June Mathis's Valentino Scripts: Images of Male "Becoming" After the Great War

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Gaylyn Studlar defines the immediate post–World War I years as “an era marked by fears of national and masculine enfeeblement” in which “there was a veritable obsession with the attainment of masculinity.”¹ Many writers at the time suggested these fears were based on “a causal connection between the standard of masculinity enforced by American capitalism and the sexual, erotic, emotional deficiencies of American men.”² Men therefore felt threatened when women turned “matinee idols” into cult hero objects of sexual desire, and none seemed more threatening than Rudolph Valentino. For his success, he was often vilified by male journalists because, as Miriam Hansen states, “Valentino called into question the very idea of a stable sexual identity.”³

During the early 1920s, writes Studlar, “Valentino had been culturally poised between a traditional order of masculinity and a utopian feminine ideal, between an enticing sensual excess ascribed to the Old World and the functional ideal of the New.”⁴ This transitional status was established not through mise-en-scène alone,

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¹ Gaylyn Studlar, This Mad Masquerade: Stardom and Masculinity in the Jazz Age (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 12, 13.
³ Ibid., 268. Hansen provides an important discussion of female-driven fan culture as the basis for Valentino’s success and male anger against him (254–268).
⁴ Studlar, This Mad Masquerade, 197.

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naturally, but also through narrative. Studlar characterizes the Valentino film narrative as resembling the Harlequin romance as defined by Janice Radway:

Initially possessed of a “terrorizing effect,” [the romance hero] must be revealed to be other than he originally seems since the narrative must prove that male behavior (and, therefore, heterosexual romance) “need not be seen as contradictory to female fulfillment.” This is accomplished by introducing a feature of “softness” that tempers the hero’s hard masculinity in the beginning, and then, by showing that the hero has the “quite unusual ability to express his devotion gently and with concern for his heroine’s pleasure.”

The writer mainly responsible for shaping Valentino’s narratives was June Mathis (Figure 1). In 1921 and 1922, she wrote the screenplays for five of his films: The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse (Rex Ingram, 1921), Camille (Ray C. Smallwood, 1921), The Conquering Power (Ingram, 1921), Blood and Sand (Fred Niblo, 1922), and The Young Rajah (Phil Rosen, 1922). Mathis’s use of romance narratives, produced within the context of the world war’s desecration of masculinity, presented more than a soft, safe Valentino image. These narratives indicated a path for masculinity to follow in the transition from Old World sensuality to New World functionality. They established that masculine identities based on violence and greed are destructive and condemned the cultural forces that promoted these qualities. More important, they presented strong women who possessed the courage and values needed to reconstruct masculinity in a more positive fashion.

In these scripts, Mathis redefines postwar masculinity through Valentino. The Valentino characters to be pitied are those in Camille and Blood and Sand, in which the available father figures suggest that debauchery, violence, and material wealth will provide stability. Having followed these models, Valentino ends each film lonely and frustrated. By contrast, in The Four Horsemen, The Conquering Power, and The Young Rajah, Valentino follows strong women and spiritual influences to obtain fulfillment and benefit society, even in death. Recent scholarship indicates “a difference in the damaged man [of the 1990s] in comparison with earlier periods of film. The damaged man is more often than not damaged . . . from the start of the film in which he appears.” Yet the same was true for Valentino’s character in each of the Mathis screenplays. Each begins with Valentino’s loss of a dear male friend, grandfather,

Figure 1. Publicity still of June Mathis, head screenwriter (Metro, c. 1920).

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or father, and sometimes his fortune as well. This depiction of the damaged male seems particularly appropriate for the post–World War I era, in which thousands of veterans faced traumas. Casting Valentino, so strongly identified as an “other,” in this role certainly benefited Mathis in displacing American male wounds from the war onto Europeans and domestic issues. But this “damaged” man (though not a weak or effeminate man) was capable of finding strength through female influences. As Pat Kirkham notes, in Frank Borzage’s films of the 1920s, “[t]he ideal man is one who is partly de-masculinized in order to be partly feminised: who is deconstructed to be reconstructed. . . . Wounding makes men more accessible to women’s imagination.”

Since the earliest days of the American film industry, women had been shaping gender definitions on-screen through their work as actors, writers, directors, and producers. Some created models that proved extremely popular with male audiences. Anita Loos’s scripts, for example, helped shape the persona of Douglas Fairbanks and turn him into a major star. Fairbanks’s films celebrated what Studlar defines as “boy culture” as a means for building rugged masculinity. Somehow, the pampered males Fairbanks played in the Loos-scripted films magically transformed into aggressive, athletic men once they encountered the western American wilderness. June Mathis’s scripts for Rudolph Valentino, beginning with Metro’s The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse, made him a star. But Mathis, producing scripts adapted from European novels and working with an Italian-born actor, continually illustrated the frustrations of young men attempting to achieve maturity without guidance from a father figure. These were not athletic action heroes unencumbered by family and social concerns as were Fairbanks’s characters. They were, instead, “wounded” figures who required an alternative to violence and adventure as a basis for identity. As a result, they did not become as wildly popular among men and boys.

Valentino’s characters, such as Julio Desnoyers (in The Four Horsemen) and Juan Gallardo (in Blood and Sand), did not conquer the world with laughter and enthusiasm. They struggled and died, sometimes without finding an answer, and needed help from women not simply to survive or to become “good.” They needed the chance to redefine themselves by leaving violence and greed in the past. The editors of The Trouble with Men note that [m]en are not somehow “better” because they seem more like women, particularly not, one might argue, when “being like a woman” involves passivity, masochism, disempowerment. Such reductiveness merely reinforces the binary oppositions upon which patriarchy and capitalism thrive. [But films can often present] moments of becoming, the interstitial moments which undermine fixed ontologies, as cinema attempts to come to terms with change.

7 Meirion Harries and Susie Harries, The Last Days of Innocence: America at War, 1917–1918 (New York: Random House, 1997). Harries and Harries write, “Injuries to the mind . . . disabled 69,934 American soldiers temporarily or permanently, and war trauma was still emerging in the late 1920s” (453).
9 Studlar, This Mad Masquerade, 10–89.
In the early 1920s, American cinema was attempting to negotiate massive changes that followed the end of the war: Republicans came to power, women became more active, and the film industry grew and stabilized. Within this context, June Mathis worked with Rudolph Valentino to construct a new image of male becoming. Like Valentino’s pictures, the Fairbanks adventure films of the 1920s were also set in Europe, but in the more distant past. Valentino’s characters were in the contemporary world and facing the future, whether with dread (Blood and Sand), hopefulness (The Conquering Power), or uncertainty (The Four Horsemen, Camille). What they learned was that if there were any hope at all for the future, it would not be secured through the patriarchal ideals of the past. But reconstruction by the female offered a chance of “becoming.”

While film scholarship has increasingly recognized the women producers, directors, and screenwriters of the silent film era, analyses of their individual goals and achievements are still sparse. Kay Armatage warns that ignoring issues of authorship can have negative consequences: “Treating women filmmakers as a group may mask the differences among women by suggesting that women are a unitary category marked only by gender.”

My argument about Mathis parallels Armatage’s thesis about Nell Shipman. Mathis was not a great artist. The great majority of her screenplays were adaptations made in collaboration with the male directors and executives who ran the studios. She also made heavy use of sentimental melodrama, a form, as Lea Jacobs has demonstrated, that was in decline throughout the 1920s. But Mathis’s life and work, including many scripts for which the films are not extant, show that she was a determined and skillful writer who sought to communicate her ideas through film. Mathis’s Valentino scripts redefine masculinity in the wake of World War I according to a socially useful, sexually open, antimaternalist, nonviolent model, an achievement that deserves recognition because it expands our understanding of how American culture, and especially women, responded to the war.

I will pursue this argument by first defining the importance of the silent film screenwriter and of Mathis’s talent. I will then analyze her scripts for Valentino, discussing the original sources in order to reveal something of Mathis’s methods of adaptation. But I will focus on generic and historical contexts to define how Mathis attempted to shape Valentino’s role in each one. Because the scripts for Blood and Sand and The Young Rajah are not available, I will not be able to quote from them. But I believe Blood and Sand especially deserves attention because it presents Mathis’s strongest feminist statements and defines Valentino’s character in a manner that has gone unrecognized. Through each work, I will focus on Mathis’s primary motifs of male immaturity, sexuality, spirituality, and the continual failure of patriarchy.

June Mathis and the Silent Film Screenplay. After spending fourteen years on the stage, playing “every water tank” in the country, June Mathis took screenwriting classes in New York, performed in a few movies in New Hampshire, and then permanently

changed careers.\textsuperscript{13} It was 1915, and she was twenty-eight.\textsuperscript{14} By 1918, she was the main writer at Metro Pictures. When Louise Boyer arrived from Pittsburgh that summer to try a career in writing, her old friend, company president Richard Rowland, advised her to stick as close to Mathis as possible and study her work.\textsuperscript{15} Metro general manager Maxwell Karger told Boyer the same thing.\textsuperscript{16} But Boyer already had great respect for June Mathis and was thrilled to meet her. Boyer wrote to her husband that Mathis was “kind, a regular pluggor, has a sentimental streak in her that has never been satisfied, is a splendid comedian and mimic, an able actress, and she knows the business of making a working continuity as well as any one in the game today. She knows the picture making business from the synopsis writing to the cutting of the film.”\textsuperscript{17} Mathis was also ambitious. Boyer noted that she usually worked until 2:00 or 3:00 a.m. and was also working on becoming a playwright.\textsuperscript{18}

Mathis’s scripts provide many examples of her knowledge of filmmaking. For example, for scene 119 in Camille, a flashback, she notes, “Mr. Swankowski of the Research Dept. has a book with the costumes.”\textsuperscript{19} Earlier, she mentioned, “NOTE I have put closeups of scene 78 and 80 together as I reckon you will take them in one scene and time for cut of scene 79.”\textsuperscript{20} On The Conquering Power, with Rex Ingram directing again, she notes, “[Scene] 61 FADE IN LONG SHOT OF VILLAGE A bit of street scene used in Horsemen with castle in background. 62 LONG SHOT FRENCH STREET WITH ARCH USED IN HORSEMEN.”\textsuperscript{21} Her script for Ben-Hur provides many more examples of Mathis providing directions for set construction, use of miniatures, camera movement, and the use of handheld cameras.\textsuperscript{22}

Karen Ward Mahar writes that screenwriters often had more importance than directors in shaping many silent films:

“The continuity script included not only dialogue and stage directions for every scene but all the necessary information regarding cinematography, direction, lighting, sets, titling, and costuming. . . . Continuity writers became

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{13} Katherine Lipke, “The Most Important Job Ever Held by a Woman,” Los Angeles Times, June 2, 1923; and letter from Metro Fan, Photo-Play Journal (1919). (New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, Robinson Locke Collection).
  \item \textsuperscript{14} Mathis family birth records are listed in the Church of Latter-Day Saints census records for 1900, vol. 4, ED 22, sheet 3, line 90. This record gives the date of June’s birth as January 1887.
  \item \textsuperscript{15} Richard Rowland, Letter to Louise Boyer, January 23, 1918 (Georgetown University Library, Special Collections Division, Helen King Boyer Collection, Box 5, Folder 64).
  \item \textsuperscript{16} Louise Boyer, letter to Ernest Boyer, January 26, 1918 (Boyer Collection, Box 5, Folder 52).
  \item \textsuperscript{17} Louise Boyer, letter to Ernest Boyer, February 19, 1918 (Boyer Collection, Box 5, Folder 58).
  \item \textsuperscript{18} Louise Boyer, letter to Ernest Boyer, February 17, 1918.
  \item \textsuperscript{19} June Mathis, Camille, screenplay (Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, Margaret Herrick Library, Beverly Hills, CA).
  \item \textsuperscript{20} Ibid.
  \item \textsuperscript{21} June Mathis, The Conquering Power, screenplay (University of Southern California Cinema-Television Library, Los Angeles, CA).
  \item \textsuperscript{22} Thomas J. Slater, “The Vision and the Struggle: June Mathis’s Work on Ben-Hur, 1922–24,” Post Script (Fall 2008): 63–78. Mathis’s script for Ben-Hur is part of Kevin Brownlow’s personal collection.
\end{itemize}
the “brains” of the production process. The director now worked hand in hand with the continuity writer on the development of the story before a single scene was shot. Indeed, in some studios the director was not allowed to make any changes once the final continuity was approved. He or she had to shoot the film as written.23

Screenplays may not provide the aesthetic pleasures of other prose forms, because they are not meant for direct reception by a reader. Yet they are not necessarily artistically inferior. They are simply a different form of writing, requiring different skills. Early historian Lewis Jacobs recognized that

[n]o matter how famous the author of an original novel or play was, what gave the novel or play substance was its working out in terms of the camera and film. The ability to do this task was not easily developed; good scenarists were uncommon. Scenario writing demanded not only dramatic training but a thorough understanding of the film’s unique tools. The best scenarists in the industry were not world-famous authors but the long-experienced motion picture script writers, many of whom had been working in the industry since its earliest days.24

Writing close to that era, Jacobs was perhaps better qualified than current scholars to cite some of the best writers of the time, and the first he names is June Mathis. Jacobs writes, “To her—and to Thomas Ince—can be credited the make-up of continuity as we know it today. Gaining a reputation for her stress on timely themes and her careful planning, she originated the writer-director combination which was to plan the film’s action before any shooting began.”25

By the end of the 1910s, Mathis appears to have been ready to make her mark within the movie business in a big way. In October or November of 1919, Metro gained the rights to The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse. It would be June Mathis’s first project after moving from New York to her new office in California. The studio would spend an extraordinary amount on the film, with the set of the castle and village alone costing as much as many complete productions.26 On the basis of Valentino’s performance in The Eyes of Youth (Albert Parker, 1919), Mathis told him she was willing to risk her future on casting him in the lead.27 It was a major gamble. Valentino had read the

25 Ibid., 15.
novel and sought out Mathis in hopes of perhaps gaining work in the film as a dancer. Getting offered the lead part of Julio Desnoyers came as a complete surprise. Thus began a friendship and collaboration that was to continue for the remainder of their short lives. Both would simultaneously rise to great fame and then die shocking, unexpected deaths within a year of each other in New York (see Figure 2).

Whether or not Mathis’s casting of Valentino in any of these roles actually shaped her writing of the script is not known. But her method of adaptation in these works was possibly influenced by her actual relationship with and feelings toward Valentino. Like the women in the films, Mathis was an advisor and guide for Valentino. When he felt miserable throughout the filming of The Conquering Power and constantly battled with director Rex Ingram, Mathis tried to function as peacemaker. She bailed him out of jail when he was arrested for bigamy, counseled him when he was physically suffering through the filming of The Son of the Sheik (George Fitzmaurice, 1926), and attended premieres with him and his second wife, Natacha Rambova.

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30 Noel Botham and Peter Donnelly, Valentino, the Love God (New York: Ace Books, 1976), 96.
31 Leider, Dark Lover, 211, 250, 369–370.
her scripts for him, women attempt to gently guide his character as he suffers from irresponsible choices and the evils of the world. In *The Four Horsemen*, for example, Marguerite Laurier (Alice Terry) guides Valentino’s Julio Desnoyers toward maturity after all the men around him fail. Alice Terry indicated how Mathis provided her understanding of the role when she stated, “Miss Mathis sat on the set and told me the thousand and one things a woman sees in a role such as mine.”

As novels, both *The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse* and *Blood and Sand* begin in medias res. In the former, Julio is awaiting a secret rendezvous with Marguerite in Paris, having just returned from a trip to Argentina for money. In the latter, Juan is at a favorite hotel, awaiting his next fight. But Mathis tells each story in chronological order, thus emphasizing the struggle for maturity of Valentino’s characters.

**Defining Masculinity: Powerless Men Led by Women.** In Mathis’s scripts for Valentino, his character’s suffering “is not just a climax, a moment of spectacular display, as might be the case . . . for the shoot-out of the western, the war film, or the action movie.” They are “damaged from the start.” During the 1920s, as Chip Rhodes states, modernist writers would increasingly explore the causes and nature of this damage. In their work, he concludes, “[t]he ‘real’ is now itself a product of a point of view: it is a subjectively experienced vision of social reality that subordinates this reality to its apprehension.” But Mathis was working in the immediate postwar years and drawing on her familiarity with romantic melodrama and adaptation rather than realism, either physical or psychological, or the actual experience of the war. In her scripts for Valentino, therefore, Mathis was predictably adapting melodramatic works that did not indulge in the cynicism and self-absorption of those who had experienced and been disillusioned by the war. Peter Brooks explains that when the world fails to live up to expectations and ordinary language fails to provide an adequate means of expression, artists have turned to melodrama. The genre suggests that though life may not provide answers, there is a parallel or encompassing world of a spiritual nature that can provide hope if we can break through to it. Thus, melodrama could have had great appeal during a post-sacred age, in which writers, as Rhodes states, increasingly “used their art to criticize the desire for something authentic and un tarnished by history.”

Mathis’s instincts had always been toward the spiritual, which fit well with her use of melodrama and promotion of active women characters, particularly in relation to war narratives. From the beginnings of cinema through World War I, depictions of

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34 Ibid.
37 Rhodes, *Structures of the Jazz Age*, 54.
women on the battlefield were common in war films, and Mathis continued this tradition in her work. Her scripts for *To Hell with the Kaiser* (George Irving, 1918), *The Great Victory: Wilson or the Kaiser? The Fall of the Hohenzollerns* (Charles Miller, 1919), and *Draft 258* (William Christy Cabanne, 1917) all featured women fighting either in Europe or against German spies at home. A key scene from *The Legion of Death* (Tod Browning, 1918) includes a heavily spiritual element, as an image of Joan of Arc steps out of a book and enters the heroine Maria (Edith Storey), who goes out to lead her troops. Mathis confessed her belief in spiritualism in several news articles.38

Vincente Blasco Ibáñez’s novels included damaged males, strong females, and spiritual elements for Mathis to work with. His *The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse* is little more than propaganda. It was his first novel after a six-year hiatus from the form, and one story of its origins is that French president Raymond Poincaré asked him to write a work based on the battle of the Marne that would depict the ravages of war.40 Ibáñez gets to his propaganda efforts right at the start as the main character, Julio Desnoyers, a young man of French and Spanish parents, born in Argentina and now living in Paris, must decide whether or not to fight in the war. Ultimately, Julio finds his identity and endears himself to his father by enlisting and becoming famous for his bravery. But he does so only after feeling humiliated by his lover, Marguerite Laurier, who regrets that she is a woman and unable to fight. Instead, she becomes a nurse and ends their affair to give herself to the cause.

Julio, however, is not the novel’s hero. That role belongs to the Russian mystic, Tchernoff, a promoter of socialism, spiritualism, and the idea that all true Christians are revolutionaries. Humanity, in Ibáñez’s view, must focus on something other than material wealth and violence. In the end, Ibáñez suggests that the stability the world needs probably exists only in the past. The closing scene is set at a massive graveyard as the Desnoyers family searches for Julio’s final resting place. After they find it, Julio’s father, Marcello, realizes that the furies unleashed by the war will not be restrained by its completion: “All the rest was a dream. The four horsemen were the reality.”41

Mathis’s *The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse* (directed by Rex Ingram, whom she selected for the job) captured postwar desires to hold on to the past while moving into the future. One of the film’s contemporary reviewers probably stated it best: “The patriotism that swept the world in 1914 and 1915 has been turned into cynicism by bungling peace delegates, by exposures of money wasted on aircraft equipment and armament and by squabbling politicians. But the nerves of the public are still sensitive to the emotionalism of a period that becomes more momentous as it looms farther


into the background of the calendar.” By casting Valentino in the role of Julio, June Mathis was therefore selecting an appropriately ambiguous figure: an unknown to play a major lead, and an Italian to play an Argentinian who would fight for the French. Throughout the film, Julio is a confused young man, uncertain of his identity in a chaotic world, but guided into maturity by a woman of integrity. As in the novel, Marguerite Laurier (Alice Terry) shows him the way by putting on a uniform, becoming a nurse, and devoting herself to her wounded husband. Only then does Julio devote himself to military service.

Early in the film, Julio’s beloved grandfather, who had shown him a life of debauchery, dies and destroys Julio’s illusions about his future. He has not left Julio his entire estate, but rather has divided it equally between the families of his two daughters. His family then decides to move back to Julio’s father’s ancestral home in France, where Julio has no idea how to continue his life. His father wastes the family fortune on antiques and a large country estate while hypocritically denying Julio money for his bohemian lifestyle. His German uncle preaches a devotion to militarism that only disgusts him. As a result, he continues as his grandfather taught him by frequenting the “tango parlors” and maintaining his habits of debauchery. But that perspective becomes useless when war breaks out, leaving Julio once again searching for direction. As one of Mathis’s intertitles states, “What chance had Julio Desnoyers to be other than a youthful libertine?”

But, following Marguerite’s lead, Mathis ultimately transforms Julio into a spiritual figure rather than simply a great soldier who dies in battle. In the novel, Julio makes a short trip home after being wounded. While he and his father are walking down the street, they spy Marguerite attending her husband. Julio suppresses his feelings and ignores her, but his father observes her gazing at him longingly. It is their final encounter, and Julio believes that Marguerite never saw him. In the film, Mathis has Marguerite considering leaving her wounded husband for Julio when he is killed. She writes a note and starts to go when Julio’s spirit appears. Marguerite does not see him, but only feels his presence, which emphasizes his spirituality. He shakes his head and Marguerite turns and stays. In this way, Julio’s spirit reminds Marguerite that the most important lesson he has learned from her is compassion. His purpose was to serve, not to kill.

As she would do with her adaptation of Blood and Sand, Mathis also expanded the importance of Ibáñez’s mystical character in The Four Horsemen. Ibáñez ended the novel with the family standing in the graveyard and Julio’s sister embracing her wounded husband. In the book’s final words, Ibáñez compares her to the image of a Grecian vase. Mathis places Tchernoff (Nigel deBrulier) among the crosses as well. When Julio’s father asks if he knew his son, Tchernoff spreads his arms in a crucifixion pose and answers, “I knew them all.” The final title states that only when love replaces
hatred in men’s hearts will the terror of the four horsemen end. Such a transformation is possible through the guidance of women and spirituality.\textsuperscript{45}

Mathis’s other two Valentino scripts of 1921 were adaptations of \textit{Camille}, by Alexander Dumas, \textit{fils}, and \textit{Eugénie Grandet}, by Honoré de Balzac. These works attacked greed more than violence. In each, Valentino plays a young man whose mother has died, who has been abandoned or deceived by his father, and who must therefore make his way through a cutthroat world without guidance from a trusted father figure. His only hope in each comes from enlightenment from a woman who is more mature and courageous. \textit{Camille}’s title character is a classic passive melodramatic female who is nevertheless stronger than anyone else in the novel. Although forced to reject Armand Duval, she never abandons her love for him and takes it with her to the grave. Dumas shows that none of the characters except Camille clearly understands what is happening. She is forced to suffer. But as someone who has rejected materialism, Camille values true love more than anyone else.

In the film, although Alla Nazimova was producing, starring, and possibly even directing (though Roy Smallwood was the official director), Mathis followed the structure of the novel by including a framing narrative of Armand telling his story to the author of a book that was special for him and Camille.\textsuperscript{46} This structure emphasized Camille’s crucial influence on Armand—someone he will feel lost without. But Nazimova wanted to keep the focus on her death at the end and therefore cut the framing scenes. In the copy of Mathis’s script available at the Margaret Herrick Library, these scenes are crossed out in pencil. But enough exists to show how Mathis’s version would have emphasized the emotional devastation caused by Armand’s father. At the conclusion, Mathis goes from the close-up of the deceased Marguerite (Camille’s real name) to a

\textbf{FOREGROUND DISSOLVE TO THE AUTHOR’S STUDY.} The author and Armand facing each other, and Armand finishing telling the story as in scene 6. Armand looking at the author—with a sad appealing expression—and without a word, the author rises—hands him the book, looking into his face with a look of deep pity. He puts his hand on the young man’s shoulder, and there is a silent sympathy expressed by the author—Armand thanking him in silence. FADE OUT.\textsuperscript{47}

\textsuperscript{45} Ibid., scene 738. The available copy of Mathis’s script does not have these exact words for the final title. Instead, it states, “But the Beast will not die—that [sic] the Four Horsemen will go on through the minds and souls until mankind turns to right living.” The script includes several indications that it is not the final draft. Mathis began the description of this scene by writing, “I do not exactly know how to write detail of this until we know what graveyard scenes we can get from the News Weekly.” Whether she wrote more drafts or whether these details were decided during production is unknown. But, in addition to including Tchernoff in this scene, Mathis also finished the script with a final spiritual reference: “We show the apparation [sic] of the Four Horsemen fleeing before the Angel of Peace.” Mathis also had the Angel holding a scroll at the start of the film on which the credits were to be printed. These images were not included in the completed work. In her unproduced script for \textit{Ben-Hur}, Mathis also included scenes of angels bringing light to the world (Mathis, \textit{Ben-Hur}, screenplay, scenes 4, 23, 39, 51). In both scripts, Mathis associates the light and knowledge brought by the angels with that of the cinema.


\textsuperscript{47} Mathis, \textit{Camille}, scene 197.
The scene 6 to which Mathis refers here is missing from the existing copy of her script; in making her changes, Nazimova most likely discarded it. Her conclusion emphasizes Marguerite’s suffering, while Mathis’s shows two powerless men able to do nothing more than mourn over lost ideals, an apt image for a postwar, post-sacred era.

The strongest woman in the novels from which Mathis adapted Valentino screenplays is Balzac’s eponymous Eugénie Grandet. She is raised in complete ignorance of the outside world and is dedicated to her abusive and greedy father. From this isolation, she learns to value love and loyalty rather than the capitalist exploitation that dominates the rest of society. Eugénie never lets herself become financially indebted to any man, twice refusing money from her father. She also refuses a lawyer who offers to help her gain her father’s hidden wealth. But she is not simply ignorant or innocent. After inheriting her father’s fortune, Eugénie keeps living in the family’s decrepit old house. But she does so in order to help the poor with her fortune. Balzac writes, “For her money was neither power nor consolation; her existence lay only in love, religion, and faith in the future. Love explained to her the meaning of eternity.”

This love does not cost her independence. When she needs to marry, she does so only on the condition that she will not consummate the union. Thus, she maintains control of her body, and her greedy, ambitious husband (similar to all the selfish men in the novel) dies in an accident.

In her adaptation of the novel, entitled The Conquering Power, Mathis introduces Valentino’s character, Charles Grandet, celebrating his twenty-seventh birthday in his father’s Paris mansion with wealthy friends. Despite his age and devotion to his father, Charles is completely ignorant of his father’s business affairs. His world is shattered when his father commits suicide because of his enormous debts. Charles moves in with his uncle Victor, Eugénie’s father, who controls most of the property in a rural region. But the uncle is a miser who causes his family suffering and betrays Charles.

Mathis’s Eugénie Grandet (Alice Terry) is not as strong as Balzac’s. In the novel, Charles becomes a cruel, exploitative capitalist and Eugénie must endure an unwanted marriage. In Mathis’s version, Charles returns to her just before that marriage is to take place, their misunderstandings are resolved, and the film ends with them together in the garden. As in the novel, she still must defy her father, suffer through a separation from Charles of several years, and get locked in her room for several months when her father realizes she has given her gold pieces to Charles. But much of that suffering takes place off-screen and is quickly covered by an elliptical cut. Furthermore, Eugénie gains much of her strength by discovering that Charles has been writing to her from the West Indies, whereas in the novel he completely neglects her after he leaves. Mathis has Eugénie find Charles’s letters in her father’s desk and confront him. He yells, “How dare you meddle in my desk?” But she stands up to him and replies, “How dare you keep us apart—how dare you cheat Charles of his inheritance and me—of my happiness?”

This scene shows Eugénie’s self-determination, though present-day audiences might find it sexist. Mathis defines women’s happiness in relation to emotions as op-

49 Mathis, The Conquering Power, scene 361.
posed to money, the concern of men. This notion sounds completely chauvinistic, especially when Mathis includes intertitles like “Woman’s is the passive part—the web of life interwoven with love, sorrow and hope” and “While the man busies himself with the present and looks to the future for consolation.” These conceptions of gender were based on Victorian ideas about separate spheres of influence for men and women, and such conceptions proved useful for personalizing melodramatic conflicts of innocence and greed. But despite their regressive nature, these understandings of gender reveal the importance of women and explain why men must learn from women. Women may be passive, but they are also associated with “life.” They appreciate and comprehend its daily beauties and sorrows. Men, meanwhile, are busy in the present, and can only hope for “consolation” in the future.

Mathis emphasizes the cost of the masculine perspective by inserting another strong spiritual element into the narrative at the conclusion. While Eugénie is confined to her room, her father goes to his secret vault to enjoy his money, similar to the way Zazu Pitts would later insanely shower herself with gold coins in Erich von Stroheim’s *Greed* (1925). When Grandet gets locked in, the spirits of people he cheated in the past torment him to death. The scenes are quite chilling. Grandet looks on fearfully as gold coins pour from the mouth of one of the ghosts. Eventually, the action fulfills the warning of a peasant who had told Grandet he would be crushed by his gold some day. By contrast, Charles turns his back on his decadent past and returns to Eugénie. As in *The Four Horsemen, The Conquering Power* thus presents another male reconstruction by a female, a “moment of becoming.”

Finally, in *Blood and Sand,* Mathis’s construction of Ibáñez’s bullfighter Juan Gallardo (Valentino) fits within the postwar context. Lacking a father or any reliable guidance, young Juan must take his cues from his culture and the men who surround him, all of whom value fame, violence, and wealth over family, fidelity, or spirituality. This situation leads to his early and lonely death. As psychologist Roger Horrocks suggests, “male fascination with damage and with death are ‘the result of masculinisation itself, the process of becoming a man under patriarchy, which is deeply damaging.’” Horrocks’s thesis, in his text published in 1995, helps us to thematically connect Mathis’s Valentino screenplays in 1921 and 1922, especially in the adaptations of Ibáñez’s novels, and nowhere more directly stated than in *Blood and Sand.*

In his 1908 novel, Ibáñez condemned the growing popularity of violence and war. Ibáñez attacks bullfighting as a vicious capitalistic enterprise that sacrifices both men and beasts to the whims of the crowd, exemplifying a love of brutality that exists everywhere. As in *The Four Horsemen,* nothing is solved. After Juan’s last fight, the ring is merely cleaned for the next event. There is no end in sight to the violence.

However, Ibáñez’s real theme in these novels is not bullfighting or war, but the shaping of masculinity. In each work, a young man follows his desires for passion, love, and fame into a violent world that ultimately destroys him. Both Julio and Juan

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50 Ibid., scene 294.
die because they do not have a father figure to counsel them.\textsuperscript{52} Both believe they must either achieve greatness or die trying, and all the men around them fail to help them find any alternative. But Julio, at least, finds purpose and a pathway toward a spiritual identity through his guidance from Tchernoff and Marguerite. Juan, by contrast, never finds influences strong enough to lead him away from (or through) dangers determined for him by the patriarchal process of masculinization.

This suggests a necessary modification of Gaylyn Studlar’s conclusion that these Valentino films foreground “a transformation of masculinity,” one “that tempers the hero’s hard masculinity in the beginning.”\textsuperscript{53} True enough, in the first part of each film, Valentino’s character is a wild young man in search of pleasure through drinking, dancing, or bullfighting, all of which fulfill sexual desires. He treats women as objects, tossing them about on the dance floor as in \textit{The Four Horsemen} and \textit{Blood and Sand} or watching them dance erotically in \textit{The Conquering Power}. These opening displays of debauchery would help hook the white female spectator, the New Woman, whose desire for sexual freedom represented by the exotic (dark-skinned) Other was culturally repressed.\textsuperscript{54} As Studlar explains, the female viewer could enjoy the tango “as a ‘safe display’ of dangerously eroticized heterosexual relations because she can rely on the conventionalized patriarchal dynamics of dance to displace responsibility for her own arousal onto the powerful male dancer.”\textsuperscript{55} After safely escaping into this erotic world, the viewer would be reassured through Valentino’s loss and loneliness that he did have a tender side, and she would also be reassured that through her “maternal instincts” she could guide this poor boy into maturity, and that her love would be returned. In \textit{Blood and Sand}, Studlar observes the importance of “Julio’s boyish interaction with his mother, whom he unashamedly kisses and caresses on a number of occasions. The emotional and physical closeness of mother and son demonstrated in \textit{Four Horsemen} is duplicated to great effect.”\textsuperscript{56}

The fact that both films are adaptations by June Mathis suggests that these similarities are not accidental. Her close relationship with Valentino from practically their first meeting suggests that her constructions of his characters may have been related to her own repressed desires and/or mothering instincts in addition to cultural influences and box-office considerations. Mathis’s work, therefore, was a crucial factor in the construction of Valentino’s characters as ones who must often look to women rather than men if they are to have a chance for survival or happiness. They do not become merely softened or feminized. Instead, Mathis shows that their one chance to become strong is through rejecting patriarchal values.

\textsuperscript{52} Ibáñez, \textit{The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse}, 90; and \textit{Blood and Sand} (New York: Frederick Ungar, 1958), 47–48. In \textit{The Four Horsemen}, Marcello Desnoyers becomes guilty of selfishness, greed, and hypocrisy in relation to his children. In \textit{Blood and Sand}, Juan’s father spends most of his income on alcohol and clothes while his family dress in rags.

\textsuperscript{53} Studlar, \textit{This Mad Masquerade}, 172–173.

\textsuperscript{54} Mathis, \textit{The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse}, scene 80; and O’Leary, \textit{Rex Ingram}, 72. Mathis’s script does not include Julio throwing down the woman. She only writes that as the girls are laughing at Madariaga, “Julio angrily sends them away.” Ingram was therefore most likely accurate when he took credit for adding the roughness to the scene, borrowed from a film he had made years earlier for Universal. Mathis might have then used this detail in \textit{Blood and Sand}.

\textsuperscript{55} Studlar, \textit{This Mad Masquerade}, 172.

\textsuperscript{56} Ibid., 173.
Seeking a New Path to Manhood. Mathis does not criticize masculinity only because of its association with violence and greed. She also creates parallels between Valentino’s character and his pets, or via associations between men and animals that ridicule men and traditional masculinity. Such associations also mock wealth and privilege. In *The Four Horsemen*, Mathis included scenes of a monkey fighting with a parrot early in the film; the monkey later follows Julio into battle and is destroyed by a shell near the conclusion. In both scenes, the animal represents Julio. In *The Conquering Power*, Mathis included an animal to mock Charles as a useless society figure, but this material is not in the completed film. As he prepares to go to his uncle’s house in the country, Mathis writes, “A very smart French poodle is on an elaborate cushion on a chair near Charles and he is feeding it with dainties—and making the servants wait while he does so.” For his drive, Charles wears a motor cap and goggles. The poodle does too.

Nazimova also cut associations between men and dogs that Mathis built into *Camille*. After the opening of her screenplay in the author’s study, Mathis had flashed back to Dumas’s scene of Armand standing outside a jewelry store watching the Count De Varville, Marguerite’s latest paramour, buy her something very expensive. In the novel, she is buying jewelry alone, presumably with the Count’s money. Both versions reveal that Armand has worshiped Marguerite from afar for a long time. He is like a puppy following her around and hoping for affection. Mathis continues this association of men with dogs through an early scene at Marguerite’s apartment, in which her sister Prudence, with her friends Gaston Reux and Armand, try to get her attention from the window of Prudence’s apartment because they want to come to the dinner party the Count is giving. Gaston scratches at the window and barks to let Marguerite know he’s there. Armand realizes Marguerite is sick and literally killing herself by continuing to throw herself at wealthy men. He tells her, “I wish I were a relative—your servant—a dog—that I might care for you, nurse you—cure you.” Mathis lifted this typically melodramatic line from Dumas’s theatrical version of *Camille* and apparently used it to build the motif of men gazing at Marguerite through windows and behaving like dogs.

In *Blood and Sand*, Juan’s occupation as a bullfighter instantly creates an association between men and animals. The vamp Doña Sol (Nita Naldi) emphasizes this quality when she tells her friends that she finds Juan “a very interesting study—just like a big, fine animal.” The irony in her statement is that Juan’s efforts to achieve masculinity through his profession show that he actually agrees with her. Bullfighting provides the immature Juan an opportunity to acquire the phallus symbolized by the sword he draws out as he prepares for the kill. When he does so, he stands rigidly straight, raising the sword above his head and then lunging toward the bull.

57 Mathis, *The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse*, scenes 102, 705, 711–714. Julio’s pet monkey is always dressed like him and imitates his attitudes, thus diminishing their sincerity. When Julio sits wallowing in self-pity after hearing his grandfather’s will, the monkey sits with him, placing a sympathetic paw on his knee. Even more derisive is the monkey’s marching back and forth with a paint brush over his shoulder like a rifle after Julio has decided to enlist. The script I have studied does not include these scenes, but it is likely Mathis either wrote them independently or worked them out with Ingram. The script does refer to an earlier draft which included the monkey consoling Julio after the reading of the will.


59 Mathis, *Camille*, scene 50.

60 Ibid., scene 80.
This action might help him feel masculine, but it does not help him reach a mature and self-confident manhood.

Studlar specifically asserts what most who have written about Valentino recognize in one way or another: that his popularity came from his blending of compassionate and macho attitudes. But her approach separates Valentino’s character from the narratives of the films and limits possible feminist readings of the work. Hansen recognizes that aggressive females such as Doña Sol in Blood and Sand are defined by their appropriation of the gaze, which makes them evil. Such women spot Valentino first and lure him toward destruction when he returns their gaze. These readings also see passive characters such as Blood and Sand’s Carmen (Lila Lee), wife of Juan Gallardo, as positive. These women first receive Valentino’s gaze before looking at him. Studlar and Hansen reach these conclusions by focusing on a few scenes, a few aspects of mise-en-scène, and a few cuts. But they ignore Mathis’s perspective and lack a comprehensive grasp of the narrative, including the development (or significant lack of development) of Valentino’s character. As a result, Studlar concludes that Blood and Sand reassured the female viewer that “the patriarchal system is really benign as [it] fulfill[s] her deeper need to symbolically recover, through heterosexuality, a mother’s love that promises that the heroine will have all her needs passively satisfied.” But in showing that Juan dies without reaching maturity, Mathis also asserts the destructiveness of traditional patriarchy. Lacking a father or any reliable guidance, Juan must take his cues from his culture and the men who surround him, all of whom value fame, violence, and wealth over family, fidelity, or spirituality.

Mathis’s work also continually argues for sexual honesty rather than passive innocence. Her screenplay for The Conquering Power begins with a blatantly sexual scene that also did not make it into the film. Mathis states that the setting for Charles’s birthday party is to be decorated as an Arabian tent with a Negro jazz band dressed in Egyptian costumes and playing exotic instruments in the background. The women are to wear oriental veils and the men Bedouin costumes. Charles indicates that it is time for the guests to receive their gifts, which are on little boats that the guests pull toward themselves. Mathis uses the occasion to insert a blatant racist caricature: “the [N]egro orchestra looks on—their eyes almost bulging from their eye-sockets at this unusual occurrence.” Charles has bought a jeweled garter for his lover Annette and offers to put it on her. Mathis writes that as he does

we cut,

23 FOREGROUND SHOT OF NEGRO JAZZ BAND
Man with trombone in front—he draws out the trombone to its full length.
24 FLASH BACK TO FULL SCENE
Charles just raising up as though he had kissed her knee—the man finishing drawing out trombone and general shout of merriment from the guests. The [N]egro orchestra now starts to play.

61 Studlar, This Mad Masquerade, 173.
63 Studlar, This Mad Masquerade, 173.
64 Mathis, The Conquering Power, scene 10.
65 Ibid., scene 22.
Mathis thus suggests that Charles could have been kissing something besides her knee and that it was having an obvious effect on him. She also suggests that none of this was lost on anyone present. The “Negro orchestra” members are caricatured through bulging eyes and shocked reactions and used to represent crude sexuality. But they also reveal the true nature of what is happening.

Through Valentino, Mathis revealed the presence of transgressive sexuality in all levels of society. It exists throughout The Four Horsemen. In the beginning, for example, we learn that Julio’s beloved grandfather, the wealthy Madariaga, has a large number of illegitimate children among his servants. Mathis was especially proud of incorporating the scene of the German soldiers in drag at Marcello Desnoyers’s castle and recognized that a segment of the audience would have a specific reading of the scene. She told the Los Angeles Times that to most people the scene only represented a group of men acting crazy, but “to people who have read and know about life, it was the greatest thing in the picture.” This statement would actually not have been too unusual during the 1920s, when, as William J. Mann writes, “gay Hollywood could only have been more visible if the pages of the fan magazines had been printed in lavender. Not to the average moviegoer, of course—but to more sophisticated readers.” Mathis’s comment seems particularly bold and perhaps represents her confidence at this time—at the height of her success—about infusing more sexual honesty into the movies.

In Blood and Sand, Doña Sol is the stereotypical vamp, an obvious representation of sexual deviance. She always dresses in black, and when Juan comes to visit her, she is lying back on a plush couch in an exotic “Arab” room. Her servants are dressed in short “Arab” garb, and one of them sits by her head, serenading her. She offers Juan and his manager, Don José (another ineffectual male advisor who has pulled him away from his home), something to smoke, possibly opium. She is also associated with a serpent, and one is engraved on the ring she gives Juan. He even calls her a “serpent from Hell,” and the mystic philosopher of the plot, Don Joselito, in a part enhanced from the novel by Mathis, is obviously referring to her when he writes in his ledger, “Woman was created for the happiness of man, but instead, she destroyed the tranquility of the world.”

Juan is powerless against her because he is only a boy and has no idea how to respond to such overt sexuality. In the opening of the film, he is referred to as “playing at bullfighting,” and his closest relationship throughout the film is with his mother. At the end of their first scene together, he sits on the table with his arms around her and promises her riches while she sews his pant leg. The last time they are together after she and Carmen have discovered him with Doña Sol, she appropriately still refers to him as a boy, and she tells him, “I wish I could take a broomstick to you just as I used to!” Thus, Juan’s relationship to his mother does more than simply mitigate his sometimes brutish behavior, as Studlar asserts. It defines his immaturity, which is evident in all his relationships with women.

67 Ibid., scenes 598–603.
Juan marries Carmen, his childhood sweetheart, but their relationship never progresses. Juan’s happiest moment in the movie is when he plays with his two little nephews. As Carmen watches them, a title states, “Her husband’s love of children was a constant reproach.”

This statement has many possible interpretations. One is that Carmen was unable to have children, which is suggested in the novel. Another is that their marriage has never been consummated. When Juan meets Carmen at the beginning of the film, she has just returned from several years in a convent. On their wedding night, after all the guests have left, Carmen looks fearful when Juan turns to her. He gently leads her upstairs as the camera pulls back behind the closed outer gates of the house. We are naturally barred from seeing what will happen. But perhaps their lovemaking is not to be. A final possible reading of the title is that Juan is happier with the two boys than with her; they could be replacements for the two young friends he lost at the opening of the film, which shows them happily walking down an open country road, arms entwined, seeking adventure in rural bullrings.

Most importantly, Mathis’s depiction of Juan’s relationship to Doña Sol. She offers him what Carmen cannot, his manhood. She provides him with it symbolically through the phallic serpent on the ring she gives him, and their relationship is certainly adulterous. But more than sexual pleasure, he desires phallic power, which he never obtains because he never actually possesses her. Every time they are together, he continues to act like the boy he is rather than the man she would like him to become. That is the meaning of her line “Some day you will beat me with those strong hands! I should like to know what it feels like!” But he is unable to fulfill that desire, and she refuses to continue an affair with a child. Fred Niblo’s direction of Valentino, in this regard, seems excellent. Throughout the movie, Valentino continually slouches, hangs his head, and shuffles his feet. Rather than exemplifying the great lover, as audiences looked for then and scholars do now, his performance captures Mathis’s conception of the character. Rather than struggling valiantly to overcome his material, as Jeanine Basinger asserts, Valentino is giving the portrayal that the film needs. To judge it differently is to require that all his performances be exactly alike. In Blood and Sand, he needs to look pathetic when Doña Sol humiliates him in front of his wife and mother by tossing her purse down and commanding him to pick it up, which he does. He also needs to look pathetic when he then tries to tell Carmen that she does not understand how “[i]n a man’s life there is sometimes a good love and a bad love.” He falls to his knees behind her and hugs her tight, his childish behavior fitting the line.

Like any young man, Valentino’s character seeks guidelines for how to achieve masculinity. But, appropriately for the films of a postwar era, father figures are mostly absent. The ones available, as in The Four Horsemen and The Conquering Power, are unreliable. Like the fathers of the young men who went to war, they have only misled or betrayed the young. Blood and Sand provides multiple examples of patriarchal and social guides for Juan, all of which fail him.

70 Ibid.
71 Jeanine Basinger, Silent Stars (Hanover, NH: Wesleyan University Press, 1999), 270.
Mathis summarizes her point in a scene near the end of the film. Juan has been humiliated by Doña Sol and abandoned by his family on account of his infidelity, and he has spent a year in dissipation. Now he sits in a café with just two companions while the only two others present pay no attention to him. This scene contrasts with two earlier ones in which the cafés were crowded and Juan was the admired center of attention. Juan reads a letter from Carmen asking him to give up the arena, but his assistants counsel him not to. One says that he cannot give up his pigtail before he is thirty. The other says that quitting would sink him into poverty. Earlier, the bandit Plumitas (Walter Long) had told him that the only way men like them could get money would be by killing and risking their lives. Juan does not want to become like the cobbler he was apprenticed to, whom we meet in the opening scene, or the beggars outside his home on his wedding night. So he goes along with these older men whom he respects, even though he will lose everything in his next fight. He staggers away from the table and forgets about Carmen.

Mathis blames Juan because he has chosen to pursue fame and risk his life rather than stay with his family. He has seen these choices as his only paths to maturity. Mathis clearly indicates that Spain’s national sport is only one example of a worldwide and age-old problem. The first title, printed over a drawing of a gladiator killing a lion in an arena, states, “The wide world over, cruelty is disguised as sport to gratify man’s lust for excitement. From the early ages, humanity has congregated to watch combating forces of man and beast.” In the second title, the arena remains the same, but a bullfighter has replaced the gladiator, and the title reads, “To the Spaniard, the love of the bull-fight is inborn. A heritage of barbarism—its heroes embody the bravery of the knights of old.” The film’s last line shows Don Joselito gazing at the crowd in the arena and claiming that “out there is the real beast. The one with ten thousand heads.”

Don Joselito is a mystical figure who understands humanity’s history of barbarism. In his dim study, he keeps ancient torture instruments on which the ghostly suffering figures of their victims appear. He also keeps a giant ledger filled with notes about crucial issues. He follows Juan Gallardo’s life with interest, but he does not offer practical help. Like Tchernoff in The Four Horsemen, he can only define the way things are. He jots down thoughts such as “Passion is a game invented by the devil that only two can play” and then stares off into the distance as if he has just expressed something profound. At the wedding party scene, he puts his arms around Juan and Carmen and tells Juan to remember that the crowd’s admiration can be as fickle as a woman’s. Juan listens thoughtfully and then turns to embrace Carmen.

The mystic’s advice might have warned him about the path he is on, but he already knows the dangers. He fears Doña Sol, and tries to resist her every time they are together. He also recognizes from his first amateur fight that death in the arena could come at any time. His friend was gored to death. But he represses this fear. We know because every time he is reminded of the danger, as when Plumitas mentions it to him, he freezes like he does when he is with Doña Sol and he has the same boyish expressions. Subliminally, he realizes that his paths toward manhood are also only paths toward death. By only experiencing what Horrocks defines as “the process of becoming a man under patriarchy,” Juan will not discover the reconstruction of his masculinity through women’s imagination that he requires. “The damaged male,” write the editors
The Trouble with Men, “forces male and female viewers to reconstruct a theoretical space which precedes patriarchal law.” Mathis provides a means for conceiving of that space through both the social criticisms of her passive male spiritual characters and the positive examples of active women.

**The Importance of Active Women.** Like other silent-era screenwriters, June Mathis made heavy use of melodramatic form in which characters are types whose every experience is wrought with emotions as they discover that they are the playthings of powerful and tragic forces. The melodramatic form allowed Mathis to focus on social criticisms and broad gender issues. Kay Armatage writes of the melodrama that in these plot-driven narratives in which psychology does not play a significant part, the achievement of successful agency for women is fairly easy to come by, according to the formulaic conventions of the defeat of the villain and the happy ending for the heroine. . . . As long as the plot acquiesces to melodramatic narrational codes, characters and relationships apparently need not conform to prescribed psychologies. It appears that the aesthetic of melodrama is more porous and malleable than usually thought, and much less locked into the prison-house of patriarchal ideology than many feminist critics have argued. Mathis’s scripts for Rudolph Valentino clearly indicate that since patriarchy has failed, active women, those “who know something about life” (to paraphrase her comment to the Los Angeles Times), will have to fill the void. Marguerite Laurier, Julio’s lover in *The Four Horsemen*, provides the first example. Only after she puts on a uniform, becomes a nurse, and devotes herself to her wounded husband does Julio also put on a uniform, become a soldier, and devote himself to countless acts of self-sacrifice. He finds fulfillment and becomes a hero by copying her every move.

In *Camille*, Marguerite is definitely stronger in coping with heartbreak. She tries from the beginning to teach Armand that their love cannot succeed. When Gaston first introduces him as a law student to her outside the opera, the scene Nazimova begins the film with, Marguerite mocks him by saying, “He should study love instead.” She and her friends laugh and walk away. Armand is embarrassed, but hasn’t learned his lesson. Later, she tells him, “You know who—what I am. Go home—forget that we have ever met.” Still, he persists. Finally, Armand’s father forces her to reject his son. After that, Marguerite must show the greatest courage as she alone knows the truth which she cannot share with Armand. To discourage him, she returns to the Count De Varville and pretends to be carefree. But, in actuality, she allows her health to deteriorate and she dies, the victim of social conformity. From this perspective, Nazimova was justified in concluding the film by emphasizing her character, a strong

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75 Ibid., scene 80.
woman destroyed by hypocrisy, rather than Valentino’s lost character as Mathis had wanted.

In Blood and Sand, Mathis indicates that female passivity will not provide the guidance Juan needs. Mathis and director Fred Niblo use props to contrast the demure Carmen and the sultry Doña Sol. Carmen first makes contact with Juan by tossing him a flower; Doña Sol tosses him her serpent ring in the same manner. Carmen is associated with soft, feminine flower imagery throughout the film. Twice, she walks through the house with a bunch of flowers. But the phallic power of the serpent is what Juan wants, and Carmen does not offer this. Doña Sol is able to associate the flower with sexuality; she finally seduces Juan when she plucks a flower from a bouquet surrounding a small bronze statue of a naked woman, actually another phallic image. Following this gesture, Juan responds forcefully, unable to resist this blatant suggestion that she possesses the phallus.

Carmen’s passivity is ineffectual; it mainly refers to her suppression of reality rather than being a source of strength or guidance. She knows about Juan’s affair with Doña Sol, yet she refuses to confront him or help him in any way except through prayer, and that is not enough. She only goes to Rinconada, the family cottage, when Juan and Doña Sol are there because Juan’s brother-in-law Antonio states that the two of them are there so loudly that she cannot help hearing. When she is finally alone there with Juan, she says nothing but only turns her back and moves away from him. He gives up trying to get a response from her and gets his hat and cape to leave, mentioning that the season’s last fight will be the next day and that anything can happen. He asks her to at least say good-bye, but she still refuses. At the end, she goes to the arena in Madrid. But, instead of trying to stop him, she again goes to pray. As he lies dying, she kneels by him and looks down. He asks forgiveness, says she is the only one he has ever loved, and finally takes off the serpent ring and drops it on the floor. This action is not simply a rejection of Doña Sol; it also represents his failure to reach maturity. Furthermore, it could suggest a rejection of the patriarchal path to maturity through fame and physical conquest. Carmen’s loving look at him is one more of pity than of unity. He was lost to her long before through the path to maturity he chose. But it was the only one available to him. Thus, from Mathis’s perspective, patriarchy in Blood and Sand is not benign, as Gaylyn Studlar suggests; it is broken and destructive.

Conclusion: The Need to Study the Screenplay.

Film is a team effort. We tend to deconstruct the finished product without dealing with what has gone into it. Who has actually created the political statements a film is charged with making? What actually is being argued? Only by going back to the beginnings of a production and chronicling its development can we hope to understand the impact of the completed film. Myth and a selective memory are enemies that may defeat the unwary historian who fails to use all of the many kinds of sources available.

—Daniel J. Leab

In her screenplays for Rudolph Valentino, June Mathis confronted the emptiness of the masculine values that had contributed to a crippling war and a generation of lost youth. The destructive influences of patriarchy and violence are the primary concerns of her Valentino scripts. What Mathis hoped to achieve through them in her effort to redefine masculinity can only be recognized by studying these written works because much of the crucial material never appeared on-screen. Thus, although the unproduced aspects of the work did not have a cultural impact, the scripts do reveal the feminist thinking of one of the most important figures in silent film, providing further evidence that women in the silent film industry had significant criticisms of patriarchy that were repressed. Yet they kept working, and the repression of their efforts should not be continued by current scholars, especially when the work of female writers suggests an alternative definition of masculinity that deserved greater recognition in the post–World War I era and is still relevant.

Mathis’s final screenplay for Valentino, The Young Rajah, maintained several elements from the previous films but also brought closure to the redefining of masculinity that she had attempted through his characters. In The Young Rajah, Valentino plays Amos Judd, who grows up in a small town in New England but is really the son of an Indian prince with an ability to see the future. He has lost his real father, like the Valentino character in the other Mathis scripts, but he has grown up under the care of a loving uncle and aunt. He is troubled because his uncle has kept the story of his childhood a secret. Thus, he does not understand his own strange, mystical nature. But he is secure in many other respects. He is a skillful athlete, a star on the Harvard rowing team, thus breaking with the Fairbanksian stereotype of effete eastern intellectuals who need to be transformed by the west. His room is filled with religious icons, and he believes that “[t]here are many roads—all lead to God.” Equally important, he struggles throughout the film to overcome the racism of the woman he loves.

Critics hated the film and Valentino himself regretted making it. It did not have either the budget or the quality of direction of his other Mathis films. But these factors do not mean that it should be ignored. Valentino’s character in The Young Rajah progresses beyond the others Mathis created for him by showing a positive conception of masculinity that crosses barriers of ethnicity and ideology. The film, in fact, condemns prejudice against interracial romance, and encourages women to admire men with positive qualities regardless of their lineage. Valentino’s Amos Judd is not simply a fatherless boy who suffers and requires rescue by a strong and caring woman. Instead, he triumphs through the strength of his own spirituality. He thus represents a fulfillment of Mathis’s redefined masculinity for a postwar, post-sacred age.

June Mathis sought to promote Valentino as neither hero nor tragic victim. Indeed, her scripts show that she was a skillful adaptor who structured her work around an alternative definition of masculinity through Rudolph Valentino’s characters. Her scripts for Valentino reveal her own ideas, and do not necessarily reflect the same goals as the scripts written for him by others. Recognizing this fact not only provides her with long-overdue credit, it also provides new legitimacy for studying even unproduced and obscure screenplays, which may reveal new ideas and rich possibilities that have been unfortunately repressed by the dominant culture.