hierarchy of male thought.

²⁰ Thalia Gouma-Peterson and Patricia Mathews, "The Feminist Critique of Art History", in The Art Bulletin, Volume LXIX, Number 3, (September 1987) 338 See section: Historical Studies of Female Imagery as Prescriptive and Proscriptive Agents, 338-342, for complete discussion of this topic.

²¹ This term is taken from Erwin Panofsky's "Introductory" in Studies in Iconology (1972) referring to Panofsky's idea that "under varying historical conditions, *essentia*

Each of these three postmodern critiques made significant contributions to the current assessment of the role of representation in the production of gendered subjectivities. In the exhibition, *Eva/Ave: Woman in Renaissance and Baroque Prints*, curator H. Diane Russell suggests that the images made by printmakers of the Renaissance and Baroque periods promoted the development of gendered stereotypes to the viewers of those historical periods.

(IV) A CASE FOR STUDY: *Eva/Ave: Woman in Renaissance and Baroque Prints*

In the Fall of 1992 an exhibition of 'Old Master' Prints from the collection held in Washington by the National Gallery of Art was placed on exhibit in Canada's National Gallery in Ottawa. It consisted of 152 prints of images of women made by male artists of the Renaissance and Baroque periods.²² According to curator H. Diane Russell, three criteria bore directly on the content of the exhibition; first, the selection reflected the judgements and interests of one person: namely herself; second, she in no way wanted to single out any one image as more important than another;²³ and third, her choice of work depended upon how well it fit the theme of her show, "woman in her various guises" and not on the fame of a particular author or print.²⁴

I visited the exhibition on several occasions. I bought the catalogue and read the essays by curator H. Diane Russell along with the essay by Bernadine Barnes, several times. As a student of religious

tendencies of the human mind were expressed by specific *themes and concepts*'. (His italics.)

²² From approximately 1460 C.E. to the late 17th century. See Russell, 13

²³ Russell, 8

²⁴ Russell, 13

images, as a visual artist working in the more contemporary recording media of camera and computer generated imagery, and as a feminist, this exhibition held many attractions for me.

After my initial visits, I decided that while Russell's exhibition was compelling, there were some apparent contradictions in it which could not be overlooked. For example: given Russell's statement that "images, as a powerful mode of discourse need to be examined in their own terms,"²⁵ why then was there so much text inscribed beside each image on the wall? Or, given the contemporary nature of Russell's thesis, why were the galleries in which the prints were mounted, coded to create the atmosphere of a 16th century *state* room? Was this a simple effect to give the prints a simulated historical context or was something else going on? If so, what? Lastly, if all of the prints in *Eva/Ave* were evidence of her thesis of a "patriarchal discourse on women which often asserts itself as *power over women*",²⁶ why then, did I find some of the imagery pleasurable? Clearly, a more formal investigation would be necessary in order to adequately answer these questions.

In the chapters which follow, I explore the theory of the disciplinary power of images by introducing a specific case of the theory in practice as it has been applied and presented in *Eva/Ave* by H. Diane Russell. My hypothesis is that not all of the images in *Eva/Ave* exert disciplinary power on the viewer *in the sense that Russell defines it as patriarchal power over women*. In the case of religious subject matter for example, the type of power potentially exerted by the image will engage the viewer differently depending on whether the print is perceived as a *doctrinal* or *devotional* image by a viewer who is also a believer. In the case of *devotional* images, the image may actually function to empower the viewer.

²⁵Russell, 14

²⁶Russell, 14

Secondly, depending on the historical context in which the print functions, the image may visually challenge the written and oral commentaries of the day. The relationship of images to texts is not a simple mimetic one. Even when both are about the same subject, there is no easy alignment between the two. Inbetween the poles of complete harmony or complete contradiction lies an ocean of gradation and variation between the two forms of thought *even when they portray the same subject matter*. Not only are images much more than "benign expressions" or cultural forms that are ideologically grounded, they are, in my view expressions of a unique mode of thought, i.e. visuality with their own epistemological constructs. This view underlines much of the critique in this study.

I will test my hypothesis by analyzing two samples of *religious* images²⁷ from the exhibition: one sample of images that may be characterized as devotional and doctrinal; and a second sample of images which I have selected to determine if their visual content challenged or reinforced written theological commentary on women with regard to: sin; celibacy and marriage; and motherhood, matriarchy and the sacred imaged as man. I will analyze these images using a viewer-oriented method as it has been developed by Mieke Bal. The data which form the subject matter for my samples are historical Biblical prints of women from the 16th century.

In my fourth chapter, I discuss the notion of the "exhibition" as a mode of meaning with some attention given to the response of pleasure as a possible disruptive element to the "discipline of imagery".

In my conclusion, I turn my attention to the most problematic print in the *Eva/Ave* exhibition as an example of the difficult relationship between images and texts. I analyze this print in relation to similar images by the same artist as an introduction to a

²⁷ Many of the images in the exhibition depict secular subjects.

visual theory which explores the concept of an inter-image rhetoric based on the content or narrative of visual forms.

1 THE DISCIPLINARY POWER OF IMAGERY

(I) *Eva/Ave: Woman in Renaissance and Baroque Prints:*

A CASE IN PRACTICE

Eva/Ave, according to its curator is about "woman in her various guises, good and bad, in which she was represented by male artists of the Renaissance and Baroque periods."²⁸

To this end Russell grouped 152 prints²⁹ selected from the National Gallery's Old Master collection into seven categories: "Heroines and Worthy Women"; "The Virgin and Saints"; "Eve"; "Venus"; "The Power of Women"; "Lovers, and Lovers with Death", and "Fortune and Prudence". In the small hall which introduced the exhibition to the Canadian public, the National Gallery of Canada provided the following introductory text in English and French based on statements found in Russell's catalogue. In order to set out Russell's curatorial strategy within the museum context (a collaboration between Russell and the National Gallery of Canada), I will quote the complete English version of the introductory panel:

This is an exhibition about Woman and some of the guises, good and bad, in which she was represented by male printmakers of the Renaissance and Baroque periods, from about 1460 to the late 17th century. These images may be seen as part of a patriarchal discourse on women, which often asserts itself as *power over women*.

The title of the exhibition, "Eva/Ave" reflects the belief of the time that women had two conflicting natures: evil and good, as expressed especially in the persons of Eve, mother of humankind and cause of "original sin", and of the Virgin Mary, mother of God and vehicle of "salvation". From the Middle Ages, Mary had been venerated as the new Eve, whose purity would overcome the sin committed in Eden.

²⁸ H. Diane Russell, *Eva/Ave: Woman in Renaissance and Baroque Prints*. With Bernadine Barnes. (Washington and New York: National Gallery of Art and the Feminist Press at the City University of New York, 1990) 13

²⁹ While the museum mounted an exhibition of 140 prints, Russell's catalogue contains an additional twelve.

The form by which she was most commonly addressed, *Ave Maria*, echoed the angel Gabriel's salutation on announcing Christ's Incarnation: "Hail Mary, O Blessed one, the Lord is with you." The polar opposites of sinful Eve (*Eva*) and redemptive Mary (*Ave*, or *Eva* spelled backwards) gave rise to the contrasting images of women seen in this exhibition.

The prints are arranged in thematic sections which illustrate this dichotomy: "Heroines and Worthy Women", "Venus", and "the Virgin and Saints", generally on the *Ave* side; and "Eve", "The Power of Women", "Lovers, and Lovers with Death" generally on the *Eva* side. However many images reveal an intriguing ambiguity. In addition, we see Fortune and Prudence, in a harking back to the Classical tradition of Fortuna, as a powerful force that directed the course of a person's life.

The invention of printmaking made possible a proliferation of all kinds of images by many artists, and thus fostered the development of stereotypes, many of which are still powerful influences in our perception today. Not least among these are the guises in which women are represented.

With the exception of two prints lent by the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston and two from the National Gallery of Canada, the 140 woodcuts, engravings and etchings shown here are from the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., which organized the exhibition and generously offered it for this exclusive appearance outside Washington.³⁰

While there is much that may be analyzed in this text, a task I will save for chapter four of this thesis, here, I will make a few introductory comments of my own. First, the word "guise" meaning external appearance or assumed appearance, has a double connotation. It is not only the "guises" in the prints that the viewer should be alerted to but also the "guise" constructed by the entire exhibition. The art historical discourse which characterizes this panel works to naturalize and give authority to Russell's controversial thesis only *partly* expressed in the second sentence of the first paragraph of the introductory panel. This statement asks the viewer who enters the exhibition to suspend his/her critical judgement in order to read/interpret the prints as Russell has suggested. At least this much of her strategy is explicit and the viewer can openly agree or disagree with her.

³⁰Eva/Ave: Woman in Renaissance and Baroque Prints at the National Gallery of Canada: October 9, 1992 to January 10, 1993

The other part of her thesis, the effect of imagery on viewer response, is expressed in her introduction to the exhibition catalogue: "Questions about the power of images, historical responses to them, and our own responses to them are *implicit* in the theme of this exhibition and *are dealt with explicitly on occasion in the catalogue.*" ³¹ It's ironic that Russell actually uses the word "implicit" to describe this aspect of her thesis suggesting that she is employing a curatorial strategy here. Exactly what these questions might be is not openly spelled out by her and with good reason. Should these questions be clearly identified, Russell would be left to untangle a knot of professional conflict that currently surrounds the debate on expositions of sexist and racially charged imagery.³² For example, if Russell is making the argument that the images in *Eva/Ave* are sexist,³³ why exhibit them? To answer this question we must return to Russell's catalogue.

The important task for students of visual imagery according to Russell is to determine the type of power inscribed or proscribed by the image, how it is conveyed visually, and what effect it may have on viewers. ³⁴ Here we have her purpose in mounting *Eva/Ave*.

The relationship among power, images and gender is the key concept of Russell's thesis. The category of *gender*, according to Russell, is interlocked with that of *power*.

...I would point to Joan Wallach Scott's definition: "gender is a constitutive element of social relationships based on perceived differences between the sexes, and gender is a primary way of signifying relationships of power." ³⁵

³¹ Russell, 20-21 The italics reflect my emphasis.

³² I will elaborate on this issue in chapter four where I offer my critique of the use of the exhibition as a pedagogical tool.

³³ Russell never uses this term, but rather phrases her claim in more academically acceptable language: i.e. a patriarchal discourse.

³⁴ Russell, 20

³⁵ Russell, 14

In her catalogue Russell offers an expanded meaning for the category, *power* in relation to the terms: *images*; *prints*; and *artists*.³⁶ I will briefly outline her comments on each of these relationships:

Power and Images: "[Images] are one of the many discourses of society forming constructs of power and knowledge." ³⁷ Russell's use of the term *power* in this instance incorporates the meanings attributed to it by Michel Foucault and art historian Norman Bryson who has been deeply influenced by Lacan's theory of the gaze. ³⁸

...Power is a ubiquitous part of all discourse. It is not a fact or concept limited to political life, to individuals and institutions concerned with governing states, to persons leading the 'active life' as distinguished from those leading the 'contemplative life'. Indeed Foucault wanted to understand power in 'its capillary form of existence,' to probe 'the extent to which power seeps into the very grain of individuals...permeates their gestures...what they say, how they learn to live and work with other people.' Norman Bryson...has proposed that power 'will be found in every act of looking... where, in order to recognize the new discursive form that is the image, existing boundaries of discourse... must be overturned...' ³⁹

Power and Prints: "A number of factors made the print media of the Renaissance and Baroque eras a powerful mode of discourse."⁴⁰ What made it powerful was its capacity for replication, wide circulation, and easy individual ownership. Through the wide circulation of similar subject matter, prints promoted the development of gendered stereotypes.

³⁶ See Russell, 20-23

³⁷ Russell, 21

³⁸ See Norman Bryson. Vision and Painting: The Logic of the Gaze (1983) especially pp. 87 -162

³⁹ Russell, p. 20 Presumably Bryson is referring to the discourse of words.

⁴⁰ Russell, p.21

Power and Artists: "Throughout the Renaissance and Baroque Periods, artists increasingly assumed a position of control in relation to the images they were creating. . . . They did not aim solely at reflecting the sensory world in their images. They subjected all parts of the world, animate and inanimate, to their scrutiny and judgement, ordering it, reconstructing it, recreating it."⁴¹ Russell singles out Albrecht Durer as one artist who personifies this new approach to art. She suggests that the way Durer conveyed the visual representation of gender in his work may have occurred quite unconsciously.⁴²

Ostensibly the exhibition is offering a critique of ongoing sexist tendencies in culture (specifically "high culture") through the exploration of historical prints. More profoundly however her thesis raises the contemporary question of the role of historical representations to produce or reproduce gendered subjectivities. While I believe this to be a worthwhile project, Russell's task is fraught with difficulties. First as mentioned above, there is the question of partaking in the ideological construct she wishes to criticize. Secondly, in order to bring forward her claim that patriarchy is the dominant discourse which frames our understanding of these images, Russell must first deconstruct or at least ironically critique two other entrenched discourses (metatexts) associated with the way we perceive these prints: the first is their recent tradition as part of the art historical discourse of attribution and connoisseurship; and the second is their status as sacred and religious images. Russell, as a feminist art historian, is caught in the problematics of her own field's competing discourses and at times, she resorts to taking up a traditional art historical position. With regard to their status as religious objects, her strategy to deconstruct this status is ambivalent. Russell

⁴¹ Russell, p.22

⁴² Russell, 23

acknowledges the religious content of the images in her accompanying museum and catalogue texts, and even submits the images to an overarching religious frame in the title of her exhibition, but her use of this conceptual frame is superficial, not ironic. It is itself a "guise" or a pretext in which to stake out her own position. In her desire to foreground the prints as "a patriarchal discourse", Russell misses the opportunity to explore how some of these images may have contradicted the written and oral commentaries of their day.

(II) REREADING *Eva/Ave*

It is my view that not all of the images in the exhibition exert disciplinary power on the viewer by partaking in a *patriarchal* discourse as Russell defines it: *power over women*. In taking into consideration the religious nature of this imagery, one could expect that much of their content will relate *in some way* to the theological discourse of their time. As we shall see, there is not always the easy slippage between the terms "theological" and "patriarchal" that Russell assumes. For example, not all and indeed not many of the images in the exhibition are self-evidently, i.e. visually sexist. While it must be conceded that the prints were made under a patriarchal social-religious system, that of Christianity, I do not agree that there is a direct transfer of the beliefs which organize social-religious relations and the ideas which produce visual materials. Each case study for this claim must be examined in its own terms. Of more interest for feminist scholarship as Linda Hults has suggested, is to study the variety of ways patriarchal culture surfaced visually⁴³. This suggestion leads me to my second point.

Russell's use of the term *patriarchy* is framed by a *modern* understanding of power relations, primarily that of Foucault's.

⁴³ Linda C. Hults, "Durer's Lucretia" (1991), 205

Patriarchy, as one contemporary feminist theorist has suggested, is not a transhistorical term imparted with universal meaning.⁴⁴ As a system of male dominance, *patriarchy* as a datum, must be studied historically and cross-culturally. The exercise of power within this system must also be studied in the same way. Sandra Lee Bartky, a theorist on the modernization of *patriarchal power*, agrees with Foucault's characterization of power as transformational through time. She describes the modernization of patriarchal power in Foucauldian terms, as "a reversal of the political axis of individualization".⁴⁵ According to this reversal, in older authoritarian systems, power was held and personified by individual rulers; its exercise over a large body of subjects was haphazard and unsystematic. In contrast, the exercise of power in the modern state is dispersed and anonymous, invading the individual's personal life on every level. At the time the prints from *Eva/Ave* were made, especially those from the Reformation era, the countries of Europe were on the threshold of modernity. The devolution of power as defined by Foucault and adopted by Russell would have been in its early stages.

Therefore in considering *patriarchy* as a political datum, we must keep in mind that Russell's characterization of the term is modern, while her employment of it is ahistorical. As we shall see, where Russell's definition of *patriarchy* has some merit is as a sociological datum i.e. as a system of male dominance within familial relationships.

Russell's position on representation as a mode of social discourse assumes that the images in *Eva/Ave* are more or less a seamless reflection of a historical debate on the nature of women in

⁴⁴See Gerda Lerner, The Creation of Patriarchy (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986) Chapter Two: "A Working Hypothesis"

⁴⁵ Sandra Lee Bartky, Femininity and Domination: Studies in the Phenomenology of Oppression, (New York and London: Routledge, 1990) 78.

Renaissance and Baroque Europe. In Russell's view the images form part of this larger historical and continuing discourse. What does she mean by this? First, the images are, at least to some degree, *visual evidence* of this debate. In her catalogue Russell points to various secular and religious texts on the nature of women that were published and circulated during the 15th to 17th centuries as textual examples of this discourse.⁴⁶ According to her view, whether a print from this time period falls into the *Eva* (evil) side of the debate or the *Ave* (good) side of the debate, both representations of women, good or bad, form a visual component of this textual commentary.

While I concur that images contain discursive elements, how these elements relate to the reception of an image depends on the relationships between the image and the context in which the image functions. Depending on this context, these elements may be read as possible "sites of resistance" to the overarching discourse.

Secondly, the prints, as part of "a patriarchal discourse on women which asserts itself as *power over women*" promoted the formation of stereotypes through their active circulation⁴⁷. Russell is making the claim that the social roles and cultural identities of historical women were limited and controlled throughout broad geographical areas through the wide dissemination of images and the ease of reproduction made possible by the new technology of printmaking. If Bartky's theory of patriarchy is correct however, then it is possible to theorize that the impact of patriarchal power on women in each of the geographical areas, and in the different historical periods under consideration would have varied considerably.

⁴⁶Among those mentioned by Russell are Leon Battista Alberti's On the Family, 1441; Juan Luis Vives, Instructions to a Christian Woman, c.1523; and Jacobus Sprenger's and Heindrich Kramer's Malleus Maleficarum, c.1486

⁴⁷Russell, 22

Thirdly, according to Russell, the current social roles and cultural identities of women in our time continue to be influenced by the stereotypes brought forward by these historical representations. With regard to this issue it must be acknowledged that first, no viewer comes to an image as a *tabula rasa*. Rather each viewer meets an image equipped with her/his own personalized cultural frame of understanding complete with her/his own ideological preferences and critiques. Secondly, the capacity of historical imagery to effect contemporary viewers, is mediated by the circumstances of its reception, a topic I will expand upon in chapter four of this thesis.

The question of male authorship of images on women is still, an open one. While there are numerous studies that show that the male viewing process, especially as applied to the tradition of the female nude, is a mode of domination and control⁴⁸, I am not convinced that all images of women by men, including nudes can be treated as evidence of a *patriarchal* discourse in the sense that Russell defines it. Surely how the subject matter is conveyed visually including the choice of media, the filter of the artist's personality (for example: what is his personal involvement with the theme), and the conceptual frame (for example: a devotional book, a museum) through which the representation is presented and read by the viewer are all factors to be interpreted in this complex relationship.

What we can state with certainty is that images of women by men are representations of female figures as seen through the lens of a male imagination.⁴⁹ I suggest it is highly possible in what I will call

⁴⁸In particular see Chapter 3 in Berger's Ways of Seeing (1972) For a more recent survey of images of women by men see Georges Duby's essay in Images de Femmes (Paris: Plon, 1992) 8-33. According to Duby, men create three female types or major themes on women in representation. They are: 1) the beloved; 2) the mother -as source of female power; and 3) the indispensable assistant who is submissive to male authority.

⁴⁹I am acknowledging here that each male artist's imagination will be different. I do not wish to challenge such an undifferentiated category as *patriarchy* only to replace it with another one: *imagination*

cross-gendered representations (images of one gender made by the other) that the attributes of "femaleness" or "maleness" which come to be represented visually, are always exaggerated (note, this is different from being idealized) by the artist. There may be a host of explanations to account for this rendering: it may be intentional or it may be because of the artist's lack of psychological experience as the 'Other'. Artistic intent is rarely easy to discern let alone prove. What is important is the recognition that there is no homogeneous factor to account for how figures come to be coded with culturally-defined gendered attributes. Such an undifferentiated category as *patriarchal* applied to imagery, as feminist art historian Linda Hults has suggested, "reduces them all to a kind of sexist sameness".⁵⁰

For example, on the subject matter of "Eve", where artist Hans Baldung Grien conveyed his figure as highly lustful, the resulting *exaggerated* figure is depicted as a caricature (see figure 10). In the example of revered or holy subject matter such as "The Virgin Mary", to whom the artist Albrecht Durer was personally devoted, the resulting *exaggerated* figure is a highly respected "portrait" (see figure 4).⁵¹ In both cases, *neither figure is an authentic representation of an actual woman.*

What I wish to emphasize here is not the theory of images of women by men as simply male fantasy (again a reductive interpretation) but rather that all representations of female and male figures exist as part of a larger artistic scheme of *visual rhetoric*⁵² that must be taken into account before declaring all female figuration by male artists as evidence of male sexism.

⁵⁰ Linda C. Hults, "Durer's Lucretia: Speaking the Silence of Women" in Signs, Vol 16, No. 2, 205

⁵¹ By portrait I mean that the image contains a visual rhetoric of dignity and realism.

⁵² See my section on analytical theory in this chapter. See also Appendix A for an explanation of this term.

(III) METHODOLOGY

Treating the *Eva/Ave* exhibit as a case study,⁵³ I will examine the two claims made by art historian H. Diane Russell about these images, namely:

- 1) that the images may be seen as part of a patriarchal discourse on women; and
- 2) that this discourse asserts itself as *power over women*.

(A) THE DATA:

To examine the two claims made by Russell, I have selected two samples of prints from *Eva/Ave* to be analyzed. Given the historical context available for study (set by the time period in which the prints were made) is quite wide, I have chosen images mainly from 16th century Germany given the more than half of the images in *Eva/Ave* were made there shortly before or after the Reformation.⁵⁴ In considering Russell's first claim, I have selected a sample of six prints to determine if their visual content challenged or reinforced the particular theological commentary of the early Reformation on women as it relates to the topics of women and sin, the question of celibacy and marriage, and motherhood, patriarchy and the family. To accomplish this task, I will analyze and compare the images to excerpts of Reformation commentary. I will augment this commentary by referencing Catholic discourse through secondary sources. The first sample of images are as follows:

⁵³ "Case Study is an especially appropriate method when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident and for opening a new field of study or breaking new ground." Tom Rankin, Unions and the Emerging Paradigm of Organization: The Case of E.C.W.U. Local 800. PhD Thesis, University of Pennsylvania 1986.

⁵⁴ The prints from *Eva/Ave* were chosen from a historical period of more than two hundred years and were produced by artists from six different European countries. With the exception of Italy and France, they were all made in Northern Europe. German prints, representing 86 of the total 152 catalogued, dominate the exhibition.

Women and Sin:

1) "Adam and Eve" (engraving) dated 1504, German. Artist: Albrecht Durer

2) "Adam and Eve" (woodcut) 1516/1519, Netherlands. Artist: Lucas van Leyden

Celibacy and Marriage:

3) "The Virgin Enthroned with Eighteen Holy Women" (metal cut) c1480/1490, German. Anonymous or Master with the Mountain-Like Clouds

4) "The Marriage of Adam and Eve" (engraving) 1540/1555, French. Artist: Jean Duvet [figure 14]

Motherhood, Matriarchy and the Sacred Imaged as a Man

5) "Saint Anne and the Virgin with the Child" (woodcut) c1513, German. Artist: Lucas Cranach the Elder [figure 15]

6) "The Holy Kinship" (woodcut) c1509, German. Artist: Lucas Cranach the Elder [figure 16]

In considering Russell's second claim I have selected a sample of ten images which may be characterized as devotional or doctrinal.⁵⁵

They are as follows:

Devotional/Sacred Images:

1) "The Virgin and Child in a Rosary" (woodcut) c 1490, French. Anonymous

2) "The Lamentation" (woodcut) c1490, German. Anonymous

⁵⁵ I will give definitions of these categories and a rationale for selecting these images in chapter two.

- 3) "Saint Anne and the Virgin with the Child" (woodcut) c1513,
German. Artist: Lucas Cranach the Elder
- 4) "The Virgin with the Swaddled Child" (engraving) dated 1520,
German. Artist: Albrecht Durer
- 5) "The Beautiful Virgin of Regensburg" (woodcut) c1519/20
German. Artist: Albrecht Altdorfer

Doctrinal Images:

- 1) "Triumph of the Virgin" (Engraving) c1480/90, German.
Artist: Martin Schongauer
- 2) "The Birth of the Virgin" (woodcut) c1503/4, German.
Artist: Albrecht Durer
- 3) "The Virgin and the Child with the Monkey" (engraving) c. 1498,
German. Artist: Albrecht Durer
- 4) "Adam and Eve" (engraving) dated 1504, German. Artist: Albrecht
Durer
- 5) "Adam and Eve" (woodcut) dated 1511, German. Artist: Hans
Baldung Grien.

I will examine Russell's second claim by considering the following questions in relation to the analysis of the above images:

- 1) Do these images exercise disciplinary power? If so, what is the nature of that discipline and, to whom is it addressed?
- 2) How does the representational strategy of the image contribute to viewer response?
- 3) How could the discursive activity of the beholder affect viewer response?
- 4) How does the environmental context in which the image functions contribute to the reception and response to the image?

Flowing out of this examination, I will discuss the exhibition within the museum setting as a mode of meaning.

(B) ANALYTICAL THEORY: Viewer-Response Theory

This analysis is a type of visual theory adapted from the contemporary analysis of literary texts. The most successful enunciation and application of this theory to date may be found in the text, Reading Rembrandt: Beyond the Word Image Opposition (1991) by Mieke Bal. Bal has developed a modified theory of semiotics first used in her analysis of texts which included passages from the *Old Testament*. In applying her categories to interpret visual art, she takes the position that images (and texts) do not contain fixed predetermined meanings given that the *event* of their reception in time continually changes and given that viewers (including scholars) always bring their own cultural frames of understanding to these materials.⁵⁶ What delimits meaning from becoming purely subjective and idiosyncratic according to Bal is that image/response events occur in specific circumstances and according to culturally valid conventions described as codes. It is the selection and deployment of these codes or rules by the viewer/interpreter which produces "specific interpretive behaviour".⁵⁷

One of her categories which is particularly useful for image interpretation is the notion of *rhetoric*. Traditionally understood as a verbal device, Bal uses it as a way of analyzing representational strategies in imagery. Bal makes the claim that the device of rhetoric is as visual as it is verbal. According to her, rhetoric as a visual device shapes meaning by reinscribing⁵⁸ the attitudes

⁵⁶ I strongly agree with this position.

⁵⁷ The above is a summary of pages 12-15 of Mieke Bal's. Reading Rembrandt (1991).

⁵⁸ I take issue with the word "reinscribing" here since it conveys the meaning of a simple transfer of attitudes from ideas to visual concepts. However, *how* an artist reinscribes cultural attitudes or ideas is critical to this notion since the artist may

towards the subject matter dominant in a particular culture⁵⁹ back into the actual visual rendering of the figures or scenes in images. It is this visual rhetoric of the image which assists in structuring the response of the viewer not only to the subject matter in the image but to the overall issue in real life.⁶⁰ This visual understanding of rhetoric is one way of explaining how disciplinary power may function in imagery.

What is of particular interest about Dr. Bal's theory is her focus on what she calls the "prefiguring power of the beholder". She argues that "the beholder's discursive activity formulates, and thus prefigures [the reception of] the art."⁶¹ This prefiguring would hold true for the art scholar, the devotee who worships the image, or the uninformed viewer who dismisses art as incomprehensible.

Her theory, while critiquing iconography as an art historical method which sometimes stops short of interpreting the image in relation to its "pre-text, cotext, and context", acknowledges the value of this method when it is used as a mode of reading. Bal argues that iconographers who stop before interpretation have not properly understood iconography as a verbal mode of reading.⁶²

chose from a variety of stances to depict a particular attitude or idea. Russell suggests in her section on *power and artists* that this process happens unconsciously. While this may be partially true, I suggest it is not a universally valid explanation.

⁵⁹ This reinscription is clearly filtered through the personality of the artist as Linda C. Hult's demonstrates in the variety of visual portrayals of Lucretia produced by early 16th century Germany artists. See Linda C. Hult's, "Durer's Lucretia", 1991

⁶⁰ The above is a summary of pages 65-69 of Reading Rembrandt (1991)

⁶¹ Bal, 41

⁶² Bal, 214.

I will use elements of this theory to analyze both individual images from *Eva/Ave* and the exhibition *qua* exhibition as a mode of meaning.⁶³

(C) INTERPRETATION STRATEGY

Part of Bal's suggested method when working with visual material as "evidence"⁶⁴ in critical analyses "is a tight solidarity between knowledge of the other and self-knowledge, the latter in the shape of self-reflection and subsequent critique."⁶⁵ The viewer/interpreter should therefore acknowledge his/her own subject position as part of any reading strategy.

I will therefore offer a brief summary of what I see as my "vested interest" in the study of this material. First, as someone who makes art, I find it difficult to accept the implication of Russell's thesis - that artists are so colonized by the ideologies of their day, they uncritically reproduce them in their images.⁶⁶ Most artists (financially successful or not) live on the ideological margins of their culture partly by choice but partly because it is the place that culture assigns to them. In any military round up of dissidents, artists and intellectuals because of their critical natures are often the first to disappear.

While the vocation of visual artist would have had a much higher status in Renaissance European culture than that currently "enjoyed"

⁶³Readers who would like a more detailed description of this theory may turn to the book cited above. For the purposes of my study, I have summarized a number of Bal's key concepts in Appendix A at the end of this thesis.

⁶⁴I am putting this word in quotation marks since I will discuss the problem of evidence in the last chapter of this thesis.

⁶⁵Mieke Bal. "Politics of Citation" p. 26

⁶⁶On this topic in the historical context of Reformation Germany, I would refer the reader to Linda C. Hult's article, "Durer's Lucretia" (1991).

by contemporary artists in North America, the emergence of the Reformation downgraded this status in at least some parts of northern Europe. That northern European artists could no longer depend on the church as a patron and were forced to look for new subject matter and new clients, to put bread on their tables is a direct result of the Protestant Reformation.⁶⁷

Secondly, although I was raised a Christian, I was not raised in a faith where images or rituals were part of regular worship. I have since found imagery and ritual as part of worship a powerful and moving experience even though I consider myself a post-Christian. I have also found imagery in museums to effect a similar response. Theologians speak of the power of imagery as eschatological; psychoanalysts as psychological; and cultural theorists as disciplinary (i.e. political).

Summary

In this chapter I have outlined the case study for the examination of an application of the theory of the disciplinary power of imagery. I have described H. Diane Russell's exhibition, her thesis, its contradictions, and my method for testing her claims through a rereading of sample images and a comparison of images with period texts. I have described the theory I will use in my analysis and offered a brief declaration of my own personal interest in this study as part of my investigative method. In the next chapter, I will focus on the first sample of images to be analyzed although I will reverse the order from that described in my *data* section and begin with the subject of devotional and doctrinal images.

⁶⁷See: Carl C. Christensen, Art and the Reformation in Germany, (1979)

2 SAMPLE ONE: DEVOTIONAL AND DOCTRINAL IMAGES

In this chapter I will examine Russell's claim that the discourse in these images asserts itself as *power over women*. As stated previously, I will study this claim by considering the following questions in relation to the analysis of the sample images:

- 1) Do these images exercise disciplinary power? If so, what is the nature of that discipline and, to whom is it addressed?
- 2) How does the representational strategy of the image contribute to viewer response?
- 3) How could the discursive activity or desire of the beholder effect viewer response?
- 4) How does the overarching conceptual frame in which the image functions contribute to the reception and response to the image?

In this analysis I will separate a sample of prints into two categories according to their historical function: the first according to their function as devotional prints; and the second according to their function as doctrinal images. As I hope to demonstrate, this basic distinction is necessary in any discussion of power and religious images.

While I will address the first three questions of my analysis to each image, I will address the fourth question to each group of images in the last section of this chapter where I draw my conclusions about devotional and doctrinal images in relation to Russell's claim.

(I) RELIGIOUS IMAGERY AND POWER:

In contemporary research on religious imagery we find that at least

two types of power are described as associated with these images.⁶⁸ So far we have only looked at the notion of disciplinary power which understands art not only as a vehicle for pleasure and reflection, but also as a site of political power and control. One should recall that in my introduction the disciplinary power of imagery was defined as the potential in imagery to structure and limit the response of the viewer. The second type of power associated with religious art is based on a perception of this imagery as a theological discourse or revelatory event.⁶⁹

(A) IMAGERY AND TRANSFORMATIVE OR ESCHATOLOGICAL POWER

"Transformative" or "eschatological" power, that is the potential of imagery to transport or transform the viewer/believer in some way is usually ascribed to images considered to be sacred or which invoke the sacred. (Eliade, 1985; Wedell, 1992; Adams, 1992; Orenstein, 1991; Gadon, 1989) Mircea Eliade whose definition of the sacred has dominated western thought on this subject describes it as "the real *par excellence*".⁷⁰ According to Eliade, the sacred "transcends this world [but] a manifestation of the sacred is always a revelation of *being*."⁷¹

Both concepts of disciplinary and transformative power understand imagery to be functional, that is to engage in interactive processes with viewers. Disciplinary power however suggests a closing down of viewer response while transformative power suggests an opening up of response.

⁶⁸For a thorough and contemporary discussion of this topic see David Freedberg's, The Power of Images: Studies in the History and Theory of Response, 1989

⁶⁹ The work does not necessarily have to depict any type of sectarian belief in order to be considered in this way.

⁷⁰Mircea Eliade. "Sacred Architecture and Symbolism" in Symbolism, the Sacred, and the Arts. Ed. Diane Apostolos-Cappadona (New York: Crossroad, 1986) 107

⁷¹ Eliade, "Sacred Architecture and Symbolism" 107

(II) DEVOTIONAL AND DOCTRINAL IMAGERY

I would like to offer the following definitions⁷² for the purposes of establishing two basic categories of religious imagery according to their function. My use of the term transcendent in the following definitions and subsequent interpretation of images is to provide a generic name for the various symbols of the Christian God and saints expressed in imagery, text, and thought.

Devotional Image: an image which points to the transcendent for a devotee. Typically, it is thought to be highly expressive but lacking in a narrative content⁷³. The image may be perceived by the beholder as a site where transcendent power ruptures ordinary experience. Devotional images are frequently used as part of cult worship or in private devotional practice and are usually considered sacred for their strong association with eschatological power.

Doctrinal Image: an image which expresses the devotee's understanding of his/her religious beliefs. This image may be highly iconographic and narrative. While it may also be visually expressive, its primary purpose is to address and instruct the devotee in an article of faith or to locate the devotee in a cosmological structure. While the image may exert power for the beholder, it is not usually associated with ecstatic response.

Given the specific examples of both types of religious prints were made by Christian artists from Northern Europe⁷⁴, between 1480 and

⁷² These definitions are my own based on my work with religious images, my discussions with Professor Norman Page, Department of Religious Studies, University of Ottawa, and my reading on image theory.

⁷³ This view is based on a very narrow definition of the term narrative. As I have already stated, all images contain discursive elements. These elements may be imported into the image by the smallest visual detail. It is this importation process that has been overlooked in the above definition.

⁷⁴ The exception to this geographical characterization is an anonymous print from France, *The Virgin and Child in a Rosary* c 1490 (see figure 1).

1520, the notion of the transcendent depicted in these types will reflect Catholic and early Protestant thought about the transcendent. The prints show images of angels, God the Father, Jesus, his mother Mary, her family, Joseph, the saints and the Holy Trinity. Who is figured, in what combinations, as well as the glances or looks and actions of the figures, will provide some indication as to how to answer the above questions. Since eight out of the ten prints have the Virgin as their primary subject matter, we will especially look to her iconography for changes in the representational strategy between devotional and doctrinal imagery. These changes will assist us in understanding how the figuration of Mary contributes to the perception of power in the image and on viewer response.

(A) DEVOTIONAL/SACRED IMAGES

The images I have grouped under the "devotional/sacred" category have been chosen for the strong historical evidence of their function as devotional prints.⁷⁵ While the criteria of historical evidence is also applicable for two of the doctrinal images⁷⁶, the remainder were chosen based on their representational suitability to the above definition.

The following is a list of the sample of prints by title, year, country of origin and artist (if known):

Devotional/Sacred Images: Sample

- 1) "The Virgin and Child in a Rosary" (woodcut) c 1490,
French. Anonymous *[figure 1]*
- 2) "The Lamentation" (woodcut) c1490, German. Anonymous
[figure 2]

⁷⁵ See Russell, 96-97, 103

⁷⁶ Namely the *Triumph of the Virgin* and *The Birth of the Virgin*.

- 3) "Saint Anne and the Virgin with the Child" (woodcut) c1513,
German. Artist: Lucas Cranach the Elder [figure 3]
- 4) "The Virgin with the Swaddled Child" (engraving) dated 1520,
German. Artist: Albrecht Durer [figure 4]
- 5) "The Beautiful Virgin of Regensburg" (woodcut) c1519/20
German. Artist: Albrecht Altdorfer [figure 5]

The Virgin and Child in a Rosary [figure 1]

According to Russell, the print, discovered pasted onto the lid of strong box, was associated with the devotion of the rosary.⁷⁷ In this image, the Virgin is depicted in a number of symbolic ways. As Queen of Heaven, as the Mother of God, as the rose without thorn, as the apocalyptic woman of the Book of Revelations, her figuration in this print is not as a representative within any particular narrative but rather as a vehicle for devotion. She and the Christ Child are visually depicted as other worldly given their visual conflation with the sun and moon. Their sideways glance away from the viewer suggests the different nature of their being and possibly the potential lethal power of their direct gaze. While this image is clearly identified with the devotion of the rosary, I suggest that any discipline imposed by the print would be elicited by the beholder's prior knowledge of the appropriate format of recitations and meditations associated with the ritual of the rosary itself rather than by anything intrinsic to the print. This prior knowledge is what Bal would identify as the *discursive activity* of the beholder which may act to formulate and prefigure the image.⁷⁸ Visually, the print depicts a rhetoric of magic through its emphasis on the other worldliness of the Virgin and Child as the central focus of the image. In this print, the Virgin is imaged as the central symbol of

⁷⁷ Russell, 96

⁷⁸Bal, 41



The Virgin and Child in a Rosary c1490, Anonymous

figure 1
[cat. 47]

transformational power for either male or female believers. The representational strategy which depicts the Virgin as the centre of magical power visually contradicts Russell's characterization of power as *power over women*. This image does not exert disciplinary power but rather suggests an opening up of response.

The Lamentation [figure 2]

This image was part of a travelling altarpiece and belonged to Apollonia von Freyberg, a German nun.⁷⁹ Like the print discussed above, its visualization is more symbolic than narrative. The visual placement of the articles of Christ's beating and crucifixion including the crown of thorns, the spear and sponge, and the column and switches around the central characters allows the viewer to approach the events surrounding His death in a visually unsystematic manner thus allowing for maximum viewer flexibility in recalling the story's events. The broken body of Christ in the foreground seems itself to be an object of devotion. The three different poses of the mourners visually suggest to the viewer the proper response to the subject of the Lamentation.

The figure of Mary, although central to the image, is no larger than St. John and St. Magdalene, the other two mourners figured on either side of her. While bereaved, she does not show the distress of the other two on her face. In this print the transcendent, in the form of God the Son is depicted by the ultimate sign of humanness – death. The image portrays the central paradox of Christianity -- that God became human and died. The print therefore becomes a focus for the believer's faith, identification, and prayer.

While the print exerts disciplinary power on the viewer to effect the proper response to the tragedy of Christ's death, thus constructing the male or female viewer as a fellow mourner, the representational strategy of the print also allows for viewer flexibility in recalling

⁷⁹ Russell, 103



The Lamentation

c.1450, Anonymous

(figure 2)

[cat. 54]

and meditating on the events leading up to Christ's death. The discursive activity of the beholder in the form of prior knowledge of the narrative of the crucifixion could intensify viewer response through the active process of filling in the details of the narrative. The viewer therefore becomes an active agent in the construction of the visual narrative.

Russell's characterization of power as *power over women* does not apply in this case given that the discipline exercised in the image would apply equally to men or women. Further the active agency of the beholder may be described as a response which allows for viewer-empowerment.

Saint Anne and the Virgin with the Child [figure 3]

With this image, we have arrived at the most problematic print included in the *Eva/Ave* exhibition. The print very pointedly expresses the contemporary issue in many academic disciplines of textual versus visual authority. It also chrystalizes the problem of referring to imagery as a discourse without some important qualifications. While the title of the print identifies the woman on the left as Saint Anne, the Virgin's legendary mother, the iconography of the print does not support this identification. If the woman on the left is Saint Anne, and the child is Jesus, as the title would lead us to believe, then whose baby is the pregnant Virgin expecting? It is more likely that the woman on the left is Mary's cousin, Elizabeth, and that the subject depicts the story of *The Visitation* from the gospel of *St. Luke*.⁸⁰ Russell has followed Hollstein (1954) in identifying the print as *Saint Anne and the Virgin with the Child*. Accordingly, I will read the print as it has been historically catalogued up to and including *Eva/Ave*. I will then give a second reading of the print according to the visual information of the image in relation to the text from *St. Luke*. I will save my "intertextual" reading of this print to Cranach's paintings of the

⁸⁰This misidentification was first suggested to me by Dr. R. Lapointe of the Religious Studies Dept., University of Ottawa.



Saint Anne and the Virgin with the Child (1512, L. Cranach

(figure 3)
[cat. 52]

22a

"Virgin with the Child and Saint Anne" as catalogued in Friedlander and Rosenberg (1978) for my conclusion.

According to Russell, the cult of St. Anne was at its peak in the 15th century and continued into the middle of the 16th century.⁸¹ Given the strength of St. Anne's cult, the date of this image (c1513), and the title, it is possible as Russell suggests, that it was used as a devotional image.

According to the title of the print we have the figures of Mary and her mother Anne holding a rather plump baby Jesus between them. They are surrounded by heads of babies with wings in the clouds (putti) all of which is presided over by God the Father, identified by the globe, crown and white hair, who along with the Holy Spirit symbolized by the dove, radiate from above down onto the scene of the three figures. Given that St. Anne was known as the patron saint of married women, it is my suggestion, that the print may have been either a devotional image for pregnant women in labour praying for a successful birth, or for women who wished to become pregnant.⁸² The roundness and size of Mary's womb along with the repetition of baby's heads in the clouds all suggest the theme of desired fertility.

There is yet another way to read this image *within its present title* which suggests a doctrinal function. In order to accept the following reading the woman on the left does not necessarily have to be identified as Saint Anne though admittedly the following reading becomes weaker if we accept the woman on the left as someone else. Following the above argument, the question becomes: Who is constructing this desire for fertility? I suggest it is possible that

⁸¹ Russell, 86

⁸²We know that in the late middle ages, St. Anne's cultural role was linked to the belief of her miraculous conception of Mary in old age. Thus she was perceived as promoting fertility, and as an intercessor for married women and mothers. See Kathleen Ashley and Pamela Sheingorn, Interpreting Cultural Symbols: St. Anne in Late Medieval Society (1990) 48-57.

the print is instructing or indoctrinating the female viewer in the virtues of motherhood. Through the depiction of ideal mothers in the figures of Anne(?) and Mary, and through the repetition of babies in the figure of the infant Jesus, the cherub heads in the clouds, and the enlarged size of Mary's womb emphasizing her status as *mother* and not as the Virgin, the viewer is bombarded with the message of motherhood as the proper religious path for women. This way of reading the image suggests a teaching consistent with Protestantism for women as found in Luther's writings⁸³. The discipline exercised within this image would also be consistent with Russell's characterization of power as: *power over women*. A comparison of this image with the Protestant commentary on the proper role for women will be undertaken in the next chapter.

Given the present title, these readings suggest for this print, an example of a devotional image which is also the potential site for disciplinary power on the viewer. The discipline exorcized by the image, while relating to a Protestant teaching on women, also agrees with Russell's characterization of power as *power over women*. If either of the above readings of this image are correct, then the gender as well as the purpose of the beholder would play an important role in determining the print's function as a devotional image or doctrinal image.⁸⁴

As a functioning devotional image, I suggest that the address is not so much to the viewer, at least not initially, as it is from the beholder to the deity or saint. As such, the print demonstrates its potential for transformational power as perceived and used by the devotee. Understood in this way the image could be seen to *empower the beholder*.

⁸³ See: Allison P. Coudert's, "The Myth of the Improved Status of Protestant Women: The Case of the Witchcraze". 80

⁸⁴ This is not to suggest that men did not pray for offspring as well.

St. Elizabeth and the Virgin with John the Baptist (The Visitation)
[figure 3]

This reading is based on the iconography in Cranach's print and on the passage in the gospel of Luke 1:39-80 which describes the events prior to and around the birth of John the Baptist, a child who, according to Luke 1: 15, "even before his birth he will be filled with the Holy Spirit".

In this print we have a young woman on our right who is clearly with child as conveyed through the illusion of volume around her mid-body. If this woman is correctly identified as Mary, then the child is not Jesus but John the Baptist. The child does not reach for "Mary" but to the woman on his left. The upper torso of his body twists away from the young woman whose left hand is outstretched under his legs in a gesture of handing him to the older woman who reaches for him. That the woman on the left is Elisabeth, the child's mother, and not Anne is further suggested visually by the barren field the two figures stand upon. Elisabeth, wife of temple priest Zachariah, was known according to the author of Luke, to be barren and getting on in years when the angel Gabriel appeared to Zachariah in the temple to announce the future birth of a special son who would "make ready a people prepared for the Lord."⁸⁵

The story of *The Visitation*, the meeting between Mary and her kinswoman Elizabeth, is recounted in the first chapter of Luke. It was the subject of many paintings made in the Renaissance including those by Northern painters, Rogier van der Weyden (1399/1400-1464) and Master of the Life of Mary, a German painter active from 1463-1490, who is thought to have been influenced by van der Weyden. Oddly enough, the subject of *The Visitation* does not seem to have been as popular with Northern painters, as it was in the south. It is not taken up by them as a subject again until Rembrandt and

⁸⁵This part of the story is described in Luke 1: 5-24. The actual quotation is from Luke 1:17. The story of the foretelling of John the Baptist is followed by and similar to the story of the Annunciation, Luke 1:26-38.

Rubens paint their interpretations almost 200 years after the Master of the Life of Mary. That is, unless the subject of Cranach's print, and as we shall see in my conclusion, a painting as well, can be identified as I have suggested.

According to the story of *The Visitation*, Mary sets out for "a Judean town in the hill country" [Luke 1:39]⁸⁶ right after her meeting with the angel Gabriel. This journey took place approximately six months after Elizabeth's conception. In this town, Mary enters the house of Elizabeth and Zechariah. According to the account, when Elizabeth hears Mary's greeting, her child leaps in her womb [Luke 1:41]. Elizabeth blesses Mary and the fruit of her womb, calling Mary, the "mother of my Lord". [Luke 1:43] According to the account Mary stays with Elizabeth for about three months before returning to Nazareth. While it is not clear from the text if Mary was present at John the Baptist's birth, the age of Cranach's baby in figure 3 harmonizes with the scripture's account of John the Baptist as roughly six months older than Jesus.

Given the changes in identification, I would suggest the image may still be read as a devotional print for barren women hoping to become pregnant or for pregnant women hopeful of a safe delivery. Perhaps even more so. As a barren woman considered to be beyond the age of childbearing, Elizabeth is 'looked upon' by God with favour and her prayer for a child is answered. Not only does she conceive a child, the child will be special: "a prophet of the Most High;" who "will go before the Lord to prepare his ways." [Luke 1:76] As a Virgin, Mary's conception is also perceived as outside of the realm of the possible. Looking at these two women, who became pregnant outside this realm of the seemingly possible, a 16th century woman who wished to have children but for some reason could not, might find comfort and/or strength in the visual message of this print.

⁸⁶Cranach's landscape in figure 3, while serving as a metaphor for barrenness, could also be interpreted as "hill country".

As a devotional image, again I suggest that the address is not so much to the viewer, as it is from the beholder to the deity or saint. Read as *The Visitation*, the print still demonstrates its potential for transformational power as perceived and used by the devotee. Perceived in this way the image could still be seen to *empower the beholder*.

Read as *The Visitation*, the print has less sway as a doctrinal image. God the Father and the surrounding cherubim make sense as part of the visual rhetoric of a supernatural event that takes place when Mary greets Elizabeth and everyone is filled with the Holy Spirit according to the gospel account.

The Virgin with the Swaddled Child [figure 4]

Durer, who was personally devoted to the Virgin throughout his life has depicted her here as a simple German woman with her baby. The style of her hair, the fleshy face and fingers all suggest humility and the existence of someone who works with her hands. While she is depicted as a mother, Mary is not idealized. The baby is also presented humbly wrapped in the manner that would have been common for young infants in Durer's time.

Of note as a visual reference to the transcendent is the difference in shapes of the two luminous nimbi encircling the heads of Mary and Jesus. While both connote glorification or deification, his has a special cross shape. They are set against the darkness of the background. This graphic rendering gives the print a strong dramatic quality which suggests transformational power is present in these figures. As discussed in the definition of a devotional image, the print lacks a strong narrative context which might suggest its use as a personal devotional image. While Mary and the baby have been imaged outdoors, that is publicly, her cast down eyes and the cover of nighttime suggest privacy.

There is no eye contact with the viewer in this print, nor is there a strong doctrinal program. The image is quite self contained and the



The Virgin with the Christ Child

1520, 1. 1. 1. 1.

(Figure 1)

[cat. 51]

436

figures are depicted as unaware of any viewer. We may conclude that there is no discipline involved in the representational strategy of this print that would limit or structure the role of the viewer so that Russell's characterization of power as *power over women* would not apply in this case.

Given that the image was made in 1520, when support for the saints was waning in Protestant Germany, the beholder's orientation to the new faith, would largely determine the view of whether this image was sacred or not.

The Beautiful Virgin of Regensburg [figure 5]

This print was derived from a painting that graced a pilgrimage site in Germany dedicated to the Virgin. The type was based on the famous Santa Maria Maggiore in Rome and according to David Freedberg, was one of a number of votive images devoted to the Virgin at Regensburg.⁸⁷ This particular representation of Mary was perceived by historical beholders as having the same power as its miraculous prototype in Rome. The votive image is somewhat different from other devotional/sacred images since its function is to represent a type of offering to the deity by the devotee.. This function is not so much to create an effect on the devotee, at least not initially, but rather to effect a response from the deity. These offerings are usually made by pilgrims in the hope of being cured or in thanks for a cure from sickness. In the case of this image, the print is being used as a vehicle to empower the beholder.

The print is of interest to our discussion of the religious frame Russell uses for the exhibition since it reflects her concern with the creation of female stereotypes through imagery. The print is an example of Russell's commentary on the power of prints to foster the development of gendered stereotypes through the wide circulation of similar subject matter. The print shows how the

⁸⁷ Freedberg, 141-142



cat. 3

The Beautiful Virgin of Rügenberg

1511-1512
A. H. B. 100

5/11

(Huguenot)
[1511-1512]

visual rendering of Mary as pure, beautiful and good in southern European culture spread northward into Germany only to become an image that was repeatedly made and circulated by German printmakers. The inscription below the image repeated three times translates: "Of perfect beauty are you, my love, and there is no blemish in you. Ave Maria"⁸⁸

Mary is dressed in fine garments as would be appropriate to a woman of the upper classes. Although Mary is looking outwards, her look is not directed to the viewer but to our left shoulder. Her head is bent as though listening to the voice of the small child while looking up at something that has caught her attention. From her finery and her position in the arch she has the pose of someone in a public role, aware of herself being seen.

While this image may have contributed to the spread of female stereotypes in Renaissance culture, we cannot conclude that the image qua image exerts disciplinary power over the viewer. Historically, its function assumes the position of the beholder as believer and as a votive image, it is perceived by the beholder as a vehicle to empower him/herself.

(B) DOCTRINAL IMAGES

To recall the definition of a doctrinal image given at the beginning of this chapter, we said that it is an image which expresses the devotee's understanding of his/her religious beliefs. This image may be highly iconographic and narrative. It may also be visually expressive but its primary purpose is to address and instruct the devotee in an article of faith or locate the devotee in a cosmological structure. While the image may exert power for the beholder, it is not usually associated with ecstatic response. As stated previously, the criteria of historical evidence is applicable for two of the

⁸⁸Russell 102

doctrinal images discussed below: "Triumph of the Virgin"; and "The Birth of the Virgin".⁸⁹ The remainder were chosen based on their representational suitability to the above definition.

One might expect that Russell's claim of power as *power over women* would be strongest for this type of imagery given its pedagogical function. Let us examine the following five prints to determine if this assumption is correct.

Doctrinal Images: Sample

- 1) "Triumph of the Virgin" (Engraving) c1480/90, German.
Artist: Martin Schongauer [figure 6]
- 2) "The Birth of the Virgin" (woodcut) c1503/4, German.
Artist: Albrecht Durer [figure 7]
- 3) "The Virgin and the Child with the Monkey" (engraving) c. 1498,
German. Artist: Albrecht Durer [figure 8]
- 4) "Adam and Eve" (engraving) dated 1504, German. Artist: Albrecht
Durer [figure 9]
- 5) "Adam and Eve" (woodcut) dated 1511, German. Artist: Hans
Baldung Grien [figure 10]

Triumph of the Virgin (Mary Ecclesia) [figure 6]

This print is of interest for its placement of Mary, a human, in a symmetrical position to that of her son as Queen and King of the court of Heaven. Although Christ has a divine status that Mary does not share, the artist has chosen to demarcate that status using only

⁸⁹ The "Triumph" image is typical of those found on portals of Gothic cathedrals and is part of medieval visual culture where the figure of Mary was often used to express Christian doctrine. For more information on Mary's role in medieval visual culture, see Michael Camille's The Gothic Idol (1989) *The Birth of the Virgin* was part of Durer's series, *The Life of the Virgin* published as a book along with explanatory texts in 1511.



Triumph of the Virgin (Mary Eckhard) Hans Baldung Grien

(Figure 6)

1502

a subtle touch. Both are crowned, a symbol of victory over death. Christ's different status from Mary is suggested in his more intricate crown with its triplicate points suggesting an ecclesiastical reference, while Mary's crown is more appropriate to a royal consort. the Holy Trinity. Both wear royal robes with extravagant drapery. Both are depicted as youthful and in the prime of health. No signs of His crucifixion are visible on Christ's hands or feet. Both have similar sized halos although Mary's contains an extra inner circle of three lines. She prays while Christ makes the sign of the blessing with his right hand and holds the globe associated with God the Father in his left. The globe symbolizing power, is an emblem of Christ's sovereignty when placed in His hands.⁹⁰ Mary's eyes are cast down which suggests her sexual purity and chastity. Neither Mary nor Christ engage the viewer with their eyes which suggests the difference of their other worldly status. Only the middle angel in the archivolt directly behind them engages the viewer suggesting that an extended gaze at Mary or Christ by the beholder is not invited or proper.

While Mary does not hold the ultimate symbol of power, the globe, the visual rhetoric of symmetry in this image emphasizes her place as an equal to that of Christ's.

While the name of this image emphasizes the Virgin, it is clearly a triumph type for both her and Christ. As a doctrinal image, the print as a whole reads as an allegory, common to late medieval visual culture, for the triumph of the Church and Christianity in this world and the next. While there is an invisible line drawn between the status of the two divine figures and that of the devotee in the visual construction of the beholder as "royal" subject, the viewer, in response to this doctrinal image, is able to locate him or herself in the cosmological structure of 15th century Christianity as someone who is saved and who will also triumph over death. The teaching

⁹⁰George Ferguson, Signs and Symbols in Christian Art (1959) 108

involved with this print would not exert discipline on the viewer so much as have the effect of reassurance and spiritual location for either male or female devotees.

Russell's claim of power as *power over women* has some merit in this image given that Mary does not hold the key symbol of power. However, this deficiency is partially balanced by the visual mirroring of Mary with Christ as an equal.

The Birth of the Virgin [figure 7]

At the time this print was made, the immaculate conception, while a topic of intense debate, had not yet been made a doctrine of the Catholic Church. The artist, Albrecht Durer, was personally devoted to the Virgin and made many prints of her during his lifetime. In the lower section of the image which shows a high effect of realism, Durer has created what seems to be a documentary image of the early 16th century. The Virgin is depicted here as the baby in the lower right hand corner about to be bathed by a midwife. The busy scene surrounding the event of her birth is clearly an earthly one, in which the artist seems to pay tribute to the importance of this type of work carried out by women. In this scene neither the Virgin nor her mother, shown in bed on the middle right hand side of the print, have primary visual importance. Without the supernatural reference of the angel in the clouds, the seen messenger of the unseen God, the print would be nothing more than an early 16th century visual account of German women at their work. Through the visual rhetoric of the print, Durer has glorified not so much the birth of the Virgin who is physically set off to one side of the image, but rather has given visual significance to the skilled work of women through the pretext of its subject. Taken on its own terms, the image is a depiction of the care-giving and medical skills of women involved with the delivery of infants as it was understood at this time.

The position of the angel in the clouds beneath the arch but above the women is highly significant. Thus positioned, the angel is shown as literally breaking through the ceiling of the building into the



The Birth of the Virgin

c1503/1504 A. Dürer

[Figure 1]

[cat. 33]

everyday activity of the women. How they are dressed is integral to the theme of this representation given they are not shown as historical women (at least not to viewers of the 16th century) but as contemporaries. The arch which also references culture through architecture and building, reinforces the theme of the transcendent's eruption into temporality, into culture. The transcendent is shown as a force, which although other worldly, watches over humans from a close range and intervenes in their affairs.

This image was part of a series of nineteen representations by Durer on *The Life of the Virgin* first published in book form in 1511.⁹¹ Russell states that by 1501 the main pictorial events through which Mary's life was conceptualized had become quite standardized in art. Her life, shown as a series of images in book form, would have served the purpose of teaching the devotee information about her that was missing from the Gospels. As part of a larger publication which included Durer's *Large Passion* and the *Apocalypse*, the images would have formed a type of first movement to a visual orchestration of the teachings of important events in Christianity.

The viewer is not someone who is visually acknowledged by the print but rather is someone who is at a distance from this activity and has caught a glimpse of this event perhaps through a window (arch) as this special scene unfolds. Given the distance between the viewer and the activity, and the reference to the arch, there is a suggestion of voyeurism in this print. We can account for this suggestion however by hypothesizing the presence of the artist himself (whose presence was allowed so long as he kept out of the way) at an actual delivery in order to make preparatory sketches for this image. While the print teaches an imaginary episode in the life of the Virgin to the devotee, it is also an image of empowerment for female viewers. Women gazing at this depiction of other women like themselves involved in the shared experience of infant delivery may

⁹¹ Panofsky explains that each image was accompanied by a text written by Benedictus Chelidonium, a good friend of Durer's. The Life and Art of Albrecht Durer, 96

have perceived the status of this activity as elevated through the visual conveyance of its religious association with divine power. The image does not exert power on the viewer, so much as empower the viewer, especially the female devotee.

The Virgin and the Child with the Monkey [figure 8]

This image was made in 1498 after Durer had made his first trip to Italy and shows the influences of the southern artists in the sculptural figuration of the Virgin and Child group.⁹² In this print the Virgin is depicted as a youthful idealized mother who looks tenderly down at her young charge. The babe is preoccupied with the bird which he holds in his right hand. What gives the print its doctrinal influence is the inclusion of a number of symbols, the detailed setting, and the narrative on the subject of conversion.

This narrative begins with the viewer's entrance into the image through the direct look of the monkey. According to Panofsky, the monkey in religious imagery at this time was a symbol of "lewdness, greed, and gluttony, and was associated with the Synagogue but especially with Eve".⁹³ A bird in the hands of the Christ Child especially one tied to a string, usually symbolized the winged soul.⁹⁴ In this image, the monkey, chained to a board, is the only creature who returns the gaze of the viewer. I expect, the viewer, constructed as sinner, is meant to be caught by this look. Once caught, the viewer, initially identified with the monkey, looks to the Virgin, who through her downcast eyes, directs our gaze to the child. In the action of the child, it seems the viewer is offered an alternative form of captivity as the bird (spirit) in Christ's hands. In this image the representational strategy of the print, through the looks of the monkey and the Virgin, functions to exercise the

⁹²According to Panofsky, this grouping is derived from Leonardesque sources as transmitted through the work of Lorenzo di Credi. See p. 67.

⁹³Panofsky 67

⁹⁴Ferguson, 2



The Virgin and Child with the Monkey 1498 A. Dürer
(figure 8)
[cat. 50]

50a

discipline of conversion on the beholder. The gaze of the monkey triggers the image-viewer interaction and the visual narrative begins. The viewer, constructed as sinner, is most likely not a believer or a partial believer, so that the address in the image is primarily to potential converts.

Russell's characterization of power as *power over women* works in this image only in the sense that the discipline of conversion is addressed to either men or women. Here, the role of the Virgin is secondary to the message the print imparts. In reacting to this image, the beholder's activity and satisfaction with his/her own religious beliefs/practices would determine the strength of his/her response to its message.

Adam and Eve: (Albrecht Durer) [figure 9]

In this print, the viewer, who is not acknowledged by these visually self-contained figures, is being instructed in a visual narrative on the first sin of humankind. As Panofsky suggests however, it would take an educated observer of the 16th century and indeed the 20th century to understand the symbolism of the four species of animals as the four temperaments and their moral implications for human nature.⁹⁵

According to Russell, this image is typically interpreted as portraying the state of equilibrium in paradise before the Fall.⁹⁶ However this interpretation is made problematic by the presence of the leaves which covers the genitals of Adam and Eve. Why, for example, are their sexual organs covered if they have not sinned? I suggest that the image depicts not the frozen moment before the Fall, but rather the *active* moment of the Fall, that is *The Fall in process*. This interpretation is based on the visual division of the print into two parts by the trunk of the fig tree and by reading the

⁹⁵Panofsky 85

⁹⁶Russell, 116



Adam and Eve

1504 A. Dürer

(Figure 9)

[Ed. 100]

different leaves which cover the genitalia of Adam and of Eve as precise indicators of the action so far. This visual reading suggests that Eve is in a different state of being from that of Adam.

Eve's sexual organs are covered by a fig leaf which according to the Biblical narrative signifies awareness of her nudity. Eve could not have gained this awareness without having first tasted the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge which she holds hidden in her left hand. Her lips are also slightly curled and she has an inward gaze which suggests she knows something that the man does not. In the other half of the print Adam holds onto a branch of a mountain ash, the Tree of Life, a small branch of which also covers his sexual organs. This difference in leafery from Eve suggests that Adam is still in the immortal state that both he and the woman shared before the Fall otherwise he too would be covered by fig leaves. His outstretched hand, his slightly parted lips and his direct gaze at the woman together suggest that he is making the demand on Eve that she give him the fruit that she has already tasted.

It is interesting that God the Father is not evident in this print as He is in several other prints on this subject from the same time period.⁹⁷ Rather Durer has chosen to show the first man and woman as divinized figures, a human god and goddess. This rendering suggests the influence of Humanism in Renaissance and Reformation art. The content of the doctrine of the Fall in this image may be from a Christian point of view but Durer's forms suggest the moving away from a transcendent-symbolized religion to a more human-symbolized one.

It is of interest to contrast this print with the following one by Hans Baldung Grien.

⁹⁷See catalogue no. 64 and 69 in Eva/Ave: Woman in Renaissance and Baroque Prints (1990)

Adam and Eve: (Hans Baldung Grien) [figure 10]

In this image, I suggest that Grien has depicted exactly the same action as Durer, that is *The Fall in Process*, but has chosen to render his subject in a less visually learned style. This direct approach to the subject matter would be more easily comprehensible to the largest of Christian audiences -- uneducated believers, thus making the print a very effective teaching tool even if the theology behind it is somewhat simplistic. What makes the print doubly effective as a doctrinal image is the artist's direct address to the viewer through the returned gazes of Adam and Eve.⁹⁸ Again in this print, the God the Father is not imaged, however the physiques of Adam and Eve do not suggest a primordial state of divination, as is the case with the figures in Durer. In Grien's print, God the Father is totally absent and the beholder must come to grips with the devil symbolized by the serpent, who in Grien's version of the Fall, is emphasized as a main character in the action. The snake is visually oversized and glowers at the viewer while maintaining a position above the heads of Adam and Eve, a visual suggestion that he has the upper hand. In this image, the snake has none of the pet qualities or intimacy with Eve that are evident in Durer's print. Grien presents the snake as a powerful antagonist and as a force to be reckoned with giving the image much of its doctrinal strength.

In Durer's print we may say that the disciplinary power of the image is evoked through its narrative of the first sin of humankind. Here the doctrine is presented as a lesson which constructs the male or female viewer as student. While this narrative begins visually with Eve, Adam is shown as an active agent in the story beseeching Eve to hand over the fruit to him.

While Grien's print also functions as a doctrinal image, this print exerts a disciplinary power on the viewer which functions to

⁹⁸ See James Marrows "Symbol and meaning in northern European art of the late middle ages and the early Renaissance" for commentary on this aspect of the print especially pages 166-167.



Adam and Eve

1511. Hans Baldung Grien

514.

Figure 10,
Eccl. 1. 10

structure the response of the beholder. James Marrow (after Joseph Koerner) suggests that this print structures the viewer as victim "by evoking his consciousness of the very knowledge of sin which had been precipitated by Adam and Eve's transgression."⁹⁹ Margaret Miles reminds us that the image implies the gaze of an assumed male spectator.¹⁰⁰ But what of the female spectator? In Grien's print the female viewer has no active address. There is no subject position created for her by this image, unless the female viewer identifies with the male viewer's gaze. While the print may contribute to the stereotyping of women as evil, even though Adam is shown to have an equally active part in the action, the image does not function to structure the response of the female viewer in any way. Ironically, it is this lack of structure which gives Russell's characterization of power as *power over women* strong merit in the case of Grien's *Adam and Eve*. Given that the visual rhetoric of the print does not address the female viewer as subject, but simply eroticizes the characterization of Eve for the male viewer, the print points to the historical powerlessness of women to direct the commentary on this teaching. As is suggested by Marrow, the print exerts strong disciplinary power on the [male] believer to identify with the figure of Adam structuring the beholder as an accomplice in the act of sin as the visual teaching of this lesson unfolds.

CONCLUSIONS

In this brief survey of five devotional and five doctrinal prints from Northern Europe¹⁰¹ made within twenty years of each other, we may make the following observations about Russell's claim of power as *power over women*:

⁹⁹ Marrow, 167 Marrow also compares Durer and Grien's prints but misses Durer's visual clues of an act in process and simply refers to Durer's version as a "self-contained narrative".

¹⁰⁰ Margaret Miles, *Carnal Knowing* (1991) 135.

¹⁰¹ The one exception being "The Virgin and Child in a Rosary" which is French.

Of the group of devotional prints we examined, we may say that one, figure 3, if read as *Saint Anne and the Virgin with the Child* may be shown to demonstrate patriarchal power in the form of disciplining women to take up motherhood rather than virginity as a religious path. This visual reading is supported by textual commentary as I will demonstrate in chapter three. In the doctrinal images we examined, two out of the five also could be shown to demonstrate that Russell's claim has some merit. Figure 6, *The Triumph of the Virgin* through its iconography, and figure 10, Hans Baldung Grien's *Adam and Eve* through its iconography and structuring of male response both construct women as powerless.

Of the total number of images examined, there are four, (three devotional and one doctrinal) that I suggest reverse Russell's claim by demonstrating their potential to empower the viewer. Figure 2, *The Lamentation* works to empower the viewer through its representational strategy of viewer flexibility in recalling and meditating on the events leading up to Christ's crucifixion and through the active agency of the viewer who contributes to the image-response interaction by filling in the details of the various events. In figures 3 and 5, *The Beautiful Virgin of Regensburg*, there is a two-way address from the image to the viewer but also from the beholder to the saint who is perceived as having transformational power. The function of these prints is to effect a response from the saint in answer to the beholder's prayers. These images functioned to empower the devotee to attain a positive result.

In figure 7, *The Birth of the Virgin*, we have an example of a doctrinal image which through the association of its subject matter with divine power, there existed the possibility of elevating the status of the work women typically did. Secondly, the empowerment of women is also suggested in this print by the perception of females as the progenitors of the sacred line.

From our examination of these ten images we can also say that while not every print demonstrated the potential to exercise disciplinary power both *devotional and doctrinal images* demonstrated this tendency. In the case of figure 2, the discipline is to evoke the response of grief associated with the mourners shown in the image, in the viewer; in the case of figure 8, *The Virgin and the Child with the Monkey*, the discipline is to convert the viewer to Christianity; and in the case of figure 10, the discipline is to evoke the experience of lust in the male viewer as a co-accomplice in the Fall.

Power and the Representation of Mary

In the eight images which show the Virgin, we note that while her iconographical importance is more central in the devotional images, her representation is primarily a strategy to render the print functional or effective in the viewer engagement of transformational power. In figure 5 however, her representation is primary in the process of empowering the viewer.

In the doctrinal images her representation is part of a larger visual rhetoric designed to convey the message or teaching in each image. In the case of figure 8, *The Virgin and the Child with the Monkey*, for example, Mary's primary role is that of a mediator between the viewer and the Child. Her look carries the viewer from a position of sin to potential salvation.

In none of the devotional images does Mary directly meet the eyes of the viewer. The turned away gaze of a divine figure however is not uncommon in representational strategies of divinities. One account for this strategy especially in devotional imagery is suggested by Freedberg.¹⁰² Given that the devotee (both artist and viewer) believed that what is represented on an image is actually present in the image, thus giving images their miraculous power, a divinity

¹⁰²Freedberg, 30; 82-98

could not be directly engaged through the eyes by the viewer, without fear of death. This belief, as we know from writers and artists of the Reformation period, was common in Germany if not throughout all of Europe. Conversely, the returned gaze by non-divinities, as we saw in figures 8 and 10 of the doctrinal images, enhanced the disciplinary power of the image. The internal gaze or look of the figures and where it is directed may be one way of determining the function of religious imagery where this function is unknown.

Except for the iconography of *Triumph of the Virgin*, Russell's claim of power over women does not hold up for the figure of Mary in the sample of images I have examined.

In addressing the fourth question stated at the beginning of this chapter concerning how the overarching conceptual frame in which the image functions contributes to the reception and response to the image, we may make the following observations.

In this sample of images which were analyzed as part of a religious culture, i.e. as historical users would have seen them -- I suggest that believers would have responded to the potential of power in the image primarily through its perceived religious function. A devotee would make use of a devotional image to empower himself/herself in some way by connecting him/herself with the transformational power thought to be present in devotional images. While a doctrinal print would have played a role in reassuring, reminding, and disciplining devotees as to their place and proper response within the larger cosmological structure. As we saw in the case of doctrinal images, the potential of these prints to also exercise power over women was evident in two of the five images. In the case of devotional images, only one of the five could be read in this manner, and only if we associated it with a doctrinal reading. We may say then that there is some merit in the assumption that Russell's claim of power as *power over women* is stronger for doctrinal imagery.

Summary

In this chapter I examined Russell's claim that the discourse in these images asserts itself as *power over women*. In this sample I examined this claim, using a viewer-oriented analysis. Using this analysis, Russell's claim could be demonstrated in three out of the 10 images. Three other images could also be shown to demonstrate the potential to exert a different type of disciplinary power on the viewer through evoking grief or guilt, for a total of six images shown to demonstrate the potential of disciplinary power on the viewer.

The question of the proper identification for figure 3, *Saint Anne and the Virgin with the Child*, and its implications for image-text relationships will be dealt with more comprehensively in my conclusion.

In the next chapter I will compare a sample of six images with written commentaries from their historical period to determine their support for or challenge to the written theological commentaries of their day.

3 SAMPLE TWO: IMAGE AND TEXT: HARMONIOUS OR CONTRADICTORY DISCOURSES?

Given that Russell through the choice of her title has chosen to submit the images of her exhibition to an overarching religious conceptual frame, I shall continue to make use of this frame in examining her other claim, namely that the images may be seen as part of a patriarchal discourse on women. I shall look at this patriarchal discourse primarily within the context of three topics from the 16th century with regard to commentary on the nature of women: 1) women and sin; 2) celibacy and marriage; 3) motherhood, matriarchy and the sacred imaged as a man. I will then examine a sample of six prints from the same historical era to determine if their visual content contradicted or harmonized with this written commentary.

(I) A PATRIARCHAL DISCOURSE ON WOMEN

That there was a "universe of discourse" active in European countries in the 16th and 17th centuries after the invention of printing is generally accepted by scholars. One broad area of enquiry was the nature of woman which consisted of commentary based on authoritative texts in a variety of disciplines.¹⁰³ For the purpose of this chapter, I will look at the commentary primarily of one author, Martin Luther (1483-1546) to determine attitudes toward women as expressed in Reformation theology.

¹⁰³ According to Ian Maclean in The Renaissance Notion of Woman, (1980) these disciplines included theology, medicine, law, and practical philosophy (ethics and politics). 2

I have chosen Luther's writings as my sample of textual discourse for the following three reasons. First, his commentary on the above topics is not as well known as writings by Catholic commentators although his ideas would have been widely known in the 16th century and certainly known by the four artists whose work is represented in this sample.¹⁰⁴

Secondly, given the German origin of more than half of the images in *Eva/Ave*, a comparison with Reformation commentary seemed particularly apt.¹⁰⁵ While ideas and discourses are not constrained by national borders, Russell's claim that the images are part of a patriarchal discourse on women might be strongest where it is possible to compare images and texts from a similar cultural background. Following this argument, four of the six images in sample two originated in Germany and were made by the following artists: Albrecht Durer (1471-1528); Lucas van Leyden (1489/94-1533); Lucas Cranach the Elder (1472-1553); and Jean Duvet (1485-c.1570).¹⁰⁶ It is well documented that these artists were all exposed to the ideas of Luther's new theology and that three of them, Durer, Cranach and Duvet were known to be active sympathizers with the new faith. Further, Cranach knew Luther personally, corresponded with him, and made several images of Luther and his family.

The third reason I have chosen to highlight Reformation commentary on the nature of women is due to its proximity with Russell's definition of a patriarchal discourse. I suggest that Reformation commentary understands itself to be patriarchal in a similar sense

¹⁰⁴ Indeed Russell refers primarily to a Catholic commentary in her discussion of a patriarchal discourse. In this chapter, I reference the contributions of Catholic commentary on the nature of woman through the use of secondary sources.

¹⁰⁵ German prints represent 57% of the total exhibition.

¹⁰⁶ Lucas van Leyden was born in the Netherlands and Jean Duvet in Dijon, France.

namely as asserting power over women. In his *Lectures on Genesis*, Luther offers an explanation for the origins of patriarchy which justify the contemporary (to his day) arrangement of male/female social and political relations. He states that woman's subjection to man is a form of God's punishment on women for Eve's sin.¹⁰⁷ in Paradise.

"The rule," according to Luther, "remains with the husband, and the wife is compelled to obey him by God's command."¹⁰⁸ He states:

This punishment, too springs from original sin; and the woman bears it just as unwillingly as she bears those pains and inconveniences that have been placed upon her flesh. ... [The husband] rules the home and state, wages wars, defends his possessions, tills the soil, builds, plants, etc. The woman, on the other hand, is like a nail driven into the wall. ... The pagans have depicted Venus as standing on a seashell; for just as the snail carries its house with it, so the wife should stay at home and look after the affairs of the household, as one who has been deprived of the ability of administering those affairs that are outside and that concern the state. She does not go beyond her most personal duties.
109

By its own terms then, we may say that Reformation commentary is a patriarchal discourse which defined the social and political relations between men and women in a way that clearly submitted the female to male rule based on theologically grounded domestic relations.

While this is not a definition of patriarchal power in Foucauldian terms (i.e. where the rule radiates out from the state, and in modernity, from large institutions), it is an acceptable sociological definition of patriarchy that is historically and culturally valid for German culture at the time the sample of images from *Eva/Ave* were made. Given its proximity to Russell's definition, I suggest that Reformation commentary is an acceptable choice of discourse

¹⁰⁷Luther's Works: Volume One. Lectures on Genesis, (1958) 202-203

¹⁰⁸Luther's Works: Volume One, 202

¹⁰⁹Luther's Works: Volume One, 203

which we may use to adequately explore Russell's claim that the images in *Eva/Ave* may be seen as part of a patriarchal discourse on women.

Before beginning this discussion it would be inappropriate to overlook the issue of iconoclasm in 16th century Germany, Switzerland and the Netherlands. Given that the removal of imagery from reformed churches signaled their loss of status as a sanctioned theological discourse, it might be assumed --incorrectly, that all images contradicted the written discourse of Reformation commentary. Despite the efforts of iconoclasts however, religious imagery did not disappear in these countries. Except in the strictest Protestant communities, religious images in the form of prints continued to be a presence in worship as illustrations¹¹⁰ to religious texts. Indeed, in some devout Luthern cities, religious statuary remained standing until well into the 17th century.¹¹¹

(A) WOMEN AND SIN

In this section I will examine Reformation attitudes to woman and sin through an analysis of Luther's commentary on Eve in his *Lectures on Genesis*. I will reference Catholic commentary on this topic as it has been summarized by Ian Maclean in *The Renaissance Notion of Women* (1980)

In delineating Luther's commentary on women and sin it is important to keep in mind that he is unique for his time in that he rejects scholastic thought on the inferiority of women. Like all theologians of his day, Luther believed that human nature, male or female, could

¹¹⁰ I am using this term purposefully here.

¹¹¹ Carl Christensen. *Art and the Reformation in Germany* (1979) 108-109
Christensen mentions that in those Protestant areas which practiced strict Lutheranism, such as the Saxon town of Bischofswerda, images of the Virgin, including those which showed her as "Queen of Heaven", were left standing well into the 17th century.

best be understood through an analysis of the actions of "the first parents", Adam and Eve.

Before proceeding to his commentary on the sin of Eve, it is important to contextualize Luther's commentary on her actions by bringing forward his thought about Eve's nature before her sin takes place:

[Commentary based on Genesis 2:18]

Hence it follows that if the woman had not been deceived by the serpent and had not sinned, she would have been the equal of Adam in all respects. For the punishment, that she is now subjected to the man, was imposed on her after sin and because of sin, just as the other hardships and dangers were: travail, pain, and countless other vexations. Therefore Eve was not like the woman of today; her state was far better and more excellent, and she was in no respect inferior to Adam, whether you count the qualities of the body or those of the mind.¹¹²

And count the qualities of the mind the scholastics certainly did. Maclean states that based on Gen. 2:21 and other biblical texts associated with it, "scholastics deduce diminished mental powers (especially reason) in the female."¹¹³ Luther however did not.

[Commentary based on Genesis 3:14]

For what ability or insight has reason in religious matters?

Then there is also something absurd in making Eve the lower part of reason, although it is sure that in no part, that is, neither in body nor in soul, was Eve inferior to her husband Adam. This ridiculous interpretation is the source of the familiar secular discussions about free will and about reason's striving toward the supreme good, which finally turn the whole of theology into philosophy and into specious prattle.¹¹⁴

Eve according to Luther however is capable of distorting the word of God when speaking to the Devil.

[Commentary based on Genesis 3:3]

¹¹²Luther's Works: Volume One, 115 Later in his *Lectures on Genesis*, Luther modifies this view of Eve somewhat. In his commentary on Genesis 1:27, he states "The woman ... was not the equal of the male in glory and prestige." 69

¹¹³Maclean, 9

¹¹⁴Luther's Works: Volume One, 185

She is quoting God's words, and on her own she is adding to God's Word, the little word 'perchance'. And so the deceit of the lying spirit met with success. What he [Satan] sought to achieve above all -- to lead Eve away from the Word and faith -- this he has now achieved to the extent that Eve distorts the Word of God.¹¹⁵

Eve's sin according to Luther is that she was not satisfied with the type of wisdom God has given her.

[Commentary based on Genesis 3:6,7]

But when that wisdom is not satisfied, it wants to rise higher and know God in a way different from His revelation of Himself in His Word. Here is the Fall, that, after losing the true wisdom, she plunges into utter blindness. ... In this way Eve, created as the wisest of women, longs for a different wisdom, a wisdom apart from the Word; and because of this wisdom she sins in so many ways with all her senses -- by seeing, by thinking, by desiring, and by doing.

... Therefore the root and source of sin is unbelief and turning away from God.

... Eve is so engrossed in unbelief both in spirit and in body that she does not realize that she is doing evil.¹¹⁶

But what of Adam's part in the responsibility for the Fall? Luther's position is that:

[Commentary based on Genesis 3:9]

It should be noted particularly that Moses specifically says that Adam was called, namely, that he was the only person to whom on the sixth day the Word of the Lord regarding the fruit of the forbidden tree was addressed. Therefore just as he alone heard the commandment, so he alone is first called to trial. But because Eve also sinned and fell away from God, she hears the verdict at the same time and shares in the punishment.¹¹⁷

In this commentary, Luther stresses Adam's primary responsibility for the Fall through his sole knowledge of God's commandment. He goes on to state that it is sin and not Eve which beguiles his response to God.

[Commentary based on Genesis 3:10,12]

¹¹⁵ Luther's Works: Volume One, 155

¹¹⁶ Luther's Works: Volume One, 161, 162, 164

¹¹⁷ Luther's Works: Volume One, 173

Just as Adam stupidly began to flee, so he answers most stupidly; so thoroughly had sin deprived him of all discernment and good sense.

... but he passes on the guilt to the woman. It is the nature of sin not to permit the soul to flee back to God, but rather to force it into a flight away from God. ¹¹⁸

In Luther's day, the blame for the Fall was usually placed on Eve's shoulders by many biblical commentators. The debate hinged primarily on the question of deception. On this issue Luther makes the following comments:

[Commentary based on Genesis 3:13]

... We must give consideration to Paul's statement in 1Tim. 2: 13-14: *Adam was first formed, then Eve. And Adam was not seduced; but the woman, since she had been seduced, was in the transgression.* Almost everybody understands this statement to mean that Adam was not seduced but sinned knowingly. For he did not yield to the persuasion of the devil as Eve did; but he was unwilling to cause sadness for his delight, that is for his wife, and so he preferred his wife's love to God. They try to make this interpretation likely by saying the serpent was afraid of the male, as the master, and approached the woman; for although she herself was also holy, nevertheless as the weaker creature, she was more likely to yield to persuasion. And thus Eve was seduced by the serpent, but Adam was not. He was seduced either by himself or by the woman: by the woman because she handed him the apple; by himself, because, since he had seen that Eve did not die immediately after eating the fruit, he did not believe that the punishment which the Lord had threatened would follow. I do not disapprove of this opinion. It indicates that both statements are true: that Adam was deceived, and that he was not deceived. He was not deceived by the serpent, as Eve was. Nevertheless, he was deceived by his wife and by himself when he persuaded himself that his deed would not result in the punishment concerning which the Lord had said that it would follow. ¹¹⁹

Maclean acknowledges that even amongst the scholastics and those who followed their thought in the Renaissance, that "the relationship between sin and sex difference produced less unified debates."¹²⁰ The problem for scholastic theologians was that Eve, as a woman, was less endowed with the power of reason than the man, so that less would be expected from her in such a trying situation as the one which presented itself in the Garden of Eden. However, they also believed, unlike Luther, that she alone was deceived. Luther's

¹¹⁸Luther's Works: Volume One. 174, 177

¹¹⁹Luther's Works: Volume One. 182

¹²⁰Maclean, 15

ambivalent commentary on this issue seems to result from his desire to avoid conflict with the New Testament commentary on Genesis, rather than from any desire to agree with Scholastic thought.

Of interest, Maclean states that the association of temptation and seduction with women's speech is the reason given by scholastic theologians and repeated by Renaissance writers for the prohibition on women speaking in church, a prohibition which Luther agreed with. Renaissance theologians especially after the Council of Trent, also linked the vices of ambition, avarice and lechery, thought to be absent in saintly women, more closely to women than to men, since "woman, as the worldly creature par excellence is thought to be more deeply imbued with them than is man."¹²¹

(B) CELIBACY AND MARRIAGE

While celibacy for men or women was seen by the Roman Church as the most desirable state in which a Christian could live, Luther reversed this position for Protestants arguing that "matrimony was established in Paradise as a duty."¹²²

[Commentary based on Genesis 2:22]

For is it not a great thing that even in the state of innocence God ordained and instituted marriage? But now this institution and command are all the more necessary, since sin has weakened and corrupted the flesh. Therefore this comfort stands invincible against all the doctrines of demons (1 Tim 4:1), namely, that marriage is a divine kind of life because it was established by God Himself.¹²³

Luther is arguing against the Roman church's position on Virginity as a prime Christian value in the above commentary on Genesis 2:22. He believed that after the Fall, men were so lustful that they needed

¹²¹ Maclean, 22

¹²² Luther's Works: Volume One, 116

¹²³ Luther's Works: Volume One, 134

marriage as an antidote to the sin of fornication. In a rather repugnant commentary on Genesis 2:18, Luther describes woman as a necessary medicine against this sin.

In addition -- and this is lamentable--woman is also necessary as an antidote against sin. And so in the case of the woman, we must think not only of the managing of the household which she does, but also of the medicine which she is.

However, it is a great favour that God has preserved woman for us --against our will and wish, as it were -- both for procreation and also as a medicine against the sin of fornication.¹²⁴

On Luther's perceived view of the Roman Church's position on celibacy, he has this to say:

[Commentary based on Genesis 2:22]

I do not deny, of course, that there are some who can live chastely without marriage. Because they have a greater gift than ordinary folk, such people can sail by their own wind. But the chastity which the pope recommends to his monks, nuns, and priests is contaminated and polluted with awful sins. In addition, celibacy has been instituted without the Word of God -- nay even, as the account before us bears witness, [Genesis 2:22] against the Word of God. ¹²⁵

As Luther himself explains to the reader on the facing page, he interprets the phrase, "And He brought her to Adam" as a description of betrothal and as scriptural support for marriage as a divine state. As we will learn in the following section, even, in the case of the Virgin Mary, Luther emphasized her role as "Mother of God" and not as "The Holy Virgin". The virginity of Mary, much stressed by Catholic writers of the Renaissance and Counter-Reformation, was associated with literature on its mystical rights and powers. ¹²⁶ Such an understanding of virginity was in direct conflict with Luther's view of marriage as a natural state and religious duty. His rereading of the above Biblical passages brought about new restrictive measures in the social life of women.

¹²⁴ Luther's Works: Volume One, 116, 118

¹²⁵ Luther's Works: Volume One, 135

¹²⁶ Maclean, 23

During the early Reformation in Germany female religious were encouraged to leave their convents and marry. Those who did not leave willingly were ordered to close their homes by city ordinances. While former monks and priests could take up new positions in the Protestant churches if they so chose, there was no place for nuns in the new religious structure, and a new religious vocation had to be found for them. Both nuns and Protestant women who fought the changes and who chose to remain single were considered suspect by the reformers since it was believed that the women were fighting their natural sex drive, and because, according to the reformers, they upset God's decree in Genesis of subjecting the woman to man. For the reformers the solution for female religious was marriage and the care of children; it was to be the calling through which women could best serve God. Unmarried women, even those who were publicly devout, were accused by leading reformers of being "masterless".¹²⁷

Protestant churches curtailed or forbade a number of practices where women's roles were prominent. City councils in Protestant territories passed marriage ordinances stressing wifely obedience, and weddings and baptisms, two highly female-centred events, also came under new and restrictive regulations.

To return briefly to the topic of iconoclasm raised at the beginning of this chapter, the account of iconoclastic activity which follows raises questions about the perception of these events as "spontaneous outpourings of religious feeling" by overzealous reformers.¹²⁸ Rather I suggest that these events need to be reread as the result of conflicting dissonances between images and words, not

¹²⁷This summary was taken from Wiesner's article, "Nuns, Wives, and Mothers: Women and the Reformation in Germany" in Women in Reformation and Counter-Reformation Europe (1989) 8-28

¹²⁸This view according to William S. Maltby, a 20th century historian of the Reformation, is characteristic of 19th century historians of the Reformation.

simply on the broad theological question of the image as idol, but as the following account suggests, as specific examples of conflict between Protestant doctrine and an image which contradicts that doctrine. In light of the above discussion on celibacy and marriage, Christensen's account of the destruction of St. Aurelia's tomb and shrine by the gardeners of St. Aurelia which took place in Strasbourg in November 1524, is of particular interest.

Bucer, in a booklet entitled *Grund und Ursach* (December, 1524), went to some trouble to explain the circumstances of this incident, along with other changes that had been brought about by the Reformation in Strasbourg thus far. According to medieval legend, St. Aurelia had been one of the famed 11,000 virgins and had died of fever as the procession passed by Strasbourg, consequently being buried in the local church. Miracles had come to be associated with the shrine The monument eventually became a popular pilgrimage site, particularly for people seeking relief from fever. An altar with a wooden image of the saint (*hultzen gotzen*), which people were accustomed to adorn and decorate, had been erected near the tomb. **Clearly this was, from the evangelical point of view, another of the idols which must be abolished.** Therefore, writes Bucer, after sufficient instruction in God's Word, his parish congregation did away with the tomb. At first the votive offerings and image were taken down, the saints bones exhumed, and the burial vault merely closed. When this did not bring an end to the idolatrous practices, the sarcophagus was completely removed and the entire grave sealed off.¹²⁹

While Christensen reads this incident as simply another of the many idols to be destroyed by evangelical reformers, I think it may be reread as an activity which supports the new Protestant discourse against celibacy, and virginity, as the highest form of celibacy. While some cases of iconoclasm may be attributed to the random acts of zealots overthrowing their "idols", research on iconoclasm during the Reformation needs to place more emphasis on the association between the subject matter of those images destroyed or targeted for destruction (where known) and specific Reformation doctrine threatened by those images. While we know that many paintings, statues, crucifixes and altars were destroyed by iconoclasts, we also know that many remained standing in some Reformation cities. The relationship between the image subject

¹²⁹Carl C. Christensen, "Patterns of Iconoclasm in the Early Reformation: Strasbourg and Basel" in The Image and The Word: Confrontations in Judaism, Christianity and Islam, (1977) 113 The emphasis in bold type is mine.

matter and Reformation theology has not been adequately studied in 16th century iconoclasm research to date. ¹³⁰

(C) MOTHERHOOD, MATRIARCHY AND THE SACRED IMAGED AS MAN

In this section I will examine Reformation attitudes toward women's relationship to the sacred through an analysis of Luther's commentary on the vocation of motherhood, his commentary on the Virgin, and his position on the Virgin's legendary mother, Anne. I will reference Catholic commentary primarily through a summary of theological positions on the *trinitubium* summarized in Kathleen Ashley and Pamela Sheingorn's, "Introduction" in *Interpreting Cultural Symbols: Saint Anne in Late Medieval Society* (1990).

In his commentary on *The Magnificat*, Luther insists on the proper name for Mary as "Mother of God" or "God-Bearer":

[Commentary based on Luke 1:49]

Men have crowned all her glory into a single word, calling her the Mother of God. No one can say anything greater of her or to her, though he had as many tongues as there are leaves on the trees, or grass in the fields, or stars in the sky, or sand by the sea. ¹³¹

This commentary is in part a response to all those who insisted on calling Mary, "Queen of Heaven".

[Commentary based on Luke 1:49]

It is necessary also to keep within bounds and not make too much of calling her "Queen of Heaven" which is a true-enough name and yet does not make her a goddess who could grant gifts or render aid, as some suppose when they pray and flee to her rather than to God. She gives nothing, God gives all. ¹³²

¹³⁰In the Strasbourg case for example, Christensen also mentions that "the magistrates, in a decision dated October 31, 1529, consented that *superstitious* images before which people continued to perform acts of veneration indeed be removed. On the other hand, pictures that were not idolatrous, *such as those providing a representation of the sufferings of Christ*, were to be left standing. The Image and The Word, 116 (My italics.)

¹³¹Luther's Works: The Magnificat, (1956) 326

¹³²Luther's Works: The Magnificat, 327-328

But it is also a Protestant polemic on the role of motherhood as the only religious vocation appropriate for women. As we have seen in chapter two, the Virgin had many roles within the Roman church, but in the Protestant church, her role is reduced to one: "Mother of God".

As Allison Coudert points out in her essay on "The Myth of the Improved Status of Protestant Women", based on his commentary on St. Paul's first epistle to Timothy 2: 14-15, Luther believed that salvation for women lay in their ability to give birth.

She will be saved. That subjection of woman and domination of men have not been taken away, have they? No, The penalty remains. The Blame passed over. The pain and tribulation of childbearing continue. Those penalties will continue until judgment. So also the domination of men and the subjection of women continue. You must endure them. You will also be saved if you have subjected yourselves and bear your children with pain.

Through bearing children. It is a very great comfort that a woman can be saved by bearing children, etc. That is she has an honourable and salutary status in life if she keeps busy having children. We ought to recommend passage to them, etc. She is described as "saved" not for freedom, for license, but for bearing and rearing children.¹³³

While Luther praised the female procreative role as "the glory of motherhood", Protestantism, through its rejection of the veneration of Mary and the saints, contributed to a shift in the use of gender-based symbols in the practice of child-bearing and child-rearing, from a female-based symbol system to a male-based symbol system. For example, Merry Wiesner states that with the loss of St. Anne, the patron saint of pregnant women, Protestant women "were instructed to pray during labor and childbirth to Christ, a celibate male, rather than to a woman who had also been a mother."¹³⁴ That symbolic shifts mirror actual shifts occurring within culture, has been suggested by Pamela Sheingorn through her study of *Holy Kinship* imagery. The shift in the definition of the family from a

¹³³Luther, quoted in Allison P. Coudert, "The Myth of the Improved Status of Protestant Women" in The Politics of Gender in Early Modern Europe (1989) 80

¹³⁴Wiesner, 14

matriarchal-led to a patriarchal-led institution that was taking place in the 15th and 16th centuries, according to Sheingorn, accounts to some degree for the different representation of *Holy Kinship* imagery over this time period.¹³⁵

Luther's own position on St. Anne, as Ashley and Sheingorn point out, "exemplifies the transition that reformers experienced in their attitudes towards her."¹³⁶ In 1525, Luther declared his own disbelief in St. Anne, the saint to whom he had made his monastic vows in 1505, and by 1530, he referred to her as an "idol" in his *Exhortation to All Clergy Assembled at Augsburg*.¹³⁷ His view of Anne also raises the question of broader theological commentary on the *trinubium* --the idea of Anne's three marriages and her position as the matriarch of a large extended family known as the *Holy Kinship*.¹³⁸

Like the discourse on women and sin, commentary on the *trinubium* in the Roman Church was also not unified. The famous 13th century scholar Thomas Aquinas (1226-74), whose theological positions and commentary were highly influential in the Roman church did not support it. Conversely, Jean Gerson (1363-1429), chancellor of the University of Paris, and another influential theologian from the middle ages supported it. Franciscan, Dominican, and Carmelite orders all supported and defended the *trinubium*. Luther eventually denounced it when he rejected all legendary material regarding the

¹³⁵I will elaborate on her research in my analysis of Cranach's 1509 woodcut of this subject matter.

¹³⁶Kathleen Ashley and Pamela Sheingorn, "Introduction" in Interpreting Cultural Symbols: Saint Anne in Late Medieval Society (1990) 47

¹³⁷Kathleen Ashley and Pamela Sheingorn, 47

¹³⁸The *Holy Kinship* as a concept was designed to reconcile the reference to "brothers of Christ" in the New Testament with the perpetual virginity of Mary. It gave Anne, the mother of Mary three daughters by three marriages which produced seven holy children. Representations of this concept appear sometime around the 13th century in England and in France.

Virgin and, the Council of Trent (1545-63) made the final decision on this notion for the Catholic church by forbidding any representation of the *trinitubium*. According to the Council, the historical veneration of Anne was perceived as "misplaced devotion".¹³⁹

Any potential therefore for a Christian matriarchy to exist within the sanctioned discourse of the Catholic or Protestant church was permanently shut down by the mid 16th century.

(II) IMAGE ANALYSIS

As stated at the beginning of this chapter I have chosen six images for study, two for each section discussed above, to determine if their visual content challenged or reinforced the commentary. The images selected are as follows:

Women and Sin

1) "Adam and Eve" (engraving) dated 1504, German. Artist: Albrecht Durer *[figure 11]*

2) "Adam and Eve" (woodcut) 1516/1519, Netherlands. Artist: Lucas van Leyden *[figure 12]*

Celibacy and Marriage

3) "The Virgin Enthroned with Eighteen Holy Women" (metal cut) c1480/1490, German. Anonymous or Master with the Mountain-Like Clouds *[figure 13]*

4) "The Marriage of Adam and Eve" (engraving) 1540/1555, French. Artist: Jean Duvet *[figure 14]*

¹³⁹The source for this summary is Ashley and Sheingorn's, "Introduction" in Interpreting Cultural Symbols, (1990) 1-68

Motherhood, Matriarchy and the Sacred Imaged as a Man.

5) "Saint Anne and the Virgin with the Child" (woodcut) c1513, German. Artist: Lucas Cranach the Elder [figure 15]

6) "The Holy Kinship" (woodcut) c1509, German. Artist: Lucas Cranach the Elder [figure 16]

Two of these images will be familiar from chapter two, Durer's *Adam and Eve*, analyzed as a doctrinal image and Cranach's *Saint Anne and the Virgin with the Child* analyzed as a devotional image. My justification for repeating them here is that they will be subjected to a different treatment in this chapter.

As I stated in my introduction, Bal's modified use of semiotics to interpret representations, assigns to images an epistemological integrity which moves the image beyond the mere status of an illustration. In this section, while I will be comparing images and texts, the purpose of this exercise is *not* to identify potential harmonious prints on the basis that they illustrate a particular commentary but rather to analyze the image on its own terms and then come to some decision about harmony or conflict with the commentary as it has been presented in the first half of this chapter. Rather than summarize my conclusions at the end of this exercise, I will offer conclusions at the end of each of the three topics presented for comparison.

In order to analyze the image on its own terms, where appropriate, I will consider the following four questions as part of the viewer-oriented method:¹⁴⁰

- 1) Where is the look of the figures directed?
- 2) How is the treatment of nudity handled by the artist?

¹⁴⁰ I have synthesized these questions from the analysis of a number of feminists engaged in the critique of historical art by men (Bal, Hults, Miles). Their purpose is to assist the visual critic in determining how patriarchy may be marked but also challenged in the visual interpretation of well-known themes on women. See Appendix "B" for further elaboration on these questions.

- 3) How is the gender coding handled by the artist?
- 4) What is the female figure's public role in the image?

(A) WOMEN AND SIN

Adam and Eve (Albrecht Durer) [figure 11]

Given I have already addressed the above questions in chapter two, I will focus primarily on the print for what it has to say about women and sin.

In my previous reading of this print, I stated that Durer's *Adam and Eve* may be considered as a doctrinal image given that the visual rhetoric within the image works to instruct the viewer by means of an active narrative on the first sin of humankind. In this reading, I suggested that Eve appears to be in a different state of being from that of Adam, namely that she has already "fallen", but that Adam is still in the immortal state that both he and the woman shared before the Fall, otherwise he too would be covered by fig leaves. In Durer's version of the Fall, Eve is not blamed as the sole agent responsible for "man's" downfall, as the artist clearly depicts Adam as an active co-participant in the action. As I stated in chapter two, Adam's outstretched hand, his slightly parted lips and his direct gaze at the woman, all suggest that he is making the demand on Eve that she give him the fruit that she has already tasted.

Adam and Eve (Lucas van Leyden) [figure 12]

In Lucas van Leyden's 1516/1519 woodcut of the same subject, Eve at first, appears to be the primary agent of The Fall. That van Leyden included this subject in both of his Power of Women cycles, lends weight to this interpretation.¹⁴¹ I wish to suggest a different

¹⁴¹Silver and Smith state that van Leyden was alone among 16th century printmakers to include the Fall as a subject for the popular Power of Women topos concluding that his "inclusion of Adam and Eve in both cycles thus stands out conspicuously and appears to indicate his particular sensitivity to the importance of the Fall in the Power of Women context. "Carnal Knowledge: The Late Engravings of Lucas van Leyden." (1978) 252-254



Adam and Eve

Paradise Lost



Adam and Eve

1516/1519 Lucas van Leiden

(figure 12)

[vol. 66]

interpretation of the print however based on the four criteria outlined above, especially the first one, on looking and seeing. In this particular version of the Fall, Adam's expression is one of a confused man, who is unaware of his actions, while Eve gazes at the apple and smiles as someone who from her expression appears to be intoxicated. Given the positions of their bodies, neither Adam nor Eve seem able to support their own weight, a possible indication of further physical instability brought on by the 'intoxication' of desire.

Given the association of the gaze with desire¹⁴², it is significant that neither Adam nor Eve look at each other. Eve's look is toward the apple and Adam's is completely unfocused. It is the serpent who does the looking in this image in that he is the one who focalizes the action by peering directly at Adam. This visual deployment of looks suggests that desire originates in Satan, not Eve. Eve may hand the apple to Adam, which he reaches out for and accepts, but she too, from her gaze, appears to be under some kind of spell. As with Durer's image of the Fall, there seems to be a visual rhetoric of co-responsibility.

While inspired by Durer's figures of Adam and Eve, van Leyden's first couple have none of the nobility of Durer's primordial man and woman. They appear as though already lapsed even though the moment depicted in the foreground of the print shows the narrative before any sin has been committed. Adam and Eve are not by any means presented as gender ideals but rather as fallen ideal physical types. Van Leyden's treatment of both male and female nudity reinforces the notion that Adam and Eve are already in the lowest state of being possible for humans to inhabit before committing sin.¹⁴³ While Eve's body is more exposed than Adam's, van Leyden, in

¹⁴²Bal, 142-143

¹⁴³The diminished physical state of Adam and Eve before the Fall as depicted by van Leyden would agree with Luther's description of unbelief in God as the source of sin and as a state of being which can mask one's performance of evil acts as stated in his commentary on Gen 3:7. Luther's Works: Volume One, 164

this version of the Fall, does not place her in a suggestive pose. Compared to Baldung Grien's Eve, [figure 10] she has not been eroticized for the male viewer.

Conclusions

When Durer made his print in 1504, Luther had not yet written his *Lectures on Genesis*. Yet the visual rhetoric of spiritual equality and mutual responsibility for the Fall evident in his image agrees with Luther's commentary on woman and sin.

In his image, Durer depicts the male and female figures as divinized, that is as members of a mythical golden age that would have been in keeping with Luther's commentary on Genesis 2:18. Durer's visual emphasis on the co-responsibility of Adam for the Fall, harmonizes with Luther's commentary on Gen. 3:9 and Gen. 3:13. Yet the *Lectures* were not yet written in 1504 so Durer's print can in no way be considered as an illustration of Luther's thought. Yet, what could account for the harmony in discourses between this image and Luther's commentary?

It might be possible that we could attribute the harmony between the two to 15th and 16th century humanist belief in a mythical golden age which Durer and Luther both shared where men and women were thought to be closer to gods and goddesses of the ancient past both in physique and in their actions. Yet there are examples of representations on this subject such as Cranach's Adam and Eve [catalogue no. 67] made within five years of Durer's which did not treat Eve so favourably. What could account then for the difference between Durer's visualization of this subject and Cranach's? What could account for van Leyden's inclusion of *The Fall* in "The Power of Women" topos considered by many to be misogynist what many consider to be misogynist, and the more favourable rendering of Eve in his 1516/1519 woodcut?

The answer I suspect lies in the personality of Durer. It has been suggested by Hulst that Durer, unlike his contemporaries, did less to diminish the treatment of nudity in well-known female subjects which were popular topics in 16th century visual art.¹⁴⁴ In my brief exposure to Durer's prints, I have found the same tendency, namely, that his treatment of the female body rather than eroticized, seems desexualized or dephysicalized.¹⁴⁵ Even in his more sensuous depictions of Eve in the *Fall of Man* (Small Passion) 1510-11, and in his 1510 *Fall of Man* (Vienna) drawing, where Eve is shown from the side, in the case of the former, and from the back, in the case of the latter, Durer avoids the opportunity to display Eve as a spectacle, an approach which his contemporaries, like Cranach and Baldung Grien did not hesitate to take.

It is possible that van Leyden transposed this bias of Durer's when he came to create his own version of *Adam and Eve*. We know that they actually met and exchanged prints in 1520,¹⁴⁶ but Durer's Adam and Eve would have been known to van Leyden as it was to all Northern artists. I suggest that van Leyden, in studying Durer's print, may have unknowingly transferred at least part of the visual rhetoric of the image into his own when he recast Durer's ideal types¹⁴⁷, enough so that we may at least question the claim that "Eve is the protagonist in bringing about the Fall." as claimed by Russell in her commentary on this print.¹⁴⁸ When we read the print

¹⁴⁴Hulst, "Durer's Lucretia" (1991) 210 Lucas Cranach is well-known for his *double entendre* of chastity and seduction in his visualization of heroic women such as Lucretia.

¹⁴⁵Durer's 1507 painting of Eve also depicts her as desexualized.

¹⁴⁶Silver and Smith, 241

¹⁴⁷Silver and Smith state that "Durer's famous 1504 *Adam and Eve* formed a natural point of departure for any Northerner's study of nudes." 241

¹⁴⁸Russell, 119

visually and intertextually¹⁴⁹ (i.e. in comparison with Durer's version) rather than as an *illustration* of scholastic theology, which is what Russell appears to have done in this case, it becomes difficult to accept this sort of uncategorical claim. Even van Leyden's later print of this subject matter, *The Fall of Man*, c.1530 [catalogue no. 68] should be read in a more open way. Even though Eve's pose is more openly suggestive as Russell states, the visual rhetoric of both bodies is identical, namely eroticism, especially when compared to their bleak surroundings. One way of interpreting this visual rhetoric is to conclude that through the forms of sexually charged nudes, van Leyden is suggesting the already fallen state of Adam and Eve. One should recall in the earlier work that the already fallen state is suggested by figures which caricature Durer's classical couple and through his use of the snake as the primary focalizer of the action.

(B) CELIBACY AND MARRIAGE:

The Virgin Enthroned with Eighteen Holy Women [figure 13]

This image depicts Mary as a youthful Queen of Heaven amongst a court of royal saints. The print may be a veneration of her status as the Queen of Virgins since some of the saints identified in the print such as Catherine on the left and Barbara on the right were thought to be virgin saints of the first century. The inscription below the figures reads: *She is beautiful among the daughters of Jerusalem*¹⁵⁰ Christ is depicted here as a baby looking at and reaching for a ring in the hand of St. Catherine, a gesture which refers to her *mystical marriage* to Christ according to Russell.¹⁵¹ From their crowns, a Christian symbol of triumph over death, and from their attributes, it

¹⁴⁹Russell claims that all of van Leyden's Eves are the initiating party in bringing about *The Fall*, a claim I do not agree with after studying van Leyden's many versions of *The Fall* as illustrated in Silver and Smith's article.

¹⁵⁰Russell, 107

¹⁵¹Russell, 108



cat. 98

The Virgin Enthroned with Christ Child, c. 1480/1490, Anonymous

(figure 10)

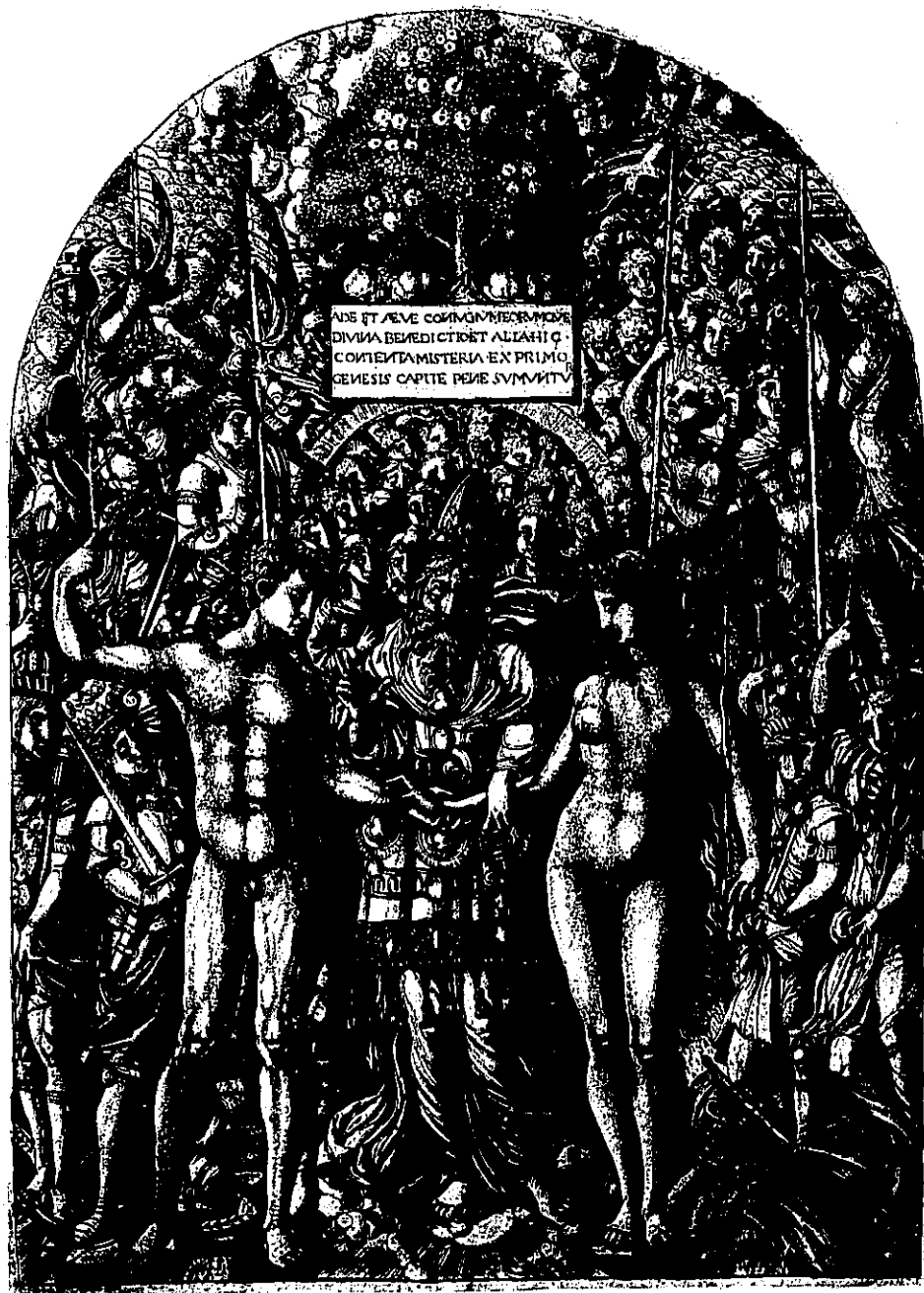
[cat. 98]

would appear that Christ shares a kinship of martyrdom with these women. Christ's depiction as a baby, rather than as a man may be a visual device to keep the emphasis of the tribute on the female saints while his own divine status and central importance to Christianity is maintained by his placement at the visual centre of the image. The two angels floating above the figures signal a visual rhetoric of a transcendent setting, most likely heaven.

The looks of these figures are strictly internal to the print, that is they are directed to the Virgin or to the infant or to the ring held up by St. Barbara, and not to the viewer which is in keeping with visual conventions around depicting sexual purity and chastity in women.

In analyzing the gender coding of the figures, where the female figure may be represented as either; (i) a caricature; (ii) a portrait; or (iii) a rendering which approaches the full humanity of the woman, these figures with their similarly drawn faces approach the category of caricature. They are symbolic women i.e. forms, chosen for their ability to represent Christian values to the believer.¹⁵² The visual opening in front of the Virgin suggests an invitation while the starry border around the figures suggests the cosmos and mystery. Perhaps the viewer is being invited to dwell on the mysteries and virtues of these particular saints. Or given the print's rhetoric of mystery and virginity, it may be suggesting that the true Christian marriage is a marriage to Christ.

¹⁵²For female saints as well as the Virgin Mary in the late Renaissance period, these values were thought to be the virtues of humility, chastity and charity. See Maclean, 22.



The Marriage of Adam and Eve
(Figure 14)
[cat. 627]

1540/1555? Jean Duvet

80a

The Marriage of Adam and Eve [figure 14]

According to Russell, representations of the marriage of Adam and Eve while known from the 11th to the 16th centuries, are typically rare. Given the subject of the divinely decreed marriage in the print, it may come as no surprise to learn that the artist, Jean Duvet, was a French Calvinist.¹⁵³ Art historians who have studied Duvet suggest that the print in the format of a tablet contextualizes the material "as signs of the word from God, to be communicated by reproduction."¹⁵⁴ Related to the story of Moses' tablets, the tablet shape, employed by Duvet to frame his visual material, suggests that Duvet may have also perceived images as legitimate 'words from God'. Such a shape may be an interesting fusion between Duvet's Protestant religion and the visual French Catholic culture which surrounded him.

It is interesting to compare this print with Durer's, *The Betrothal of the Virgin* [catalogue 35] from which the figure of God the Father was taken. The importation of this figure from Durer's print, along with the lily motifs symbolizing The Virgin, substantiates, Eisler's interpretation of Duvet's print as a "heavenly, visionary remarriage of Adam and Eve" after "Eve's conquest of original sin through the New Eve's Son."¹⁵⁵

God, dressed in vestments which seem appropriate to the papal office, has been visualized as a Heavenly Pope while Adam and Eve posed for public viewing are naked except for Eve's wreath of lilies that crown her hair. They hold small branches of a tree in their hands as do some of the Heavenly host, while a dragon rests peacefully at Eve's foot. While not looking at either of them, God, of central visual importance, appears to be talking, another reference

¹⁵³For the fascinating story of his double life as a Catholic and a Protestant, see Colin Eisler's, The Master of the Unicorn: The Life and work of Jean Duvet (1978)

¹⁵⁴Eisler, as quoted in Russell, 115.

¹⁵⁵ Eisler, The Master..., 238.

to 'the Word'. Above God, the inscription reads: *The marriage of Adam and Eve and their blessing from God and other mysteries here contained are taken for the most part from the first chapter of Genesis.*¹⁵⁶ The qualifier "for the most part" begs the question from where else have the mysteries depicted in the image been derived? From Roman Catholic commentary? From Calvinist commentary? The word "mysteries" suggests a Catholic interpretation in that the entire thrust of Protestantism was to rid Christianity of any sacrament or practice, thought to invite superstition or magic.

Like the print discussed above, the looks of the figures in *The Marriage of Adam and Eve* are internal to the print. The viewer is only involved as a spectator but not as a participant. The marriage taking place is on display and like Durer's *Adam and Eve*, the print has a doctrinal quality about it -- which is emphasized by the words above the head of God. The nudity of both the man and the woman is portrayed with dignity and the learned viewer is aware of Duvet's visual references to Durer's print in the poses of Duvet's male and female figures.¹⁵⁷ While the presence of God reduces the sense of Adam and Eve as a divinized couple, their proportions still suggest heroic figures from a golden mythical age as does the dragon. While, the male figure is posed somewhat more dramatically with an outstretched leg and upraised arm, both figures are coded as gender ideals.

Overall, the image is an interesting mixture of Protestant and Catholic sensitivities.

¹⁵⁶Russell, 114 (My italics.)

¹⁵⁷Eisler suggests that only Duvet's figure of Adam is derived from Durer's, *Adam and Eve* of 1504 while Eve is taken from Marcantonio's, *Three Graces* (no date given). The Master ..., 238

Conclusions:

In examining Russell's claim that the prints are part of a patriarchal discourse, it would appear that in the example of the above two prints, *The Virgin Enthroned with Eighteen Holy Women* challenges this commentary while *The Marriage of Adam and Eve* supports it. As images, they are visual opposites of the discourse on celibacy and marriage, as it was espoused by Luther¹⁵⁸. As we have seen in the section on this topic, Luther placed marriage above virginity as the primary divine state of life for Christian believers. In the evangelical atmosphere of the Reformation, the existence of representations of Mary and the female saints shown in positions of honour as Virgins would have strongly challenged the restrictions placed on women by Protestantism. How could the role of wife, as the new religious vocation for women, be reconciled with triumphant images of the Virgin, female saints and mystical marriage?

While Luther would not have agreed with Duvet's visualization of God as a Heavenly Pope, he would have agreed with the doctrinal message of God blessing the union of the primordial couple. While Luther perceived marriage to be a divinely ordained state, and a sacrament, he did not perceive it to be a mystery. According to Luther, marriage was a state ordained by God as an antidote to the sin of fornication. While Duvet's print supports protestant commentary on marriage, his treatment of the subject is I think quite Catholic. While the emphasis on speaking, the centralized inscription, and the tablet form retain a protestant frame, his rendering of God and reference to mysteries suggests a Catholic influence.

Eve's passive pose agrees with Luther's description of the rule remaining with the husband and wifely obedience as a proper response. It also agrees with his description of the woman as "medicine", something to be taken as an antidote against sin. Both Adam and God grasp her arm suggesting she is being held in her

¹⁵⁸*The Virgin Enthroned with Eighteen Holy Women* would have supported Catholic commentary on this topic.

place. Her positioning [for man] contrasts sharply with the community of women shown in *figure 13*. Even though the women in this print may be signs for a Catholic discourse on virginity or Christian virtues, they are shown as triumphant, as a community, and in positions of honour, a discourse that would not agree with Luther's view on the proper role of women as it relates to celibacy and marriage.

(C) MOTHERHOOD, MATRIARCHY AND THE SACRED IMAGED AS A MAN
Saint Anne and the Virgin with the Child..[figure 15]

Given the problematic nature of this print as discussed in the previous chapter, I will again give two readings, one according to its current title and one according to the story of *The Visitation*. In my commentary in chapter two I described this print as a devotional image that could also be read doctrinally. It is its doctrinal reading that we are interested in here.

I stated that the ambivalence in the print revolves around the question of: Who is constructing the desire for fertility? I suggested it is possible that the print is instructing or indoctrinating the female viewer in the virtues of motherhood. Through the depiction of ideal mothers in the figures of Anne and Mary and through the repetition of baby images in the figure of the infant Jesus and the cherub heads in the clouds, and through the enlarged size of Mary's womb emphasizing her status as *mother* and not as the Virgin, the viewer is bombarded with the message of motherhood as the proper religious path for women. This message has the blessing of God the Father, depicted above, who according to Luther "ordained and instituted marriage". That motherhood as the proper religious path for women is a Protestant message is demonstrated by Luther's insistence on Mary's proper title as "Mother of God" above all titles and in his commentary based on St. Paul's first epistle to Timothy 2: 14-15 where Luther demonstrates his belief that salvation for women lies in their ability to give birth.

As I stated previously, the discipline exercised within this image by the doctrine would also be consistent with Russell's characterization of power as: *power over women*.

Perhaps because of the glances or looks between the three figures in this image: Mary to Jesus; Jesus to Anne and because of the presence of the three generations below the symbol of God the Father, it has been suggested by one art historian that configurations such as these in the *Holy Kinship* series parallel a matriarchal and patriarchal Trinity in the horizontal and vertical axis of the image symbolizing the parentage of Christ.¹⁵⁹ The question of the female figure's public role in these images became problematic for both the Protestant and Roman Church as we shall see in our discussion of Cranach's print, *The Holy Kinship* c. 1509.[figure 16].

St. Elizabeth and the Virgin with John the Baptist [figure 15]

Given I have already outlined the iconographical support for this print read as *The Visitation*, I will limit my comments here to illustrating the importance of nuance in the interpretation of images in relation to texts when both the image and text are about the same subject. First, Cranach's print is not an illustration of the account of the Visitation as we read it in the first chapter of Luke. The print is his interpretation of the account, and in this sense it is quite different from the text.

In fact, there is no moment or verse in the Biblical account that corresponds exactly to Cranach's image. The supernatural moment in the written account occurs in Luke 1:41 when Elizabeth's child leaps in the womb after hearing Mary's greeting upon which Elizabeth is filled with the Holy Spirit, cries out and proceeds to bless Mary etc.

¹⁵⁹Sheingorn discusses this idea in relation to a quote by John Oliver Hand who stated: "The implication is that the grouping of Anne, Virgin, and Child is equal to and sanctified as the more traditional triumvirate of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost." in "Appropriating the Holy Kinship: Gender and Family History" in Interpreting Cultural Symbols: Saint Anne in Late Medieval Society (1990), 176



Saint Joseph and the Virgin with the Child. circa 1470-1480.

[Figure 10]

[Cov. 52]

860

At this point in the account, both infants are still in their mothers' wombs. In his depiction of the figures and in his rendering of landscape, Cranach's image can be read as an interpretation that supernaturalizes the entire account of Luke 1:39-80. By showing Mary with Elizabeth and an infant John the Baptist, Cranach collapses the story of their greeting before either son was born, the birth of John the Baptist, and the reference in verse 80 to his growth and "becoming strong in spirit". The story of *The Visitation* is bracketed by a reference to landscape: "hill country" in the case of verse 39 and "wilderness" in the case of verse 80. Cranach's landscape in figure 15 can be interpreted as a ground that not only references both of these geographies but as a visual field that references a different understanding of time. The appearance of God the Father signals the viewer that what is taking place is a highly significant event, and not simply the gathering of a mother, daughter, and the daughter's baby.

Cranach painted such images of St. Anne, The Virgin and the Child and in my conclusion I will demonstrate how different symbols of the transcendent in Christian iconography signal various levels of importance.

Before leaving this print to consider its relation to Luther's commentary, I wish to point out one more way in which the image differs significantly from the written account in Luke and that is both of the women's mouths are closed. Yet, the story of *The Visitation* contains *The Magnificat*, one of the most important female speaking parts in the New Testament, and as I have already mentioned, it contains Elizabeth's spontaneous blessing of Mary and of the child in her womb. In this way the image misrepresents and reinterprets the written account reducing the women to passive vessels of the sacred.

In accordance with the gospel account of *The Visitation*, Elizabeth and Mary should be considered as progenitors of the sacred within the Christian tradition. The role of women in bringing forth the

sacred or in birthing the sacred is one which Luther took great pains in his commentary to minimize. In his view, Mary held a place of honour and was certainly privileged among all women, but she, like her ancestors before her, "was born in wedlock according to the usual order of nature."¹⁶⁰ While the image may not have harmonized with the Biblical account in regard to motherhood, matriarchy and the sacred, it certainly would have harmonized with Luther's commentary.

The Holy Kinship [figure 16]

According to Sheingorn, the *Holy Kinship* image has a long history of representation in the visual arts beginning with its twelfth century origin in which Christ's matrilineal lineage could be traced through to the late 16th century where with the entrenchment of the Reformation and the negative ruling on the *trinitubium* by the Council of Trent, saw the decline of the *Holy Kinship* as a subject in art.

In Cranach's version of the *Holy Kinship*, we see Mary and her mother Anne, who is holding a book in her left hand and a fussy infant Jesus on her lap, pictured in the centre of the image. They are surrounded by Joseph with hat in hand on Mary's right, Anne's three husbands on her left: Joachim, Cleophas, and Salomas, and her daughters by her second and third marriages and their husbands in the foreground. Apart from Anne, the younger men are engaged in reading books with the older children while the two other daughters tend to the infants and toddlers.

Once a matriarchal representation emphasizing Christ's origins from a female line illustrated in a lushly female atmosphere, where the males were visually sidelined or not even present, *Holy Kinship* imagery gradually shifted to introduce males to a more central space within the image and to a more important role in the action such as the education of the children, which was formerly reserved

¹⁶⁰Luther's Works: Volume One, 192 See my full quotation from this passage in chapter four.



The Holy Kinship

c. 1500 Lucas Cranach

August 14
Ecc. 100

for the mothers. First Joseph and Joachim are introduced, then the other husbands and fathers so that by the early 1500's the entire holy clan is present.

Sheingorn suggests Cranach's 1509 woodcut is an excellent example of the tension in gender shifts characteristic of this subject. Anne still retains responsibility for teaching the Christ child to read but the men are tending to the literacy of the older children. The subject was also used as ideological fodder in the late medieval religious debate between celibacy versus marriage shoring up the Reformation emphasis on marriage and family life. The gradual grouping of the family members into nuclear units as is evidenced in Cranach's print also challenged the concept of matriarchal organization and the idea of the extended family. In this regard the reader is referred to Jacques Callot's print, *The Holy Family at Table* c. 1628 [catalogue no. 39] where *The Holy Kinship* as a subject has been replaced by *The Holy Family*. Cranach's image was eventually reissued in 1518 with an attached song and used as a pedagogical tool to teach school children that reading and writing were necessary for a Christian life.¹⁶¹

Even with the shifts in the image to reflect the new patriarchal organization of the family and the appropriation of the image for Reformation ideologies, the visual rhetoric of a matriarchal Trinity was too strong to be overcome by the Protestant [and Catholic] discourse which deemphasized the role of women as progenitors of the sacred.

Conclusions

With regard to Russell's claim that these images are part of a patriarchal discourse, it may be said that figure 15, Cranach's print read as either *Saint Anne and the Virgin with the Child* or as *St.*

¹⁶¹This summary is based on Sheingorn's "Appropriating the Holy Kinship" (1990) 169-198.

Elizabeth and the Virgin with John the Baptist harmonizes with Reformation commentary on motherhood, though not with Luther's final position on Anne. Cranach's image is the only example from the total sample of sixteen images submitted for analysis which comes closest to demonstrating both of Russell's claims -- namely that it is part of a patriarchal discourse on women and secondly that this discourse asserts itself as *power over women* through the doctrinal rhetoric of the image.¹⁶²

The *Holy Kinship*, despite its makeover for Protestant purposes as discussed above, would have never been supported by Reformation commentary. After Luther broke with the Roman church, he renounced Anne as a legendary figure asking "How many people sacrificed for St. Anne, although it is not certain whether such a person ever existed?"¹⁶³

Summary

In this chapter I compared six images from *Eva/Ave* with the commentary of Martin Luther, identified as a patriarchal discourse within its own terms, to determine if the images supported or challenged that commentary. My analysis indicated that both Durer's and van Leyden's images of *Adam and Eve* could be understood to harmonize with Luther's commentary, while in the section on celibacy and marriage, only Duvet's image of *The Marriage of Adam and Eve* with some qualifications, could be understood to harmonize with his commentary. In the case of the final two images that were analyzed, Cranach's *Saint Anne and the Virgin with the Child/St. Elizabeth and the Virgin with John the Baptist* could be seen to harmonize with Lutheran commentary on motherhood while the *Holy*

¹⁶²Hans Baldung Grien's *Adam and Eve* is a close contender except that Grien's interpretation of the Fall --namely that lust caused man's downfall-- is not supported by Luther's commentary. Lust, in particular male lust, according to Luther, was a result and not a cause of the Fall.

¹⁶³Luther, quoted in Ashley and Sheingorn, "Introduction" 47.

Kinship, even in its patriarchal version could not support Reformation or Catholic commentary in the 16th century.

It may be said that the *The Virgin Enthroned with Eighteen Holy Women* did not support a Lutheran discourse on virginity while supporting a historical Catholic commentary on this topic. The use of this image in her exhibition emphasizes one of the difficulties with Russell's claim that the images may be seen as part of a patriarchal discourse on women. I wish to point out that 16th century discourses on celibacy and marriage, women and sin, and motherhood, matriarchy and the sacred were not unified. The implication of Russell's claim glosses over that fact. Further it glosses over the important dissonances of the images with the texts and with each other. Despite her statement in the beginning of the catalogue, that "images [are] ... a powerful mode of discourse in their own right [and] need to be examined in their own terms", her analysis of the images fails to do this. While her claim has merit, I have tried to show that it is misleading and oversimplified. Further, it needs to be demonstrated rather than simply claimed.

Having said that, four of the six images analyzed in this chapter, may be seen to harmonize with or support the patriarchal discourse of Reformation commentary that was contemporary to their historical period. What is ironic about these findings is that the Reformation commentary on women and sin, with which the images have been shown to harmonize, conceived women's nature to be more fully human i.e. included reason, than for example Catholic Renaissance commentary which followed Aristotle's notion of woman. Had I used examples of the latter commentary to test Russell's claim, the images would have conflicted with, rather than support the discourse.

Of the remaining two images, one image may be seen to challenge the Protestant discourse about virginity, while supporting the Catholic discourse. And finally, one image may be seen to support neither a patriarchal discourse imposed on it nor the final positions

of either the Protestant and Catholic churches on the discourse of a matriarchal genealogy for Christ.

4 THE EXHIBITION AS A MODE OF MEANING

In this chapter I will examine viewer-response theory as a method for critiquing not just individual images but *the conceptual frame* in which images work. In the field of Religious Studies, this type of examination might be useful for a study of the use of masks or costumes within a particular ritual, or for an analysis of an altarpiece within the setting of a sanctuary. The emphasis here is on the importance of context as a mediator of meaning or how the image works within its larger field of visual culture. How does this field contribute to the interplay of meanings between image and art; function and context?

(I) THE RELIGIOUS IMAGE IN THE MUSEUM SETTING

When a religious image is contextualized by a curatorial strategy to go beyond its historical function as a doctrinal or devotional image to become an artifact of culture, an objet d'art, the installation of the image in the museum setting presses it into a new terrain of meaning. Here the image's visuality, that is its status and function as a thing to be looked at, is intended to overshadow its function as a religious image. Frames, didactic panels of scholarly text beside each image, and thematic presentation all combine to construct the religious image as a work of art. But does the religious work of art ever lose its rhetoric as a devotional/doctrinal image? In the competition for visual attention which speaks the loudest? The image? The museum? or the discursive activity of the beholder?

As a way of organizing this discussion, I will return to the three questions I posed in my introduction. (i) Given Russell's statement that "images, as a powerful mode of discourse need to be examined in their own terms", why was there so much text beside each print? This may seem an innocuous question at first but in an exhibition

where the interplay of visual and written discourses within culture form the basis of the curatorial strategy, the visual treatment of *images* and *texts* demands a mode of presentation that will somehow disrupt the way the typical viewer perceives these two categories, i.e. as ontologically and epistemologically identical. In rereading Russell's quote within the context of her catalogue, it seems that what she means by "their own terms" is the methodological practices which exist within the discipline of Art History.

In my many visits to this exhibition it was clear that some viewers were missing Russell's contextualization of the material due to the amount of reading required by the presentation. In the installation of her exhibition, Russell attempted a visual mix of images and words, when at times, the commentary on the image actually extended beyond the bottom margin of the print. The result was a traditional art historical exhibition with lengthy didactic panels.

Fewer images, images unaccompanied by individual texts, and excerpts from the written commentaries on women from the same time period, might have better represented Russell's point concerning the inter-relationships between images and texts. It would have also allowed viewers to draw their own conclusions about what these relationships might be.

The exhibition, through the close proximity of prints which represented the same or similar theme, attempted to convey the idea of a visual discourse among images. The method however was not always successful because the subject matter that fell under the same theme was too varied. For example in the section on The Virgin and Saints, the multiple subjects included: *The Birth of the Virgin*, *The Marriage of the Virgin*, *The Annunciation*, *The Holy Kinship*, and *The Mount of Calvary*, some of which consisted of only one print.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶⁴ The method worked best when for example there were there were multiple prints of the same subject allowing the viewer an opportunity to read the images intertextually i.e. with each other.

The most successful example of a visual discourse in the exhibition was the installation of the prints of Eve, since a number of excellent prints of the subject, *Adam and Eve*, could be lined up in a row for comparison and easily read, both individually and intertextually as a visual discourse.¹⁶⁵ Again texts between Russell's images could have been eliminated. Rather than reinforce the traditional art historical method of commenting on each image, Russell's own commentary could have been restricted to her observations on the confluences and dissonances between historical religious commentary and historical religious imagery.

Eva/Ave as an exhibition which demonstrates the new curatorial practice of analyzing artwork as historical documents or artifacts of culture acknowledged the religious origin of the prints while falling short of incorporating their historical *function* as part of the visual presentation of the material. As part of a viewer-oriented approach, reproductions of the images could have been inserted into a set constructed to approximate a historical domestic space used for private worship or to simulate one of the travelling altars referred to on pages 97 and 103 in the catalogue. Such a visual context which signifies both the function of the print and the viewer as user would have broadened the art historical discourse into a cultural one.

(ii) Given the contemporary nature of Russell's thesis, why were the galleries in which the prints were mounted, coded to create the atmosphere of a 16th century state room? Was this a simple effect to give the prints a simulated historical context or was something else going on?

¹⁶⁵One of the more successful treatments of analyzing imagery as a visual discourse on historical social conditions has been demonstrated by Pamela Sheingorn in her essay, "Appropriating the Holy Kinship: Gender and Family History" In this article, the author "traces the career of the concept of the image" as a way of reading the transformation of ideologies in medieval culture.

At the time of my viewing the visual coding of the rooms seemed a purposeful method to persuade the viewer of the validity of Russell's approach to the prints as historical documents. That the colours of the galleries have remained the same since Russell's exhibition suggests that the prints had to work within the confines of a visual rhetoric that was pre-established by the constructed corporate identity of the National Gallery. The rhetoric which codes the prints and drawings galleries as stately and historical does nothing to disrupt viewer expectations of a traditional art historical presentation of images. Whatever visually innovative approaches Russell attempted through the organization of her material, they were largely sabotaged by the traditional and conservative visual coding of the rooms.

(iii) If all of the prints in the exhibition were evidence of Russell's thesis of a "patriarchal discourse on women which often asserts itself as *power over women*", why then, did I find some of the images pleasurable?

I will discuss this response in relation to Rembrandt van Rijn's print, *The Virgin and Child with the Cat and Snake*. (Etching, dated 1654, see figure 17) In this print, Mary is shown as a loving mother in humble clothing and surroundings. While there is a substantial chair available for her to sit on, she remains seated on a cushion on the floor. She is watched from outside by a man who may be Joseph, and who is partially hidden in a pose which suggests a reluctance to be seen. The only visual details the artist provides which point the viewer beyond human relationships are the lines which emanate from the heads of the two foreground figures. The circle/halo which overlaps with the window panes may also be a reference to the transcendent. Its positioning, in the window frame, suggests a dimension of dual existence, one which is physical and another which is beyond the physical. The foot of the Virgin on the snake refers to Genesis 3:15 where a Mariological interpretation of this passage credits the Virgin with crushing the serpent. As Russell



Amberg 1694.

The Virgin and Child with the Cow and Donkey

1034, Lombard

(Figure 11)

[cat. 49]

states in her commentary on this image, "[Rembrandt], no doubt, understood the meaning of the motif [crushing the serpent] and did her a kind of honour in adapting it here."¹⁶⁶

In the exhibition this image was flanked by Andrea Mantegna's print, *The Virgin and Child* (figure 18) and Albrecht Durer's *The Virgin with the Swaddled Child* (figure 4) so that the viewer is able to compare Rembrandt's print with the similarities of the former one and the differences with the latter. The visual references to the transcendent are minimized in each of these three prints so that it is the mother's relationship with her child, *qua* mother, which is emphasized and reinforced by the proximity of the images to each other.

With regard to Rembrandt's print, let's assume for the sake of argument that it can be demonstrated that the print is part of a patriarchal discourse. In accordance with this claim, women should not feel pleasure when looking at male-produced images of women.¹⁶⁷ Those who do are thought to somehow be seduced by the image when they ought to feel alienated or indignant. Pearce has suggested that the pleasure women feel in patriarchally inscribed imagery has to do with " 'a desire to see, know and become like an idealized feminine other' " as a way of compensating for what they lack in themselves.¹⁶⁸

One possible explanation of pleasure in responding to Rembrandt's print and to the Mantegna which it borrows heavily from, may have less to do with a desire to see, know and become like an idealized mother figure, than with a recognition, a mirroring, and a desire to re-experience the bonds of intimacy one feels with her/his own

¹⁶⁶Russell, 98

¹⁶⁷ See Lynne Pearce, Woman, Image, Text (1991) 17-18

¹⁶⁸Jackie Stacey as quoted in Pearce, 21



The Virgin and Child

c. 1480-1490 J. Mantegna

(Figure 18)

[cat. 40]

children. In my response to this image, I re-experience the love I feel for my children *by looking at* "Mary" lovingly holding her baby, not once but in each of the three prints. My response mimics the response of the female figure(s) in the image towards her child.¹⁶⁹ In her section on voyeurism, the glance, and the gaze, in *Reading Rembrandt*, Bal has suggested that a representation of viewing does affect actual viewing.¹⁷⁰ Why wouldn't the repetition of figures carrying out a similar action also influence the viewer to desire the same activity so long as the viewer perceives the activity in the image as appealing. So much feminist research in the area of image-response has focused on the production of static subject positions for female and male viewers rather than on the potential for action that desire, activated by the images, generates in the viewer..

My response to Rembrandt's print reduces my concern with the gender of the artist, *in this particular image*, principally because Rembrandt's rendering of Mary subverts the *visual codes* of patriarchy.¹⁷¹ As well, the theme acknowledges the important role of a woman (and not a supernatural being) in redeeming humankind.

That Rembrandt's interpretation acknowledges this perception of Mary is evident from the visual rhetoric of his print which portrays her as a poor woman like the many he encountered on the streets of Holland during his lifetime. The print gives a Mariological interpretation to Genesis 3:15 which, as might be expected, is severely opposed by Luther in his commentary on this verse. He labels such an interpretation as "idolatrous".

We do not want to take away from Mary any honor which is her due; but we want to remove the idolatry contained in the statement that by giving birth to Christ, Mary has

¹⁶⁹That viewer response can mirror response visualized within an image is discussed in great detail by James Marrow in "Symbol and meaning in northern European art ..." (1986)

¹⁷⁰Bal, 143

¹⁷¹Recall the four questions raised in chapter three as part of my image analysis

destroyed all the power of Satan. If this is a true statement, does not the same honor belong to all the other women who preceded Mary in the same line? In fact, a portion of this glory will belong also to their husbands and to all the ancestors of Mary. For if she had not had these, she herself would not have existed either, since *she was born in wedlock according to the usual order of nature*.

... Therefore let the Blessed Virgin keep her place of honor. Among all the women of the world she has this privilege from God, that as a virgin she gave birth to the Son of God. But this must not be permitted to deprive her Son of the glory of our redemption and deliverance.¹⁷²

Luther's commentary, which as I stated previously understands itself to be patriarchal by its own terms, does not support the discourse on woman as represented in Rembrandt's print. Even though Luther considers Mary to be privileged, in his view, she is still an ordinary mortal since her birth was no different from that of any other human. In this comparison, we have an excellent example of how the visual and written discourses on the same theme contradict each other.

It has been suggested in critiques of Foucault that the basic physical impulse toward spontaneity and pleasure might become the locus of resistance to the imposition of discipline on the body.¹⁷³ Such an analysis would be an interesting strategy to bring to the study of ecstatic response within religious pilgrimages, or to religious statues, relics etc. especially in those religions which are heavily text-based or have strict behavioural codes around sacred laws. In *Eva/Ave* the theme of ecstatic response and the body is suggested in Durer's print of *The Elevation of Saint Mary Magdalene* c. 1504/5 (figure 19). The idea of bodily pleasure as a *subversive response* to

¹⁷²Luther's Works: Volume One, 192

¹⁷³This critique of Foucault is cited and rejected by Bartky in her paper, "Foucault, Femininity, and the Modernization of Patriarchal Power". I disagree with her however and believe the idea has some merit. Pleasure, reformulated in this way, has the potential to resolve some of the inherent difficulties in the theory of aesthetics. See Carolyn Korsmeyer, "Pleasure: Reflections on Aesthetics and Feminism" in The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism 51:2 Spring 1993 199-206



The Elevation of Saint Mary Magdalene c.1504/1505 A. Dürer

(figure 15)
[cat. 57]

the disciplinary power of images should not be overlooked by feminist theorists.

The case study that this paper represents is an example of an analysis of prints based on viewer-response theory. Viewer-response theory is based on our sense of connection to the world. It is a model for scholarship grounded in a more holistic approach both toward the viewer/scholar and to the material studied. In the case of scholarship, both the scholar and the material studied exist within contexts. In this kind of criticism, the contexts are acknowledged and a subject to subject relationship replaces the subject to object one. In the case of Religious Studies, viewer-response theory can provide new insights into religious works of art or artifacts but it can also provide insights into the average believer when there is cause to think that the type and function of visual material studied may have been or is widely used within a large population.

While it has existed for a long time, the relationship between imagery and its power to effect viewer response is not well understood within the field of Religious Studies outside of research on extreme reactions such as iconoclasm and iconophilia.¹⁷⁴ Response which is not manifested by extremes, but is culturally and historically typical is just beginning to be studied by art historians. "Reception aesthetics" is an area that art historians are just beginning to investigate. It flows out of the recent shifts in their discipline to "historicize art" which refers to the practice of relating specific qualities of a given art work back into the social and political world from where it originated. The history of forms becomes an ally in this process but is no longer considered the central focus in this type of interpretation. Ironically, Russell's exhibition fell short of acknowledging the contemporary function of the prints as "Art" within the larger metatext of the museum due to

¹⁷⁴These areas need to be revisited using gender as a category of analysis, as I briefly demonstrated in chapter three.

her desire to foreground the prints as historical artifacts. A commentary on the prints as both 'art and artifact' in the introductory panel to the exhibition may have helped to clarify her approach. Nonetheless, sociological and political claims made within the field of art history call for the need of greater interdisciplinary dialogue to help sharpen the accuracy of this type of approach.

The study of imagery has relevance for Religious Studies when figures in imagery are perceived by viewers as gods/goddesses with power. Both non-literary traditions and the study of ritual/imagery within the "higher" religions demand attention to reveal a broader understanding of religion. The corpus of work which makes up the exhibition *Eva/Ave* among other insights, gives scholars a visual representation of how the transcendent was imagined by different cultures within Europe at a critical period in the history of the Christian church. If we think of prints as a type of cultural map, the exhibition also gives us an insight into the influence of ideology [patriarchy being only one example] on belief, an issue which is a 20th century concern for many religions

More broadly, meaning production in contemporary culture is largely accomplished through images, yet by and large, audiences remain image illiterate, while scholarship continues to give primary attention to texts. As Carol Christ has argued, the bias towards text, based on an emphasis of Biblical and Christian theological categories, has shaped the field of Religious Studies.¹⁷⁵ This thesis is an example of the kind of work that may be accomplished within our discipline if we are open to the data of the visual world.

¹⁷⁵Carol P. Christ, "Toward a Paradigm Shift in the Academy and in Religious Studies' in The Impact of Feminist Research in the Academy, ed. Christie Farnham. (1987) 68

CONCLUSIONS

When I set out to compare a sample of the prints from *Eva/Ave* with the written commentary of their historical period to determine the degree of agreement between the two, it did not occur to me that I might find a contradiction between the text which constitutes the title of the print, and the visual representation which constitutes its image. However, this is clearly the problem that arises in the case of Cranach's print, *Saint Anne and the Virgin with the Child*, c. 1513 (figures 3 and 15 of this study). While it is beyond the scope of this thesis to identify the origins of this mistake, I will use the example of this error to make a case for the primacy of image interpretation based on the rhetoric of visual forms.¹⁷⁶ In order to state this argument, I will read Cranach's print intertextually¹⁷⁷ with black and white copies of three of his paintings all ostensibly about the subject of "The Virgin and Child with St. Anne".¹⁷⁸

The three paintings I will discuss in relation to Cranach's print are titled as follows:

1. Virgin and Child with St. Anne c. 1520 [catalogue no. 105, *The Paintings of Lucas Cranach*, 1978] (figure 20)
2. Virgin and Child with St. Anne seated Outdoors c. 1515-16 [catalogue no. 67, *The Paintings of Lucas Cranach*, 1978] (figure 21)

¹⁷⁶The reinterpretation of these images is the subject of my upcoming article, "Revisiting the Visitation".

¹⁷⁷This term is highly problematic when applied to a reading of images in relation to other images. Clearly a new term must be found.

¹⁷⁸These copies are taken from Friedlander and Rosenberg's book on Cranach as cited in my bibliography.

3. Virgin and Child with St. Anne c. 1515-16 [catalogue no. 79, *The Paintings of Lucas Cranach, 1978*] (figure 22)

I will begin with a comparison of Cranach's print to figure 20. I suggest that this image has also been wrongly identified and despite what its title suggests, it is a painted version of the subject, *St. Elizabeth and the Virgin with John the Baptist* (The Visitation). In comparing the print with the painting we note the same volume evident in the Virgin's mid-body signalled by the highlights in her robe and by the light and dark arcs which describe the area of her womb. In the print, these curves are depicted by cross-hatching. While the Child in the painting looks at Mary, he does not reach for her but instead holds a small piece of fruit, which may signal a reference to Jesus as the "fruit of the womb" [Luke 1:42]. As with the print, something more than a gathering of holy personages is occurring as signalled by the inclusion of the three putti which hold up the drapery behind the figures. Like the cherubim poking out of the clouds in Cranach's print, the putti are a type of visual rhetoric symbolizing the transcendent that the artist has employed to portray the idea that a special event is taking place.¹⁷⁹ In this painting, Cranach has collapsed the story of *The Visitation* much in the same way as I described for figure 15 in chapter three.

The remaining two images, *Virgin and Child with St. Anne seated Outdoors* and *Virgin and Child with St. Anne* (figures 21 and 22) in my view have been properly identified, and, as one might expect the rhetoric of their visual forms is substantially different from the two images discussed above. Of prime importance to the identification of the Child as Jesus in both of these paintings, and in contradistinction to Cranach's print and figure 20, where the Child is John the Baptist, Mary reaches for her child and the child reaches for its mother. While, the volume of Mary's robe, another indicator of

¹⁷⁹As we also saw in Durer's print, *The Birth of the Virgin* c. 1503/4, the advent of the transcendent is marked by the visual rhetoric of a heavenly frontier symbolized by clouds and angels.



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Virgin and Child with St. Anne
Sainte Anne trinitaire
Die hl. Anna Selbdritt

c. 1570, Lucas Cranach

(figure 20)

1020

the identity of the Child, is certainly not a question in figure 22, it is not possible to see her robe in figure 21. However the absence of the putti in this scene, along with the detailed landscape, suggest that the gathering in figure 21 does not depict a supernatural event.

In figure 21 the absence of the putti is instrumental to identifying the three figures as stated in the title of the painting. In figure 22, something different is happening. Here the invisible presence of the transcendent has been symbolized by the visual indicator of round discs or halos. The holy personages of the Virgin, the Child, and St. Anne are signalled by their respective halos, with each new generation's smaller than the one before. However the three figures are set against the background of what? Aside from a few stones visible at the bottom of the painting, there is no suggestion of landscape. Could this be heaven? There are no clouds to suggest a different frontier has been crossed or the advent of the transcendent. Perhaps the painting is a devotional image as discussed in chapter two of this study. When we compare this painting to figure 21, which was made approximately at the same time, one may conclude that the symbol of the halo and the lack of detailed background have been combined to suggest a different aspect of the transcendent. These different aspects translate into different visual forms that undoubtedly express a Christian hierarchy of meaning. Their inclusion and exclusion are critical to the subject matter of the image as originally intended.

It is interesting to speculate when and why this error could have occurred. What may have caused the original confusion around the identification of the figures of St. Anne and St Elizabeth could have centred on the question of the model's face used for these two figures. Cranach (or his assistant) appears to have used the same model for both Anne and Elizabeth in figures 20 and 21. I am less certain about figure 22, but the face for the figure of Anne appears to be the same as the other two.



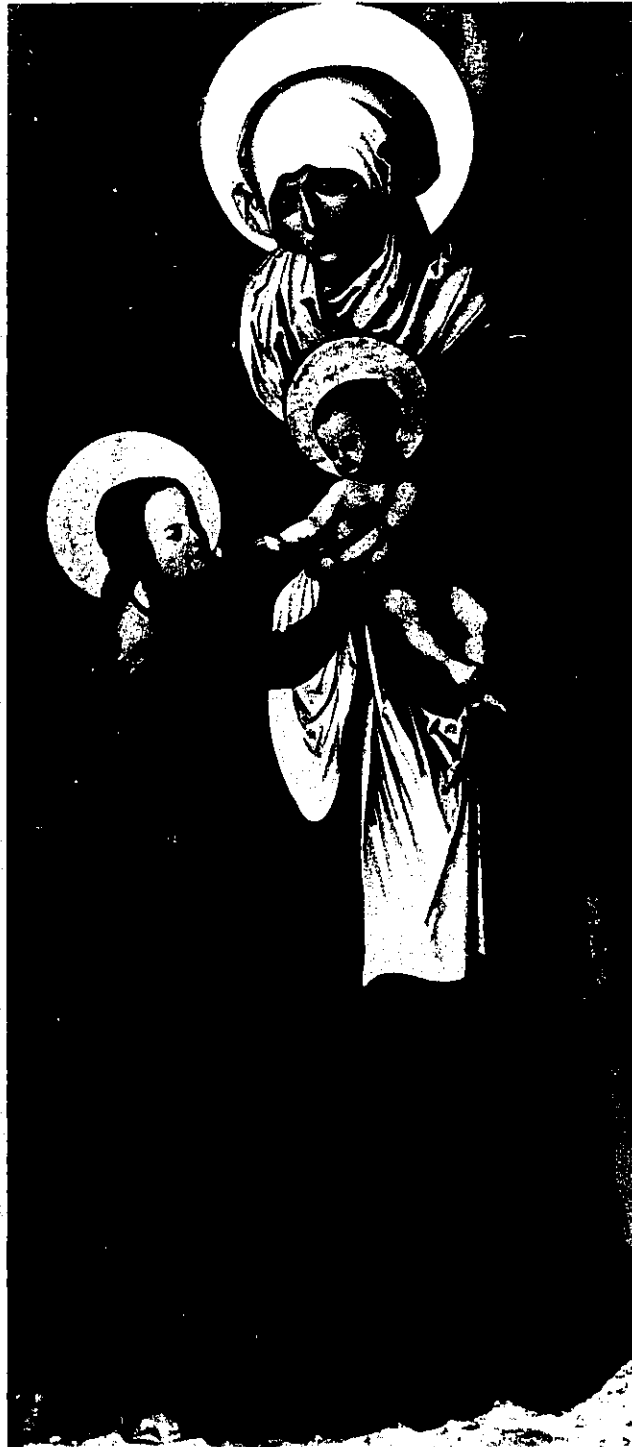
67

Virgin and Child with St Anne seated Outdoors
Sainte Anne trinitaire dans un paysage
Die hl. Anna Selbdritt in Landschaft

C1515-16 Lucas Cranach

(figure 21)

103a



C1515-16 Lum. C. 11. 12

79

Virgin and Child with St Anne

Sainte Anne trinitaire

Die hl. Anna Selbdritt

(figure 22)

1036

Another possible explanation is a deliberate misnaming of the images by Cranach or his son, Lucas Cranach the Younger, an image-maker of Protestant propaganda, as a way of demystifying the content of *The Visitation* story. As support for this explanation, Cranach the Elder's later paintings of the association of John the Baptist as a child and the boy Jesus, c. 1534-35, include the Virgin but drop the figure of Elizabeth altogether. As a Lutheran, Cranach may have shifted his interest in this subject from the mothers to the boys to reflect the renewed focus on Christ and his defenders rather than on the female saints who had by then lost their venerated status in the Protestant church.

The question of confluences and dissonances between images made about the same subject has much to teach us about "images, as a powerful mode of discourse [that] need to be examined in their own terms." As I have demonstrated in this inter-image reading of Cranach's four representations of "The Virgin and Child with St. Anne", theorists are not yet sufficiently conversant in the rhetoric of visual forms to go "beyond the word-image opposition". An expansion of visual theory as a mode of metaphoric thought with its own epistemological constructs and categories must be undertaken if students and audiences of visual data are to become image literate. This theory must of course include the ideological grounding of any such visual forms.

APPENDIX A: EXPLANATION OF BAL'S KEY TERMS*

Artist/Author: In reading a work of art, the artist is more important as a cultural text than as a historical reality. The artist constitutes the works and the response to them. This view de-emphasizes the art historical preoccupation with artistic intent.

Discursive Activity:

The active circulation of prominent discourses in the culture at large amongst the individuals who live in that culture. Discursivity in visual art has been defined as a mode of representation where it is contrasted with figurality, the latter being a sense of formness and materiality while the former is understood to be propositional content.

Focalization: In Bal's work, focalization replaces the phrase, "point of view". Focalization is the relationship between the elements of the fabula (events) presented in the story, and the perspective from which they are presented. Focalization is already an interpretation, a subjectivized content. The same object or event can be differently interpreted according to different focalizers.

Framing: is a semiotic activity which predisposes the reading of images. Framing includes the notion of context but considers context to be as fluid and therefore subject to the same difficulty of interpretation as any other image/text.

*Most of the material included in this section are actual quotes taken from Reading Rembrandt (1991). Since the material is a compilation of statements scattered over a number of pages, many of them not sequential, the reader is referred to Bal's "Index of Terms", p.488, for follow-up to the abbreviated list given above.

The Gaze is a viewing attitude or mode of looking proposed but not enforced by a work of art. The gaze is an attitude that conflates model and figure and is encouraged more strongly in work that obliterates the labour of representation ex. photography or highly realistic painting. Such work constructs the viewer as voyeur.

The Glance is a mode of looking which emphasizes the viewer's own position as viewer through the traces of the labour of representation which focalizes the work in specific ways.

Intertextuality: Presupposes an element of discourse A detail in a work may bring along a whole other text/image. One can read intertextually within an image or intertextually between images or between images and texts.

Narrative Reading is contrasted with iconographical reading. It is a reading rather than a recognition of a narrative structure in an image without assuming any pre-texts for that image. It can be done in conjunction with reading for the theme, whenever the theme is a story. It is a visual reading based on the signs of a non-visual but equally non-verbal manner of representation.

Narratology: Visual epistemological claim. Narrative theory. Bal juxtaposes narratology with iconography as two conflicting modes of reading imagery but which have a bearing on one another.

Reading: an act of reception, description and interpretation. A viewer reframes the work of art according to contingent circumstances. Reading is a socially framed effect of meaning, that is to say it is a strategy whether the interpreter acknowledges this approach or not. Reading is a type of code.

Reception: An event or moment in time when a work of art is received by the viewer. "Reception aesthetics" is a new art historical term which acknowledges the cultural circumstances at the moment the work was made but also the moment in which it is

received. "Production and reception effect the historical transformation of art. The contemporary interpreter is influenced not only by the 'historical succession' of earlier interpreters but also his/her own experience of art "¹⁸¹

Response: Bal's first position on response would be that the artwork itself is a mode of response to particular cultural questions or issues. Response signifies a reception-oriented cultural critique where the focus is on the interaction between the visual and verbal "behaviour" of those who deal with, process, or consume works of art.

Retrospective Fallacy: It consists of the projection of an accomplished, singular and named character-image on previous textual [and visual] elements which lead to the construction of that character. In the case of the visualization of the first man and first woman, the accomplished characters of Adam and Eve, who appear at the very end of the story of the Fall, are projected by the artist and the viewer onto their previous stages of particularization.

Rhetoric: As a representational strategy, rhetoric shapes meaning by reinscribing the attitudes towards the subject matter dominant in a particular culture back into the actual visual rendering of the figures or scenes in images. It is this visual rhetoric of the image which assists in structuring the response of the viewer not only to the subject matter in the image but to these issues as they play out in real life. Bal also uses rhetoric to mean exaggerated form. For example, photography may offer us images from real life but it does so within a rhetoric of realism, realism being the form through which photographic information is communicated.

¹⁸¹ Hans Belting, The End of the History of Art? Trans. Christopher Wood (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1987) 30

Sign: A sign is not a thing but an event. The meaning of a sign is neither pre-established and fixed, nor purely subjective and idiosyncratic.

Viewer: The spectator within or outside of an image. In viewing which is internal to the image, a represented viewer partakes in the viewing action of a represented scene. In viewing which is external to the image, the spectator is positioned or addressed in a limited number of ways by the image.

Visuality: The internalized social construction of vision.

APPENDIX B

QUESTIONS FOR STUDY

RE: THE PATRIARCHAL CODING OF IMAGERY

1) Where is the look of the figures directed?

The look describes the way the eyes of the figure or figures have been depicted by the artist. It is important because it assists the viewer in interpreting the different points of view or attitude of each figure within the narrative of the image. If it is an image of a single figure, the look can tell us whether she is self-involved or viewer-involved. It is also important for discerning the different modes of address the image can suggest to the viewer. In images of female nudes, for example, the look can suggest the figure's degree of willingness or unwillingness to be seen by the viewer. In images of women by men, it has been suggested that there is a link between the look of a woman and her sexuality, of the failure of the look and her asexuality: averted eyes may suggest sexual purity and chastity; the figure's direct look to the viewer, as a desiring gaze.¹⁸²

2) The treatment of nudity; how is it handled?

Given that so many representations of women by men depict the female figure without clothes, the visual treatment of nudity is a critical category in this discussion. There are many ways that female nudity has been treated by male artists. I will describe three which are relevant to our discussion of images of women made in the 16th century: (i) to enhance heroic, mythical or suprahuman meaning in the female figure; (ii) to construct the figure as a scopophilic object for the viewer; (iii) to suggest a *double entendre* of heroic or chaste meaning and the simultaneous seduction of viewers internal or external to the image.

¹⁸²Linda C. Hult's, "Durer's Lucretia", 226.

3) Gender Coding

The over feminization of female figures for the historical period of patriarchy we are investigating has been described as: passivity, weakness, and hysteria.¹⁸³ While the male artist cannot help but depict a female figure as "other" with all the psychological complications this implies, the question remains whether the female figure is a: (i) caricature; (ii) portrait; or (iii) an attempt to depict the full humanity of the woman. Given that portraits of individuals usually but not always are portrayed within a rhetoric of idealism, in either of the first two cases, neither figure is an authentic representation of an actual woman. It has been suggested by some feminist writers on Rembrandt that he attained the last category in some of his images of women.¹⁸⁴

4) What is the female figure's public role in the image?

What is the relationship of the female figure to her surroundings? Is she the protagonist? an active character? If she is the centre of visual attention, is she on display, subject to the internal or external viewer's gaze? Is she portrayed as defeated? demure? triumphant? How the female figure relates to her surroundings in the image will in part determine how the viewer has been positioned by the image, and how the image structures response.

¹⁸³ Hults, 210

¹⁸⁴ Hults, 236

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