Re-Appropriating Female Identity: Taking Back the Buffybot and Other Bionic Females

Kim Kirkpatrick

In *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, the vampire Spike commissions the construction of a sex toy, a robot in the likeness of Buffy. The Buffybot is so lifelike, it fools even Buffy's friends. When Buffy meets her own image, she is shocked and disappointed that her friends could not tell the difference between the shallow, unnaturally cheerful machine and her own complex, very human self. In an odd twist, however, Buffy disguises herself as the Buffybot in order to obtain information from Spike. Rather than destroying the fake Buffy, Willow reprograms it, replacing the sex subprograms with slayer moves so the Buffybot can kill vampires and other demons. This re-appropriation of the Buffybot by the female community gives Buffy the opportunity to control not only the formation of her own Self but also her community's definition of her image. The feminine, marginal community, represented in this example by Buffy and Willow, deconstructs its own docile body defined and created by a patriarchal society and then rebuilds that body in order to explore and express female desire, as Buffy does when she pretends to be the Buffybot. Other fictional women, like Deirdre of C.L. Moore's —No Woman Born‖ and Molly of William Gibson's *Neuromancer*, use technology to take control of the body and their public image, thereby defining their own desire while undermining the patriarchal male gaze. For them, visibility is no longer a trap as they break through the Foucauldian doctrine of the societal prison.

Allowing a mechanical version of a woman or a technologically-altered woman to function as a character allows the human woman to assume a critical, exterior view of herself as she looks upon the cyborg or robot version. She is able to see and identify multiple versions of herself, which is likely to throw her into an initial state of confusion as she suddenly finds herself in a situation similar to Lacan's infant looking into the mirror. According to Mary Klages (2001) of the University of Colorado at Boulder, —Lacan . . . says that the process of becoming an adult, a ‗self,' is the process of trying to fix, to stabilize, to stop the chain of signifiers so that stable meaning — including the meaning of ‗I' — becomes possible.‖ As an adult, however, confronted by a three-dimensional cyborg or robotic version of herself, the woman discovers an unstable meaning of self; she begins to understand the —I‖ that others see and is able, therefore, to begin to differentiate between the identity that she believes she has created for herself and the separate identity which society recognizes her to be. The woman is able to watch while society interacts with her cyborg version, responds to her version, and makes assumptions about that version. Because that cyborg represents her and becomes her image, she responds to the image she sees, but she also distances herself from it, recognizing that she has become her own specular object and that she now is conscious of her performative identity. She sees how her identity is variable and plural, encompassing her view of her self, her view of

her image, and others' views of herself and of her image. Acknowledging that she has a flexible identity can give her an advantage over patriarchal attitudes that want to stabilize and define her as an Other who is somehow less.

So many Buffys

In Joss Whedon's *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, Warren's creation of his own sexbot, April, and of Spike's Buffybot is a restructuring of the Pygmalion story of man engendering a perfectly docile female. These bots become the representatives of femininity and womanhood approved by the patriarchy. Each robot has been specifically programmed for Spike or for Warren. In Whedon's world, however, the male characters would prefer real women, as Warren and Spike each treat his bot as a stand-in for non-patriarchally-approved women: when Warren finds that he prefers his human girlfriend, Katrina, he tries to run away from April, simply abandoning her. Spike would much prefer to be with the real Buffy and, because he recognizes that Buffy would never deign to be with him, he substitutes an image, the Buffybot. As the robots interact with others, they accrue identity, not through themselves, but because others assign them identity. Others see April as a clingy, overly possessive girlfriend abandoned by her boyfriend. She elicits sympathy even as she tries to attack Katrina and fight Buffy. Whereas Spike has assigned the Buffybot an identity as sex toy, he recognizes her limitations as a glorified computer and expects nothing more from it than following the scripts or programming assigned to it. However, when the Buffybot is confronted by Xander, Anya, and later Willow, it is assigned human identity based upon how Buffy's friends interpret and recognize the real Buffy. The Buffybot, therefore, functioning as she does within a social reality, begins, through no effort of her own, to take on a specific identity that represents and interprets the real Buffy's perceived identity. While recognizing that Buffy is acting oddly, her friends do not doubt her identity. Based upon the Buffybot's behavior, Xander and the others think Buffy is grieving over her mother's death or is crazy, but they never doubt that this is Buffy. When Buffy is faced with the specular image of her robot, she immediately recognizes that it does not have her personality: —At least it's not a very good copy,‖ she says. Her friends still express surprise, and they wonder if both Buffys could be real.

> BUFFYBOT: Say, look at you. You look just like me! We're very pretty.
> WILLOW: Two of them!
> XANDER: Hey, I know this! They're both Buffy!
> BUFFY: (annoyed at him) No, she's a robot. She acts just like that girlfriend-bot that Warren guy made. You guys couldn't tell me apart from a robot?
> BUFFYBOT: Oh, I don't think I'm a robot.
> ANYA: She's very well done. (Espenson)

In previous episodes, Xander had been split into two real Xanders and another Willow had crossed over from a parallel universe so that two Willows existed at

the same time. Why not two Buffys? Buffy‘s friends are confused by the reality of the two Buffys because they cannot see much difference between Buffy and the Buffybot; they see a stable, fixed identity. Yes, the Buffybot acts oddly, but still within the parameters of their experience with Buffy; yes, the Buffybot has sex with Spike, but Buffy had a sexual relationship with vampire Angel, so this behavior is still within her friends‘ expectations. The challenge that Buffy faces is making her friends differentiate clearly and easily between her own identity and the identity they are socially creating for the Buffybot. When Buffy understands that her friends could interact, converse, and fight beside the Buffybot and not recognize that it was not Buffy, then Buffy must realize that the Buffybot represents more than just a physical image of the Slayer; the Buffybot mirrors her own identity and represents what her friends see when they gaze upon Buffy‘s identity.

Buffy‘s first desire is to decommission the robot. Willow, however, recognizes the usefulness of having an image, another identity, that can fill in and represent the real self occasionally. She commandeers the Buffybot and uses it later as a substitute Slayer when Buffy dies. Buffy, on the other hand, commandeers the identity of the Buffybot in order to gather information from Spike. The real self takes on the identity of the image. With Willow and Buffy both finding other uses for the Buffybot or its image, they are taking the control of the Buffybot away from its patriarchally-inscribed role and modifying it to their own purposes and desires. The female community takes back the identity and the power of a female image. Buffy imitates a software program as she imitates the Buffybot performing Buffy. Spike is fooled, believing he is talking with the Buffybot:

> BUFFYBOT: Spike! You‘re covered in sexy wounds.… I fell down and got confused. Willow fixed me. She's gay.
> SPIKE: Will fixed you? I thought they'd melt you into scrap.
> BUFFYBOT: They were confused too. (smiles) Do you wanna ravage me now?
> SPIKE: (weakly) Give us a minute. Got some bones need mending.
> BUFFYBOT: Why did you let that Glory hurt you?
> SPIKE: She wanted to know who the key was.
> BUFFYBOT: Oh, well, I can tell her, and then you'll — (turns to leave)
> SPIKE: No! (coughs as she turns back) You can't ever. Glory never finds out.
> BUFFYBOT: Why?
> SPIKE: (quietly) ‘Cause Buffy ... the other, not so pleasant Buffy ... anything happened to Dawn, it'd destroy her. I couldn't live, her bein' in that much pain. Let Glory kill me first. Nearly bloody did.
> She frowns slightly, then leans forward and kisses him softly on the lips. Spike starts to kiss her back, frowns and pulls away. *Shot of her looking at him.* Spike stares at her in amazement. She turns to walk away.

> SPIKE: And my robot?
> BUFFY: (turns back) The robot is gone. The robot was gross and obscene.
> SPIKE: (lowers his head) It wasn't supposed to —
> BUFFY: Don't. That ... thing, it ... it wasn't even real.… What you did, for me, and Dawn ... that was real (Espenson).

While denying the usefulness of the robotic version of herself, Buffy has found the usefulness of a variable identity by masquerading to fulfill the expectation of her audience. Not only was she able to elicit information from Spike while she performed an alternate identity, but by switching to her preferred self identity, she was able to express her gratitude to Spike while reaffirming the importance and control of her own reality and identity. Additionally, she was able to prove that Spike, unlike her friends, could differentiate between the Buffybot and herself. He, at least, is able to see that the woman and the bot are not alike, thereby confirming the validity of Buffy‘s creation of her self outside of a patriarchally-imposed role upon woman.

Gazing upon the Body

In *Discipline and Punish*, Michel Foucault addresses the Panopticon, Jeremy Bentham‘s 1787 device of discipline and control. In demonstrating how Bentham‘s prison renders a prisoner‘s body docile and confined, Foucault also provides a method to show how patriarchy renders a woman‘s body docile and defined:

> A perimeter building in the form of a ring. At the center of this, a tower, pierced by large windows opening on to the inner face of the ring. The outer building is divided into cells each of which traverses the whole thickness of the building. These cells have two windows, one opening on to the inside, facing the windows of the central tower, the other, outer one allowing daylight to pass through the whole cell. All that is then needed is to put an overseer in the tower and place in each of the cells a lunatic, a patient, a convict, or a schoolboy. The back lighting enables one to pick out from the central tower the little captive silhouettes in the ring of cells. In short, the principle of the dungeon is reversed; daylight and the overseer's gaze capture the inmate more effectively than darkness, which afforded after all a sort of protection. (1980, 147)

Foucault applies this device to the prisoner, the sick, the worker, and the schoolboy, anyone who needs to be observed and controlled. The prisoner, for example, recognizes that he is being monitored by the overseer but, because of the design of the buildings, is unable to see the overseer and cannot know

precisely when he is being watched and, even, who is watching him. Isolated from other prisoners, he is unable to recognize, to gaze upon, any individual nor is he able to form a community in which he can exchange thoughts or feelings. With windows as walls and a light source constantly distorting his individual features and casting him in ―shadow‖ or silhouette, the prisoner finds that his individuality, his sense of self, seeps away as he begins to gaze upon himself and see himself as the overseer would see him. ―Just a gaze. An inspecting gaze, a gaze which each individual under its weight will end by interiorisation to the point that he is his own overseer, each individual thus exercising this surveillance over, and against himself‖ (Foucault, 1980, 155). Therefore, the prisoner behaves as though he were constantly watched and begins to police his own behavior. In effect the overseer's gaze falls on the prisoner only occasionally, but the prisoner's gaze rests upon himself full time. His body becomes docile, ―subjected, used, transformed, and improved,‖ as he conforms to the behavior expected of him (Foucault, 1995, 136). Finally, he exists only to be seen and is unable to establish an identity beyond object of the gaze. Foucault's ―interiorisation‖ means that the prisoner, the object of the gaze, has become a gazer himself, gazing upon himself to the point that he objectifies himself and cannot see himself as an individual with special identifying qualities exuded through his personality but only as shell that has the empty pseudo-identity, the silhouette, of the gazer imposed upon him. He has ―interiorized‖ that silhouette and believes himself to be the silhouette.

We all have been recipients of the societal gaze, a form of peer pressure that teaches us how to behave and conform to our particular type of society. We come to understand the boundaries of acceptable behavior within our community. But the societal gaze does not hold equal expectations for each recipient: some groups are gazed upon more because those bodies are not as docile as society would like them to be, others because the bodies are a site of pleasure. Thus, young men socializing on a street corner will draw the gaze of passers-by as well as law enforcement out of fear of threat, while scantily clad pop stars are gazed upon both as role models by young admirers and wanna-bes and as objects of sexual pleasure. My concern is with the control of women via a patriarchal gaze that shapes their bodies and their views of themselves. This gaze disciplines women's bodies, not only suggesting how they should act and present themselves, but also how to speak and to think. Susan Bordo suggests that this male gaze cuts across class, age, ethnicity, and education, and affects every woman, consciously resistant or not, with the goal of interiorizing the gaze so that the woman will regulate herself. ―Female bodies become docile bodies ― bodies whose forces and energies are habituated to external regulation, subjection, transformation, ‗improvement.' Through the exacting and normalizing disciplines of diet, makeup, and dress … we are rendered less socially oriented and more centripetally focused on self-modification‖ (Bordo, 1993, 166). That is, using Foucault's concept of the Panopticon, if Woman is isolated from others,

denied a community, understands that she is constantly gazed upon but is seen only as a silhouette and never as an individual, she will lose her sense of identity in gazing upon herself and endeavor to conform to the docility the overseer requires of her. Eventually, she will self-discipline herself so well, the patriarchal gaze will not be required at all to keep her docile. At the same time, she may be convinced that she needs the gaze because she has come to define herself as the silhouette, the spectacle, and, without watchers, she has no value, no self-definition. Given the opportunity to leave the Panopticon, she would prefer to stay.

The term ―male gaze‖ is substituted frequently for ―patriarchal gaze.‖ Both terms should be recognized as non-gender specific; women too can be patriarchal gazers, focusing a male gaze upon themselves or others, if, through that gaze, they offer a patriarchal critique of the object and impose a sanctioned discipline upon it without respecting that body as a potential subject and site of subjective resistance. The patriarchal gaze offers a number of templates, or silhouettes or ―coded forms‖ (Irigaray, 1993, 110), for Woman, and women are taught to regulate themselves to fit one of these templates, to turn themselves ―into bodies already encoded within a system,‖ using standardized ―familiar scenes, worn-out phrases, routine gestures‖ (Irigaray, 1981, 206). Feminist theorist Luce Irigaray continues:

> a virgin is one as yet unmarked by them [the phallocentric order], for them. One who is not yet made woman by and for them. Not yet imprinted with their sex, their language.... we don't have to be turned into women by them, labeled by them, made holy and profaned by them.... their fatherland, family, home, discourse, imprison us in enclosed spaces where we cannot keep on moving, living as ourselves. (1981, 211-12)

The forms of Woman exist before one becomes a physical woman, and women must regulate or discipline themselves to fit one of the patriarchal-approved templates. But as Foucault's prisoner gazes upon himself and becomes his own overseer, a woman disciplining herself to fit a coded form of Woman would not be aware that she is ―interiorizing‖ a patriarchal template, allowing the template to masquerade as her identity so that she exists, both before society and herself, merely as a silhouette. She forgets whom she used to be and about the person she could have become and becomes instead whomever others want her to be. In Buffy's encounter with the Buffybot, the bot is the silhouette. Buffy has been able to exteriorly confront and reject the template patriarchal society has reserved for her. She has seen what the male gaze wants her to be, and, because she has seen it completely in the form of the Buffybot, she would know what to watch for within herself to find if she has interiorized a coded form of the bot template.

What women really could be, physically and conceptually, beyond the templates, what they could become if they were not regulating themselves to fit the templates, does not exist in that patriarchy does not allow space or language for that existence; these women would have to break open the Panopticon and start a whole new world so that they could exist and define themselves. Which, in a sense, is what Luce Irigaray suggests when she says, ―As women, we have thus been enclosed in an order of forms inappropriate to us. In order to exist, we must break out of these forms‖ (1993, 109). She continues:

> It may be that in destroying already coded forms, women rediscover their nature, their identity, and are able to find their forms, to blossom out in accordance with what they are. Furthermore, these female forms are always incomplete, in perpetual growth, because a woman grows, blossoms, and fertilizes (herself) within her own body. But she cannot be reduced to a single flower, as in the male image of virginity. In line with her own virginity, she is never completed in a single form. She is ceaselessly becoming, she ‗flowers' again and again if she stays close to herself and the living world. (1993, 110)

Irigaray highlights the necessity of destroying the codes first; then, perhaps, women will be able to ascertain their identities from the inside. She does not suggest that personal identity exists before the destruction of the codes, nor does she suggest that a personal identity will freely develop once the codes are broken. She again plays with the spatial concept of identity when she shows that the exterior blossom of the flower is grown from within the body, so that the interior of the identity is created first and spreads out to manifest itself upon the exterior. Additionally, just as a flower may blossom over and over, a woman's identity may blossom over and over as she continually re-invents herself, destabilizing the concept of identity as a constant.

Re-Inventing Self

Deirdre, of C.L. Moore's short story ―No Woman Born,‖ originally published in 1944 and republished in 1991, is a woman who must re-invent herself. In a sense, her code or template was destroyed when her body was burned in a theater fire. In overseeing the building of her own mechanical body, she has the opportunity to break all the old codes imposed upon her. Although her new, mechanical body reflects Deirdre's perception of herself, the scientist Maltzer cannot help seeing her as a lesser, weaker being because she is no longer human to him. Her manager, Harris, on the other hand, can only see her as more than human because she still retains all the human personality traits that

she possessed while in a human body, but now she also controls her mechanical body by those human principles, thereby humanizing it.

Maltzer‘s perception of cyborg Deirdre as weak, as less, is predicated upon his acceptance of a patriarchal code for woman. Because she is not woman (and, I assume, because she is not man either), Deirdre cannot be human, according to Maltzer‘s standards. He recognizes a woman as an object, to be desired and to remain fixed within a male gaze. Without sex, how can Deirdre expect to hold that societal male gaze? Why would society want to gaze upon her? And if society will not objectify her, then she cannot be a human woman. Sex is more important than gender for Maltzer. Cyborg Deirdre has retained her identity, her personality, her femininity, but lacking femaleness, Maltzer sees no reason why she should live: ―I wish I‘d let her die,‖ he says, more than once (Moore, 1991, 251). While watching television, Maltzer observes an actor and finds her much more compelling, much more worthy of the male gaze than Deirdre, because the actor has a sex. Even more specifically, this actor has, what Maltzer assumes to be, working female genitalia:

> A face swam up into soft focus upon the screen. The dark, lush beauty of the actress who was playing the Stuart queen glowed at them in velvety perfection from the clouds of her pearl-strewn hair. Maltzer groaned.
>
> ―She‘s competing with *that*,‖ he said hollowly.
>
> ―You think she can‘t?‖ asks Harris....
>
> ―Of course she can‘t compete,‖ he cried irritably. ―She hasn‘t any sex. She isn‘t female any more. She doesn‘t know that yet, but she‘ll learn.‖ …
>
> ―She‘s an abstraction now,‖ Maltzer went on … ―I don‘t know what it will do to her, but there‘ll be a change. Remember Abelard? She‘s lost everything that made her essentially what the public wanted, and she‘s going to find it out the hard way.‖ (Moore, 1991, 250)

Without womanhood, according to Maltzer, Deirdre is nothing; she is worthless. Of course, this has troubling implications for menopausal women, women with disabilities or illness, and even infertile women, but Matlzer‘s reference to Abelard suggests that Maltzer believes that Abelard too lost humanity when he lost his genitalia, so Maltzer identifies humanity with having sex organs, and limits sex to male and female. His specific reading of Deirdre‘s humanity is in heterosexual terms, reflecting the straight, male patriarchy:

> ―Yes, but where did the grace and charm come from? Not out of the habit patterns in her brain. No, out of human contacts, out of all the things that stimulate sensitive minds to creativeness. And

> she‘s lost three of her five senses. Everything she can‘t see and hear is gone. One of the strongest stimuli to a woman of her type was the knowledge of sex competition. You know how she sparkled when a man came into a room? All that‘s gone, and it was an essential. You know how liquor stimulated her? She‘s lost that. She couldn‘t taste food or drink even if she needed it. Perfume, flowers, all the odors we respond to mean nothing to her now. She can‘t feel anything with tactual delicacy any more. She used to surround herself with luxuries – she drew her stimuli from them – and that‘s all gone too. She‘s withdrawn from all physical contacts.‖ (Moore, 1991, 250)

Maltzer‘s discussion of what defines a human and identity tells us more about Maltzer than it does Deirdre, but Maltzer represents the belief of a portion of Moore‘s reading public who would agree that Deirdre cannot be human without being physically male or female and being able to respond to physical stimuli – despite the fact that sex therapists emphasize that the most important sex organ is the mind.

Science fiction readers understand that Deirdre could have commissioned a cyborg body that somehow incorporated sex, but she chose not to. Star Trek‘s Data was —fully functional‖ (Fontana, 1987). Philip K. Dick‘s androids, in *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* (1968), were created for hard labor and sex work. April and Buffybot were sex toys. Deirdre must have chosen not to have a sexualized body nor a body that could copulate. Deirdre‘s concept of self was not based upon sex, and, evidently, the sex act was not that important to her. By refusing to incorporate sex into her identity, she negates her humanity in the eyes of Maltzer, but she creates a definition of herself over which she has complete control. By creating a feminine identity, without the femaleness, via the integration of her physical brain and cyborg body, Deirdre appears to anticipate the cyborg of Donna Haraway, who separates herself from the societal coding defining women and finds —a way out of the maze of dualisms in which we have explained our bodies and our tools to ourselves‖ (1991, 181). Dying as a woman and being resurrected as a cyborg allows Deirdre to take back the definition of her own identity and desire. Her identity goes beyond sex, as sex is no longer a part of her physical body. Nevertheless, she conceptualizes gender, feminizes herself, but accrues other qualities – swiftness, strength, power, decisiveness – usually associated with masculinity.

Maltzer and Harris are both keenly aware of Deirdre as spectacle. As an actor, singer, and dancer, Deirdre has accepted the role of object to be gazed upon. She wants that role again once she has learned to function within a mechanical body, making that body dance and sing, not in imitation of a human but as representative of Deirdre‘s identity. She wants her friends and her audience to recognize her by her movements, her laugh, her personality. Her

cyborg body, without imitating her destroyed fleshly body, does suggest the stance and movement of that former body, which is how Harris recognizes her when he first sees the cyborg: ―the machinery moved, exquisitely, smoothly, with a grace as familiar as the swaying poise he remembered.… Illusion steadied and became factual, real. It was Deirdre‖ (Moore, 1991, 236-7). Deirdre is aware of what her body can do and its affect upon others. As an entertainer, she has understood her job to be reading audiences and responding to them:

> I‘ve always had ... well, power over my audiences. Any good performer knows when he‘s got it. Mine isn‘t gone. I can still give them what I always gave, only now with greater variations and more depths than I‘d ever have done before. (Moore, 1991, 245-6)

She is also aware of herself as audience. When Harris meets her for the first time in her new body, she knows he will marvel over it, but she does not take the time to observe him, to gaze upon his marveling over her. Rather she supplants him as audience, positioning herself in front of a mirror, replacing Harris as audience, and performing for herself:

> She turned away from him and crossed the room smoothly, with the old, poised, dancer‘s glide, to the mirror that paneled one side of the room. And before it, as he had so often seen her preen before, he watched her preening now, running flexible metallic hands down the folds of her metal garment, turning to admire herself over one metal shoulder, making the mailed folds tinkle and sway as she struck an arabesque position before the glass. (Moore, 1991, 240)

As an entertainer, Deirdre knows the potential power of the audience, how she should never turn her back on the audience or take it for granted. But in her new cyborg body and while creating new definitions for herself, she chooses her primary audience to be herself, thereby re-appropriating her image, identity, and desires. Only by focusing upon herself can she project a true representation of her personality. Harris observes that, distracted, Deirdre does become metallic, inhuman: ―When she was not listening to her own voice, it did not keep quite to the pitch of trueness‖ (Moore, 1991, 274). To be a true, real, human, Deirdre must be in control of her own identity and her performance of it.

After her triumphant return to the stage and screen, Deirdre chooses to isolate herself at her New Jersey farm, ostensibly to plan her future but actually to contemplate herself without distraction. She wants to be alone with that primary audience, herself, and perform amazing feats with her new body. By leaving Harris and Maltzer, however, Deirdre is also leaving the patriarchal,

masculine-centered world for a feminine community, albeit a community of one. Moore allows the reader to focus on Harris, and to an extent Maltzer, during this two-week retreat and we, as the audience, become acutely aware that the spectacle, Deirdre, cannot be gazed upon. She is controlling how the societal male gaze — represented by Maltzer, Harris, and the reader — sees and defines her. At the farm, removed from the gaze, she performs for herself and practices agility and strength movements. She finds that her delicate, feminine, metal body is more powerful than any fleshly body. Later when Maltzer tries to throw himself out her apartment window, she surprises Harris and Maltzer by crossing the room like lightning and snatching Maltzer off the floor and away from the window before he can hurt himself. Proud of her power over her body and self-definition, Deirdre looks ahead to all the possibilities open to her. She does not limit herself to the one identity she now holds:

> —There's one limit I can think of.…Only one. My brain will wear out in another forty years or so. Between now and then I'll learn . . . I'll change . . . I'll know more than I can guess today…. I could put a stop to it now, if I wanted,‖ she said [implying that she could kill herself by leaping out the window as Maltzer had tried]. —If I wanted. But I can't really. There's so much left untried. My brain's human, and no human brain could leave such possibilities untested.‖ (Moore, 1991, 274)

So many new possibilities – so many changes! So many roles and identities she could try on! Deirdre's desires have nothing to do with sex. The cyborg body and the elimination of sex gives her the opportunity to redefine her social reality and become exactly who she wants to be at any given time, controlling her identity and the perception of her identity. By creating a new body and taking control of her identity, she has broken out of the Panopticon.

Deirdre was not responsible for the theater fire that destroyed her human body, but Molly, in William Gibson's *Neuromancer* (1984), willingly makes modifications to herself and her body, remaking herself as a cyborg. Molly becomes the muscle on a team put together to steal a password that will unlock the confined sentience of an Artificial Intelligence. Victimized by a patriarchal society that dehumanizes everyone, but particularly women, Molly desires to take control of her Self by controlling her body. In order to counteract society's view of her as weak and pliable, she learns to fight and makes her body into a weapon. She begins by changing her name from Rose Kolodny to Molly, thereby stripping off her old personality coded for her by a patriarchal society. Within her body, she has implanted retractable knives or files in her fingers underneath her nails so that she becomes a deadly weapon. More intriguing, perhaps, are the modifications she has made to her eyes, computerizing aspects of her vision and protecting her eyes with surgically implanted mirrored lenses or glasses, allowing

her to see in the dark. By modifying her body and changing her name, she has taken control of her image and self-definition, but patriarchal society still tries to force her to interiorize a template.

Gibson provides two scenes in which Molly becomes her own audience. In each case, patriarchy is objectifying Molly's female body and forcing her to recognize that objectification and the lack of power she has over her body and her self. Whereas Deirdre willingly places herself in the role of audience in order to perform for herself and to retain control of her body and identity, Gibson uses the concepts of performance and spectacle in an opposing way, demonstrating how patriarchal objectification renders the female or feminine body and the female or feminine desire powerless and at the mercy of the patriarchy. In these two scenes the patriarchal male gaze is represented first by Rose's pimp and second by Peter Riviera, with whom Molly is working in order to steal software. In Gibson's postmodern world, most masculine characters, like Case, the AI Winterbourne, and the Finn, accept Molly's appropriation of her identity, but Riviera takes a patriarchal approach to Molly, showing her the old patriarchally-imposed definition of herself as Rose. Rose's pimp takes a patriarchal approach of dominating his prostitutes primarily in the name of capitalism: his goal is not to denigrate a woman so much as make a lot of money. In order to pool the money Rose needed to become Molly, she worked as a meat puppet, a prostitute with a cut-out chip implanted in her brain so that her mind could cut out or shut down while she was with a customer. Shut down, her mind could not control her body, and, in fact, would not even be conscious, and her body could be completely controlled by the desires of the customer through software programming. —Renting the goods,‖ she called it (Gibson, 1984, 147). During the span of time that Rose was surgically changing to Molly, her pimp, aware of the potential violence Molly/Rose could administer, would rent her out to special needs clients with a desire for violent sex. The cut-out chip, however, stopped working and Molly became aware of the sexual encounters and the violence for which her johns paid. This puts Molly in the position of watching herself and having no control over her body: —Trouble was, the cut-out and the circuitry the Chiba clinics put in weren't compatible. So the worktime started bleeding in, and I could remember it.... But it was just bad dreams, and not all bad.… Then it started getting strange‖ (Gibson, 1984, 147). The programming her customers paid for were —snuff‖ programs, routines in which Molly as meat puppet and the john participated in torturing, mutilating, and killing other prostitutes as part of the sexual release for the customer. Molly could remember but had no control over her body:

> —They knew you were picking up on this stuff? That you were conscious while you were working?‖ [asked Case.]
>
> —I wasn't conscious. It's like cyberspace, but blank. Silver. It smells like rain…. You can see yourself orgasm, its like

> a little nova right out on the rim of space. But I was starting to *remember*. Like dreams, you know. And they didn't tell me. They switched the software and started renting to specialty markets.‖ (Gibson, 1984, 148)

One night, however, Molly becomes more than just aware during a violent sex session; the cut-out chip malfunctions completely so that she cuts back in and has not only consciousness but also control over her body:

> —Bad dreams. Real ones. One night… one night, … I came up. I was into this routine with a customer….‖ She dug her fingers deep in the foam. —Senator, he was. Knew his fat face right away. We were both covered with blood. We weren't alone. She was all…' She tugged at the temperfoam. —Dead. And that fat prick, he was saying, _What's wrong. What's wrong?' 'Cause we weren't *finished* yet….‖ (Gibson, 1984, 148)

Turning the violence upon the senator, Molly kills her john and runs away, knowing that her pimp would put a contract out on her. Because of the malfunctioning of the cut-out chip, Molly can watch herself via the societal male gaze, but the chip then allows her to re-appropriate control of her body; release her own desires, thus directing violence toward the patriarchy in the form of the senator; and free herself from the control of her pimp. Technology, in this case, has allowed Molly to redefine herself bodily by physically and surgically transforming from Rose to Molly, but, more importantly, the failure of technology, in the form of the malfunctioning cut-out chip, has allowed her to take back control of her consciousness. Molly thus is in control of her body, mind, and identity, goes where she wants, does as she pleases, including revisiting her identity as Rose Kolodny when she chooses.

Peter Riviera, a sadist who believes women's bodies should be available and open for men's desire, sees Molly's independence and self-definition as a personal affront that he must destroy and discipline. His goal is to undermine Molly's self-confidence, self-awareness, and self-definition, which he attempts by objectifying Molly's body while forcing Molly to watch. In his scheme, Molly becomes both the performer and the audience. An illusionist performing before a live audience, Riviera creates the projection of a woman, who appears as a series of body parts, with whom he has sex during which she flails him using her bladed fingernails. The woman he reveals as part of his illusion show slowly adds up to an image of Molly. He deconstructs the real Molly and reconstructs her as the image, which he calls —The Doll.‖ He takes parts of Molly's self-definition and warps them slightly to his own end so that the aspects he appropriates could become anathema to Molly. For example, Riviera observes —Molly pick[ing] her teeth with a burgundy nail‖ (Gibson, 1984, 138). During his reconstruction, he

—raised the [projected woman's] hand to his mouth and began to lick the tips of the fingers. The nails were coated with a burgundy lacquerǁ (Gibson, 1984, 140). Riviera demonstrates how patriarchy can appropriate a part of a woman's self-identity, place it in a different context, and impose a new definition upon that woman. For Molly, her burgundy nails reify her physical power, as they become a symbol of the deadly but hidden weapons that she controls. Riviera reconstructs Molly's fingers and nails as sexual objects that he controls.

> As performer, Molly's image is manipulated by Riviera like a puppet: Then the torso formed, as Riviera caressed it into being, white, headless, and perfect, sheened with the faintest gloss of sweat.
>
> Molly's body. Case stared, his mouth open. (Gibson, 1984, 140)

Case's response here is similar to Harris' reaction when he first meets cyborg Deirdre. Case is shocked by the reality of the projected woman – she *is* Molly; seemingly, Riviera has captured and appropriated her identity.

> But it wasn't Molly; it was Molly as Riviera imagined her. The breasts were wrong, the nipples larger, too dark. Riviera and the limbless torso writhed together on the bed, crawled over by the hands with their bright nails.…
>
> Now limbs and torso had merged, and Riviera shuddered. The head was there, the image complete. Molly's face, with smooth quicksilver drowning the eyes. Riviera and the Molly-image began to couple with a renewed intensity. Then the image slowly extended a clawed hand and extruded its five blades. With a languorous, dreamlike deliberation, it raked Riviera's bare back. Case caught a glimpse of exposed spine, but he was already up and stumbling for the door.…
>
> There was an inverted symmetry: Riviera puts the dreamgirl together, the dreamgirl takes him apart. With those hands. Dreamblood soaking the rotten lace. (Gibson, 1984, 140-141)

Riviera has had access to Molly's past and recreates a violent sexual encounter not unlike many she participated in as a meat puppet. He undermines her identity by appropriating her past and he publicly performs his desire to dominate Molly by having sex with her. He creates his version of a reality, a reality he wishes, but by publicly performing it, this version takes on validity as a social reality which many people now share, all those in the audience, those who hear about the performance, Riviera himself, and the Molly-image. Because so many have participated in this social reality, it takes on greater weight as a true reality over

Molly's private memory of her past. In this illusion, Molly's image has no control over her actions as she flails Riviera. Even if the real Molly desires to do this – kill Riviera – he has already commandeered her actions, thereby negating the power she has over her own body. Molly can only watch this performance and walk out. Riviera's audience sees an illusion of Riviera being flailed during intercourse, but at the end of the drama, they see the living, in tact artist Riviera triumphing over his work while the projected image of Molly has disappeared. His drama suggests that no matter how much power a woman feels she has accrued, no matter how much danger she thinks she can pose to the patriarchy, no matter how persuasive her self-definition may be, a man like Riviera can dismantle her and make her disappear into nothing by placing her back into a patriarchal role for women.

Once she leaves, Molly does not allow Riviera to retain control of her definition. She leaves the patriarchal public space of Freeport and isolates herself, before finally being joined by Case, and replays her past in her mind, thereby reaffirming the reality of what she has seen and experienced. Case has never accepted the labels of patriarchal society and inhabits a marginal space, cyperspace. Together they create a feminine space in which Molly casts Case as audience by sharing her past, her reality with him, speaking it into existence and reclaiming and re-appropriating it from Peter Riviera.

Buffy, Deirdre, and Molly each have the opportunity to gaze upon herself and recognize one incarnation of her perceived, public identity. Buffy, shocked by the narrowness and shallowness of this identity, on the one hand rejects it as —not me,‖ but, on the other hand, embraces it and takes on the identity of the Buffybot as a way to exert power. She plays a submissive sex toy in order to undermine masculine authority, much as Luce Irigaray suggests with her metaphor of the female mimicry. Molly appears to be running from her past identities. She wants to recreate herself, and in the process, to lose a past self, and uses technology to mold her body physically to reflect how she wants to see herself. Nevertheless, it is finally in the safety of a feminine community with Case that she can excise from her mind the old templates that she has already cut out of her body. Deirdre, on the other hand, creates her body from scratch and takes control of it by taking center stage before the patriarchal male gaze but then replacing the patriarchal gazer with herself, so that the woman does not vanish, but the patriarchy does.

Works Cited

Bordo, Susan. *Unbearable Weight*. Berkeley: U of California P, 1993.
Dick, Philip K. *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* New York: Del Rey, 1968.
Espenson, Jane. —Buffy Episode #96: _Intervention' Transcriptll [episode transcript]. Transcribed by Joan the English Chick. Buffyworld.com. Accessed May 5, 2005. //www.buffyworld.com/buffy/season5/transcripts/96_tran.shtml. Internet.

Fontana, D.C. —The Naked Now #40271-103‖ [episode transcript]. *Star Trek: The Next Generation*. 1987. Accessed May 5, 2005. //www.twiztv.com/scripts/nextgeneration/season1/tng- 103.txt. Internet.

Foucault, Michel. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. Translated by Alan Sheridan. New York: Vintage, 1995.

---. —The Eye of Power.‖ *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews 1972-1977*. Edited by Colin Gordon, 146-165. New York: Partheon, 1980.

Gibson, William. *Neuromancer*. New York: Ace, 1984.

Haraway, Donna. —A Manifesto for Cyborgs: Science, Technology, and Socialist Feminism in the 1980s.‖ *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature,* 149-181. New York: Routledge, 1991.

—Intervention.‖ *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*. Created by Joss Whedon. 2001. DVD. 20th Century Fox, 2003.

Irigaray, Luce. *Je, tu, nous: Toward a Culture of Difference*. Translated by Alison Martin. New York: Routledge, 1993.

---. —This Sex Which Is Not One.‖ Translated by Claudia Reeder. *New French Feminisms*, edited by Elaine Marks and Isabelle de Courtivron, 99-106. New York: Schocken, 1981.

Klages, Mary. —Jacques Lacan.‖ 2001. Accessed May 5, 2005. //www.colorado.edu/English/ENGL2012Klages/lacan.html. Internet.

Lacan, Jacques. —The Mirror Stage as Formative of the Function of the I as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience.‖ In *Critical Theory Since Plato*. 3rd ed., edited by Hazard Adams and Leroy Searle, 991-994. Boston: Thomson Wadsworth, 2005.

Moore, C.L. —No Woman Born.‖ In *Great Tales of the Golden Age of Science Fiction*, edited by Isaac