A Woman with Influence: Henrietta Porter in the Television Series *Trackdown*

WILLIAM HAMPES

In the 1950's women on television tended to be relegated to traditional domestic roles as contented housewives: *Father Knows Best* (1954-1963), *Leave it to Beaver* (1957-1963), *The Donna Reed Show* (1959-1966), etc. This emphasis on domesticity was found throughout the culture at the time because although "the actual lived experience of domesticity was fraught with problems, the family ideal still promised material benefits and personal stability in a confusing world." (Spigel 34). Even when women were single, self-supporting and competent in their chosen profession, they conformed to the traditional feminine role as, for example, in *Our Miss Brooks (1952-1956*) (Dow xvii). Conflicts that occurred tended to center around the normal growing pains that the couple's children were having rather than any fundamental disagreements between husband and wife. Female resistance against gender roles was mainly confined to wives disobeying or disagreeing with their husbands, typically in shows about childless couples where conflict could not focus on the children, such as *I Married Joan* (1952-1955), *The Honeymooners (1955-1956)*, and *I Love Lucy* (1951-1957).[1] In regards to Joan and Lucy their rebellion against their respective husbands consisted of their wacky, unrealistic and unsuccessful attempts to seek employment outside of their marriage (Spigel 174-177).

Alice Kramden of the *Honeymooners* was different. As the long-suffering wife of her often-irresponsible husband, Ralph, she did not pull any verbal punches when she was angry and frustrated with Ralph's inconsiderate schemes and ridiculous

[1] It is true that Lucy and Ricky gave birth to little Ricky, but he was not born until the second season and appeared in only eight episodes in the first four years of the series.

WILLIAM HAMPES was a professor of psychology for 38 years at St. Michael's College, Louisiana State University at Eunice, and Black Hawk College, where he is now a Professor Emeritus of Psychology and Sociology. He has a B.S. Degree in Psychology from Loyola University, Chicago, and an M.A. in General Psychology and Ph.D. in Experimental Psychology from the University of North Dakota. His articles in the area of the psychology of humor have been published in academic journals and his book about the role of courage in film and television Westerns, Cowboy Courage, was published by McFarland and Company. He can be reached at Hampesw@bhc.edu.

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comments. Much of the humor of the series came from her sarcastic, well-deserved put-downs of her husband. A large part of the context of their disagreements was the fact that the Kramdens, despite Ralph's job as a bus driver, were a working class couple whose resources were quite limited. Perhaps if they had the resources and income of the middle-class Andersons, Cleavers, and Stones they could have avoided some of their conflicts. If Ralph was the sole bread winner in a middle-class suburban marriage, the power differential between the two of them would have made it more difficult for Alice to complain or criticize him. It is interesting that as a stand-alone series it lasted only one season. Perhaps Alice's sarcasm and the Kramdens' strained economic circumstances were a bit too harsh for 1950's television comedy.

However, there was one television genre where women could break out of confining gender roles, at least more than in other genres during this time: Westerns (Wildermuth 134). There are several reasons for this. First, the emphasis on individualism and freedom in Westerns, which mainly applied to the male characters, could also apply to females. Secondly, since Westerns occurred in the distant past women breaking out of restricting gender roles would be less threatening than women on television breaking out of these roles in programs set in contemporary times.

A third reason is that the Western frontier in the mid to late 19th century was a lot more harsh, dangerous and unforgiving than suburbia in the 1950's. That meant that a woman on the frontier, especially a woman alone, in many cases had to be tough and independent just to survive. Women in Westerns are sometimes categorized as either a schoolmarm or a dance hall/prostitute. The former is the traditional female, but generally did not appear until a town was "civilized," that is, no longer dangerous but without the freedom and individualism of earlier days. The dance hall/prostitute on the other hand, "appeals to the dark, uncivilized qualities of the hero (despite that this type of female is often being portrayed with a heart of gold), and therefore must be killed or marginalized with the advance of civilization" (Hampes, 115). However, William Indick argues a third type of female exists, one who figures more prominently and importantly in Westerns, the frontierswoman, who is "Neither as debased as the whore nor as hopelessly virginal and pure as the schoolmarm, the frontierswoman is gritty but wholesome, honest but also sexual, and earthy but still refined" (68-9). This is the type of woman who would defy traditional gender roles.

The fourth reason has to do with the evolution of television Westerns. During the early days of television Westerns catered to a juvenile audience. Good guys were strictly good and bad guys strictly bad, and the good guys always won. Heroes in these Westerns, like Hopalong Cassidy and the Lone Ranger, were reassuring to a public confronted with the complexities of the Cold War. This type of Western hero during this time provided reassurance to an American public caught up in the complexities of the Cold War that there were still clearly defined good guys and bad guys and the good guys would eventually win (Yoggy, 5-18).

In the middle 1950s, however, television Westerns began to offer programs geared more to adults with themes that expanded the scope of Westerns from just masculine exercises in physical bravery and good overcoming evil with characters who were more complex (Yoggy 78). These changes were at least in part a reaction to a trend in films towards "psychological Westerns" a trend that had been occurring since the late 1940's. Because these psychological Westerns challenged the norms of traditional Westerns they added "dimension, complexity, and dramatic tension-an enormous creative spark" (Meuel 14). These characters, in films and later television, could be both brave and cowardly, and strong and weak, depending on the circumstances. The heroes sometimes made mistakes and had doubts and regrets. The villains could have redeeming qualities and were sometimes forced to break the law and even harm others due to their circumstances. If heroes and even villains could have the freedom to make mistakes and have regrets and doubts — something more in line with traditional femininity than traditional masculinity and thus challenging traditional gender roles — then the possibility opened up for women to have more freedom to act in more masculine ways.

Westerns Women and Henrietta Porter

Something that added complexity to the characters in these "psychological" or "adult" television Westerns was that the definition of courage and its consequences were expanded. The characters in these Westerns had to find the courage not only to face physical threats, but also to love and be part of a community, redeem themselves for past failures, transgressions, and losses, be authentic and true to themselves, be temperate and refrain from hurting others or themselves, pursue justice in nonviolent ways, and simply grow up and grow old successfully (Hampes 5-7). This emphasis on other types of courage, besides physical, such as moral courage (pursuing an ethical course of action despite the opposition, disapproval,

punishment and threat of being ostracized by others) and psychological courage (overcoming one's fears and psychological problems and addictions, such as alcoholism to do what is beneficial for themselves and others) opened up possibilities for females to go beyond the traditional roles of either the schoolmarm or dancehall girl/prostitute. Women could assert themselves in courageous ways (being authentic by telling the truth about themselves or others, supporting those unpopular with the community, etc.) without necessarily being violent. To put these changes in psychological terms, television Westerns allowed women and, for that matter, men, to become more psychologically androgynous (Bem 155), a healthy mixture of the best of both traditional masculine and feminine traits, or as Blake Lucas would put it, Westerns are "not a masculine genre, but one supremely balanced in its male/female aspect" (301).

According to Mark Wildermuth, *Annie Oakley* (1954-1957) is one of those television shows which are "balanced in its male/female aspect" (135). In some respects, it is what Gary Yoggy (5) would call a juvenile Western. The good guys (or in this case, good guys and good woman) are very good, and the bad guys are very bad. The good guys and Annie, played by Gail Davis, are so good that they never resort to killing the outlaws, but subdue them by shooting the guns out of their hands (Annie's specialty) or beating them up (the specialty of Annie's sidekick, Deputy Sheriff Lofty Craig, played by Brad Johnson). What makes the show a precursor for later Westerns is that Annie can definitely take care of herself. Outlaws or others who demean her as "just a girl" learn to regret it. She pursues outlaws with abandon in her rather undefined role in law enforcement. Often, she is more in charge of the pursuit of the criminals and solves crimes and sizes up people and situations ("she's plenty smart") better than Lofty or the seldom seen sheriff. She shoots, ropes and rides a horse better than any man and has other masculine skills, such as driving a locomotive or a stagecoach. When individuals need help, often it's Annie they call for, rather than Lofty, whom she rescues on a number of occasions. In fact, at times it seems Lofty is necessary only for the mandatory fisticuffs which put the finishing touches on the bad guys.

However, she has a feminine side to her personality. Annie is an excellent cook. She is devoted to her younger brother, Tagg (Jimmy Hawkins), and nurtures and guides him as well as any parent could. Men have learned not only to respect her, but to like her as well because of her obvious concern for them. She befriends those who are friendless, often helping them to keep out of prison or to avoid being lynched or to save their jobs. She even aids those who are rude and arrogant, but

basically decent, helping them to become humbler and more human. There is also a hint of a romance between Annie and Lofty, someone who Annie cares about very much as a friend and perhaps more.

According to Yoggy (113), another woman in the 1950's Western who is able to take care of herself is Kitty Russell, played by Amanda Blake, in *Gunsmoke* (1955-1975), whether fending off drunks who get too fresh with her or dealing with more dangerous types. She can use a gun, play a hand of poker, or drive a stage, if need be, to get want she wants. As a businesswoman who owns her own saloon and runs it by herself from ordering her stock to keeping the books, she is totally independent and at the beck and call of no man. However, Kitty is a fully rounded, psychologically androgynous woman who can show not only tender feelings for those she cares about but also help, nurture and fight for them, whether it is an 18-year-old expectant mother or a wounded passenger whose life she is racing to save (Yoggy 113). She cares especially deeply for the other recurring characters in the show: Matt (James Arness), Doc (Milburn Stone), Chester (Dennis Weaver), Festus (Ken Curtis), Chad (Roger Ewing), Newly (Buck Taylor) and Quint (Burt Reynolds), often taking risks, sometimes life-threatening ones, to help them, especially Matt. Her relationship with Matt is particularly close, with a hint that it is something more than friendship.

According to J. Fred McDonald (95), by the middle of the 1960's the Westerns that remained popular were those that revolved around families or family-like units. Members of a functional family tend to not only nurture and care for one another but also fight in defense of the other members of the family, in other words, be androgynous. *Gunsmoke* was able to survive all the way to 1975 because it transitioned into one of these "domestic Westerns" (McDonald 98). Kitty was able to make this transition without losing any of her strength and independence.

However, as impressive as these two women are, they are not as integral and influential in their towns nor do they challenge the patriarchy of the times as much as Henrietta Porter, played by Ellen Corby, in *Trackdown* (1957-1959). Annie's proficiency with the gun, a rope and a horse, as well as her help in rounding up outlaws makes her a valued member of the community, but the source of her influence in the community is restricted to personal relationships and prowess in chasing down outlaws and not based on any prominent position with well-defined powers in the community, a situation which makes the stability of that influence somewhat uncertain. As the proprietor of the prosperous Long Branch and an esteemed person in her own right, Kitty certainly receives a great deal of respect

from those who frequent the saloon, as well as the respect and admiration of Matt, Doc, Chester, Festus, Quint, Newly, Chad and other townspeople. However, because of the importance of their occupations and their acknowledged expertise in practicing them, Matt Dillon, and to a certain extent, Doc, are the moral centers of Dodge City and hold the most sway in the community.

Henrietta Porter, who appeared in 24 of the 71 episodes of *Trackdown*, on the other hand, is the moral backbone of Porter, Texas, and the most influential member of the community. The star of the show, Hoby Gilman played by Robert Culp, is every bit as capable, smart, tough and brave as Matt Dillon and certainly Lofty Craig, but he is not really an established part of the town of Porter. He is a Texas Ranger "on assignment" to Porter, which means he is an outsider and can be called away at any time to go to Ranger headquarters in Austin or somewhere else in Texas, as he does on numerous occasions. Henrietta is a widow who has established her gravitas by founding the town of Porter with her husband and running the newspaper there. She has seen and done enough to have a firm set of principles that guides her and forms the foundation of her strength and independence. She also has a hard-won understanding of human nature based on her experience that allows her to be empathic and admit when she is wrong. Her social and political clout is greater than that of Annie and Kitty because she possesses something more and more influential as time goes on than either Annie's guns or Kitty's popular saloon: a printing press. This stable institutional power base anchored in the community allows her to do more than assert her own independence; it allows her to be a direct threat to the patriarchy of the town.

The ability to use her power effectively is related to Henrietta's androgynous personality, which allows her the flexibility to use whatever methods, traditionally masculine, traditionally feminine, or a combination of both, are most appropriate in a given situation (see Wiggins and Holzmuller 67). Also, androgynous individuals are higher in emotional intelligence than either those who strictly conform to either masculine or feminine stereotypes (Guastello and Guastello 663). Emotional intelligence is a broad concept associated with interpersonal competence that includes being able to recognize accurately emotions in oneself and others and express and control emotions in a way that produces effective interpersonal relationships (Salovey and Mayer 85). Androgyny, flexibility, and especially emotional intelligence are demonstrated by Henrietta in the episodes in which she appears.

Henrietta shows her determination and power in the very first episode she appears in, "The Judge." Malcolm Henry (Steve Terrell), the son of the town judge, kills a man in cold blood. Henrietta witnesses the murder and not only decides to testify against Malcom (who brags that his father, Judge Nelson Henry, as played by John Litel, will let him go) but she also plans to write a newspaper article about the murder and her role as a witness. Hoby puts Malcolm in jail, but he escapes and goes to the newspaper office intending to hold Henrietta hostage until a friend brings him a horse to escape. While there, Malcom threatens to shoot Henrietta, but she refuses to be intimidated. When Hoby visits the newspaper office, Malcolm is hiding with his gun trained on both Henrietta and Hoby. Before Hoby leaves, the resourceful and brave Henrietta gives him a copy of supposedly the latest edition of the paper but is really a note to Hoby that Malcolm is hiding in the office. The judge comes into the office through the back door and begs his son to leave, but Malcolm says he wants to kill Henrietta first. The judge kills Malcolm before he can pull the trigger.

In numerous episodes after that one, Henrietta uses the power of the press to achieve results. In "The Avenger," Hoby asks Henrietta to publish a false story that he has found a stolen payroll, a ruse that results in the capture of the thieves. In "The Schoolteacher" Henrietta writes an editorial in the newspaper about Porter needing more teachers at a time when there is considerable doubt about the town supporting education. At the end of the "Three-Legged Fox," Henrietta publishes the truth about the outlaw Ben Moss (Henry Hull), that he was killed when he chose to face Hoby and a sheriff alone rather than use an innocent man as a human shield, even though the story appears to result in glorifying an outlaw. In "Stranger in Town," with Hoby's blessing Henrietta publishes a letter from the bank robber, Harry Keller, in which Keller tells the townspeople to stay out of his way because he is going to kill Hoby, even though this so unsettles the townspeople that they complain about every stranger who comes to town (nobody, even Hoby, knows what Keller looks like). At the end of the episode, Hoby figures out who Harry is and subdues him after Tenner Smith (Peter Leeds) wounds him.

One of the more interesting episodes in which Henrietta uses and misuses the power of her newspaper is "The Set-Up." Rex Carlson (Douglas Fowley), an old acquaintance of hers, starts up a courtship with Henrietta, who is clearly infatuated with him. Meanwhile, Hoby is all alone in suspecting the courteous Rex of committing a robbery for which he seems to have an air-tight alibi. Henrietta is so angry about Hoby expressing his suspicions to Rex, who has proposed to her, that

she threatens Hoby to either apologize or she will use her newspaper to print stories against Hoby until he is run out of town. Hoby refuses to apologize and Henrietta runs a story about Hoby violating Rex's civil rights. Hoby acquires proof that Rex has a criminal background and breaks Rex's "air-tight alibi" to prove he committed the robbery. He has to shoot Rex just before Rex is about to leave town. When Henrietta finds out the truth about Rex, she apologizes to Hoby the best way she knows how, by printing a headline in very large type: "I'm Sorry, Hoby!"

An even more common way Henrietta exerts her influence is through passing on vital information to Hoby. As one of the founders of the town with a great deal of knowledge about what has been printed not only in her newspaper, but also in other newspapers, Henrietta has inside information which is often critical in cracking cases and influencing public opinion. In "The House," Henrietta informs Hoby that Ben Steele (Jacques Aubuchon) has lived well for fourteen years while spending much of his time on his front porch. Steele's puzzling behavior leads Hoby to guess correctly that Ben, whose three wives have either died or disappeared under mysterious circumstances, has killed them for their money. In the "Pueblo Kid," Henrietta's past newspaper articles make it clear that the so-called Pueblo Kid (Michael Landon) is a fake, that he did not kill any of the seven men he supposedly killed. In "Killer Take All," Henrietta tells Hoby about Ellen Hackett's (Nancy Gates) romance with Bobby Caryle (Don Durant) three years before, which ended when she married Paul Hackett. This occurrence is part of the complicated chain of events that leads Hoby to correctly surmise that Ellen killed Paul.

In "Day of Vengeance," Henrietta informs Hoby that five years ago Jack Summers (Michael Landon) was convicted of attempted train robbery. While Jack was in prison, his brother Larry was killed. Now that Jack has been released from prison and coming to Porter, Hoby assumes his return has to do with his desire for revenge against Larry's killer. As it turns out, Hoby convinces Jack that Larry's killing is justified, and Jack curtails his quest for vengeance. In "The Three-Legged Fox," Henrietta tells Hoby that, according to newspaper stories, Ben Moss had a reputation as a Robin Hood figure who never shot a man when he did not have to and was supposedly killed twenty years ago, a death that proves to be untrue when he shows up in Porter before he is killed there. In "The Kid," after Hoby shoots a 16-year-old boy because he suspects him of robbing a hotel room, Henrietta informs him that two weeks previously someone was breaking into buildings around the hotel and the hotel room of Jonathan Tate, who was critically wounded. Eventually Hoby can find out to his regret that it is the boy's father, Milo York (Jack

Kruschen), who is the thief. In "The Feud," Henrietta relates to Hoby the long-ago feud between the Turleys and Hacketts that is revived when the Turleys come back to Porter. In "Hard Lines," Henrietta informs Hoby that the townspeople despise Joker Wells (James Coburn) because he was accused of cowardice and desertion while in the Confederate army. In "The Trick," Henrietta lets Hoby know that Tully Saxon (Edgar Buchanan) wants Tenner Smith killed because Tully was sent to prison for eight years for killing a man on the testimony of Tenner, who informed the court that Tully was marking cards in the poker game that led to the killing.

Henrietta also is influential in her community because of her integrity, wisdom, empathy, bravery, and willingness to tell the truth. In "Outlaw's Wife," Henrietta supports a woman who is an outcast in Porter because her husband is an outlaw. When Grace Marsden (Barbara Lawrence) is accused of being an accomplice in a murder and robbery, Henrietta, who believes that someone is innocent until proven guilty, supports Grace when most of the rest of the town has prejudged her as guilty. In "The Kid," when Hoby mistakenly kills an innocent 16-year-old boy, Henrietta tries to comfort him by telling him that the town does not blame him for the killing. When a mob comes after Bart McCallin in "McCallin's Daughter" for allegedly committing a murder and robbery, Henrietta stands up to the mob, insisting that whatever they do has to be legal and proper. In "Hard Lines," Henrietta tells Hoby that she witnessed that Joker Wells shot Ed Crow (DeForest Kelley) because Ed drew first, even though the townspeople would have preferred that the unpopular Joker be prosecuted for the shooting. In "Sunday's Child" Henrietta defies Hoby by refusing to separate the mother Cindy (Gail Kobe) from her baby even though the father, Joe Sunday (James Best), who has a criminal reputation, has come to Porter with a court order giving him custody of the baby against Cindy's wishes.

"Sunday's Child" has a scene that reveals a great deal about both Henrietta and Hoby. When Henrietta defies Hoby by refusing to help him deliver Joe Sunday's child to him despite a judge's court order, he sarcastically asks her, "Do women have a monopoly on loving their children?" Henrietta responds, "You men, you're all alike. I never met one yet admit that another man was wrong," implying that when men perceive that they are threatened by women they close ranks against them even if the men are wrong. This answer so angers the normally temperate, fair-minded and respectful Hoby that he counters with a retort sometimes used by men in Westerns of that era when frustrated with a woman, a comment that is both threatening and condescending at the same time: "I wish you were a man so I could take a poke at you." Henrietta, not at all intimidated, responds, "Then I would hit

you right back, and then when we get tired of hitting one another we would go to the nearest saloon and drink to each other's long life and future happiness. Oh, I'm sorry, Hoby, that I've just about given up hope of seeing you men act like grown-ups." As far as Henrietta is concerned, the masculine code of the West is child's play, and violent child's play at that.

Two other episodes besides "The Set Up" in which Henrietta demonstrates her integrity by having the courage to admit she is wrong are "The Chinese Cowboy" and "The Vote." When Les Morgan (Don Gordon) and his friends harass the Chinese immigrant, Wong (Keye Luke), at first Henrietta defends Morgan, telling Hoby that everyone likes Les and that there will be trouble if Hoby intervenes. She adds that it takes a while for people to get used to foreigners. Hoby refuses to accept her explanation of the townspeople's poor treatment of Wong, stating that Wong is being abused and not teased and the law and Constitution state nothing about foreigners being treated differently. Later when the harassment of Wong escalates to the point that his laundry and its contents are damaged, Henrietta tells the deputy how ashamed she is that she, like everyone else, stood by while it was happening. After Wong is pushed into getting a gun and shooting Les dead in a fair gunfight, the townspeople express their regrets to him about how he was treated and that they want to make it up to him. Wong says that their gesture would have made a difference before but not now and that he is leaving town. When Henrietta asks Hoby to stop him, Hoby agrees with Wong that it is too late. Henrietta has learned an important lesson the hard way.

Appropriately, the last episode in which Henrietta appears in *Trackdown,* "The Vote," demonstrates that she is a force to be reckoned with in the town of Porter and that she intends to empower women the best way she knows how, but she also has the integrity to admit when she is wrong. Gil and Ameilia Hallswell claim they are brother and sister who have come to Porter to encourage the women there to protest in favor of women's suffrage and to contribute to the funds they are collecting to help to reach that goal. Henrietta aids them by helping them in their fundraising efforts and by printing handbills supporting the cause. Hoby suspects that the Hallswells' intentions are less than honorable. As a result, he checks up on them and finds out that they are really man and wife and that the senator who they said would come to Porter to speak in favor of women's suffrage does not intend to come nor is even in favor of women's suffrage.

When Hoby reveals to Henrietta that he has been checking up on the Hallswells, she becomes indignant: "You're just like every other man in town. You think a

woman's place is in the kitchen and the nursery" and tells him, "Don't misuse the badge. Don't pressure a decent man just because you disagree with what he thinks." When Hoby shows the telegram from the senator to Henrietta, she claims this does not prove that the Halswells are dishonest. When Hoby responds with the sexist remark that "It's a common female failing to believe a man who spins pretty words in the moonlight," a disgusted Henrietta counters that "Just because Mr. Hallswell is good looking and can speak without tripping over his words does not mean I've taken leave of my senses. I don't intend to act like any silly school girl." She leaves by saying that women should be in politics and could not do any worse than men.

Later Hoby catches the Hallswells trying to sneak away from Porter with the funds they supposedly have collected from the women in the town for the cause of women's suffrage but are really going to keep for themselves. Although Henrietta is distraught and contrite that she was duped by the Hallswells, she is no less determined to fight for women's right to vote. Her last words in both the episode and in the series are "You men won this time, but you mark my words. The time is coming when women will have the vote and there's nothing you can do about it." Henrietta remains feisty, independent and determined to empower women to the very end of her participation in the series, despite the fact that the men in town are so hostile to women's right to vote that they even resort to violence to keep them from gaining this very powerful tool which would threaten their dominance in the community. Even the normally reasonable Hoby, who scrupulously protects the civil rights of the women to protest and organize, is clearly on the side of the men.

After Henrietta Porter, there were two strong, androgynous women in recurring roles in some of the longer running television Westerns. One of these was Victoria Barkley, played by Barbara Stanwyck, in *The Big Valley*, from 1965-1969. Stanwyck was someone the audience could find relatively easy to accept as a strong and independent female considering she had played assertive and aggressive females in numerous films going back to the 1930's (*40 Rifles, The Maverick Queen, The Violent Men, Double Indemnity, Annie Oakley,* etc.). On the other hand, the feminine side of Victoria's personality is thoroughly developed. She cares for and supports her four biological children and is even magnanimous enough to welcome Heath (Lee Majors), the illegitimate son of her deceased husband, into the family. Throughout the four years of the series she does not hesitate to help those in need, even when it is unpopular to do so. However, she is no pushover. She lets nobody intimidate her. When need be, she faces down those who try to bully her with her ability to use a gun and any other means at her disposal. Like Henrietta,

she has great power at her disposal. However, unlike Henrietta, her power comes from great wealth derived from vast ownership of land, cattle, mines, and other investments. Also, unlike Henrietta, who runs her own business, Victoria's sons are the ones who run the family enterprises, although as the matriarch of the family her wisdom is a valued source of advice for them. As a consequence, although she willingly fights for the rights of individuals, she does not use the power of the Barkley wealth and enterprises to try to overturn institutional patriarchy.

Another strong female character in a television series was *Dr. Quinn, Medicine Woman,* starring Jane Seymour, which aired from 1993-1998. In 1959 there were 32 Westerns featured in prime-time television (Yoggy 1), but by the fall of 1993 there were only two set in the 19th Century (*Hearts of the West* was set in the contemporary West): *The Adventures of Brisco County, Jr.* and *Dr. Quinn, Medicine Woman.* The former lasted just one season (Yoggy 629); the latter lasted five (Lowry). The primary reason for the success of the show was Dr. Michaela (Mike) Quinn's androgyny (that a woman named Michaela is known as Mike indicates something about her ability to embrace both gender roles). By 1990 the percentage of women participating in the workforce was 57.5%, up from 33.9% in 1950 (United States, Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics). Therefore, her androgyny appealed to a wider audience than did earlier television programs. Being an influential member of the community while one of the very few female doctors at the time who thus defies traditional gender roles was attractive to the large number of women in 1993 who were independent and self-supporting, especially if they were in traditionally masculine occupations. If confronting the prejudiced individuals who did not believe in women doctors does not bring her enough problems, she also finds herself in conflict with those who don't like her determined support of those in society who were marginalized, such as African-Americans and Native Americans. Her love interest, Byron Sully (Joe Lando), accepts her for who she is, treats her as an equal and shares her respect for Native Americans.

On the other hand, she also appealed to those women and men who wanted a female with also decidedly feminine traits. She not only is very helpful and empathic with her patients but is ready to help others in need. Although she came out West soon after the Civil War (significantly to escape restricting gender roles in Boston) as a single 35-year-old woman, she ends up marrying the very sensitive, strong and faithful Byron (about as close as someone could come to the ideal mate) and ends up adopting three children.

All five women (Henrietta Porter, Kitty Russell, Dr. Quinn, Victoria Barkley, and Annie Oakley) are androgynous with both the masculine and feminine sides of their personalities fully formed. However, Henrietta stands apart from them as being truly remarkable. To a greater extent than Dr. Quinn, Kitty Russell, Annie Oakley, and Victoria Barkley, Henrietta is alone. Although all these women can defend themselves, one way or another, when threatened by men, they could all fall back on other males when a situation got really rough: Dr. Quinn with Sully, Annie with Lofty, Kitty with Matt, and Victoria with her sons and Heath. The town of Porter, on the other hand, has no regular peace officer, but rather has to rely on Hoby Gilman, the Texas Ranger "on assignment" from time to time in Porter. Even though Hoby is an effective law man when he is stationed in Porter, that does not keep Henrietta from challenging him when she thinks he is wrong, especially when she vehemently rejects his sexism.

More importantly, although Annie, Victoria, Dr. Mike, and Kitty all bravely confront sexism and racism on an individual basis, only Dr. Mike confronts institutional patriarchy and the masculine ethos as directly as Henrietta does with the influence she has with that powerful institutional tool, the printing press, and any other means at her disposal. In the 24th episode of the second season of *Dr. Quinn, Medicine Woman*, "The Campaign," the town of Colorado Springs, which has never had a mayor, decides to elect one. Jake Slicker (Jim Knobeloch) is nominated, followed by the nomination of Dr. Mike, who is allowed to run because the charter of the town does not restrict voting or office holding to males. Because she faces almost unanimous opposition from the men in the town and only women who hold property can vote (typically husbands and not wives legally hold title to their property) she faces an uphill fight. However, Dr. Mike's love interest and later husband, Sully, decides to sell little parcels of his land to the landless women of the town to allow them to vote. This makes the race competitive and forces Jake and his manager Loren Bray (Orson Bean) to accept a deal presented by Dr. Mike's politically savvy campaign manager and the town's newspaper publisher, Dorothy Jennings (Barbara Babcock), in which Jake will accept women voting with or without property in their names if he wins and Dr. Mike agrees not to ban prostitution if she wins. Jake wins and keeps his word about women voting.

However, there are stark differences between the way that Dr. Mike fights for women's suffrage and rights and way that Henrietta does it in "The Vote." First, Dr. Mike has considerable support. Her campaign manager, Dorothy, is very smart in the ways of politics. The tide of the election is turned when Sully comes across

with his plan to sell land to the women. Henrietta is all alone in her leadership position. The support of the Halswells completely collapses when it turns out they are con artists caught trying to escape with the money they have collected for the cause. The men of the town are totally against women suffrage, not a Sully or Horace Bing (Frank Collison) — the man who nominates Dr. Mike — among them. Even Hoby is on the side of the men although his professional ethics as a Texas Ranger compels him to enforce the women's right to protest.

More importantly, "The Vote" is more realistic than "The Campaign." A series of improbable events has to occur for women to get the vote in Dr. Mike's town of Colorado Springs in 1867. (In reality, Colorado women did not get the vote until 1893, Grimshaw and Ellinghaus 29). The town charter has to leave open the possibility that women with property can vote rather than restricting the vote to males only whether women have property or not. Sully has to sell parcels of land to the women of the town for them to vote. Since Dr. Mike ends up with 98 votes, apparently almost all female, it means that Sully must either have a huge plot of land or each woman got a tiny parcel of land. Also, Jake and Loren have to agree to a deal that, as Dorothy puts it, benefits Dr. Mike either way since no matter who wins, women will get the vote, thus making it harder for Jake to be re-elected or succeed in his policies if he were elected. It is problematical that the corrupt Jake would keep his word about women being able to vote once he got elected. Henrietta, on the other hand, while unbroken, is defeated in her efforts for women suffrage, something consistent with the fact that in the real world it would be decades before women would get to vote in her Texas town or elsewhere in the state.

As a result of Henrietta's determined stands against institutional patriarchy and male chauvinist attitudes, she has more conflicts with Hoby than the other females have with the men who are closest to them. Although Hoby is generally as fair minded, considerate, honest and competent as the Barkley sons, Matt Dillon, Byron Sully, and Lofty Craig, the females in those shows do not confront their respective males about the rights of women, gender roles and the male patriarchy as much or as forcefully as Henrietta challenges Hoby concerning those issues.

Conclusion

In some ways Henrietta is a safe choice as a woman who challenged the patriarchy of the day. She does not have any children, so her work and causes do not take time away from raising children, which could have upset viewers in the 1950's. It would

be hard for someone even in the 1950's to be very upset with Henrietta's work in favor of a woman's right to vote since that issue had been settled 30 years before the 1950's. Also, the fact that she appears in only 24 of the 71 episodes of *Trackdown* and even then, is not always central to the plot made it easier for those who did not like her views or actions to tolerate her. Still, it is remarkable that someone as early as the late 1950's should be so outspoken about women's rights. Despite being such an extraordinary woman, it is doubtful that a character who had a limited exposure on a series that lasted only two years was the role model for the considerable number of strong female lead characters who started to appear on television in the 1970's. Her importance lies in telling us that the discontent that led to those dramatic changes in the gender roles of women in the 1970's and beyond in television and society in general were bubbling just under the surface in the 1950's. Henrietta was a harbinger of things to come in television, just as the printing press, an instrument she used so well on television, in real life would eventually help women to acquire the vote and other civil rights and challenge traditional gender roles.

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