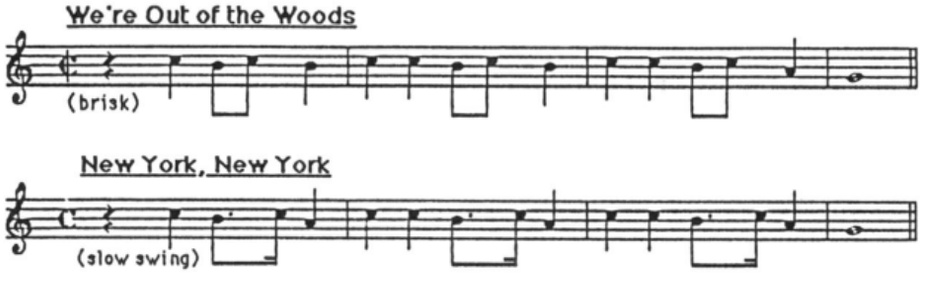
Charles Rzepka

"If I Can Make It There": Oz's Emerald City and the New Woman

The thread of cultural influence is often spun so fine that observers can lose sight of it. Consider a song like "New York, New York," which was recently declared the city's "official song" by Mayor Ed Koch. Most people have already forgotten that John Kander originally wrote it for Judy Garland's daughter, Liza Minelli, who played a young, up-and-coming swing-band singer in the 1977 film of the same name. As it turns out, the film is full of allusions to Garland,[1] and one of the most surprising but hitherto unremarked of these allusions appears in the principal theme of the title song itself. Fans of Garland's most famous film, *The Wizard of Oz* (1939), will recall that at the moment when Dorothy and her friends leave the deadly poppy field and begin skipping up the Yellow Brick Road toward the Emerald City, radiant in the distance, a tune is sung off-screen by "The Rhythmettes": "We're out of the woods, we're out of the dark, we're out of the night . . . step into the sun, step into the light . . . ." This melody, when slowed down to a swinging adagio, becomes the opening bars of "New York, New York." Here's what the two passages of music look like when written out, both transposed to the key of C:



Kander's choice of melody for his title song, so expressive of Minelli's upbeat, starry-eyed excitement at being "a part of it," not only echoes, almost note for note, the score of the film that first made Minelli's mother famous, but echoes that unique passage (it is not repeated elsewhere in the film) when Dorothy Gale beholds the urban goal of her perilous pilgrimage, the Big City where her desires will, supposedly, be fulfilled. Though the borrowing may have been unconscious,[2] it makes perfect sense. MGM took L. Frank Baum's turn-of-the-century fantasy and made it into a parable of the "fanzine" Hollywood or Broadway success story: small-town or, better, farm girl—from Kansas, say—comes to the Big City with practically nothing but the clothes on her back and finds a big-name "producer"—a humbug and a snake-oil salesman like all the rest, but a great manager of illusions, a great purveyor of dreams. Under his direction, she achieves fame and glory, sees her name, not just in lights, but written on the sky, and becomes the idol of millions.

Tracing the origins of "New York, New York," we arrive in Oz, where we discover an ancient archetype—the quest—resurrected in a distinctly modern feminine form. It is the archetypal power of this feminine quest saga, in fact, that makes the identification of Garland with her role as Dorothy Gale so compelling, and that enables us, in turn, to make sense of the curious derivation of her daughter's hit song. Garland, after all, went on to embody the Tinsel-Town version of the female quest in later movies like *A Star is Born* (1954) and the less successful *I Could Go on Singing* (1962),[3] and to live the tragic denouement of the Hollywood success story herself. One of the most important features of this modern female version of the quest archetype is the Big City itself, a place mythically associated since ancient times—e.g., Plato's Atlantis, John's New Jerusalem, Augustine's City of God, and More's Utopia—with ideal self-fulfillment, apocalyptic transformations, and apotheosis.[4] Hollywood and New York epitomize the Big City as the mythical site of heroic struggle and triumph for the modern woman. They have become, as much as the Emerald City itself, pieces of mythical American real-estate, urban sites in our collective consciousness.

Figuring prominently and repeatedly since the late nineteenth century in American tales and movies about female success, the Big City soon came to embody ambivalent American attitudes toward women who were trying to "make it" in a man's world, i.e., a world removed from the demands tradition-

ally placed on women in their familial roles as obedient daughters and nurturing wives and mothers. These attitudes, in turn, were rooted in turn-of-the-century urban culture. Baum conceived his spunky, city-bound young heroine during the years that saw the emergence on the urban scene of a radically modern and untraditional image of femininity, the "New Woman." The social and economic forces that were creating the modern American cityscape—the acceleration of industrialism, the growth of capital investment and employment opportunities, the spread of the railroads[5]—were also opening up new opportunities for young women. They were leaving their families behind on the dusty prairies and in the small towns of depressed rural America and going where the new jobs—as salesgirls, garment workers, waitresses, typists, and journalists—offered them the chance of realizing the American dream of financial and familial independence.[6] The archetype of Big City fulfillment was becoming feminized by the appearance of these "New Women," a phenomenon, as Albert Auster (5) has noted, that was disturbing traditional notions of a woman's "proper" relationship to men and marriage. Insofar as it represented the field of feminine, as opposed to masculine, ambitions, however, the American myth of Big City opportunity soon revealed an ironic tendency to reaffirm domestic values at the expense of personal fulfillment.

In no urban profession at the turn of the century was the promise of liberation from the traditional economic, social, and familial constraints on women more appealing and more pronounced than in the theater, which at that time was flourishing in the urban economic boom. Big-name actresses, after all, had the financial independence, the exotic, glamorous aura, and the mass popularity to allow them to reject the traditional roles of housewife and mother with little harm to their standing in the eyes of society, or to their professional careers. It was only to be expected, given the exigencies of theater life—extended separations, constant travelling, long hours—that the infidelity and divorce rates among actresses, like their incomes, should be much higher than the norm. Not surprisingly, actresses were among the staunchest and most visible supporters of the resurgent feminist and suffragist movements of the 1890's and early 20th century.

The actress's power as feminist spokesperson and exemplary New Woman was strengthened by the fact that, in the earliest

instances of exactly the phenomenon which has made MGM's *Oz* so popular with fans of Judy Garland, theatergoers were beginning to identify more with the actress than with the role (usually quite conventionally feminine) that she played. The 90's and the first decade of the new century saw the appearance on the American stage of the modern "star" system and so-called "personality school" of acting, which encouraged "the substitution of the performer's personality for the dramatic character, or the portrayal of dramatic characters which fit the performer's personality so exactly that performer and character [were] practically identical" (Wilson, 269).

Complementing and encouraging the rise of the star system and personality school was the "matinee girl" phenomenon: young working women, usually teenagers, would attend Saturday matinee performances unescorted in order to see their favorite "matinee idols." Edward Bok, editor of *Ladies Home Journal*, is quoted by Auster as deploring the matinee girls' attendance at adult plays: "One will see at these matinees seats and boxes full of sweet young girls ranging from twelve to sixteen years of age. They are not there by the few, but literally by the hundreds" (Auster, 39). Theodore Dreiser's fictional stage-struck heroine, Carrie Meeber, in *Sister Carrie*, discovers during her first encounter with big-city theater a world "complete with wealth, mobility, and . . . independence" (Dreiser, 166). What was drawing young women to the theaters was no longer just the character the actress played, but the popular image of the actress herself—she was becoming her own heroine, and the story of her successful liberation from the trammels of domestic drudgery was becoming the central myth by which a new generation of women defined their own hopes and aspirations.7

Sister Carrie is a particularly interesting illustration of the Big City theatrical success story. It is a work, oddly enough, exactly contemporary with Baum's *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*—both were published in 1900—and sharing the major feminized quest-theme. Carrie Meeber, like Dorothy Gale, travels from the rural areas of the great Midwest to find her dreams fulfilled in the burgeoning metropolis that served as Baum's model for the "Emerald City"—Chicago. Like the real Judy Garland, Dorothy's later film incarnation, Carrie is intent on becoming a famous performer, and like Minelli, she ends up "making it" in New York, on Broadway, while her lover Hurstwood, the prominent, rich, and very married saloon-keeper with

whom she elopes from Chicago, ends up dying penniless in a flop-house on the Bowery. In this respect, *Sister Carrie* eerily anticipates *A Star is Born* as well, where the female star's already famous actor-husband, played by James Mason, slowly sinks into despair and finally drowns himself as his wife's fortunes rise.

But despite their mythic similarities, Dreiser's tale and Baum's differ in one important respect. For while Carrie is traveling to Chicago to make a successful and independent life for herself away from home, Dorothy is traveling to the Emerald City—defying "lions and tigers and bears" and overcoming the perils of the poppy field—in order to *return* home. One might even suggest that our full enjoyment of the trials and triumphs of Dorothy's quest can only be sustained insofar as we manage to forget that her ultimate goal, unlike that of most male heroes, is not to achieve the complete independence of an adult, but to return to the secure dependency of childhood. The twice-repeated last line of the film supplies its moral—"There's no place like home!"[8] To this extent, Baum's otherwise plucky heroine and her adventures in Oz reflect the covert, and sometimes quite overt, antagonism of late 19th and early 20th-century writers toward independent women, not only as represented in literature by men, but in stories of female entrapment and renunciation written by independent women writers themselves. The works of Sarah Orne Jewett, Edith Wharton, Kate Chopin, and Willa Cather all offer examples of late 19th-century heroines who, setting out to fulfill themselves in a male-dominated society, either surrender their independence to a man or give up the struggle altogether, outcomes terribly ironic in light of their creators' quite independent and self-reliant lives as woman writers and editors in a male-dominated profession.[9]

Far worse, however, than such images of self-defeat penned by women writers were popular representations of the "New Woman" by outspokenly anti-feminist and anti-suffragist male writers like Robert Herrick. Herrick's New Women are invariably portrayed as leading empty, unfulfilling, and melancholy lives because they refuse to tend to their proper domain: home, hearth, and husband. The female, for Herrick, is in her element—and truly happy—only as housewife, social ornament, and domestic cheerleader for the man of the house, who must go out each day and fight for survival like any other predator, or prey, in the vast economic and political jungle of social Darwinism. For Herrick, the city represents the mythic scene, not of

woman's liberation *from*, but of her fulfillment *in* her proper sphere—social and domestic. Consider, for instance, the almost fairy-tale nuances of the following description of the Manhattan skyline in Herrick's book *Together*: "'I love it!' murmured Isabelle, her eyes fastened on the serried walls about the end of the island. 'I shall never forget when I saw it as a child, the first time. It was a mystery, like a story-book then, and it has been the same ever since'" (311). "Thus," intones Herrick, "the great city—the city of her ambitions—sank mistily on the horizon" (312; Isabelle is sailing to Europe). It's a description worthy of Oz—or of Hollywood. But Isabelle's great ambition is to become the most prominent hostess in the New York Social Register. Her idea of "making it" is entirely, and approvingly, domesticated.

Unhappiness and disappointment are, Herrick implies, the just punishment New Women bring on themselves for their unnatural feminist tendencies. Such punitive characterizations make all the more clear the reasons for the vituperation heaped on Dreiser with the publication of *Sister Carrie*, which so blatantly contradicted the mythical stereotype. The glamorous success of Dreiser's easy-going, self-infatuated, ambitious, and amoral (if not immoral) young heroine violated every canon of American-Victorian poetic justice. Carrie never had to *pay* for flouting the conventional idea of femininity. Dorothy did—or at least, she had to make her token bow to the demands of domesticity. And in the movie it is even worse: the heroine's quest to prove her fitness to take on the wide world of adulthood is shown, in the end, to have been a dream all along. Her literally "real" place is at home.

Of course, *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* is hardly an anti-feminist tract, even though in some of his other children's books Baum did satirize the suffragists and their supporters. (As Moore points out, his mother-in-law, Mathilda Joslyn Gage, was a close friend of Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton and a well-known suffragist polemicist in her own right [50-51].) Baum's book simply reflects the prevailing notion that little girls should stay at home. But because Dorothy is no ordinary little girl, the book's final capitulation to prevailing notions is not an ordinary concession. Dorothy was the first true American counterpart to Lewis Carroll's independent-minded and matter-of-fact Alice,[10] and as such, she posed a threat to established American notions of youthful female propriety, as the early history of her

banishment from many library bookshelves testifies. Even though, like her English cousin, Dorothy is safely and permanently pre-adolescent, which would make her independence generally non-threatening to adult males,[11] Baum watered down much of the delightful matter-of-factness and unselfconscious courage of his heroine in later *Oz* books, as though shocked, on second thought, by the unladylike qualities of his own creation. Raylyn Moore notes with dismay "the overweening sentimentality about young females which infiltrates the later *Oz* books" (133), how from *Ozma* on Dorothy becomes "increasingly 'cute,' even coy" (155), eliding syllables in her speech ("s'pose" for "suppose," "'cause" for "because"), acting "skittish" and "irritable," more and more like "the kind of girls who shy at spiders" (156).

Or like the kind of girls who should have stayed at home. It is, in fact, just that little-girl quality of vulnerability and, in the end, lack of self-confidence that cripples the rising star of the Garland legend with self-disesteem and remorse.[12] Under all the spunky independence, courage, loyalty, and practicality beats a heart longing for the comforts of home and family, Uncle Henry and Auntie Em. (To give Baum some credit, he never makes Dorothy's home look very attractive.) That is the negative aspect of the Big City myth of feminine success and freedom: in her rise to fame the star loses family, old friends, affection—she loses touch with "home," the locus of her "true"—which means conventionally female—self. In the end she will come to regret it—the ingenue of "A Star is Born" will probably end up, long after James Mason has walked out of her life and into the surf, on *Sunset Boulevard* rooming with Gloria Swanson, where she will have nothing to console her but memories of faded glory and glamor—no husband, no children, no happy family ending.

The Hollywood realities of female cinematic success, however, like those of Big-City female theatrical success at the turn of the century, have always been at odds with the myths of female success peddled by Hollywood itself. As Molly Haskell has observed, "Through the myths of subjection and sacrifice that were its fictional currency and the machinations of its moguls in the front offices, the film industry maneuvered to keep women in their place; and yet these very myths and this machinery catapulted women into spheres of power beyond the wildest dreams of most of their sex" (3). Haskell goes on to say, with respect to

the Hollywood image of women in film, "In no more than one out of a thousand movies was a woman allowed to sacrifice love for career . . . . Yet, in real life, the stars did it all the time, either by choice or default. . . . The personality of the star, the mere fact of being a star, was as important as the roles they played, and affected the very conception of those roles" (5).

In the end, inevitably, the myths always exact at least a token tribute. The Dorothys of filmdom must *want* to go home: *What Price Hollywood?* (1932), *Morning Glory* (1933), *The Goddess* (1952), *A Star is Born* (1954, as well as in its original version, starring Janet Gaynor and Frederick March), all are female Big City show-business fables belonging to the general thematic category of "woman's film" that Haskell has called the "sacrifice" film, a genre originating in the 30's. In these movies the woman sacrifices love and/or family for career, nearly always with tragic results, "an indication perhaps," writes Haskell, "of the vision [the female audience] had of themselves" (p. 163).[13] Throughout the early years of the movie industry, audiences rarely found an independent heroine, however tough, career-minded, and no-nonsense, who, when the hero wrapped her in his arms at the end of the film, did not melt and throw the world away for an apron and a dustmop. What women in the audience identified with, however, was not just the character the actress played—this, perhaps, least of all—but the actress who, in her own life, personified the freedom and independent-mindedness that her celluloid character only briefly—until the last fade-out, anyway—espoused. That last surrender to the female stereotype was the ritualized punishment inflicted, Herrick-like, on the heroine. In the movie-houses it had the cathartic effect of allowing millions of women to identify with the female character's aspirations for independence (and with those of the woman playing her) without feeling guilty about it. As long the conventional pieties were finally reaffirmed, fantasies of overturning those pieties could be indulged.

If one turns again to the question of MGM's *Oz* and its power over modern audiences, one finds the myth of female stardom as strongly at work in shaping our response to Judy Garland's Dorothy as in shaping our response to any other "independent female" in the Hollywood of the 30's and 40's, with two major differences. First, since Dorothy is a girl and not a woman, she succumbs to a girlish and not a womanly domestic fate—her return home is a return to female childhood,

not conventional female adulthood. Second, in Garland's case the legend informing the character she portrays on our TV screens is projected backward, from the vantage-point of her career *after* making *Oz*. Even fans of Baum's original book would agree that the main reason for the story's current popularity with American audiences of every age was the 1950's television success of the film version. Indeed, it is safe to say that our vision of Oz today conforms less to W. W. Denslow's original illustrations than to the stage-sets of the MGM musical that have been broadcast into American living rooms every spring since 1956. CBS would hardly have continued showing the film without sufficient viewer demand, and that demand was stimulated by the initial coincidence of this period of mass television exposure with the tragic aftermath of Judy Garland's meteoric rise to fame: the years of her self-destructive breakdowns, comebacks, and suicide attempts, her debts, divorces, drug-addiction, and fatal overdose.[14] "And without Judy Garland's unique voice and tragic future being tied to 'Over the Rainbow,'" notes Aljean Harmetz, "the picture would never have taken on the qualities of poignancy, seriousness, and irony" for which we value it today (23). It is the Judy Garland legend that, as much as anything, has helped the film become a part of American pop mythology, for she has come to embody the very image of inbuilt self-defeatism and self-hatred perpetrated by Hollywood's own cinematic myths of female film-stardom. To win in the Big City, you must give up everything that defines you, conventionally, as a woman. You must never go "home," in the largest sense of the word.

And you must *suffer* for it. *Oz* ends happily, unlike Garland's career—Judy/Dorothy *gets* to go home. That is one reason, as Harmetz implies, that audiences love to watch the movie again and again. But Janet Juhnke has identified the trouble with the ending, seen from a feminist perspective. Juhnke records the response of a student of hers at Kansas Wesleyan, who viewed the film for a class in 1977. This was a nineteen-year-old woman, says Juhnke, "who has since left her Kansas home to make her way alone in New York City: 'The ending was a total anticlimax. It stated that this was all a dream, that fantasy is unreal and can only get you in trouble, and boring status quo existence is the right way to live. . . . I hate the ending because fantasy *is* real, necessary, *and because home is not always the right place to be*'" (175, italics mine). If *New York, New York* is

any indication, we have come a long way toward recognizing the validity of this essentially feminist response: in that movie, Minelli chooses career over marriage and triumphs as both performer and mother, retaining custody of her child while her husband, played by Robert De Niro, continues to make a decent living with his sax.[15]

In the final analysis, much of *Oz*'s mythic appeal lies in the Big City origins of modern American feminism, in the period which saw the growth of America's industrial and commercial centers. There, young women from small-town and rural America not only chased the dream of financial and familial independence, but worshipped the goddesses of Big City fame and glamor, the mythic apotheoses of that freedom. In the process, they stimulated the burgeoning 19th-century media marketing of celebrities, which in turn helped eventually to power the 20th-century Hollywood dream factories. Baum's book captured the mythic lure of the Big City and anticipated its more cinematized allegorical representation in the MGM film version. The irony of the Hollywood promise of escape for the American "New Woman," of course, was that she was liberated from the demands of the traditional, male-dominated home and family by being cast, for the most part, in larger-than-life, stereotypically subservient female roles, or in roles that, even if they reflected the true changes taking place in women's socio-economic status, ended almost inevitably in ruin or the reassertion of the stereotype. The very image of "the actress" in the American cinema became compromised by these accessions to the sterotype of woman as, in her deep heart's core, unhappy with her own success because of the "unnatural" domestic price it exacted.

Dorothy Gale, both in the book and in the movie, transcends these stereotypes up to the very end: she is straightforward, courageous, independent, steadfast, and resourceful. But she is never allowed to grow up. She is, for Americans, the nearest female equivalent to Huck Finn, even though her quest, appropriate to her time and the situation of her sex at that time, lies city-ward, not down-river. Unlike Huck, however, and unlike the quintessential American anti-heroes, who also sought to throw off the restrictive middle-class conventions of 19th-century American society, she does not have the option of "lighting out for the territories." She not only can, but must go home again.

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NOTES

[1]Vincent Canby noted that director Martin Scorsese visually pointed up the resemblances between Minelli and her mother by means of costumes and singing styles, and even alluded to songs that had become Garland trademarks, like "The Man Who Got Away," from *A Star is Born*. The resemblances were acknowledged by Scorsese himself and noted elsewhere, e.g., in *Variety*: "Minelli is so much like her mother . . . Reincarnation is the only word" (quoted in Spada, 200).

[2]In a recent letter, postmarked February 5, 1987, Mr. Kander assured me that whatever resemblance obtains between the two tunes was entirely unintended. He is, however, well-acquainted with Garland's musical career and has written nearly all of Minelli's music. This includes the score for *Cabaret* (1972), which won Minelli an Oscar and which is still another, if grotesque, variation on the theme of the female "show-biz" personality having to put aside her personal life for her career.

[3]In this film, co-starring Dirk Bogarde, she played the role of Jenny Bowman, an aging stage-singer who has sacrificed her family-life for her career. The script was co-written, in part, by Garland herself and conforms loosely to the shape of her own career.

[4]Raylyn Moore, noting that Baum's orginal title was *The Emerald City* (122), observes the Emerald City's archetypal resonance with the City of God (78-79), and Janet Juhnke observes that "like many in myth and legend who go on quests, Dorothy seeks a beautiful city" (168).

[5]On the impact of the railroads on small-town life and the romanticization of the Big City in the last half of the 19th century, see Stilgoe's *Metropolitan Corridor*, particularly pp. 193-218: "Not surprisingly, then, the small-town depot appears again and again in American literature as a liminal zone through which young people pass into adulthood, into adventure, and into real or seeming wisdom, and through which they sometimes return to find the towns of their youth, rarely beautiful but more often tawdry" (218).

[6]Hamlin Garland's short story, "Up the Coule," contains a scene in which a farm wife, Laura McLane, expresses all the pent-up frustrations of women living in the "middle border" states of the northern plains and far mid-west, the "Kansas" of Baum's Dorothy: " 'I hate farm-life,' she went on with a bitter inflection. 'It's nothing but fret, fret and work the whole time, never going any place, never seeing anybody but a lot of neighbors just as big fools as you are. I spend my time fighting flies and washing dishes and churning. I'm sick of it all.' . . . 'I lived in Lumberville two years, going to school, and I know a little something of what city life is. If I was a man, I bet I wouldn't wear my life out on a farm. . . . I'd get away and I'd do someting. I wouldn't care what, but I'd get away' " (132-3).

[7]My colleague here at Boston University, Burton Cooper, has called to my attention two Lillian Russell films that corroborate my point about popular impressions of theatrical life at this time, *Lillian Russell* and *Diamond Jim*.

[8]In this respect I would strongly qualify Moore's judgment, and that of others who view the book from a psychoanalytic perspective, that after Dorothy completes the

mythic hero cycle she "returns to Kansas renewed, reborn, ready to grow up at last" (172). Ready to grow up, perhaps, but only into the stereotypically limited role conventionally assigned women in Baum's society. There is certainly nothing to indicate that she is ready to make a life for herself away from Uncle Henry and Auntie Em. Nothing has changed in her relationship to home.

[9]Take, for instance, the fate of Flavia in Cather's short story, "Flavia and her Artists." Like Cather, Flavia has moved from the midwest to New York, but she moves in a stratum of society far above that of the working journalists and writers with whom Cather associated. Living in a mansion overlooking the Hudson River, Flavia houses and entertains outstanding, talented people. Her cruelly ironic fate—one which Cather seems both to sympathize with *and* approve—is to be despised by her beneficiaries for her pretenses to artistic talent, taste, and sophistication. Indeed, she can afford to "collect" these specimens of what she cannot become only because her rich husband indulges her possessive hospitality by footing the bill for her guests. I am indebted for this example and much of the material on the situation of women writers in turn-of-the-century America to an unpublished essay, still in draft, "Women Writers and the New Woman," which my colleague, Cecelia Tichi, graciously allowed me to read. (Flavia's film counterpart appears in *Humoresque*, where Joan Crawford plays a rich married society woman who supports artists, falls in love with a violinist who cannot become part of her ordinary world, and commits suicide by walking into Long Island Sound.)

[10]Consider her forerunners and contemporaries in American literature: Little Nell and Eva of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, Pollyanna, Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm. The nearest character we have to Dorothy in American 19th-century fiction is Jo, of *Little Women*, a tomboy who finally "grows up" by "settling down" to woman's work in a woman's sphere—home and husband.

[11]As Harmetz points out (23), Garland's Dorothy, with her 16-year-old figure corseted into resembling that of a 12-year-old, seems much more of an adolescent on the brink of womanhood. I believe that this accentuates our subliminal impression that what is at stake in Dorothy's quest is her future identity as a woman, an identity which is literally about to "bust out" of her, so to speak.

[12]As Tichi has pointed out to me, Cather's *Song of the Land* (1915) is suffused with a similar homesickness for the Nebraska prairies of her girlhood.

[13]Burton Cooper cites two other movies in which the show-business female sacrifice theme is evident. In *All About Eve* Bette Davis's confession, in the role of Margo Channing, biggest star on Broadway, that no success is worthwhile without a man next to her in bed seems to summarize the message directed by the film at all ambitious women. In *Maytime*, Jeanette Macdonald plays an opera star who gives up her lover, Nelson Eddy, for operatic fame. In old age she advises a young girl not to pursue a career, but to stay in her home town and marry her young suitor. An interesting variation on this theme relevant to the Big City archetype and its origins in late 19th-century American culture occurs in *The Actress* (1953), where Jean Simmons, as a small-town New England girl at the turn of the century, battles her parents' opposition to her pursuing an acting career in New York. The rejection of traditional family values in pursuit of a career is thus clearly emphasized. Significantly undercutting the heroine's heroic aspirations, however, the film ends before Simmons's arrival in the Big City, and she herself "is made to seem silly and problematical—at best, starry-eyed, at worst, untalented," notes Haskell, so that her parents' "misgivings about her career seem well-founded" (240).

[14]Anne Edwards notes that "the slavish devotion of what was to become the full phenomenon of The Garland Cult did not swing into frenetic motion until the mid-fifties," based on fans' identification with her obvious suffering and even more with her struggle to overcome suffering, a struggle which informed and electrified her stage

presence (179).

[15]One cannot help feeling, when viewing this film, as though the backlash against feminism that Haskell identified (323-371) as the principal cause of the trashing and demeaning of women in the movies of the 60's and 70's had finally given way, in the late 70's, to an acknowledgment, if only in part, of feminism's legitimate claims. Such an acknolwedgment has been signalled generally by the growing number of films (e.g., *The Turning Point* (1977), *An Unmarried Woman* (1978), *9 to 5* (1980), and, most recently, *Desert Hearts* (1986)) recognizing both women's legitimate needs for full personhood, at home and at work, and the pernicious effects of enculturated patriarchal values on women's personal, family, and professional lives. There are, however, still exceptions. Bette Midler's *The Rose* (1979), which is loosely based on the self-destructive, small-town-girl-makes-it life of Janis Joplin, indicates that many of the stereotypes of female show-business success are still operative.

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