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**A Complicitous Critique: Parodic Transformations of
Cinema in Moving Image Art**

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PhD

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Abstract

Since the 1960s strategies of recycling, revision, and reframing have dominated art practice, and are particularly evident in artists' films since the 1990s. A majority of these films, and certainly some of the most significant examples, take the classical Hollywood film text as their object of revision, producing a diverse range of interventions that both reproduce and obstruct its governing conventions. This thesis proposes that the imitative tendency in contemporary moving image art constitutes a *parodic* revision of the classical film text and its attendant assumptions, and is currently a productive site of critique of dominant cinematic forms. Theorist Linda Hutcheon provides an inclusive definition of modern parody as extended repetition with critical difference; an ambivalent combination of conservative and revolutionary drives, a form that necessarily reproduces the very values it simultaneously displaces.

Of particular interest here is the effect of these parodic acts on Hollywood inscriptions of gender norms. Feminist film theory since the 1970s has argued convincingly that the decorative image of woman is the linchpin of the classical film text. Therefore, any critique of that text accordingly revises her placement; whether or not such a revision is the work's *explicit* intention. In place of a complete rejection of narrative cinema and its problematic repetition of reductive stereotypes of gender (and race and class) influential feminist theorists such as Claire Johnston and Laura Mulvey have insisted that a counter cinema must engage with both the form and content of the mainstream text. Only by inhabiting the language of that text can its assumptions be undermined. Hutcheon defines the challenge to dominant aesthetics produced by such parodic revisions as a *complicitous critique*, and views parody as a key feminist strategy. Yet, taking into account recent developments in theories of gender, race, and sexuality, this investigation does not exclusively focus on films by women, or by self-proclaimed feminist or queer filmmakers (who might be said to have as their main aim a re-writing of the place of 'woman,' and therefore 'man,' in cinema).

As the distinction between film and video becomes blurred, due to an abating interest in medium specificity, so too does the distinction between experimental cinema and moving image art become hazy. Currently the only significant distinction seems to be in the exhibition context of each; one occupies the cinema theatre (the black box), the other the gallery space (the white cube), yet there are certain artists and films that move freely between both venues. This apparent collapse of material and institutional boundaries should, one would imagine, prompt a similar disruption of boundary lines between film and art criticism, yet they remain quite separate, bridged only by a few critics such as Stephen Heath, Michael O'Pray and Laura Mulvey. This inquiry combines the discourses of film and art criticism in an attempt to locate an appropriate vocabulary to discuss these hybrid artworks that incorporate aspects of cinema.

Having established the theoretical parameters of this thesis, the films of four artists are discussed in detail, starting with Andy Warhol, the artist who marks the re-ignition (or continuation) of practices of appropriation that were dominant in the avant-garde movements of the early twentieth century. Warhol is a key figure in the re-emergence of what has subsequently become the dominant aesthetic of the last forty years and his influence on ensuing generations of artists is a prime reason for his inclusion as the first 'case study' of this thesis.

What links the films selected for close analysis here is their fascination with what are already ambivalent elements of classical cinema. Andy Warhol revises the seductive spectacle of woman by refusing the language of cinema that codifies her as enigmatic object of desire, American artist Matthew Barney imitates the abstracted ornamental spectacle of Busby Berkeley musical numbers that traditionally (and often inexplicably) delay narrative progression, Australian artist Tracey Moffatt repeats the resistant image of the insolent black maid tethered to her role as subservient other, and British artist Douglas Gordon reveals the still images that comprise the filmstrip and the all-important illusion of movement. Film theory has examined each of these subversive elements at length and, while they are ultimately 'contained' by the ordering principle of the classical film, they represent the only permissible instances of excess in what is otherwise a very

unified economical text. The films examined parody what are already excessive ambivalent aspects of cinema paying tribute to them, while simultaneously critiquing the Hollywood text in general (and its compulsion to produce an expression of excess, in order to both acknowledge and expel it). Placing these subversive elements centre stage in their revisions, these artists, through strategies of exaggeration, repetition, and expansion, make those subversions explicit and reposition them as *uncontrollable*.

The diverse and constantly expanding collection of parodies of cinema in contemporary moving image art is here proposed as a type of counter cinema, one that does not forge an absolute break from cinema, but creates ruptures and dislocations by critiquing it from within.

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Introduction

In his discussion of artist Douglas Gordon's 2006 mid-career retrospective, Klaus Biesenbach the curator of Film and Media at New York Museum of Modern Art states: "Re-enact, re-sample, re-assemble, re-create, re-do, and re-make; these were some of the key artistic strategies of the last fifteen years,"¹ identifying these strategies as prominent since around 1990. Biesenbach makes this statement in a discussion of Gordon's video art works, and indeed the strategies of re-framing that he lists are prominent in much recent gallery installed artists' films and videos. This thesis focuses on the tendency in contemporary moving image art to take the cinematic text as its object of scrutiny. In particular it investigates art's parodic revisions of the iconic image of woman in cinema, and prescribed cinematic gender norms. Feminist film theory of the 1970s and 80s developed a compelling body of writing about the *central* place of woman in cinema and her designation as the site of excess that threatens the sanctity of the classical film text. Parodic repetitions of the conventions of the classical cinema simultaneously enhance and displace her positioning, providing cinematic inscriptions of gender norms with a productive, if complicitous, critique.

While the repetition of pre-existing images and forms may be a prominent tendency in recent art practice, often referred to as appropriation art, these strategies have a much longer history, dating at least as far back as early modernist works such as the paintings of French artist Edouard Manet in the mid-nineteenth century. Yet, Simon Dentith notes their prominence in the Early Modern period of Cervantes and Jacobean drama in the early seventeenth century² and even further back to Greek literature such as the mock epic the *Batrachomyomachia* (the *Battle of the Frogs and Mice*) in the 800 BC.³ In an essay written for an exhibition catalogue in 1978 Leo Steinberg makes the observation

¹ Klaus Biesenbach, *Douglas Gordon: Timeline* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2006), p.31

² Simon Dentith, *Parody* (London: Routledge, 2000), p.160

³ *Ibid.*, p.40

that: "All art is infested by other art."⁴ The exhibition was *Art About Art* at the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York. In making this comment he draws attention to a tendency to recycle in all art, a point he illustrates by identifying a horse figure that had been copied from a Titian painting in 1560 into a Van Dyck in 1782 and finally a John Trumbull in 1790. This "perennial recirculation of recognizable antecedents"⁵ that had a tendency to "deliver quotations as if they were improvised"⁶ is not the sort of recycling of imagery that Steinberg and the exhibition concentrate on. The recognition of quotations in this kind of 'unannounced' recycling is the pastime of art insiders, whereas the proliferation of recycling strategies in art from the 1960s onwards is what Steinberg refers to as "the open secret of art."⁷ Involuntary inspiration by a pre-existing source is replaced by deliberate cannibalization, to use Steinberg's vocabulary. He describes this late twentieth century phenomenon of appropriation in art as "inter-art traffic."⁸

Practices of revision are considered to be particularly prolific and promiscuous today, with artists freely pillaging from all existing forms and texts and, although Biesenbach's classification of these practices reaches only as far back as 1990 (perhaps because he focused on film and video), the current version of this activity is generally traced back to the 1960s. Regurgitation of pre-existing images, texts and forms is widely recognised as the dominant aesthetic of the postmodern, both in popular culture and in art. The strategies listed by Biesenbach are often characterised as parasitical and purely derivative, expressive of a late capitalist cynicism that permeates every aspect of culture, a characterisation largely attributable to the influential theories of American cultural critic Fredric Jameson.⁹ Conversely, by drawing on feminist film theory and theories of parody, this thesis makes a case for strategies of re-enactment as critically transformative

⁴ Leo Steinberg, 'Introduction: The Glorious Company,' Jean Lipman & Richard Marshall (eds.), *Art About Art* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1978), p.9

⁵ Ibid., p.10

⁶ Ibid., p.15

⁷ Ibid., p.20

⁸ Ibid., p.21

⁹ Fredric Jameson, 'Postmodernism and Consumer Society,' *The Cultural Turn: Selected Writings on the Postmodern, 1983-1998* (London: Verso, 1998), pp.1-20

of the forms they cite and proposes that currently an exciting area of critique of the doxa of conventional cinema is found in gallery art.

The cinematic text is re-situated in a variety of ways in contemporary art, but rather than viewing this as a simple gesture of imitation for its own sake, I intend to demonstrate throughout this thesis that cinema is subjected to what theorist Linda Hutcheon might term a *complicitous critique*.¹⁰ For, while parodic re-framings do carry with them many of the conventions and values of the parodied text, they do so as a prerequisite for critique. Hutcheon defines parody as “extended repetition with critical difference,”¹¹ succinctly acknowledging the duality of the parodic text, containing as it does both conservative and revolutionary drives. While this discussion draws on the writings of other theorists and historians of parody, such as Margaret A. Rose¹² and Dan Harries,¹³ it makes consistent use of Hutcheon’s inclusive and updated definition of parody.

In *The Politics of Postmodernism*, Hutcheon outlines the close relationship between feminism and postmodernism; a relationship explored by many theorists, always with the cautionary advice that while feminism and postmodernism may intersect at certain points, they are quite distinct.¹⁴ In particular, Hutcheon identifies an allegiance between postmodern parodic strategies and feminist discourse:

Parody, rewriting, re-presenting woman is one option which postmodernism offers feminist artists in general, but especially those who want to work within the visual arts, overtly contesting the male gaze.¹⁵

¹⁰ Linda Hutcheon, *The Politics of Postmodernism* (London: Routledge, 2000), p.106 and p.151

¹¹ Linda Hutcheon, *A Theory of Parody* (Urban: University of Illinois Press, 2000), p.7

¹² Margaret A. Rose, *Parody: Ancient, Modern and Post-Modern*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995)

¹³ Dan Harries, *Film Parody* (London: BFI, 2000)

¹⁴ For good examples see Alice Jardine, *Gynesis: Configurations of Woman and Modernity* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986) and Rita Felski, ‘Feminism, Postmodernism and the Critique of Modernity’ in *Cultural Critique*, No. 13, Autumn 1989, pp.33-56

¹⁵ Linda Hutcheon, *The Politics of Postmodernism*, op. cit., p.156

However, she also points out that feminism maintains a distance from postmodernism, because it has a very clear political agenda, one that seeks to affect social change and not simply to disrupt socially authorised inscriptions of desire and pleasure.¹⁶ Exceeding critique, what Hutcheon terms 'de-doxification,' and moving into political agency is an urgent and persistent goal of feminist art and discourse. Yet, rather than offer examples of such political effectiveness, she concludes by stating that parodic practices (which she continues to link to postmodern aesthetics) do facilitate a feminist contestation of 'the old' without necessarily precluding the possibility of re-imagining desire and the woman's body. The first chapter of this thesis outlines the allegiance between feminism and parody by presenting the writings of feminist scholars that argue the importance of an engagement with dominant forms of representation for any attempt to counter them. Indeed the arguments presented by critics such as Patricia Mellencamp¹⁷ and Susan Rubin Suleiman¹⁸ suggest that it is only through an engagement with narrative and with the conventions of dominant texts (one major version of which is parody) that transformations of these texts, and therefore indications of alternatives, become a possibility. In this case we are describing the necessity of directly engaging with the classical film text as the dominant model of cinema. Throughout my discussion I use the terms classical Hollywood film, conventional film, and dominant cinema fairly interchangeably, though in all cases it is the classical Hollywood text as defined by film theory and criticism that I am referring to.

In short, according to Hutcheon, the duplicity of parody works for a feminist agenda, such as the agenda to destabilize the male gaze. Parodic re-writings of the iconic cinematic image of woman (and all of its constituent assumptions) transform its doxa; a process of transformation effected by precisely the strategy that many critics, including Jameson, see as 'blank parody,' compulsive or pathological imitation. Chapter four of this thesis challenges the characterisation of postmodern practices of imitation as

¹⁶ Ibid. p.152

¹⁷ Patricia Mellencamp, *Indiscretions* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990)

¹⁸ Susan Rubin Suleiman, *Subversive Intent: Gender, Politics and the Avant-Garde* (London: Harvard University Press, 1990)

ineffective through a discussion of Tracey Moffatt's pastiche films, with reference to the recent contestations to Jameson's writings provided by the work of Ingeborg Hoesterey¹⁹ and Richard Dyer.²⁰ In his essay 'From Collage to the Multiple: On the Genealogy of Avant-Garde and Neo-Avant-Garde,'²¹ Dietrich Scheunemann also offers a very useful challenge to the characterisation of recent avant-garde practices as simply derivative 'inauthentic' repetitions of the historical avant-garde of the early twentieth century, when he questions the assumption that Peter Bürger's influential *Theory of the Avant-Garde*²² is the *only* valid interpretation of the aims of the early avant-garde. Re-conceptualising Bürger's thesis, while careful to acknowledge its invaluable contribution to studies of the avant-garde, Scheunemann rejects the proposition that the avant-garde is a completed and failed project, and identifies Andy Warhol as a key figure in its re-ignition in the 1960s after a period of dormancy:

So it seems that after the 'dark days' of the 1930s and 40s, during which the avant-garde vanished under the pressure of political persecution, Duchamp's attack on the traditional categories of the 'originality' and 'uniqueness' of the work of art and his critique of the reliance of the traditional notion of art on the skill of the artist's hand were re-appropriated for contemporary artistic production in and through Warhol's work.²³

For Scheunemann, the avant-garde has only failed according to Bürger's designation of its chief aim, which was, according to him, to return art to the praxis of everyday life, to make it relevant again in the face of modernism's refusal to sully itself with morality, politics, or any kind of social relevance. Bürger sees Marcel Duchamp's *Fountain* (1916) as the ultimate attempt to achieve this aim and, therefore, its acceptance by the art institution and its canonisation as one of great art works of the twentieth century, marks

¹⁹ Ingeborg Hoesterey, *Pastiche: Cultural Memory in Art, Film Literature* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001)

²⁰ Richard Dyer, *Pastiche* (London: Routledge, 2007)

²¹ Dietrich Scheunemann, 'From Collage to the Multiple: On the Genealogy of Avant-Garde and Neo-Avant-Garde' in Dietrich Scheunemann (ed.), *Avant-Garde/Neo-Avant-Garde* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2005), pp.15-48

²² Peter Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984)

²³ Dietrich Scheunemann, op. cit., p.38

the failure of the avant-garde. However, Scheunemann interprets Duchamp's, and indeed the avant-garde's, aims rather differently, stating that by placing an ordinary ceramic urinal signed by the manufacturer (or so we're led to believe) into the art gallery, the artist is not attempting to attack the autonomy of the art institution, but to explore "the conditions under which an ordinary article of life transforms into a work of art."²⁴

Traditional notions of creativity, who decides what art should be, and the uniqueness of the art object are all questioned by Duchamp's advanced conceptual gesture. If we reconsider the aim of the so-called 'historical avant-garde,' and indeed if we explore a variety of aims, then Bürger's categorical rejection of the authenticity of the so-called 'neo-avant-garde' is highly contestable. Rita Felski is another critic who complicates the usual separation of postmodernism from all that precedes it. Like these other two scholars, Felski turns "a somewhat jaundiced and sceptical eye on a ubiquitous vocabulary of crisis, rupture, and ending."²⁵ She suggests that the styles and forms of modernism are also those of postmodernism, disputing the idea that postmodernism makes a clean break with modernism or is generally antagonistic to modernism.²⁶

For Jameson, postmodernism is characterised chiefly by its complicity with doxa, however, Hutcheon writes about parody's potential to 'de-doxify,' an ability that Hoesteray, Dyer and Scheunemann observe that postmodern parody has retained. This thesis acknowledges the tendency to separate modern and postmodern forms and negotiates that tendency when encountered in relation to the various art works discussed here, but aligns itself with the view, held by Jean-François Lyotard and Scheunemann to name two, that postmodernism is a part of the project of modernity and certainly in the case of parody and feminism we can see no clear break from the modern to the postmodern.

As mentioned, this discussion aims to elucidate the effect that parodic re-writings of cinema have on the image of women. Since the image of woman as abstracted spectacle

²⁴ Dietrich Scheunemann, op. cit., p.30

²⁵ Rita Felski, *Doing Time: Feminist Theory and Postmodern Culture* (New York: New York University Press, 2000), p.6

²⁶ Ibid. p.5

is so central to the economy of the classical film text, critiques of that text consequentially dismantle her centrality. Yet, this thesis does not exclusively discuss works that consciously or chiefly set out to critique the formulation of gender norms in conventional cinema. Of all the works discussed at length in the thesis it is only Australian artist Tracey Moffatt's *Lip* (1999) and *Love* (2003) that make a pointed critique of Hollywood inscriptions of race and gender. It is the contention of this thesis that even artworks that do not focus directly on gendered images or structures in their quotations of or allusions to cinema, effect a critique of gender norms through their particular use of parody. This is due to the central importance of the image of woman as enigmatic object of desire and the masculine thrust of the narrative in the ideal example of dominant cinema. While South African Berlin-based artist Candice Breitz's quotations of scenes from *Grease* (Randal Kleiser, 1978) in *Double Olivia (Hopelessly Devoted to You) 1977-2000* and Swiss artist Pipilotti Rist's *Ever Is Over All* (1997), which both stages and disrupts clichés of femininity, may directly and *intentionally* critique cinematic gender norms, American artist Christian Marclay's multiple quotations of scenes of musical performances from Hollywood movies in *Video Quartet* (2002) may not. However, by re-framing iconic cinematic images his work also (albeit inadvertently) revises and 'interrupts' Hollywood gender norms which are inscribed onto his quoted texts and of central importance to the organisation of their original narratives.

In her book *Video Art: A Guided Tour*, artist and critic Catherine Elwes points to the recent phenomenon of artists re-staging significant films, or sequences from films; a strategy facilitated by the accessibility of new digital technologies.²⁷ Film critic Michael O'Pray also acknowledges the tendency in moving image art from the 1990s to today to imitate film and television, however, he continues to separate avant-garde and postmodern tendencies in much the same way that Jameson and Bürger do, stating that for the young British artists he discusses "the past is not something to be built upon or developed but rather pillaged and looted."²⁸ In his introduction to *The Undercut Reader*,

²⁷ Catherine Elwes, *Video Art: A Guided Tour* (London: I.B.Tauris, 2005), p.169

²⁸ Michael O'Pray, *Avant-Garde Film: Forms, Themes and Passions* (London: Wallflower Press, 2003), p.119

a collection of writings on artists' films, Barry Schwabsky also highlights the recent "recuperation of art's relation to film"²⁹ and expresses some surprise that this recuperation has focused on Hollywood narrative cinema and not any of the various avant-garde and experimental cinemas with which he imagines art to have a greater affinity. He does concede, however, that this interest may be due to the desire to examine the extraordinary cultural impact of classical cinema and perhaps a desire to quash the high art / mass culture divide. Biesenbach cites the point made by art critic Hans Ulrich Obrist where he states that the "flirtation between filmmaking and art-making" in the 1990s became "one of the decades most prominent 'golden frames.'"³⁰ In the introduction to his interview with Ken and Flo Jacobs, for *A Critical Cinema 3*, Scott MacDonald contextualises Jacobs' work within the now prolific tendency in art to work with what he calls "recycled cinema."³¹ MacDonald notes that this tradition began with the films of Esther Shub and Joseph Cornell, who Jacobs had briefly worked for in the 1950s, but claims that it "in recent years, has become a, if not *the*, dominant procedure in independent film and videomaking."³²

This tendency has also been highlighted by a number of influential exhibitions in recent years: *Scream and Scream Again: Film in Art* at Museum of Modern Art Oxford in 1996; *Hall of Mirrors: Art and Film Since 1945* at Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles in 1996; *Spellbound: Art and Film* at the Hayward Gallery in 1996; *Notorious* at Museum of Modern Art Oxford in 1999; *Cinéma Cinéma: Contemporary Art and the Cinematic Experience* at the Stedelijk Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven in 1999; *Cut: Film as Found Object in Contemporary Art* at Milwaukee Art Museum in 2004.

Considering the clear and persistent interest that art in general, and moving image art in particular, has in cinema (both the film text and the exhibition context of cinema), it is

²⁹ Barry Schwabsky, 'Art, Film, Video: Separation or Synthesis?' in *The Undercut Reader: Critical Writings on Artists' Film and Video* (London: Wallflower Press, 2003), p.2

³⁰ Klaus Biesenbach, op. cit., p.25

³¹ Scott MacDonald, *A Critical Cinema 3* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), p.364

³² Ibid.

rather surprising that there is still so little cross-fertilisation between art and film criticism. The discipline of film studies contains a wealth of advanced critical and theoretical writing on cinema that could illuminate discussions of the relationship between art and cinema, and yet art critics mostly overlook this rich resource. Sean Cubitt, in his foreword for Jackie Hatfield's *Experimental Film and Video*, makes the same criticism of film critics' and theorists' reluctance to discuss contemporary examples of experimental moving image art:

There have been honourable exceptions like Mike O'Pray and Stephen Heath, but few of the leading film critics and theorists of the last forty years have spent much time with artists' video and film.³³

I would add Laura Mulvey to Cubitt's list of examples for her discussion of Douglas Gordon's *24-Hour Psycho* in her most recent book *Death x 24 Frames a Second*.³⁴ The focus on parodies of cinema in moving image art here necessitates a discussion of the conventions of cinema, which is facilitated by recourse to film theory and I suggest that film theory makes an invaluable contribution to the development of any discussion of these films. Because the films I discuss here are most frequently situated within art historical discussions and have been the focus of much recent art criticism I also draw on art history to piece together my own analysis of them. Cubitt is making a general point about the tendency for film criticism to separate moving image art from the avant-garde and experimental film movements that film critics more freely discuss; thereby overlooking a vast body of exciting and innovative filmmaking. The interdisciplinary approach adopted by this thesis, which integrates the disciplines of film studies and art history, aims to illustrate the potential benefits for film criticism of discussions of artists' film and video and their relationship to cinema and simultaneously to demonstrate that an understanding of film theory is indispensable to art history's discussions of moving image art, especially moving image art that engages directly with cinema.

³³ Sean Cubitt, Foreword to Jackie Hattfield (ed.), *Experimental Film and Video* (Eastleigh: John Libbey Publishing, 2006), p.viii

³⁴ Laura Mulvey, *Death 24 x a Second* (London: Reaktion Books, 2006)

Philip Dodd provides a reason for this neglect by both disciplines of the work of the other, in his essay 'Modern Stories' written for the catalogue of the 1996 exhibition *Spellbound: Art and Film*, where he explains that the power of disciplinary boundaries, largely attributable to the modernist insistence on medium specificity (and purity), precludes discussion that crosses from film to art or vice versa, or discussions of film as art.³⁵ Dodd writes a convincing critique of our tendency to 'dump' all filmmaking that rightly belongs to various art movements into the historically static (seemingly ahistoric) category of 'experimental film.' He gives the example of the British artist Len Lye who made painterly films (painting and scratching directly onto film), lamenting that he "falls between the orthodox histories of the two art forms and into the ghetto of 'experimental film' (a catch-all term, if ever there was one)."³⁶ He later states that: "The truth is that modernism cannot easily find a place for such an 'impure art.'"³⁷ In this essay Dodd cites many interesting examples of the cross-fertilisation between various fine art mediums and film, for example Frances Bacon's 1957 painting of the nurse from Sergei Eisenstein's film *Battleship Potemkin* (1925).³⁸ In a move that perfectly illustrates Dodd's point, Bacon's tortured figures were later to provide a source of reference for the design of the alien creature for the *Alien* (1979-92) movies.

Critics now recognise the convergence between art and cinema and between video and film that makes any continuation of these traditional distinctions and separations hard to justify; a continuation that would perpetuate the separation of film and art criticism when clearly certain films require the attention of both. Michael Rush points out that "digital technology is removing boundaries across the board" and notes that the experimental has entered the movie theatre (e.g. Mike Figgis' digital feature film *Timecode* made in 2000), while "what once appeared only in movie houses has been appropriated, reinterpreted, and channelled into video installations in galleries."³⁹ Patricia Mellencamp observes

³⁵ Philip Dodd, 'Modern Stories,' Amy Taubin et al (eds.), *Spellbound: Art and Film* (London: BFI and Hayward Gallery, 1996), p.34

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid., p.38

³⁸ Bacon's painting is titled *Study for the Nurse in the Film Battleship Potemkin*, 1957

³⁹ Michael Rush, *Video Art* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2003), p.125

these crossovers prior to their recent general recognition, suggesting that the technological and institutional alignment of film and video with both “precious art and reproducible mass culture”⁴⁰ makes the task of recognising boundary lines both in the past and now difficult if not irrelevant. Schwabsky observes the move away from an emphasis on the material differences between film and video that marked experimental and avant-garde film and video production from the 1960s to the 1980s, particularly commenting on the common practice of shooting in one format and transferring to another for exhibition purposes.⁴¹ O’Pray also identifies this material interchangeability between video and film in his closing comments on recent British moving image art, which he states has yet to be fully understood, but that “has meant an ambiguity between film and video” that dilutes “the ‘pure’ modernist film tradition that stressed film’s properties and placed ‘video art’ in something of a limbo.”⁴² Chrissie Isles augments this point when, in the opening of her essay “The Mutability of Vision,’ for the 1996 exhibition *Scream and Scream Again: Film in Art* she refers to “an unprecedented crossover between the languages of video and film.”⁴³

As we can see moving image art’s interest in cinema has been widely acknowledged by both art criticism and by the staging of themed exhibitions of such art. Yet writing on the fascination of cinema for moving image artists tends to ignore the vast body of film theory that can only enhance our understanding of that fascination and the particular effects of art’s revisions of cinema. Embarking on a project such as this, one encounters an immediate problem with the shifting terminology used by different writers, writing from various positions and disciplines, to describe the same work. The difference in terms implies a difference in text and form that is not always so apparent, and certainly difficult to sustain when subjected to close analysis of the films concerned. The material difference between film and video is less relevant to the practice of contemporary artists using these media. For instance work shot on video is often transferred to film as in

⁴⁰ Patricia Mellencamp, op. cit., p.xv

⁴¹ Barry Schwabsky, op. cit., p.2

⁴² Michael O’ Pray, op. cit., p.126

⁴³ Chrissie Isles, ‘The Mutability of Vision,’ *Scream and Scream Again: Film in Art* (Oxford: Museum of Modern Art Oxford, 1996), p.5

Swedish artist Henrik Håkansson's high definition videos of birds and moths in flight which are then transferred to film for projection in the gallery, giving the effect of slow motion without any loss of detail in the image. 'Impure art' dominates today and therefore we need to locate appropriate critical vocabulary to discuss it. In this discussion I refer to 'moving image art,' which could also be criticised for being a 'catch all' term, yet it clearly describes films and video made through art gallery support and exhibited in a gallery context, often referred to as installation art. Because of the general fluidity between film and video in moving image art today I refer to all of the recent works discussed as films regardless of whether they've been shot on film or video.

I have chosen various works by four artists to illustrate the variety of approaches taken by artists in reinvesting conventional cinema through parodic strategies, however, I am mindful that there are many other excellent examples worthy of inclusion in this thesis and in a discussion of parodic revisions of conventional cinema in general. Of all of these perhaps the most glaringly obvious omission is the work of Jean-Luc Godard. Godard's *Histoire(s) du Cinema* (1988-1998) is the quintessential example of video remembering cinema and contains some fascinating juxtapositions of quoted cinematic images that provide rich ground for a discussion of the ways that the cinematic image of woman, and more broadly of gender norms, are highlighted, challenged and subverted, through processes of quotation. Yet his work has been written about extensively by film critics and theorists and, although this epic work contextually reframes cinema, it does so through television and film festival screenings rather than making use of the gallery space. For those reasons it sits outside of the parameters of this particular study. However I am also interested in less obvious engagements with cinema and further study would therefore also include some analysis of the work of Pipilotti Rist, whose intensely coloured videos make allusions to classical cinematic representations of femininity, interrupted by some random acts of violence. Further research on this thesis subject would certainly include a discussion of her films.

Although Warhol's practice is separated from the other artists discussed in detail (in individual chapters) by at least three decades, I have chosen to include a discussion of a

number of his films as the first of my case study chapters for a few reasons. Firstly, his work marked a significant return to the avant-garde practices of appropriation and was the beginning of the establishment of such practices as a major tendency in contemporary art, as indicated by Scheunemann. Secondly, as O'Pray acknowledges in his brief overview of the work of some contemporary British artists working with film and video: "If there is a ghost haunting these works, in some cases causing a distinct din, it is, inevitably, Andy Warhol."⁴⁴ That influence is obvious in Gordon's use of slow-motion, silent projection and the double screen in *24 Hour Psycho* (1993). But the interest in revising mass cultural imagery, and in reframing and repeating iconic cinematic images in order to simultaneously pay homage to and dismantle them, permeates the work of the other artists discussed here and was pioneered by Warhol in a pointed and deliberate way (if one can be deliberately ambivalent) that was missing from earlier works such as those of Joseph Cornell and Ken Jacobs. In his overview of video art, simply titled *Video Art*, Michael Rush also acknowledges the importance of Warhol to any discussion of contemporary moving image art, particularly as he began using video alongside film in 1965: "There can be little doubt that Andy Warhol was an artist of singular importance."⁴⁵

Taking Laura Mulvey's comments on the promise of an alternative cinema in her highly influential essay 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema' as a starting point, this thesis examines the ways that moving image art transforms the iconic image of woman; the central image of dominant (Hollywood) cinema. Mulvey claims:

The alternative cinema provides a space for the birth of a cinema which is radical in both a political and an aesthetic sense and challenges the basic assumptions of the mainstream film."⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Michael O'Pray, op. cit., p.120

⁴⁵ Michael Rush, op. cit., p.52

⁴⁶ Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," *Visual and Other Pleasures* (London: Macmillan, 1989), p.15

She observes that one of the challenges for feminists is “how to fight the unconscious structured like a language [...] while still caught within the language of patriarchy?”⁴⁷ She argues that an alternative that marks a total break with the past is impossible, but that “we can begin to make a break by examining patriarchy with the tools it provides.”⁴⁸ For her this facilitates a distance from the past that also necessarily acknowledges that past. Although she does not propose parody as a useful strategy to explore the possibilities for such an alternative cinema, it fits perfectly with her preliminary conception of such a cinema.

The first chapter of this thesis proposes that parody provides the most effective form for critiquing dominant cinema, and this is followed by an examination of four significant and diverse examples of parodic revisions of these iconic images. Each case study draws on a relevant body of theoretical writing to illuminate the artist’s particular use of parody and its effects. Mary Ann Doane’s writings on the masquerade, in her book *Femmes Fatales*,⁴⁹ provide the theoretical underpinning of the second chapter, which is on Andy Warhol’s *Beauty No. 2* (1965) *Thirteen Most Beautiful Girls* (1965), and *Poor Little Rich Girl* (1965). In the third chapter, German theorist Siegfried Kracauer’s notion of ‘the mass ornament’ is used to facilitate a discussion of the parodies of Busby Berkeley’s musical numbers (that reduce the woman’s body to an essential fragment of decoration) in Matthew Barney’s *Cremaster Cycle* (1994 – 2005). The postcolonial writings of bell hooks extensively drawn on in chapter four provide insight into the particular critique of the racist and sexist assumptions of colonising cinema made by Tracey Moffatt’s two short films *Lip* (1999) and *Love* (2003). Finally, a combination of Jean-François Lyotard’s short essay ‘Acinema’⁵⁰ and Laura Mulvey’s recent book *Death 24 x a Second* assist an analysis of the use of slow motion in Douglas Gordon’s *24-Hour Psycho* (1993).

The long history of parody in fine art practice is often thought to stem from Duchamp’s iconoclastic appropriation of the *Mona Lisa* in *LHOOQ* (1919), which he decorates with

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Mary Ann Doane, *Femmes Fatales* (London: Routledge, 1991)

⁵⁰ Jean-François Lyotard, ‘Acinema,’ in Andrew Benjamin (ed.) *The Lyotard Reader* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1992), pp.169-180

a moustache and beard while his title comments on her 'hot ass.' Yet, as John C. Welchman acknowledges of this early act of obvious appropriation in art "its shadow is cast well beyond Duchamp and the ready-made."⁵¹ Steinberg describes the commonplace, yet unacknowledged act of copying in Renaissance and neo-classical art, and we have many post-Duchampian knowing appropriations of art. Well known works from the latter half of the twentieth century include Cindy Sherman's *Untitled Film Still* (1977-80) series of photographs that fake generic stills from non-existent films and Hannah Wilke's 1976 *Through the Large Glass*, a sixteen millimetre film of the tongue-in-cheek striptease she performed in front of Duchamp's *The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even* (1915-23). Though Duchamp is often cited as the father figure of contemporary appropriation art, as he transformed everyday objects as well as familiar imagery in his work, we could place the origins of this strategy further back to Manet's *Olympia*, a painting of his muse as prostitute and a parody of Titian's myth-based *Venus of Urbino* (1538), or his *Le Dejeuner sur l'herbe* (1863), which takes its composition of figures from a now lost Raphael painting *The Judgement of Paris* (1510-20). Perhaps Manet's paintings mark the beginning of the now omnipresent inter-art traffic that Steinberg begins to define in the 1960s. There are many other artists we could add to this list such as Sherrie Levine and her 1980s mock fraudulent copies of seminal works of art that seek to dissolve much of the mythmaking that surrounds artists, particularly male artists and canonical studies. All of these artworks incorporate the 'original' work cited in different ways, but always with some critical re-framing in mind, making a commentary on the history of art, its exclusive selection of 'great works' and 'great artists' and its significant movements. Unlike much of this parodic activity in fine art, Sherman's work, like that of the pop artists of the 1960s such as Warhol, Jasper Johns, and Robert Rauchenberg, draws from the imagery of popular culture, and since the 1960s, this has been a recurring trend.⁵² The result of this tendency is a confusion of the previously made distinction between pop culture and art. Yet, even when citing 'master works,' parodic artworks tend to mock and question the elevated status of these works so

⁵¹ John C. Welchman, *Art After Appropriation: Essays on Art in the 1990s* (London: G and B Arts International, 2001), p.48

⁵² David Salle and Jeff Koons are other examples of contemporary artists, both of whom draw, like Sherman and Barney, on the imagery of popular culture and everyday objects.

that, in a general sense, we can suggest that parody has as one of its chief motivations an interest in disrupting cultural hierarchies e.g. between high art and mass culture, between the master work and the work of the newcomer, between the great male artist and the feminist artist, between the (male) artist and the (female) model / muse.

In the introduction to her book *A Theory of Parody*, Linda Hutcheon informs us that one of her chief convictions after years of writing obsessively about parody in both literature and visual art is “that theory should be derived from (and not imposed upon) art.”⁵³ In other words theories should be proposed as ways of understanding certain tendencies or patterns that the theorist observes in art, rather than as a model for art to adhere to. The approach adopted in this thesis is in general accordance with Hutcheon’s conviction, setting out to locate examples of alternative cinema that provide critiques of dominant cinema’s gender norms and finding a vibrant and under-discussed body of examples in moving image art. The work of each artist is examined through recourse to a combination of film theory, theories of parody and art criticism in order to establish these works as examples of parody to understand the particular parodic strategies employed by each. The films discussed in chapters two to five were selected partly because they each employ very different parodic strategies, and revise a different aspect of dominant cinema’s gender norms (sometimes with intent, as with Tracey Moffatt’s films, sometimes as a by-product of a broader revision of cinema, as with Douglas Gordon’s work). As I noted earlier, they also share an interest in reframing already subversive elements of classical cinema, elements that represent excess in an otherwise orderly, economical text. Hutcheon emphasises the importance of analysing individual examples of parody and indeed she derives her theory of parody from what she refers to as “the teachings of the texts themselves.”⁵⁴ She also advocates the adoption of a number of critical perspectives in order to understand the diverse forms of modern parody. In this way, she claims, critics provide a response to “aesthetic realities,”⁵⁵ rather than propose a monolithic theory that then identifies only those examples that affirm its central

⁵³ Linda Hutcheon, op. cit., p.xi

⁵⁴ Ibid., p.116

⁵⁵ Ibid.

propositions. Hutcheon uses analyses of examples of contemporary parodic texts to advance (and not just illustrate) her discussion and it is her approach that I have adopted here. This thesis argues, through analyses of the work of individual filmmakers, that the recent and variegated deluge of artists' films that regurgitate Hollywood imagery may be grouped together and discussed as examples of parody. In particular, it proposes that these parodic transformations of Hollywood cinema provide us with a compelling body of work that critiques the iconic image of woman, considered by feminist film theorists to be the linchpin of the classical film text.

An early example of parodic film quotation that acknowledges the essential role of woman as fetish object in cinema, shows us how this technique has been carried through generations of filmmaking, in this case, from Hollywood B movie, to film collage in the 1930s, to experimental film screening of the 1960s. In the catalogue for the exhibition *Spellbound: Art and Film*, Amy Taubin describes the example of Ken Jacobs' mediated screening of a Joseph Cornell film, which in itself is comprised of sections of a Hollywood B movie *East of Borneo* (1931, George Melford). Cornell extracted from this film all of the shots that contained the actress Rose Hobart and strung them together, simply titling the work *Rose Hobart* (1936). Jacobs and filmmaker Jack Smith, who had worked for Cornell as studio assistants, later conducted a private screening of Cornell's film, slowing it down to sixteen frames per second, projecting it through a blue filter and playing what Taubin describes as "a tacky 'Sounds of Spain' record" alongside it.⁵⁶ This treatment of Cornell's film, according to Taubin, resulted in "fetishising this already amazingly fetishistic object."⁵⁷ We can trace the history of these found footage practices of appropriation from Cornell, through to Jacobs, Godard and numerous artists today such as those included in this thesis. Chapter One includes an overview of key literature on found footage film, but it is not only practices of sampling and quotation that are of interest here. The parodic practices of imitation and allusion also provide compelling revisions of the central tenets of conventional cinema.

⁵⁶ Amy Taubin, 'Douglas Gordon,' Amy Taubin et al (eds.), *Spellbound: Art and Film* op. cit., p.72

⁵⁷ Ibid.

Scott MacDonald articulates the major contribution these appropriations of film make to an idea of a counter cinema when he remarks that the unconventionality of Jacobs' film *Tom, Tom, the Piper's Son* (1969) asks "for an entirely different way of experiencing film ... and, by implication, life."⁵⁸ Speaking about *Tom, Tom* in an interview with MacDonald, Jacobs claims that rather than see his film as "a systematic investigation of every detail" that he has in fact "gone through a long film experience that reveals a tiny bit of what could be virtually an infinite investigation."⁵⁹ One of Ken Jacobs' former students, Richard Herskowitz, describes the effect that his analytic style of cinema had on him when, in the opening of a discussion of his work at the Robert Flaherty Seminar in 1987, which Herskowitz had programmed that year, he said: "What Ken taught us was not so much how to watch experimental films, but how to watch all films experimentally."⁶⁰ He goes on to describe this experimental watching as a kind of active, or live editing of the film that occurs when the critical viewer watches any film: "He showed us how we could play with and 're-edit' the wide variety of films he showed us *as we watched them*."⁶¹ In his book *Recycled Images*, William C. Wees quotes Jacobs who questions whether or not all familiar imagery (which Jacob's describes as 'garbage' while Wees uses terms such as 'trivia' and 'trash') is simply waiting for the "talented viewer."⁶² For Wees "the first 'talented viewer' is the filmmaker who must decide how best to 'use it' – which means finding the best way to turn *us* into 'talented viewers' too."⁶³ This description of experimental viewing is in part a reference to the live performance element of much of Jacobs' work, where he experiments with various effects while screening his films, and the performance element is a crucial aspect of the work. But Herskowitz's comments also describe a way of viewing film learned from Jacobs' experiments with pre-existing film. The liberating lesson of Jacobs' uses of 'found footage' is that one need not accept the conventions of the film text or

⁵⁸ Scott MacDonald, op. cit., p.380

⁵⁹ Ibid., p.383

⁶⁰ Ibid., p.158

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² William C. Wees, *Recycled Images* (New York: Anthology Film Archives, 1993), p.58

⁶³ Ibid.

conventional viewing procedures. Jacobs' film *Cherries* (1980), a minute and a half long French pornographic film stretched through the use of slow motion to two hours, was screened at the Flaherty seminar that year. As an illustration of his point about how Jacobs' films and his teaching had altered how he viewed film, Herskovitz later says:

The original film was probably directed totally at a voyeuristic gaze, but in the expansion of this material, something independent of, transcendent of the original takes place. You go beyond the original intent, and something repressed in the original is liberated.⁶⁴

Later in the discussion Jacobs says that his films are "about becoming conscious of what exists on the screen, of *seeing* what exists."⁶⁵ Although many of its audience responded negatively to the film on the basis that it used offensive sexist imagery, clearly Jacobs' film is not a celebration of pornography, but an investigation of it, a questioning of what it is and an act that disarms the pornographic text. Jacobs confirms this in one of his final remarks before walking out of the discussion, frustrated by the audience response: "I took something that was meant to be used as an abuse of the body, an abuse of even what the *camera* can do, and I transmuted it into something glorious. I took it back to life!"⁶⁶ Leaving aside the artist's impassioned defence of his work, this statement does outline his intentions for the piece. He transforms a short porn film, a film that exploits people, women in particular, and strips it of that use value (as a masturbatory aid). His comment on taking the film back to life also refers to the way that he may be reviving a discarded, pointless piece of film through this act of critical appropriation. Although Jacobs' films are not examined at any length in this thesis, the comments both he and Herskovitz make are pertinent to all of the parodic revisions of the conventional film text that are discussed here. In particular, each one of the films explored herein asks the viewer to *watch experimentally* and to enter into a process of re-editing the film as she/he watches, as memories of the familiar text battle with our transformed experience of it in the present; a battle that reflects the essential conflict of parody.

⁶⁴ Scott MacDonald, op. cit., pp.161-162

⁶⁵ Ibid., p.162

⁶⁶ Ibid.

At this point it might be useful to introduce a distinction between the two different strategies for referencing employed by the filmmakers I discuss. This distinction is useful for its separation of those films that imitate or allude to Hollywood images and conventions as is the case with both Warhol's and Barney's films, and those films that directly sample Hollywood texts, as illustrated by the films of Moffatt and Gordon discussed here. The latter strategy is commonly referred to as found footage film. Cornell and Jacobs are significant innovators of this approach, and key contemporary artists who exemplify this tendency are Abigail Child, Peter Tscherkassky, Martin Arnold, Susan Hiller, Candice Brietz and Christian Marclay. In an article on found footage filmmaking William C. Wees explains the attraction of this approach for filmmakers who wish to engage with the dominant model of filmmaking while working outside of that system:

To pluck images out of their commercial contexts and recycle them, for whatever reason, is empowering for filmmakers who are determined to avoid the immense apparatus of commercial film and television but want to work with its images.⁶⁷

The Gallery

This thesis explores the parodic transformations of cinematic gender norms (and especially the image of woman) and therefore it is principally engaged with a textual analysis of the imitated/quoted and transformed cinematic image. However, a discussion of the *context* of each of these works is also important because it is, in part, the removal of Hollywood imagery from the institutional and social framework of cinema and its transposition into the gallery that facilitates the artists' parodic engagement with it. This transposition places inverted commas around the appropriated text, announcing its critical re-framing and signals for the viewer the critical reappraisal of the familiar imagery presented by the work. Therefore, while my main focus is the various textual transformations of Hollywood gender norms, these transformations are framed by the

⁶⁷ William C. Wees, 'The Ambiguous Aura of Hollywood Stars in Avant-Garde Found-Footage Films,' *Cinema Journal* Vol. 41, No.2, Winter 2002, p.4

gallery context and intersect with various transformations of the cinematic aesthetic also produced by the work.

In his explanation of the use of quotation in found footage film Wees quotes Benjamin, who writes: “the concept of quotation implies that any given historical object must be ripped out of its context.”⁶⁸ Compilation films take fragments of pre-existing film, rip them out of their context and reposition them new compositions that interrogate these fragments and their origins in a variety of ways. In her essay ‘Outside the Archive: the World in Fragments,’ Lucy Reynolds also describes the tearing gesture that is fundamental to compilation film and its shattering of the coherence of the quoted text(s).⁶⁹ The notion of tearing relates to the textual strategy of removing fragments of from variety of sources and juxtaposing them in a new text, however it also implies quite a physical act which is actualised in the relocation of the cinematic text into the gallery space.

Parodic films exhibited in conventional cinema theatres surrounded by the usual institutional operations of cinema may produce very effective textual critiques of narrative conventions and of the relationship between spectator and screen, but the conservative and familiar elements of the text that are necessarily included in the parody are bolstered by the familiar exhibition context of the work, the combination of which must dilute any critique offered.

While originally the viewing experience of moving image art in the gallery was closer to television viewing than cinema spectatorship, the replacement of monitors with large-scale projectors for many installations in the 1990s prompted a reconsideration of the relationship between cinema and moving image art. Chrissie Iles states that the current:

⁶⁸ Wees, *Recycled Images*, op. cit., p.42

⁶⁹ Reynolds, Lucy, ‘Outside the Archive: the World in Fragments,’ in Jane Connarty & Josephine Lanyon (eds.), *Ghosting: The Role of the Archive within Contemporary Art* (Picture This, 2006), p.16

[W]idespread use of video projection, [...] has liberated the video image from the spatial restrictions of the monitor and magnified it hundreds of times, creating a movie-sized image that relates not to the object, but to the surrounding architectural space. This physical shift has, in turn, detached the video image from its associations with the 'democratic,' everyday, documentary/dramatic narrative of television.⁷⁰

For Isles the cinematic aesthetic liberates the video image from the confined space of the monitor that had encased it allowing it to forge a greater relationship with the gallery space. In a short essay 'Film, Art, Ideology' that forms the last section of his book *Film Art Ideology* Nicky Hamlyn also comments on the recent appearance of the cinema aesthetic in the gallery, but he makes a distinction "between those who use the media unreflexively and those whose work necessarily includes an investigation of their manner of operation."⁷¹ According to him, unreflexive filmmakers are 'gallery' artists such as Douglas Gordon, while the filmmakers that he turns his attention to in his book involve themselves in various reflexive investigations of film and its exhibition contexts. Ken Jacobs is an example of one such experimental filmmaker. He objects in particular to the description of any of this gallery art filmmaking as innovative and enjoys pointing out the precursors for many recent examples from amongst the work of his peers or filmmakers from an older generation of experimental filmmakers. For Hamlyn, these younger filmmakers mimic the filmmaking of an older more politically engaged generation but do so without attempting to address what such mimicry might mean.

In another essay 'Installation and its Audience,' Hamlyn identifies the cinematic aesthetic of recent gallery art as a ruse to avoid addressing the problems of presenting time-based work in the gallery and invokes Expanded Cinema, a movement that spanned the 1960s and 70s, to suggest a more successful response to the issues raised by this type of practice:

⁷⁰ Chrissie Iles, 'Issues in the New Cinematic Aesthetic in Video,' in Tanya Leighton and Pavel Büchler (eds.), *Saving the Image: Art After Film* (Centre for Contemporary Art, Glasgow & Manchester Metropolitan University, 2003), pp.130-131

⁷¹ Ibid.

In its characteristic concerns Expanded Cinema has been more sophisticated and effective compared to recent gallery installations, where the problems of presenting time-based works in galleries have often been fudged, or avoided altogether by constructing an entirely conventional cinema space within the white cube.⁷²

In particular Hamlyn seems to object to the slick installation approaches that neatly box the projector away from view, build small cinema-style rooms into larger gallery spaces, or simply project the single image onto a screen or wall. All of these devices emulate the cinematic aesthetic and do not therefore consider what is specific to the gallery space and to the relationship between the movement of the image and the movement of the gallery viewer as she/he navigates her/his way through the space. For Hamlyn, the “bodily effort” that is required to engage with sculptural film installations such as those produced by Expanded Cinema carries with it an understanding of time passing that is “held in abeyance” by the cinema projection that fixes the look of the spectator.⁷³ These are fair points especially because art practice since the 1960s and art school education since the 1980s have emphasised the importance of site to the making and exhibition of art.⁷⁴ This interest in site specificity is, for many contemporary artists, the most important criteria for making art. Describing his own approach to filmmaking Hamlyn writes:

I aimed to make a piece which was not simply ‘installed’ in a gallery with no regard for the specificity of the space, but to make a work whose meaning was dependent on being seen in that space.⁷⁵

Hamlyn provides many useful examples of the kinds of analytical works that he favours, but one that exemplifies this practice is one piece by Neil Henderson called *Thirty Six Working Projectors* (2000), in which thirty six projectors were arranged on Dexion racks and placed quite close to the screen (which was a wall) so that it becomes difficult for the

⁷² Nicky Hamlyn, ‘Installation and its Audience,’ in *Film Art Phenomena*, op. cit., p.43

⁷³ Ibid., p.46

⁷⁴ Art school education were highly influenced by the criteria for site-specific and mixed-media art outlined by Rosalind Krauss’ essay ‘Sculpture in the Expanded Field’ originally published in *October* in 1978 then reprinted in Hal Foster (ed.) *Postmodern Culture* (London: Pluto, 1985), pp.31-42

⁷⁵ Nicky Hamlyn, op. cit., p.52

viewer to step in front of them. The viewer must therefore view the work from behind the rack of projectors, that then obscure her/his vision of the screen: "In obstructing our field of vision the projectors also become a central, paradoxical part of the screen."⁷⁶ Another example is the *Nervous System* performances of Ken Jacobs that he has been making since the mid-1970s, which involve Jacobs' various live manipulations of film as he screens it so that no two screenings are the same. Hamlyn emphasises the sculptural value of earlier film installations in the gallery and those recent examples of expanded cinema⁷⁷ that work to anchor the viewer in the physical space of the gallery and sees this as radically different from the cinematic image that pulls the viewer into it and away from her/his immediate environment:

The multiscreen clusters of monitors, frequently in stacks, blocks, or rows, or the often complex constructions that characterised sculptural video installations during the 1980s, took the eye away from the mesmerising pull of the single image. The body moved around a more Euclidian space, experiencing recognisable boundaries between physical objects, the interiority of the electronic images, and the architectural surroundings, often articulated in theatrically constructed environments.⁷⁸

He sees the new cinematic form of installation as a move "away from the object and towards a more internal, psychological experience, in which space is no longer tangible and theatrical, but illusory and filmic."⁷⁹ Hamlyn's criticisms are only relevant while we continue to compare recent work that emulates a cinematic aesthetic with the broader category of expanded cinema. If we begin to consider what distinguishes this recent work his criticisms seem less plausible. Hamlyn overlooks the overt interest many of these artists have in cinema in general and not just in appropriating a cinematic exhibition style for their gallery art. It is no coincidence that many of these artists take cinematic

⁷⁶ Ibid., p.50

⁷⁷ The use of the lower case here refers to the broader practice of mixed-media installation that includes film and is frequently used in art historical writing including Hamlyn's *Film Art Phenomena* to differentiate current practices from the 1960s and 70s Expanded Cinema movement.

⁷⁸ Nicky Hamlyn, op. cit., p.132

⁷⁹ Ibid.

images and conventions as the subject matter of their films at the same time that they reproduce aspects of the cinema's exhibition format.

Instead of seeing the emulation of a cinematic aesthetic as an unengaged unreflexive exhibition strategy, I suggest that it combines with references to the cinematic text to constitute an active hijacking of the cinematic by certain artists who then re-position it in the gallery in order to hold it at a distance and analyse its conventions. The closest emulation of the cinematic aesthetic is the large-scale projection that usually fills an entire wall of the gallery. A film in the gallery using this format would be seen by Hamlyn as the most unreflexive imitation of cinematic aesthetics possible, yet he states that if it involves a double projection it produces a radically different effect in that it begins to engage with the specific architecture of its site. For instance he describes the multi-screen works of Sam Taylor-Wood as exhibiting a more considered relationship with the exhibition space even if that is just a resurrection of issues that he claims have previously been dealt with by filmmakers of the original Expanded Cinema movement such as Dan Graham, Vito Acconci and Malcolm Le Grice in the 1960s and 70s.⁸⁰ As Eric de Bruyn points out in an essay on expanded cinema, 'The Expanded Field of Cinema, or Exercise on the Perimeter of a Square,' a film that uses large-scale projection in this way "literalizes the gallery space" through its use of "multiple walls as projective surfaces."⁸¹

For Hamlyn then some examples of moving image art that appropriate the cinema format enters into a productive and interesting dialogue with the gallery space, but this tends to involve a fracturing of the single image by including more than one projection and de Bruyn agrees with this assertion. It is interesting to consider Douglas Gordon's work in the light of these observations. His work does not bring together a variety of media in the obvious sense that some examples of expanded cinema do, but it nonetheless refuses to forego the sculptural value of the screen by treating it as an object that literally alters and

⁸⁰ Ibid., p.44

⁸¹ Eric de Bruyn, 'The Expanded Field of Cinema, or Exercise on the Perimeter of a Square,' Matthias Michalka (ed.) in *X-Screen: Film Installations and Actions of the 1960s and 70s* (Köln: Museum of Modern Art, Vienna & Walther König, 2004), p.154

sculpts the space. In his exhibition *Douglas Gordon: Timeline* in New York's Museum of Modern Art in 2006 he used the screen to divide the first room of the gallery. It jutted down into the space from the ceiling and was positioned at an angle so that on entering the space the viewer would perceive it as an object that divides the room, and not as a screen onto which the 'real' artwork is projected. He projects his film *24 Hour Psycho* onto this translucent screen to create a double projection with each side mirroring the other and this format invites us to walk around the imposing object, an invitation which is at odds with the cinematic aesthetic produced by his use of the large scale projection. Elsewhere in this exhibition he made use of monitors to present his films, placing a number of them on the floor so that the viewer needs to move back in the space to see them properly or to approach them and crouch down. In his retrospective exhibition in *Superhumanatural* at Edinburgh's National Gallery in 2006 he installed a stack of monitors that formed a wall of clustered images. These examples illustrate that Gordon's installations always consider the sculptural elements of the work and the journey of the viewer through the space of the gallery and that tension between the cinema aesthetic and sculptural presence of the work signals a critical engagement with the cinematic exhibition format. Iles makes a similar case for Gordon's critical engagement with the cinematic. However, where I emphasise the sculptural qualities of the work, Iles concentrates on the critical distance achieved through the Gordon's use of video to mediate the cinematic image:

The cinematic scale of Gordon's video image further complicates our reading of the image, since the size of the screen deceptively suggests a cinematic experience which is then undermined by the image's mediation through the instant, present-time quality of video, blown up to a monumental scale.⁸²

Matthew Barney is another artist who remains committed to a sculptural practice even as he simultaneously reproduces the production values of Hollywood and screens his films in conventional cinemas. We have been concentrating here on art's hijacking of cinema, but Barney reverses that by screening very long complex experimental films in the cinema theatre. By doing this he make the conventions of the films usually exhibited in

⁸² Chrissie Iles, op. cit., p.131

these spaces explicit. Barney carefully controls the screening conditions of his work so that the entire *Cremaster* cycle is shown over a period of one or two days. I viewed the cycle on a single day at the Ritzy in Brixton in October 2002 and in a two-day stint at the Edinburgh Film Festival in August 2003. Such marathon events test the limits of the spectator who must work hard at trying to understand this complex work, which is layered with references to various different types of cultural text and includes a very limited amount of dialogue. Viewing this unfamiliar work in a very familiar setting attunes us to the conventions of the films we usually see at the cinema. However Barney also installed his films in the Guggenheim gallery in 2002 in an exhibition that marked the completion of the cycle. This was a highly reflexive installation where all elements of the exhibition including the site and his large petroleum jelly sculptures formed part of the *mise-en-scène* of the films. 'The Order,' which is the central section of *Cremaster 3* (2002), was filmed in the Guggenheim so that this film moves beyond a consideration of its exhibition site to make the gallery integral to it. The exhibition also included framed production stills from the films. Although he borrows from the cinematic by reproducing familiar cinematic imagery in his films and he even inhabits the cinema space for some of his screenings, he confers on the film the value of an art object. His films (like all films) are infinitely reproducible but he limits the amount of copies made to establish them as rare art commodities.

Like the work of Gordon and Barney, Warhol's films have also been installed in a variety of contexts in the gallery to that explore the relationship of the cinematic to the gallery space. For instance his *Thirteen Most Beautiful Women* was included in the large *Andy Warhol Retrospective* held at Tate Modern in 2002 and at the *Andy Warhol Exhibition* at the National Gallery Complex in Edinburgh in the summer of 2007, where just the *Edie Sedgwick Screen Tests* that form a part of the film were screened as a single piece. In Tate Modern *Thirteen Most Beautiful Women* was positioned in a quasi-cinematic context. It was the only work in the room (though as I recall the screenings alternated between this and another of Warhol's films) and the room was darkened with a few benches positioned in front of the large screen to create a simplified version of the cinema theatre format. In Edinburgh the *Screen Tests* were projected consecutively onto

a screen on wall in a room that included other art works such as one of Warhol's silkscreen prints. The film at Tate Modern emulated a cinematic aesthetic and drew the viewer in by focusing their attention on the single projected image without any distraction, whereas the film at the National Gallery in Edinburgh was hung as though it was an art object, like a painting for instance, on a wall beside other works in a brightly lit room. In both situations the presence and movement of other gallery visitors distract the viewer's attention, but the mock cinematic arrangement of the space at Tate Modern attempted to minimise distraction.

The viewing context of these works affects our reading of them and for my research for this thesis that context hinged on two things - the availability of the films on VHS or DVD and the timing and location of exhibitions and screening events. Initially I had hoped to see all of the films I studied in their proper situation within the context of the gallery, but that was not always possible. Even when I did manage to view certain works in an exhibition context I also acquired copies of the films for home viewing when they were available in order to be able to review the material carefully and take comprehensive notes on various aspects of the text. Viewing the films in this careful way allows us to notice more about the text than we would if limited to taking notes at a one-off screening event, but something is certainly lost when these works are not experienced within the physical context of the gallery. For instance my only viewings of *Beauty No. 2* (1965) were from of an old VHS recording of it that is held in the collection of films at the Theatre, Film and Television resource centre at University of Glasgow and my only viewing of *Poor Little Rich Girl* (1965) was on a research trip to the Andy Warhol Museum in Pittsburgh in 2004, where I viewed it on a small monitor. There are obvious advantages to seeing these two films on a VCR, however it is difficult to make any observations about their impact in a gallery space having never seen them there. The same is true for Moffatt's two films *Lip* and *Love*, both of which I bought from the feminist media arts organisation Women Make Movies. Writings on Moffatt's work describe it as cinematic and images detailing installation views of her work in various galleries, such as her 2007 exhibition at the Roslyn Oxley 9 Gallery in Sydney illustrates

her reproduction of the cinematic aesthetic described by Iles and Hamlyn.⁸³ Her film *Doomed* (2007) for instance, which is a pastiche film of cinematic depictions of war and terror is projected onto a wall in a darkened room creating the impression of a black frame that surrounds the image. When we compare this type of installation to those of Gordon and Barney we can see that this is indeed one of the least complex interactions with the cinematic as it literally negates the gallery space so that it becomes nothing but a black frame that alludes to the black frame that surrounds the cinema screen. However, as I indicated in the opening lines of this section on the gallery, my focus is on the ways that these films challenge clichéd cinematic representations of gender and I therefore concentrate on the film text. A preservation of certain aspects of the cinematic in the exhibition contexts of these works enhances these artists' parodic engagement with the text.

Conclusion

Whether employing strategies of imitation or quotation, for almost five decades then, peripheral cinemas, including artists who work with moving image media, have continuously returned to the clichéd images and prevailing narrative patterns of commercial cinema, and this thesis attempts to theorise that referencing tendency in relation to images of gender. It examines how that tendency critiques the established model of filmmaking and what possibilities it opens up for alternative cinematic spaces, identifications and pleasures.

This discussion attempts to articulate a framework through which these disparate films may be understood as effecting significant challenges to the place of women in dominant cinema. Although the films grouped together here may seem divergent, they converge on a number of crucial points; they oppose dominant cinema in terms of narrative, form and exhibition, but specifically they use parody as a key strategy to achieve their various oppositions, thereby also insisting that a clear engagement with the opposed text is necessary for presenting some form of critique. Moreover they share an interest in revising iconic Hollywood images of woman and gender roles in general. The diversity

⁸³ <http://www.roslynolex9.com.au>

of the films selected for examination here is intended to illustrate the wide variety of approaches used to resituate Hollywood cinema in the gallery and consequently to establish the heterogeneity of contemporary forms of parody.

What links the films I have selected for close analysis in chapters two to five (that comprise the case studies of this discussion) is that they share a fascination with what are already ambivalent elements of classical cinema. Andy Warhol revises the seductive spectacle of woman by refusing the language of cinema that codifies her as enigmatic object of desire, American artist Matthew Barney imitates the abstracted ornamental spectacle of Busby Berkeley musical numbers that traditionally (and often inexplicably) delay narrative progression, Moffatt repeats the resistant image of the insolent black maid tethered to her role as subservient other, while British artist Douglas Gordon reveals the still images that comprise the filmstrip and the all-important illusion of movement. Film theory has examined each of these subversive elements at length, and while they are ultimately 'contained' by the dominant film, they represent the only permissible instances of excess in what is otherwise a very orderly and unified text. These elements of excess are all mapped onto the image of woman. These artists parody what are already excessive ambivalent aspects of cinema paying tribute to them, while simultaneously critiquing the Hollywood text in general and its compulsion to produce an expression of excess, in order to both acknowledge and expel it. Placing these subversive elements centre stage in their revisions, these artists, through strategies of exaggeration, repetition, and expansion, make those subversions explicit and reposition them as *uncontrollable*.

Chapter 1: The Allegiance Between Feminist Film Theory and Practices of Parody

Woman then stands in patriarchal culture as a signifier for the male other, bound by a symbolic order in which man can live out his fantasies and obsessions through linguistic command by imposing them on the silent image of woman still tied to her place as bearer, not maker, of meaning.¹

Re-Vision – the act of looking back, of seeing with fresh eyes, of entering an old text from a new critical direction – is for women more than a chapter in cultural history: it is an act of survival. Until we can understand the assumptions in which we are drenched we cannot know ourselves. And this drive to self-knowledge, for women, is more than a search for identity: it is part of our refusal of the self-destructiveness of male dominated society.²

Introduction to Key Themes and Terms

While it is a difficult task to attempt to theorise avant-garde film movements, bringing groups of films together to discuss as a coherent body of work that shares a common goal or mission, especially over a period of decades, and across national borders, we can observe a persistent tendency within film and video-making on the margins since the 1960s to reference commercial cinema in various ways. The critical potential of that tendency in moving image art is what this thesis aims to discuss. An image consistently quoted by these films is the iconic Hollywood image of ‘woman,’ an abstract two-dimensional figure described by feminist film theorist Laura Mulvey as “lynch pin to the system.”³ In other words iconic images of femininity (and by implication masculinity) are continuously imitated or quoted and transformed by films that operate outside, or on the fringes, of commercial film production. Since the image of woman has been described by Mulvey and many other film theorists as central to the economy of Hollywood film, this discussion focuses mainly on the transformations of dominant images of femininity and examines how the various parodic transformations presented by

¹ Laura Mulvey, ‘Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema’ in *Visual and Other Pleasures* (London: Macmillan Press, 1989), p.15

² Adrienne Rich, *Adrienne Rich’s Poetry and Prose* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1975), p.167

³ Laura Mulvey, op. cit., p.14

the films discussed here shatter the enduring iconic image of woman in cinema, whether or not that is their *explicit* intention.

This image of woman is central to the classical Hollywood system of filmmaking, a model that developed during the studio system of film production in America that operated roughly between the 1910s and the 1960s, and quickly established itself as the dominant model of cinema around the world. As Colin MacCabe puts it in his discussion of the dominance of realist cinema, of which the Hollywood model is the most prevalent: “film production throughout the world [was] hegemonized in Hollywood.”⁴ It is worth noting here the point made by David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson in the follow-ups to their influential study *Classical Hollywood Cinema: Film Style and Mode of Production to 1960*,⁵ which they wrote together with Janet Staiger, that although the studio system of film production broke down in the 1960s - and there have been huge advances in technology, changes in censorship regulations and many general changes in both style and technique - the narrative model of filmmaking that was defined and consolidated by this earlier golden age of filmmaking in Hollywood is largely still dominant today.⁶ I make frequent use of the term dominant cinema in this discussion in order to emphasise the continuing currency of the classical narrative film, beyond the geographical and historical parameters that are implied in the term classical Hollywood film. This is an important point because although the filmmakers that I focus on in subsequent chapters predominantly cite examples from the golden era of Hollywood filmmaking, their critique of those texts can be seen to have some effect on contemporary commercial cinema, which still largely adheres to the basic structuring principles of the classical model.

⁴ Colin MacCabe, ‘Theory and Film: Principles of Realism and Pleasure,’ in Gerald Mast, Marshall Cohen & Leo Braudy (eds.), *Film Theory and Criticism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), p.80. Other types of realist cinema are Italian Neorealism (1940s - 1960s) and New Wave British Social Realism (1960s - today).

⁵ David Bordwell, Janet Staiger & Kristin Thompson, *Classical Hollywood Cinema: Film Style and Mode of Production to 1960* (London: Routledge, 1988) second edition

⁶ See Kristin Thompson, *Storytelling in the New Hollywood* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999) and David Bordwell *The Way Hollywood Tells It* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006)

Unlike many feminist investigations of gender roles in film, this investigation is primarily interested, not in producing subversive readings of dominant cinema, but in developing an understanding of some of the ways that moving image art uses parodic strategies to deconstruct the classical film text and to intimate thereby the possibility of new and alternative cinematic gender roles. My focus, therefore, is the re-writing of dominant cinema by contemporary art *practice*. The films examined here explicitly aim to interrogate and oppose dominant cinema, both formally and at the level of narrative, and are variously categorised as avant-garde, alternative, experimental and underground, but all fall within the broad category of moving image art, or artists' films (it is worth noting that all of the artists discussed in this thesis work across a range of media of which, for them, film is the most significant). While this chapter makes use of the term avant-garde in order to provide a brief overview of the relationship between parody and oppositional film practices, the chapters that follow dispense with this term preferring instead to discuss the films as examples of parody, a form that implies an avant-garde impulse. Avant-garde here is understood as extending beyond the avant-garde of the early part of the twentieth century focused on by Peter Bürger in *Theory of the Avant-Garde*.⁷ In his introductory essay for the book *Avant-Garde/Neo-Avant-Garde*,⁸ influenced by Hal Foster's essay 'Who's Afraid of the Neo-Avant-Garde?'⁹ Dietrich Scheunemann makes a very convincing reappraisal of theories of the avant-garde that sees contemporary avant-garde practice, not as a simple imitation or repetition of the practices of the historical avant-garde of the early twentieth century characterised by the use of various types of readymade in collage works, but as the re-ignition (or continuation) of those practices after a period of disruption marked by wars and economic depression. For Scheunemann, Warhol is a key figure in the most recent re-ignition of the avant-garde, and his influence on subsequent generations of artists is a major reason for his inclusion

⁷ Peter Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde* (University of Minnesota Press, 1984)

⁸ Dietrich Scheunemann, 'From Collage to the Multiple: On the Genealogy of Avant-Garde and Neo-Avant-Garde,' Dietrich Scheunemann (ed.), *Avant-Garde/Neo-Avant-Garde* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2005), pp. 15-48

⁹ Hal Foster, 'Who's Afraid of the Neo-Avant-Garde?' in *The Return of the Real* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996), pp.1-33

as the first 'case study' of this thesis. This thesis investigates the persistent use of parody to re-write dominant cinematic texts since the 1960s, examining the various disruptions to the text that mark the works as parodic or critical in some way, rather than simple repetitions of the familiar.

As noted by Laura Mulvey in her seminal essay 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema,' the image of woman as 'bearer of meaning' is central to the logic of the classical film text, and therefore disruptions of that image are potentially devastating to the order of that text and its 'naturalisation' of particular power relations (between the sexes and between races and ethnicities). Inhabiting the dominant text in order to produce critical re-vision of the image of woman (and therefore gender positions in general) is an ongoing strategy in use at the forefront of experimental and alternative cinema and moving image art (which are increasingly difficult to distinguish), and this thesis aims to theorise that strategy in a way that reflects the diversity of practices that employ it. This discussion does not attempt to write a history of allusions to cinema in artists' films since the 1960s. Rather, it is an attempt to understand the persistence of parodic acts of allusion, quotation, reference, and imitation as a major tendency in contemporary moving image art. Each instance of parody is different and, while this discussion attempts to articulate a common rationale for this parodic tendency, it looks at the particular form that each example takes. I have purposefully selected four examples of filmmakers whose work exemplify very diverse examples of such parodic revision of Hollywood in the context of the gallery space. Focusing on a number of divergent approaches allows me to demonstrate the flexibility of parody as a critical form. Drawing on recent theorisations of parody, and in particular the writings of Linda Hutcheon, this discussion attempts to stretch its constituency to include for instance certain types of pastiche that have generally been considered as a lower form of imitation and regarded as distinct from parody. This thesis presents and tests various definitions of parody through analyses of a number of divergent examples of imitation and quotation of the Hollywood text.

These revisions then take the image of woman as their object of scrutiny, as if removing and analysing the linchpin will unravel the Hollywood system in general. Having

introduced the key terms of this discussion I want to outline the concept of 'woman' as defined by feminist film theory and to describe the affinity between feminist film criticism that provides us with compelling re-readings of the Hollywood text and these filmmakers, who re-write the Hollywood text through their parodic practice.

Feminist Film Theory: The Problem of 'Woman' and the Analysis of Gender

The paradox of phallocentrism in all its manifestations is that it depends on the image of the castrated woman to give order and meaning to its world. An idea of woman stands as lynch pin to the system: it is her lack that produces the phallus as symbolic presence, it is her desire to make good the lack that the phallus signifies.¹⁰

This statement from Laura Mulvey's influential essay 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema,' which was originally written in 1973, identifies the paradoxical position of woman in cinema and is one of the key assertions of feminist film theory. This essay and its theorisation of gender roles in classical Hollywood cinema acted as a springboard for much subsequent feminist film scholarship and indeed Tania Modleski suggests that it "may be considered the founding document of psychoanalytic feminist film theory."¹¹ In it Mulvey proposes that the anxiety-invoking image of the female body is necessary for the production of order in the phallogentric classical Hollywood film - woman is central to the film text, its guarantee of order - yet she symbolises lack and it is this contradictory position (being simultaneously everything and nothing) that feminist film scholarship since the 1970s has endeavoured to understand. Mulvey was particularly concerned with articulating and understanding "the central place of the image of woman"¹² in cinema. For Mulvey, the singular abstracted term 'woman' denotes the 'idea of woman' that classical cinema constructs, thereby distinguishing this shallow two-dimensional cinematic figure from real *women*. By analysing gender roles and the function of the female character in particular, Mulvey claims that in classical Hollywood cinema all

¹⁰ Laura Mulvey, op. cit., p.14

¹¹ Tania Modleski, 'Hitchcock, Feminism, and the Patriarchal Unconscious,' in Patricia Erens (ed.), *Issues in Feminist Film Criticism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), p.58

¹² Laura Mulvey, op. cit., p.16

female characters are more-or-less the same and are more appropriately conceived of as an entity or a zone, rather than reflecting an attempt to portray a 'realistic' three-dimensional character with her own story, desires and motivations.

Of particular import for this thesis is Mulvey's identification of the fetishised image of woman as the linchpin of classical cinema; a description that is difficult to contest. According to Mulvey, the cinema delights in displaying the female body as a "sexual object" that "signifies male desire."¹³ In other words, her significance lies solely in her symbolic function, which is to articulate male desire for both the characters on screen and the masculine spectator that the film exclusively addresses. While scholars such as Jackie Stacey have disputed this aspect of Mulvey's thesis, persuasively arguing the pleasures of classical cinema for women viewers, her identification of male privilege in the classical film text remains generally undisputed.¹⁴

Mulvey's description of "woman as icon," emphasises the flatness of the cinematic image of woman in Hollywood, which she contrasts to "the active male figure" who "demands a three-dimensional space."¹⁵ In the classical Hollywood film female roles are do not involve complex characterisation. According to Mulvey woman symbolises sexual difference and particularly the visible evidence of difference (perceived to be a lack in women) on which gender roles are build. Her analysis of classical cinema depends largely on the use of Freudian theory and particularly his writings on the Oedipal stage of early childhood, which she sees as analogous to the relationship between spectator and screen. Freud posits that the male child's realisation of his anatomical difference from his mother triggers in him a fear of the female body in general, because this difference is perceived of as a lack in women. The child believes his mother was once just like him, but has been castrated by the father as a punishment for masturbation. This stage in the child's development, and the fear symbolised by the woman's body that

¹³ Ibid., p.19

¹⁴ For instance see Jackie Stacey, 'Feminine Fascinations: Forms of Identification in Star-Audience Relations' in Sue Thornham (ed.), *Feminist Film Theory: A Reader* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999), pp.196-209

¹⁵ Laura Mulvey, op. cit., p.20

it gives rise to, which he terms the castration complex, marks a shift in the child's identification from the mother to the father, from the Imaginary to the Symbolic, to take up his rightful place of privilege within patriarchy. Mulvey takes up Freud's claim that this fear spawns a desire to control the woman's body through vision by subjecting it to a controlling voyeuristic gaze and by fetishising it so that it appears reassuring: "[W]omen in representation can signify castration, and activate voyeuristic or fetishistic mechanisms to circumvent this threat."¹⁶ This process of containing the female body and turning it into a reassuring object is played out through images of idealised femininity; seen through soft focus filters she is coiffed and painted to perfection and encapsulated by the frame of the screen. However these familiar images that focus on the woman's face also coincide with a delay in the narrative that is uncharacteristic of the classical Hollywood film, which is generally characterised by unwavering narrative propulsion. As Mulvey puts it, this moment of concentration on the image of woman "tends to work against the development of a story line, to freeze the flow of action in moments of erotic contemplation."¹⁷ It also thwarts another general convention of the classical narrative film by occasionally also offering us direct access to a close-up image of woman, when normally all shots are 'motivated' by being offered from a character's point of view. This type of unmediated access threatens to break with the carefully constructed verisimilitude and 'realism' of the Hollywood text.¹⁸ Mulvey's thesis exclusively articulates the identification processes of cinema from the point of view of an ideal male spectator. She claims that the Hollywood text is designed to address a male spectator, which poses a problem for women spectators, who seem to have no option but to occupy a masochistic spectator position as she identifies with the objectified woman on screen. The male spectator, on the other hand, identifies with his on-screen surrogate, the central male protagonist who drives the action forward and who possesses the woman through his controlling gaze. In her 1981 follow-up essay 'Afterthoughts on 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema' inspired by King Vidor's *Duel in the Sun* (1946)' she addresses her neglect of the woman spectator in her earlier essay by suggesting that the spectator

¹⁶ Ibid., p.25

¹⁷ Ibid., p.19

¹⁸ Ibid., p.26

position articulated by the classical Hollywood film is *masculine* rather than male and that women too can occupy this position through a process that she describes as “trans-sex identification.”¹⁹ Mulvey’s ‘Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema’ continues to be hugely influential, but it is just one example (albeit a seminal one) of a vast body of feminist film criticism that focuses on developing theoretical frameworks for understanding gender roles in classical cinema.

The opening sections of American scholar Patricia Mellencamp’s *A Fine Romance: Five Ages of Feminism* are useful in providing an overview of what she refers to as “film feminism,”²⁰ which comprises both feminist film theory and criticism, and feminist film filmmaking both in the UK and the US. She summarises the key positions, approaches, and voices in early feminist film criticism in the first of five sections in the book, which she names *Age One: Intellectual Feminism*. In a brief note entitled ‘To Begin With ...’ that introduces the book she sets out the agenda of these 1970s feminist scholars who wrote about film:

The film feminists of the 1970s were [...] “romantic, fiercely partisan.” We wanted to change film history, its past and future, to treat women as equal subjects, to break open the realm of production. We succeeded, to a degree. Feminist film theory opened academia’s eyes to the inequity of *white* women – on screen and in audiences.²¹

Their ambition was to change film history, to re-write film history through their scholarly interventions, which in turn they hoped would expand opportunities for women in film in the future in terms of alternative roles for women both on screen and in production. Their object of scrutiny at this stage was predominantly the mainstream movie, films that were consumed by mass audiences and were therefore hugely influential. To be more

¹⁹ Laura Mulvey, ‘Afterthoughts on ‘Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema’ inspired by King Vidor’s *Duel in the Sun* (1946)’ in *Visual and Other Pleasures*, op, cit., p.32

²⁰ Patricia Mellencamp, ‘What Cinderella and Snow White Forgot to Tell Thelma and Louise,’ *A Fine Romance: Five Ages of Feminism* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1995), p.10

²¹ Patricia Mellencamp, ‘To Begin With...,’ *A Fine Romance: Five Ages of Feminism*, op. cit., p.xi

precise, they analysed the classical Hollywood film as a model of filmmaking as outlined by earlier film theorists such as Christian Metz, Andre Bazin, Barry Salt and Noël Burch, whose work all contributed in important ways to the identification of norms in style, technique and narrative.²² The recognition of norms repeated across thousands of films produced over decades (broadly from the 1910s to the 1960s) during the studio system of filmmaking in Hollywood identified a distinctive and dominant model of filmmaking. Feminist film scholars then analysed such norms to determine patterns in gender roles across decades of filmmaking, which in turn permitted them to argue that these roles were constructed and reinforced through their repetition in this fairly static model.

In the very personal opening to the introduction proper of her book, that recalls her childhood desire to have the same freedoms as a boy, Mellencamp makes the following observation: “Boys moved through space. Girls stayed in place. Boys never looked back. Girls waited.”²³ She attributes these familiar gender roles, or what she refers to as “ploys of romance,”²⁴ to fairytales, which she points out have also been incorporated cinema. She describes the realisation for many women film scholars that film theory had ignored the role of women in cinema (with the exception of the femme fatale or the pin-up) and that in fact, in cinema, “[w]omen had only two endings – married or dead.”²⁵ In the essay ‘A Fine Romance, With no Kisses: Discourse, Not Intercourse,’ Mellencamp outlines the key assertions made by early film feminists involved in the analysis of gender roles. Primary to these is the point made strongly by Mulvey, that woman occupies a paradoxical place in cinema as central to the cinematic text (in terms of her dominant presence on screen, both temporally and compositionally) and simultaneously insignificant except in her contribution to defining masculinity. In relation to the

²² See André Bazin, *What is Cinema? Vol. 1* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971); Christian Metz, *Film Language: A Semiotics of Cinema* (Oxford: Oxford university Press, 1974); Barry Salt, *Film Style and Technology: History and Analysis* (Washington: Starwood, 2003) originally published in 1978; Noël Burch, *Theory of Film Practice* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1973)

²³ Patricia Mellencamp, ‘What Cinderella and Snow White Forgot to Tell Thelma and Louise,’ *A Fine Romance: Five Ages of Feminism*, op. cit., p.1

²⁴ Ibid., p.2

²⁵ Ibid., p.7

narrative, she is significant only as an object of male desire, while her own desire is almost always neglected:

From the early 1970s into the 1990s, from Mulvey, Modleski, and de Lauretis to Doane and Williams (and countless others), feminist film critics looked into Hollywood movies for women's desire, women's pleasure, and rarely found it.²⁶

In another essay from this book 'A Fine Romance, with No Kisses: Discourse, Not Intercourse,' Mellencamp points out that although it may seem glaringly obvious to us today, these writers in the 1970s in particular made explicit a fundamental assumption of the classical narrative cinema that had been overlooked since the beginning of film criticism in the early twentieth century: "Whether white and present or black and absent, women were there to serve."²⁷ She later draws on Foucault's conceptualisation of power as a construct that conceals its mechanisms, which in doing so renders itself tolerable if not altogether invisible and she compares this to the effect of the repetition of the continuity style of filmmaking practised by Hollywood whereby every movement of the film seems to be absolutely logical in that it is motivated by the movement that preceded it.²⁸ The tight economy of the classical film text, where every element (every shot, camera angle, transition and every aspect of the *mise-en-scène*) is used up, consumed by the narrative as a whole, with all questions answered and loose ends tied up, operates to conceal the mechanics of the filmmaking process. Pam Cook and Claire Johnston have referred to this successful concealment of the apparatus by classical Hollywood cinema as "the effect of 'non-writing.'"²⁹ The continuity style of filmmaking also persistently repeats certain narrative patterns and certain gender relations that are essential to those narrative patterns, making them seem logical and fixed. In short, the repetition of a narrative pattern that casts women as central to the film as the 'prize' or 'love object' for the successful, powerful man who propels the story forward through his action works to

²⁶ Ibid., p.8

²⁷ Patricia Mellencamp, 'A Fine Romance, with No Kisses: Discourse, Not Intercourse,' in *A Fine Romance*, op. cit., p.16

²⁸ Ibid., pp.21-22

²⁹ Pam Cook and Claire Johnston, "The Place of Woman in the Cinema of Raoul Walsh" in Patricia Erens (ed.), *Issues in Feminist Film Criticism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), p.26

present that pattern (and those attendant gender relations) as 'natural' by concealing the apparatus that produces it. Mellencamp claims that the dominance of these conventions for a long time prevented critics from recognising some of the basic assumptions they advanced: that women are subordinate to men and that the love interest is always female, young and white. She describes the double standard that is applied to gender race and age by the continuity style that, for instance, appoints "different conventions of lighting make-up, speech, and even action for men and women."³⁰ Once again pointing to the discrepancy in the treatment of the sexes on screen, she states: "Women had to be beautiful and young; men just had to be men."³¹

Like many feminist critics of film, Mellencamp foregrounds the enduring centrality of the female face to cinema: "The female face was and is everything."³² Female beauty is paramount in Hollywood cinema, and one of the prerequisites of beauty is youth. The film production process does whatever it can to ensure that it creates the most beautiful image of woman achievable. Mellencamp quotes from John Alton's book on cinematography, *Painting With Light*,³³ to illustrate the very different treatment, with regard to shooting conditions and *mise-en-scène* such as make-up and lighting, that men and women actors received, which reflects their different functions to the film in general terms. Describing the close-up shot Alton explains: "In feminine close-ups, we strive for beauty, in masculine pictures it is the character of the individual that we accentuate."³⁴ He describes the regular use of diffusion to erase wrinkles on women's faces and the importance of fixing women within these optimum lighting conditions once they had been arranged around her face; a factor in her relative stasis on screen when compared with her male counterpart.

³⁰ Patricia Mellencamp, 'A Fine Romance, With No Kisses: Discourse, Not Intercourse,' *A Fine Romance: Five Ages of Feminism*, op. cit., p.24

³¹ Ibid., p.28

³² Ibid.

³³ John Alton, *Painting With Light* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995)

³⁴ Patricia Mellencamp, 'A Fine Romance, With No Kisses: Discourse, Not Intercourse,' op. cit., p.30

This brief overview of key writings that theorise the significance and function of woman in the classical Hollywood text reveals three common hypotheses. Firstly, that woman is a two-dimensional fetish object, insignificant except as a site for working through and containing the fear that she represents for the male subject. Secondly, the classical Hollywood film exclusively addresses a male or *masculine* spectator position and, thirdly, woman is synonymous with beauty and youth.

Feminist Re-readings of Hollywood and the Concept of Excess

A key strategy for feminist scholars attempting to expose the ideological foundations of the codes and conventions of Hollywood is what is often described as 'reading against the grain,' whereby scholars are not only concerned with making the construction of gender in Hollywood explicit, but also with locating moments of rupture, or subversive elements within ostensibly conservative texts. These feminist re-readings of Hollywood genres attempted to locate various sub-texts and forms that provided pleasurable identifications for women that were not solely based on women's masochistic relationship to the text. As part of their re-readings of the classical film text various feminist scholars locate and discuss moments of excess or excessive elements that the text strains to contain. While the classical text provides narrative justification for all of its constituent parts, there are significant moments of excess that paradoxically permit us to recognise its usually obsessive regulatory operations.

In her book *Old Wives Tales: Feminist Re-Visions of Film and Other Fictions* Tania Modleski critiques the romance genre, which is the principal genre of classical Hollywood cinema. In the introduction to her book she states: "Female genres, those genres which have traditionally appealed to women, are perhaps the most rigid of all. Romances tell the same courtship stories over and over."³⁵ However, she is careful to place the culpability for the oppressive fantasies that these novels promote with the

³⁵ Tania Modleski, 'Feminist Criticism Today: Notes from Jurassic Park,' *Old Wives Tales: Feminist Re-Visions of Film and Other Fictions* (London: I. B. Taurus Publishers, 1999), p.10

conditions that make these narratives “necessary,”³⁶ rather than with the novels and films themselves.

Modleski reminds us of the defence made by some feminist scholars of the romance genre (and its readers) against its denigration by other feminist scholars such as Germaine Greer and Ann Douglas, who defined the genre as promoting utter female masochism.³⁷ For Modleski, romance literature and cinema reproduces neither utterly masochistic female reader/spectator positions nor sexual equality as some recent critics have suggested of later examples of the genre. She uses the term “zigzag” to describe her exploration of various critical positions in the discussion of specific romance texts, a term that also fits her critical position and her own relationship to this genre, as one who both enjoys the fantasies it promotes while simultaneously seeing it as problematically promoting female subordination and the “eroticisation of dominance.”³⁸ She oscillates between these two positions, as do many feminist critics who take the classical Hollywood text as their object of analysis. Both Modleski and Mellencamp (who also critiques the romance genre) happily concede that an understanding of the pleasures that Hollywood genres have provided for them is one of the key motivations for their analyses. Modleski summarises the aim of feminist scholars who produce readings against the grain of the popular cinematic text when she emphasises “the importance of seeing both progressive *and* regressive elements in popular texts.”³⁹

Mellencamp claims that because her generation of feminist film critics believed that Hollywood movies operated through processes of dissimulation, it was their goal to demystify them by penetrating the surface.⁴⁰ Classical Hollywood film texts that have already been scrutinised by feminist theorists are now subjected to further analysis by various parodic re-writings of these texts in moving image art. Like these feminist re-

³⁶ Tania Modleski, ‘My Life as a Romance Reader,’ *Old Wives Tales: Feminist Re-Visions of Film and Other Fictions*, op. cit., p.65

³⁷ Tania Modleski, ‘Preface to the Following Three Chapters,’ *Old Wives Tales: Feminist Re-Visions of Film and Other Fictions*, op. cit., p.29

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p.30

³⁹ Tania Modleski, ‘My Life as a Romance Writer,’ op. cit., p.66

⁴⁰ Patricia Mellencamp, ‘A Fine Romance,’ op. cit., p.45

readings, I suggest that the aim (and the achievement) of the parodic re-writings of prototypical Hollywood texts is to reveal something that was already there but hidden from view. Both the scholarly re-readings and the art practice re-writings of Hollywood texts examine something latent and make it manifest.

Kristin Thompson's essay 'The Concept of Cinematic Excess,' which she wrote in 1981, acknowledges the element of excess that pervades cinema, which she describes as containing a tension between oppositional forces:

Some of these forces may strive to unify the work, to hold it together sufficiently that we may perceive and follow its structures. Outside any such structures lie those aspects of the work which are not contained by its unifying forces – the 'excess.'⁴¹

For Thompson, rather than examine either the coherent aspects of the text or the excessive elements, the critic should deal "with the tensions between them."⁴² She cites an essay by Stephen Heath, 'Film and System: Terms of Analysis,'⁴³ published by *Screen* in 1975, where he uses the term excess in a discussion of classical Hollywood film, which as she observes "typically strives to minimize excess by a thoroughgoing motivation."⁴⁴ She states that other models of cinema are not so driven by an imperative to provide narrative justification for each movement included and therefore their excessive elements are more easily perceived.⁴⁵ Excess then is an aspect of the text that is perceptible, but does nothing to advance or contribute to the narrative meaning of the film, or to provide any metaphoric or symbolic underpinning for the narrative.⁴⁶ As she puts it: "More precisely, excess implies a gap or lag in motivation."⁴⁷ Because Heath

⁴¹ Kristin Thompson, 'The Concept of Cinematic Excess,' in Philip Rosen (ed.), *Narrative, Apparatus, Ideology: A Film Theory Reader* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), p.130

⁴² Ibid., p.131

⁴³ Stephen Heath, 'Film and System: Terms of Analysis, Part 1' *Screen*, Vol. 16 no. 1, 1975, pp.7-77

⁴⁴ Kristin Thompson, 'The Concept of Cinematic Excess,' op. cit., p.130

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

draws on psychoanalytic theory to explain the function of excess to the text, Thompson states that we can view excess as the repressed of cinema, residing in its unconscious realm, but seeping out here and there and detectable in the symptoms etched onto the surface of the film.⁴⁸ Thompson believes that the critic should point out the excesses of the film text, which may be met with some resistance by both critics and readers since it problematises the idea of neatly constructed analysis.⁴⁹ Our tendency to seek out the significance of every aspect of the text tends to inhibit our discussion of the elusive aspect of excess. For Thompson the critic must resist the urge to locate a narrative justification for every detail in the film and she insists that even if some plausible narrative justification is found it does not necessarily prohibit certain details from also distracting us from the narrative.⁵⁰

A film displays a struggle by the unifying structures to 'contain' the diverse elements that make up its whole system. Motivation is the primary tool by which the work makes its own devices seem reasonable. At that point where motivation fails, excess begins.⁵¹

Thompson states that it is possible only to indicate excess, and not to analyse it (precisely because it is that thing that evades meaning). She also suggests that the value of acknowledging excess may lead to alternative ways to view and think about film and challenge our expectations of how a film should operate (in terms of narrative and structure).⁵² Her essay draws attention to an area of practice that is central to this thesis. She notes a tendency in experimental filmmaking to look for excess in pre-existing films through a process of appropriation, or what has become known as found footage film. She gives the example of Ken Jacob's *Tom, Tom, the Piper's Son* (1969) that reworks an early short film, repeating various segments to produce a feature-length film. Filmmakers such as Jacobs make explicit the excesses that are already present in the films they use as raw material. In Jacobs film "[n]arrative begins to break down and tiny

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid., p.133

⁵⁰ Ibid., p.134

⁵¹ Ibid., pp.134-35

⁵² Ibid., p.140

gestures, grain, and individual frames become foregrounded.”⁵³ For Thompson, willingness to perceive excess can only deepen out understanding of the structures and conventions of cinema.

I would like to return to Mulvey’s essay here to make the observation that in her thesis excess is mapped onto the female body. Mulvey claims that the idealised cinematic image of woman arrests the narrative, which is excessive to the text insofar as it contributes nothing to the telling of the story, yet it provides an essential element of spectacle. This image also connotes excess in that “the female image as a castration threat constantly endangers the unity of the diegesis and bursts though the world of illusion as an intrusive, static, one-dimensional fetish.”⁵⁴ In other words its abstract decorative quality threatens the verisimilitude so sought after by the rest of the text.

Mary Ann Doane also proposes that excess in the classical film text is closely associated with the image of woman but instead of focusing on woman’s representation of lack, she concentrates on her symbolic representation of maternal plenitude. In her influential essay ‘Film and the Masquerade: Theorizing the Female Spectator,’ Doane states that the cinema is “a writing in images of the woman but not for her. For she *is* the problem.”⁵⁵ Like Mulvey, Doane analyses the image of woman on screen and sees the close-up of the woman’s face (or sequences that contain close-ups of her face) as the site of most importance for the organisation of the rest of the text. She studies the voyeuristic relationship of the spectator to the screen and explains that it is the play between proximity to and distance from the concurrently desired and threatening image of woman that produces this voyeurism. In other words a prescribed degree of distance, a gap, is necessary to the cultivation of this relationship. In a section that rehearses feminist film theory’s assertion that the cinematic text specifically addresses male desire, she cites French feminist theory’s conviction that for women spectators the image of woman is

⁵³ Ibid, p.141

⁵⁴ Ibid., pp.25-26

⁵⁵ Mary Ann Doane, ‘Film and the Masquerade: Theorizing the Female Spectator,’ in *Femmes Fatales: Feminism, Film Theory, Psychoanalysis* (London: Routledge, 1991), p.18

'over-present' as she *is* the image. These writers such as Luce Irigaray use psychoanalytic theories of subjectivity to advance their hypotheses. The mother is the first object of desire for both the male and female child and while the male child proceeds to displace this object, the female child must become it. A desire to return to the plenitude of the mother's body, to eliminate the distance between the self and the other, permeates the classical cinematic text and threatens to destabilise the foundations of the socialised subject. This precarious game is considered to be a working out of attitudes to the woman's (mother's) body from the male perspective, or masculine subject position. French feminists claim that this gap is not present for the woman spectator and that therefore the narrative film does not address the woman who is already situated in that sought after, but feared, space of plenitude. Doane quotes Michele Montrelay who writes: "This body, so close, which she has to occupy, is an object in excess which must be 'lost,' that is to say, repressed, in order to be symbolized."⁵⁶ Once again the maternal body (the female body's first significance for the male subject) is a symbol of excess.

This body so close, so excessive, prevents the woman from assuming a position similar to the man's in relation to signifying systems. For she is haunted by the loss of a loss, the lack of that lack so essential for the realization of the ideals of semiotic systems.⁵⁷

Other feminist film critics reinforce the collision between woman and excess perceived by both Mulvey and Doane. For instance in 'Masochism and the Perverse Pleasures of the Cinema,' Gaylyn Studlar agrees with Doane's conceptualisation of woman as symbol of plenitude. She suggests that instead of representing lack or the Oedipal threat of castration for the male spectator, that in fact woman represents memories of the pre-Oedipal stage when the mother's body was experienced as plenitude. Instead of lack then she represents excess, a spilling over edges and boundaries or, more accurately, the negation of all boundaries.⁵⁸ Similarly, in an essay on the 1940s films of Hollywood

⁵⁶ Mary Ann Doane, op. cit., p.23. Doane is here quoting from Michele Montrelay, 'Inquiry into Femininity,' *m/f* 1 (1978), pp.91-92

⁵⁷ Ibid., p.23

⁵⁸ Gaylyn Studlar, 'Masochism and the Perverse Pleasures of Cinema,' *Quarterly Review of Film Studies* 9, no.4 (Fall 1984), pp.267-82

director Raoul Walsh, Pam Cook and Claire Johnston also refer to the abstracted two-dimensional female figure as 'woman' but they describe her as an ambivalent object that symbolises *both* castration threat and maternal plenitude. They also emphasise that her significance lies in what she represents for the male spectator: "She represents at one and the same time the distant memory of maternal plenitude and the fetishized object of his fantasy of castration – a phallic replacement and thus a threat."⁵⁹ For Cook and Johnston woman functions as an empty sign "the locus of emptiness"⁶⁰ in that Walsh's films use her as a device to allow the male character to confront his own lack. Whether she represents Oedipal castration anxiety or pre-Oedipal plenitude she is a site of excess, the only permissible site of excess in the classical narrative text. It is probably most useful to us to see her as a symbol that combines lack *and* over-presence, nothing *and* everything. As Mulvey, Cook, Johnston and others have stressed, she is an ambivalent symbol, a paradox.

Doane looks to the notion of masquerade to dispute claims that the woman cannot gain distance from the image of because she is the image. As Doane explains, the masquerade is precisely an excess of femininity, which women wilfully adopt in order to conceal the possession of traits that have been consigned to masculinity and therefore to men and for which she fears reprisals. Her over-the-top or obvious display of femininity shields her from criticism from the father (society), but at the same time it announces femininity as a construct, a repertoire of so many conventions that she uses to *represent* femininity in accordance to the dictates of society. In short, the masquerade reveals gendered identity as a construct. For Doane, the masquerade "in flaunting femininity, holds it at a distance."⁶¹ She continues to explain that the masquerade of femininity makes gender a mask that can be worn or removed and that its subversive potential then is located "in its denial of the production of femininity as closeness, as presence-to-itself, as, precisely, imagistic."⁶² This understanding of femininity as masquerade becomes the foundation

⁵⁹ Pam Cook and Claire Johnston, 'The Place of Woman in the Cinema of Raoul Walsh,' in Patricia Erens (ed.), *op. cit.*, pp.19-20

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p.25

⁶² *Ibid.*

for her rejection of the French feminists' claim that the woman is 'too close' to her body, or that for the woman spectator the body on screen represents an over-presence of the body.

Doane makes reference to the notion of excess in relation to the female body on numerous occasions throughout her essay. For her "[t]here is always a certain excessiveness, a difficulty associated with women who appropriate the gaze, who insist upon looking."⁶³ Referring to three classical Hollywood films from the second half of the 1940s where the female spectator tries to assume the gaze, she writes: "In all three films the woman is constructed as the site of an excessive and dangerous desire."⁶⁴ She then describes this excessive desire and the need to contain it as a chief motivating factor for the narrative conventions of the classical cinema: "This desire mobilizes extreme efforts of containment and unveils the sadistic aspect of narrative."⁶⁵ Returning to the notion of closeness as a characteristic of the woman's body, she writes:

The entire elaboration of femininity as a closeness, a nearness, a present-to-itself is not the definition of an essence but the delineation of a *place* culturally assigned to woman.⁶⁶

In 'Film Bodies: Gender, Genre, and Excess' Linda Williams describes the excesses of certain genres that she refers to as 'body genres,' which are horror, melodrama and pornography. She describes excesses of spectacle and the display of basic "primal, even infantile emotions"⁶⁷ that create lapses in the realism of the film and states that: "Much of the interest of melodrama to film scholars over the last fifteen years originates in the sense that the form exceeds the normative system of much narrative cinema."⁶⁸ In the essay she cites Rick Altman's writings on the musical and his identification of the excesses of the Hollywood film in "unmotivated events, rhythmic montage, highlighted

⁶³ Ibid., p.27

⁶⁴ Ibid., p.28

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Mary Ann Doane, op. cit., p.31

⁶⁷ Linda Williams, 'Film Bodies: Gender, Genre and Excess' in *Film Quarterly*, Vol. 44, No. 4, Summer 1991, p.3.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

parallelism, overlong spectacles.”⁶⁹ Altman describes these excesses as “a second voice”⁷⁰ in that they provide a logic that competes with the narrative order of the film. For Williams these body genres share “the spectacle of the body caught in the grip of intense sensation or emotion.”⁷¹ She describes this spectacle as representative of a sort of ecstasy, which originally meant insanity and bewilderment, but is now used to relate to sexual excitement and rapture:

Visually, each of these ecstatic excesses could be said to share a quality of uncontrollable convulsion or spasm – of the body ‘beside itself’ with sexual pleasure, fear and terror, or overpowering sadness. Aurally, excess is marked by recourse not to the coded articulations of language but to inarticulate cries of pleasure in porn, screams of fear in horror, sobs of anguish in melodrama.⁷²

Once again we see a direct relationship between excess and the woman’s body in that these extraneous elusive elements are associated with expressions that emanate from the woman’s body: “[I]n each of these genres the bodies of women figured on the screen have functioned traditionally as the primary *embodiments* of pleasure, fear, and pain.”⁷³ In all of these discussions the ‘second voice’ or excess in cinema is connected with the woman’s body and is neither sensible nor containable but perceptible in the woman’s extreme expressions of ecstasy, in her tendency to arrest narrative progression, in her ambivalent status as a two-dimensional stereotype that simultaneously represents lack and plenitude. Mellencamp sums up this point well when she writes: “woman is absolutely essential and supremely worthless. In so many ways, women are depicted as everything and nothing.”⁷⁴

⁶⁹ Ibid. Williams is quoting from Rick Altman, ‘Dickens, Griffith, and Film Theory Today,’ *South Atlantic Quarterly* no.88, 1989, pp.321-359

⁷⁰ Linda Williams, op. cit., p.3

⁷¹ Ibid., p.4

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Patricia Mellencamp, ‘A Fine Romance, With No Kisses: Discourse, Not Intercourse’ op. cit., p.17

While my particular selection of parodic texts necessitates an engagement with certain types of excess (the masquerade of the femme fatale, the disruption of narrative flow caused by the musical number, the stereotype of black womanhood, and the relationship between the maternal body and death/stillness in Hitchcock), there have been other genres that have proven particularly interesting for feminist re-readings in that they present some possibility of pleasurable identifications for the woman spectator. Examples include the horror film and its not always very well disguised sub-text of lesbian desire as explored by Andrea Weiss in her essay 'The Vampire Lovers',⁷⁵ and the woman-centred melodrama in Jackie Byres' book *All That Hollywood Allows: Rereading Gender in 1950s Melodrama*⁷⁶ and Modleski's essay 'Time and Desire in the Woman's Film'.⁷⁷

Re-writing Hollywood: Found Footage Film

[R]ecycled images call attention to themselves as images, as products of the image-producing industries of film and television, and therefore as pieces of the vast and intricate mosaic of information, entertainment, and persuasion that constitute the media-saturated environment of modern – or many would say, postmodern – life. By reminding us that we are seeing images produced and disseminated by the media, found footage film opens the door to a critical examination of the methods and motives underlying the media's use of images.⁷⁸

As mentioned in the section above, feminist film theory takes as its object a re-writing of film history by locating subversive pleasures for women spectators in the film text.⁷⁹ In her discussion of the critic's task to acknowledge the excesses as well as the structuring

⁷⁵ Andrea Weiss, 'The Vampire Lovers,' *Vampires and Violets: From the Crossdressing Stars, Dietrich and Garbo, to the Vampire Films of the Late '60s, to Silkwood and the Color Purple* (New York, Penguin Books, 1993)

⁷⁶ Jackie Byres, *All That Hollywood Allows: Rereading Gender in 1950s Melodrama* (London: Routledge, 1991)

⁷⁷ Tania Modleski, 'Time and Desire in the Woman's Film,' in Gerald Mast, Marshall Cohen & Leo Braudy (eds.), *Film Theory and Criticism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), pp.536-548

⁷⁸ William C. Wees, *Recycled Images: The Art and Politics of Found Footage Film* (New York: Anthology Film Archives, 1993), p.32

⁷⁹ The other type of re-writing undertaken by feminist film critics, not discussed here, involves discussing the relatively overlooked work of women in the film industry.

patterns of cinema, Thompson points to the critical practice of experimental filmmakers such as Ken Jacobs who investigate pre-existing films in search of excessive elements and who quote from and modify those films to make any traces of excess explicit. Undoubtedly, there is a clear affinity between these two types of re-writing of the classical (or in some cases just pre-existing) film text. In an essay on the Austrian filmmaker Peter Tscherkassky, Alexander Horwath describes the filmmaker's avid reading of film theory and the symbiosis of theory and practice achieved in his work, which he names "film art as film theory."⁸⁰ Both Thompson and Horwath then identify certain examples of found footage filmmaking as a kind of 'practice as critique.'

While my discussion is not exclusively about found footage film, much of the discussion about this strategy also resonates with practices of imitation and allusion, other types of parodic strategies. A statement by Patrick Sjöborg in his book *The World in Pieces: A Study of Compilation Film* supports this: "The copy follows the same aporetic logic as the quote: that it reappears as the same but different"⁸¹ and this also recalls Linda Hutcheon's definition of parody as "extended repetition with critical difference."⁸² Two of the filmmakers discussed in this thesis, Moffatt and Gordon, fit this classification of found footage filmmakers, by transforming pre-existing film footage in their work while the other two, Warhol and Barney, re-cycle Hollywood imagery in a less conspicuous way, by imitating the instantly recognisable norms and iconography of Hollywood. The following section will examine some of the key writings on found footage film, which as I've suggested shares many characteristics in terms of intensions and effects with other parodic strategies, such as imitation and allusion. In particular strategies of reproduction, re-cycling, re-framing, and repetition are common both to practices of imitation and quotation.

⁸⁰ Alexander Horwath 'Singing in the Rain: Supercinematography by Peter Tscherkassky,' in Alexander Horwath & Michael Loebenstein (eds.), *Peter Tscherkassky* (Vienna: Österreichisches Filmmuseum, 2005), p.28

⁸¹ Sjöborg, Patrik, 'Introduction,' in *The World in Pieces: A Study of Compilation Film* (Stockholm, 2001), p.31

⁸² Linda Hutcheon, *A Theory of Parody* (Urban: University of Illinois Press, 2000), p.7

Traditionally, experimental filmmakers working with found footage steered clear of Hollywood, which may have been to confirm their oppositional stance in relation to the mainstream commercial text, but was possibly also largely due to the practical considerations of what sort of footage was available to them, gleaned as it was from cutting room floors and flea markets. Many filmmakers worked with newsreel, pornography, education films and home movies. As Horwath puts it:

Historically, avant-garde film has almost always dissociated itself completely from Hollywood, often gaining an aura of 'frustration' along the way. By default, one could glimpse its actual fixation with the almighty Goliath. In the era of found footage film, however (and Tscherkassky's work of the past fifteen years), Hollywood is openly welcomed into the world of the very 'small' filmmakers.⁸³

Horwath champions the work of Tscherkassky, while being sceptical of the critical potential of the work of others such as Gordon whose manipulations of the text and engagement with its processes seem too easy by comparison. For Horwath Tscherkassky's films' analytical 'excavation' of the original material and its context "is definitely bound to a dimension of *depth*."⁸⁴ This process amounts to what Horwath refers to as "Tscherkassky's practical film criticism on the basis of found footage"⁸⁵ and is for him distinct from apparently similar strategies in visual art. Horwath's observations of certain types of found footage filmmaking as practical film criticism is useful and repeats the association between theoretical and practical re-writings of film genres, but I suggest that we extend these observations to include artists such as Gordon, who may conduct less rigorous research into his primary material, but whose work nonetheless effects a convincing critique of that material. My discussion of his work in chapter five argues and illustrates precisely that.

In his book *Recycled Images: The Art and Politics of Found Footage Film*,⁸⁶ William C. Wees describes three different types of found footage filmmaking, the first being what he

⁸³ Alexander Horwath, op. cit., p.34

⁸⁴ Ibid., p.44

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ William C Wees, op. cit.

describes as the 'perfect film,' which is just a re-presentation of found material with no alterations made to it whatsoever. The filmmaker who re-presents pre-existing films in this way believes it to be an example of a work that is best left alone, perfect as it is. The second type of film is what Wees refers to as montage film, which involves the compilation of various fragments of found film into a new whole, and the third is film that is subjected to a series of processes that radically alter its appearance, effacing elements of it through scratching, perforating, dying, painting over, or chemically altering it somehow. Although Wees prefers to concentrate on the middle type, montage film, he claims that all three, through processes of de-contextualization and various degrees of textual transformation critique film industry representational standards and conventions and they intervene in or, as he puts it, they "interrupt the endless recirculation and unreflective reception of mass media images."⁸⁷ For Wees then, found footage film is a politically effective practice, and montage film is the most politically effective of all. Like Thompson, Wees cites Jacob's film *Tom, Tom, The Piper's Son* (1969) to illustrate the sort of manipulation of a pre-existing film that examines it through elongating the action, repeating certain actions and blowing up certain details "so that its richer implications become more apparent."⁸⁸ Elsewhere he provides the example of Charles Levine's *Bessie Smith* (Charles Levine, 1969), which quotes and repeats shots from *Saint Louis Blues* (1929) in order to simultaneously pay tribute to Bessie Smith the blues singer and to critique popular stereotypes of black womanhood.⁸⁹ However, as he points out, most examples of found footage film combine fragments from a variety of sources, placing them together "in montage constructions that invest them with new or previously unrecognized implications."⁹⁰ For instance, some films may look to underscore associations between the clips used, such as the cinematic repetition of subordinate roles for women articulated in the Tracey Moffatt montage films discussed in the fourth chapter of this thesis. As Wees suggests, there are numerous examples of this kind of film, however in all of them:

⁸⁷ Ibid., p.32

⁸⁸ Ibid., p.8

⁸⁹ Ibid., p.10

⁹⁰ Ibid., p.12

[T]he underlying tactic remains essentially the same: the incongruity of sound and image expose, satirize, and produce new readings of the banalities, clichés and conventional modes of discourse – verbal and visual – that are most endemic to mass media.⁹¹

Wees is clear that the fragments that comprise the montage film should still bear marks and traces of their original media context.⁹² In other words we should be able to identify the source from which each element of the film has been culled: “Its fragments do not blend into a seamless, illusory whole, and its significance cannot be enclosed within the borders of the work itself.”⁹³ As we shall see later in my discussion of Moffatt’s pastiche films, recognition of the source of the fragment is also a key characteristic of pastiche as conceived by Richard Dyer in his 2007 book *Pastiche*.⁹⁴ This is one example of the potential confusion created by conflicting or differing uses of terminology. Wees uses the term compilation film fairly interchangeably with montage film (which he sees as the film version of collage though he also uses this term occasionally in relation to film) and as I have suggested each of these are coterminous with Dyer’s recent reappraisal of the term pastiche. Wees distinguishes montage from appropriation, claiming that the latter is incapable of critiquing the texts it quotes, while the former does just that. He identifies appropriation as involving the same formal strategy as montage, but the context of the work and the particular editing together of certain clips produces a reassuring effect rather than challenging us to reconsider the familiar imagery it cites, and he gives the example of Michael Jackson’s 1987 music video *The Man in the Mirror*. He summarises the difference between the two uses of compilation by stating: “collage is critical; appropriation is accommodating.”⁹⁵ To elaborate on his distinction Wees claims:

[I]t is not the splicer that makes a collage film. It is the decision to invest found footage with meanings unintended by its original makers and unrecognized in its original contexts of presentation and reception.⁹⁶

⁹¹ Ibid., pp.20-21

⁹² Ibid., p.46

⁹³ Ibid., p.50

⁹⁴ Richard Dyer, *Pastiche* (London: Routledge, 2007)

⁹⁵ William C. Wees, op. cit., p.46

⁹⁶ Ibid., p.48

He states that a collage film could be a straightforward re-presentation of a film (a 'perfect' film) so long as the filmmaker's intention is to critique that material somehow through its re-presentation, and he calls this type of collage "the filmic equivalent of a Duchamp 'ready made.'"⁹⁷ However, in art historical discussions the readymade works of Marcel Duchamp are considered to be early examples of appropriation art, which became a prevalent tendency in art practice in the 1980s and this confusion of terms creates some difficulty when we come to discuss examples of recycling in art and film practice. The terminological confusion is perhaps more problematic for my study than for Wees' as I set out to discuss moving image art, films in the gallery, and must therefore pay attention to terminology used by the disciplines of both art history and film studies. Yet conflicting uses of terms also exists across writings on the same filmmakers. For instance, Horwath refers to the critical film practice of Tscherkassky and other found footage filmmakers such as those discussed by Wees as "cinematic appropriation art."⁹⁸ While appropriation may for Wees imply a critically impotent citation or compilation, my use of the term accords with Horwath's and owes more to its currency in art historical discourse and therefore for the purposes of my discussion I use it in a way that is analogous to Wees' use of the term montage. Wees acknowledges his own conflation of certain terms when he states that it matters little whether we use the term collage or montage, so long as either one is:

[U]nderstood to mean the juxtaposition of pre-existing elements extracted from their original contexts, diverted [...] from their original, intended uses, and thereby made to yield previously unrecognized significance."⁹⁹

Drawing on the writing of Walter Benjamin, Wees reminds us that "[q]uoting a text implies interrupting its context."¹⁰⁰ The text is removed from its original context and resituated within a new text, and is thereby modified somehow either through processes such as slow motion or repetition, or through its juxtaposition with other fragments borrowed from other texts. But the context is also interrupted in terms of it being

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Alexander Horwath, op. cit., p.32

⁹⁹ William C. Wees, op. cit., p.52

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., p.53

positioned within a new viewing context e.g. the Hollywood film fragment being inserted into a text made for viewing within an art gallery. These interruptions of context act as a kind of coercion of the text that exposes its usually concealed ideological functions. Such interruptions, for Wees, put “conceptual quotation marks around material and encourages the viewer to see it differently and think about it more critically – which is to say, more politically.”¹⁰¹

Again we can see the affinity between this practice and feminist film criticism in Wees’ insistence that the montage film then must reveal something normally hidden by the original context of the work. Wees quotes filmmaker Keith Sanborn who makes the following comment on experimental filmmaking of his generation in the early 1980s: “[W]hat was needed wasn’t new films or formal innovation in that sense, but rather a better understanding of what was already out there.”¹⁰² Horwath concurs with this when he states in reference to pre-existing films that the aim was “to create new knowledge from their knowledge and their unconscious.”¹⁰³ Wees includes in his study some key commentary by Abigail Child from conversations and interviews he conducted with her where she describes the iconoclastic nature of her appropriative practice that invents various new contexts for her source material: “Nothing is sacred. You just rip it out of one context, or leave a couple of little sub-contextual things in it, and mix the whole thing up with something else entirely.”¹⁰⁴

As noted earlier, Tscherkassky’s practice is influenced by his knowledge of film theory, aesthetics, and critical theory and can be classified as a kind of ‘art practice as theory,’ but Tscherkassky also writes about the practice of found footage film. In an essay ‘The Analogies of the Avant-Garde’ Tscherkassky points to the “iconoclastic tendency”¹⁰⁵ of the avant-garde, which is specifically directed against the idea of the cinematic image as

¹⁰¹ Ibid., p.55

¹⁰² Ibid., p.90

¹⁰³ Alexander Horwath, op. cit., p.34

¹⁰⁴ William C. Wees, op. cit., p.93

¹⁰⁵ Peter Tscherkassky, ‘The Analogies of the Avant-Garde,’ in Cecilia Hausheer & Christoph Settele (eds.), *Found Footage Film* (Luzern: Viper/Zyklop, 1992), p.27

being a representation of reality. Instead, he suggests that the classical avant-garde concentrated on revealing the “*imageness*”¹⁰⁶ of the film image, and that its iconoclasm might best be understood as a total disregard for subject matter, since this subject matter is invested in a desire to create the illusion of looking in on an homogenous world. This is a position typical of high modernism, which concerned itself with the specificity of the medium and in the case of film that would have included demystifying the moving image by showing the audience the materiality of the celluloid strip, the graininess of the image, the emulsion that coats it and the perforations that bookend it. Tscherkassky makes the interesting point that this revelation of the material identity of the film and the rejection of its representational function, brought to us by Structuralist and other modernist avant-garde filmmakers (a grouping that he refers to as the ‘classical avant-garde’) allows a newer generation of found footage filmmakers to turn their attention back to the analogous quality of filmmaking. He illustrates his point with the example of Martin Arnold’s 1989 film *Pièce Touchée* in which Arnold takes a fairly innocuous eighteen second segment from a classical Hollywood film, which depicts a man entering a room and kissing a woman who sits in an armchair reading a newspaper and repeats what Tscherkassky describes as the “short phases of movement”¹⁰⁷ that comprise the film, so that the image appears to quiver back and forth. According to Tscherkassky by focusing closely on and repeating the movements in this scene “the building blocks of cinematic movement are made visible.”¹⁰⁸ His theory might in part explain the recent fascination with representation, the move away from a materialist avant-garde film practice towards an engagement with subject matter, a focus on content once again. However, for the purposes of my discussion of moving image artworks that quote from and imitate Hollywood cinema, I find a compelling alternative explanation is provided by feminist writing on representation that argues the political efficacy of works that engage with problematic subject matter by inhabiting it rather than rejecting it wholesale, as the modernist filmmaking movement had done. I present that argument later in this chapter

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., p.29

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., p.35

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

and indicate the relationship between the feminist notion of inhabiting the offending text and strategies of parody.

Certainly the recent trend to quote from and imitate Hollywood in experimental film practice is difficult to ignore. In the introduction to the book *Ghosting: The Role of the Archive within Contemporary Art*, editor Jane Connarty states that:

Hollywood's back catalogue provides an almost unlimited pool of raw material for artists and filmmakers whose concerns range from the history of cinema, to the structural analysis of film, visual improvisation, or a critique of Hollywood's role in the creation and perpetuation of social, racial and gender stereotypes.¹⁰⁹

In her essay contribution to *Ghosting*, 'Outside the Archive: the World in Fragments,' Lucy Reynolds describes the found footage filmmakers' active interventions into their "stolen material, diverting its original messages so that hidden meanings and histories can be revealed."¹¹⁰ Like Wees, Reynolds identifies the tearing gesture as a key characteristic of found footage filmmaking, which again locates an alignment between this practice and the parodic practice of pastiche: "Images are transformed through a process of decontextualisation and juxtaposition in which they are torn from their sequential coherence."¹¹¹ These snippets from various genres such as fiction films, newsreel and public information films are then "grafted onto other cinematic corpses."¹¹² Like many writers on found footage film, Reynolds insists on the critical potential of this strategy that both reproduces and transforms familiar moving images. Echoing the writing of Wees on found footage and Dyer on pastiche, she observes that the modified material "remains attached to its first meanings and origins, which the trespassing filmmaker cannot completely rewrite or erase."¹¹³ Indeed, the filmmaker working with found footage would not wish to completely erase these traces of origins even if that were

¹⁰⁹ Jane Connarty, 'Introduction,' in Jane Connarty & Josephine Lanyon (eds.), *Ghosting: The Role of the Archive within Contemporary Art* (Picture This, 2006), p.7

¹¹⁰ Lucy Reynolds, 'Outside the Archive: the World in Fragments,' in Jane Connarty (ed.), op. cit., pp.15-16

¹¹¹ Ibid., p.16

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Ibid., p.18

a possibility because such traces are the guarantee of an effective critique of those origins and an opportunity to position her/himself in relation to them: "Found footage is the palimpsest onto which layers of different history are already written."¹¹⁴

Patrik Sjöborg's book *The Word in Pieces: A Study of Compilation Film* opens by stating that compilation film should not be viewed as a kind of generic category and that attempts to offer a definitive classification of compilation film are not necessarily useful. Instead, the author chooses to "present and analyze certain salient strategies for making compilation film."¹¹⁵ Sjöborg draws substantially on Wees' study and agrees with his assertion that "it is the ability to trace the *original* footage through alterations that gives these films their significance."¹¹⁶ He spends quite a substantial part of his introduction teasing out the definitions of various terms that have been applied to found footage film and prefers to avoid what he perceives to be the constraints and limits of many of these. His preferred term is compilation film. In a statement that echoes Reynold's description of the found footage film as palimpsestual, Sjöborg states that the meaning of the images that comprise such films is in a constant state of flux. The images maintain a link to their original significance, though that link serves to facilitate the transformation of those original meanings:

The images found in a compilation film cannot but continuously change as they are presented, but they do so, I believe, without completely losing contact or relation with an earlier version of the images. The new meaning relies on the older one(s) just as the postulated future appearances will bear the trace of yet other versions in a state of continuous morphing.¹¹⁷

I have saved my discussion of the most relevant essay on found footage film until last in this short section. Wees' 2002 article 'The Ambiguous Aura of Hollywood Stars in Avant-Garde Found Footage Films' discusses various transformations of the aura of the Hollywood star in compilation films, drawing a clear distinction between those films that

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Patrik Sjöborg, 'Introduction,' in *The Word in Pieces: A Study of Compilation Film* (Stockholm, 2001), p.13

¹¹⁶ Ibid., p.17

¹¹⁷ Ibid., p.29

maintain, even at times enhance the aura of the star and those that annihilate it.¹¹⁸ This distinction for him is to some extent commensurate with a difference in the historical context of the films' production, with a younger generation of media savvy and media studies literate filmmakers producing more critical films that sacrifice the aura along with every other construct of the classical system and he provides the example of Martin Arnold as an exemplary practitioner of this younger generation. An older generation of experimental found footage filmmakers that includes innovators such as Joseph Cornell with his 1936 film *Rose Hobart* and Bruce Conner with his 1973 film *Marilyn Times Five* maintained more of the coherence of the original and certainly betrayed their own fascination with the images of Hollywood stars they reproduced in their films. However, Wees also cites Jerry Tartaglia's 1990 film *Remembrance* that re-presents clips from *All About Eve* (Joseph E. Mankiewicz, 1950) as an example of recycled cinema that lovingly maintains the aura of the Hollywood star, in this case Bette Davis. In other words the distinction he makes between those filmmakers who maintain the aura of the star and those who eradicate it is not purely an historical one. Tartaglia's film pays homage to Davis, necessarily reproducing her aura while he foregrounds her status as an icon for gay men.

According to Wees Arnold's films represent "the most extreme example of the critical, analytical, and deconstructive tendencies in the avant-garde's appropriation of Hollywood images."¹¹⁹ I should point out here that while Arnold's work is relevant to my thesis, it is my intention to discuss a range of practices and strategies in order to illustrate the diversity of parodies of Hollywood in moving image art and my inclusion of a discussion of Douglas Gordon's *24 Hour Psycho*, which shares some strategies with Arnold's work, precludes my discussion of it for the moment. However, future development of this research would certainly include a close examination of Arnold's films. For Wees the successful destruction of the Hollywood star's aura is the result of a tendency in recent films to decode Hollywood gender norms. Wees' assertion is that

¹¹⁸ William C. Wees, 'The Ambiguous Aura of Hollywood Stars in Avant-Garde Found-Footage Films, *Cinema Journal* Vol. 41, No.2, Winter 2002, pp.3-18

¹¹⁹ Ibid., p.15

these younger filmmakers establish a greater degree of critical distance between Hollywood images of stars and their versions or reproductions of the same because their practice is informed by the political discourses of feminism, queer theory and various theories of postmodernism. While Wees argues that some examples of found footage film cultivate a more political relationship to the images they cite, he concedes that the majority of such films place the cited images in inverted commas thereby “calling attention to them *as* images, as constructed representations, and therefore as something that can be deconstructed or ‘undone.’”¹²⁰

Those films that establish less critical distance from the material they cite are prevented from doing so by their evident admiration for that material. In these films, such as *Rose Hobart* by Joseph Cornell, “critique merges with admiration.”¹²¹ It is this ambivalent relationship to the Hollywood image that Wees describes as responsible for the depletion of critique in some found footage films. However, if we consider these found footage films as parodic, it is precisely their ambivalence that guarantees the effective critique of their target text. Parody as we know is a highly effective form of critique that inhabits and at the same time alters the text it wishes to critique. In fact, critics of parody insist that a reproduction of the conventions and values of the target text is an essential aspect of parody. The distinction that Wees makes is therefore challenged by theories of parody that describe the critical operations of this form which are dependent on a combination of conservative and revolutionary drives, critique merged with homage. Ambivalence and ambiguity are requisite features of parodic regurgitations of Hollywood images and conventions. In his writings on found footage film Wees describes a subversive re-writing of the text that once again resembles feminist re-readings and re-writings of film and in fact, I suggest that he is describing a parodic re-writing of cinema.

Wees argues that Arnold’s films are so utterly analytical that they deter an ambiguous relationship to the texts they cite, however, I suggest that their selection of stock scenes mobilise our familiarity with Hollywood conventions and memory serves to promote the

¹²⁰ Ibid., p.4

¹²¹ Ibid.

ambiguity that appears to be missing in the text. In other words, our reading of Arnold's work is inflected by our knowledge of the conventions and pleasures of Hollywood cinema. The viewer's familiarity with Hollywood cinema inevitably plays a part in the re-contextualisation of these works. Our understanding of the transformations of any of these pre-existing films must at least acknowledge the role that memory ('cultural capital') plays in our reading of the new text, rather than place sole emphasis on textual strategies and operations.

Feminist Theory's Promotion of Parody

Many film theorists, and in particular feminist film theorists, have stressed the importance of an inclusion of narrative or some 'fictive' elements in oppositional cinema, for an engagement with the strictures of the dominant model. These positions need to be traced in order to establish the various arguments proposed for the inclusion of narrative in the avant-garde film. Just as feminist film theory re-read cinema it also promoted and attempted to define a feminist film practice that could challenge the dominant model of cinema. In practice, feminist filmmakers have sought an engagement with content, with images and words and what they mean, and not just with the formal language of cinema.

Mulvey searches for a theory, incorporating aesthetics and politics, that is specific to a feminist cinematic avant-garde. She tentatively mentions the possibility of such a cinema in 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema' (1973) and in 'Film, Feminism and the Avant-Garde,' an article written five years later, she investigates the form such a cinema might take.¹²² While in this article Mulvey looks at other marginal cinemas, she does so as a sort of research that enables her to propose a theory for feminist cinema, and not because they in themselves may already present significant challenges to the problems of the dominant model that she identifies in her influential essays 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema' and 'Afterthoughts on Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema.' In the

¹²² Laura Mulvey, 'Film, Feminism and the Avant-Garde,' in *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema* (London: Macmillan, 1989), pp.111-126

1970s when Mulvey was writing these articles feminist film theorists were concerned with defining a feminist cinema. I want to move on here to survey that literature together with literature from related studies of art to establish what claims it makes for a cinema that will challenge dominant forms of representation and in particular the gender norms promoted therein. While my focus is not feminist cinema, the films I discuss share with that cinema an interest in challenging the iconic cinematic image of woman and an understanding of the strategies employed by feminist filmmakers and advocated by feminist film theorists will demonstrate the usefulness of parody for such challenges.

It is interesting to note the persistence of the claim by film theorists such as Mulvey, Claire Johnston and Wollen or in related disciplines by scholars such as Susan Rubin Suileman, Julia Kristeva and Adrienne Rich that an engagement with narrative and the conventions of representation is *essential* to any attack on the presumptions of the dominant model. This claim reads not so much like a recommendation as an observation based on analyses of feminist texts. The repetition of this point suggests that an engagement with narrative may be a precondition of any effective feminist cinema and perhaps even of any effective counter cinema. Certainly the proliferation of parodies of Hollywood cinema (which necessarily involve an engagement with narrative) in alternative cinemas and moving image art gives weight to that suggestion.

Framing this discussion within the parameters of the postmodern, I suggest that there are many challenges to the dominant cinematic image of woman in films from various avant-garde movements from the 1960s to the present, and not just from within feminist cinema. What these films tend to have in common is a commitment to narrative, at least inasmuch as working *with* narrative facilitates a pointed challenge to conventional narrative patterns (both in terms of content and a film's narrative construction including the creation of verisimilitude through continuity editing and the construction of voyeuristic pleasure). I suggest that a common strategy for these films' challenges to the dominant model is parody and an overall 'style' that consists of appropriating pre-existing genres and texts, and re-interpreting and re-framing them, as Susan Rubin

Suleiman points out in her book *Subversive Intent: Gender, Politics and the Avant-Garde*:

The appropriation, misappropriation, montage, collage, hybridization, and general mixing up of visual and verbal texts and discourses, from all periods of the past as well as from the multiple social and linguistic fields of the present, is probably the most characteristic feature of what can be called the 'postmodern style.'¹²³

The films selected for analysis here are discussed within a theoretical framework that attempts to articulate their challenges to convention, their common method being the parodic quotation of other texts. However, they do not constitute a coherent group of films that could be labelled 'this' or 'that' such as 'feminist avant-garde film' or 'queer avant-garde film.' Each of these films and filmmakers has been chosen because of their tendency to reference the dominant model of cinema in order to revise its imagery and meanings through parody. If this revision of cinematic conventions is not the central goal of all of these films, it is certainly an outcome of their parodic relationship to the dominant cinema.

For film theorist and filmmaker Peter Wollen, what distinguishes this kind of postmodern avant-gardism described by Suleiman from a modernist avant-garde is what he describes as 'semiotic expansion' as opposed to 'semiotic reduction.'¹²⁴ In other words, modernism, which he associates mostly with the US, focused on reducing the medium to its most pure form, eliminating anything external to its materiality, while the avant-garde that he identifies as 'European' was preoccupied with processes and systems of signification "mixed media, montage of different codes, signs and semiotic registers, heterogeneity of signifiers and signifieds."¹²⁵ Further, Wollen suggests that it is the avant-garde that is preoccupied with 'semiotic expansion' that he considers 'avant-garde,' insisting that "it is modernism that has run its course, not the avant-garde."¹²⁶

¹²³ Susan Rubin Suleiman, *Subversive Intent: Gender, Politics and the Avant-Garde* (London: Harvard University Press, 1990), p.191

¹²⁴ Peter Wollen, op. cit., pp.9-10

¹²⁵ Ibid., p. 9

¹²⁶ Ibid., p.10

Wollen's distinction echoes Tscherkassky's distinction between materialist cinema and the recent return to an interest in the analogous quality of cinema. Wollen notes, however, the failure within film theory to identify a useful theoretical model that could deal with the heterogeneity of signs produced by avant-garde cinema. Yet in feminism he locates a potent attempt to develop a useful film semiotics for making and discussing avant-garde film. By recognising the importance of 'meaning' or 'content' to the avant-garde film, he notes feminist cinema's leading role in the search for a theory of avant-garde cinema:

Feminism also demanded a critique of image and narrative in dominant forms of cinema which inflected it towards the avant-garde. As yet there are only the beginnings of a breakdown of the division into two avant-gardes and separation of avant-garde from theoretical work, but it is in, and in relation to, feminist film that the convergence is most marked.¹²⁷

For Wollen and Suleiman narrative, or some form of 'representation' or 'fictive' element, is necessary to feminists and to avant-garde artists in general, seeking to re-imagine dominant narrative patterns and imagery. The conventions of dominant cinema, including its narrative structure and content as well as its formal arrangement through editing, are all targets for avant-garde opposition. An essential image of dominant cinema, and a key narrative device is the image of woman as object of desire. In her 1978 essay 'Film, Feminism and the Avant-Garde' Mulvey identifies a problem, posed specifically from a feminist perspective, but of import to avant-garde filmmakers searching for alternatives to the dominant model: how to move beyond "woman, unspeaking, a signifier of 'other' of patriarchy, to a point where *women* can speak themselves."¹²⁸ She is here proposing a cinematic and, more broadly, a linguistic space that is outside of or beyond the dominant masculinist framework of culture. We should note that the search for a "poetic language made also by women"¹²⁹ called for by Mulvey is not necessarily a space beyond all signification, that is pre-linguistic, or a return to the

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Laura Mulvey, 'Film, Feminism and the Avant-Garde,' op. cit., p.121

¹²⁹ Ibid.

Imaginary space that precedes entry into the Symbolic realm of language (to use the language of psychoanalysis employed by many feminist film theorists).

While parody is one of the key strategies used by filmmakers opposing dominant cinema, it was not the only response from avant-garde filmmakers to the 'problem' of dominant representation and its naturalisation of particular power relations and hierarchies. As noted by Wollen, significant avant-garde film movements in the 1960s and 70s opposed dominant cinema by emptying film of all signification, opting instead to foreground the material signifiers of cinema. This medium-specific approach aimed to produce a pure form of cinema, one that made no reference to anything extraneous to its own material processes. One of the key filmmakers and film theorists promoting the abandonment of representation was British filmmaker (of American nationality) Peter Gidal who worked within the Structural/Materialist film movement, (also known as the Co-op Movement as they formed from the London Film Co-op). I want now to outline the problems with this Structural/Materialist response to the problem of representation in general.

David E. James sums up the position of Gidal and his fellow Structural/Materialist filmmakers in stating that "[i]n order to save film, they had to destroy it."¹³⁰ He points to the self-ingesting tendency of all instances of modernist medium-specificity as they become ever more puritanical in their definition of an acceptable avant-garde. This group of filmmakers achieved in cinema the sort of distillation that critic Clement Greenberg had identified and promoted in his writings on 1950s and 60s American painting, such as the work of Frank Stella.

That the image of woman was problematic for avant-garde filmmakers is clear from Gidal's decision to exclude all representations of women from his films of the early 70s. His decision to abandon all illusionism and all references to anything outside of the material processes of filmmaking was an attempt to offer knowledge to the spectator in place of the ideology presented by Hollywood, thereby producing a more independent, critical spectator. The 'problem of representing women,' outlined by feminists in

¹³⁰ David E. James, op. cit., p.279

general, and in particular, by feminist film theorists and art critics, resulted in Gidal's exclusion of women, suggesting the force with which representations of women had come to signify 'absolute sex,' to use Simone de Beauvoir's expression, and how effectively film history had encoded her. Patricia Mellencamp paraphrases Gidal's rationale for this decision, offered in a debate with Jean Louis Comolli in 1978, where he explained that "representation of women was impossible given the sexist baggage of connotation which their images had historically accumulated."¹³¹ His concern was how to free the woman's body from connotations of sex or, more problematically, from denoting sex. In this rather polemical way of thinking, to represent a woman's body was to objectify it. However, Mellencamp observes that the avant garde's avoidance of clichéd images of women did not necessarily create better opportunities or roles for women in these film movements:

While it might be true that "woman" was not blatantly exchanged or grotesquely commodified by avant-garde films, neither was she centrally figured. "She" seemed to vanish with very few traces, except as allied partisan, liberated lover, or filmed mother/muse – a "bearer rather than maker of meaning[.]"¹³²

While some men filmmakers may have found it difficult to free the woman's body from sexist baggage and therefore avoided all 'problematic' inclusions of her, the exploration of the woman's (often the filmmaker's) body, is central to 'oppositional' films made by women. Tired of two-dimensional images of enigmatic women on screen, women filmmakers, like women performance artists of the 1970s, chose to self-represent, to make their own bodies the focus of their work, and criticised reductive stereotypes of women through a repertoire of strategies that included, amongst others, parody and direct address. Featuring the body of woman (and often their own bodies) has been central to women filmmakers' re-visioning of dominant cinema. Evidence of the tendency for avant-garde filmmakers to reproduce the problematic equation of woman with sex object found in conventional cinema can be seen in the opening line of Paul Arthur's study of avant-garde American film, *A Line of Sight: American Avant-Garde Films Since 1965*

¹³¹ Patricia Mellencamp, *Indiscretions* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990),

p.x

¹³² Ibid., p.12

where he describes his first sight of an avant-garde film, Bill Vehr's *Avocada* (1965):
"Candles were burning and a nude woman writhed on a wooden table in what looked like a fake dungeon."¹³³

The high modernism of 1960s and 70s avant-garde filmmaking (Peter Gidal in Britain and Stan Brakhage in America) prioritised the signifier at the expense of the signified.¹³⁴ This can be seen as an extreme reaction to dominant cinema's subordination (and even erasure) of form to content. Apart from being quite a male-dominated approach to filmmaking, this approach proved unpopular with women filmmakers who wanted to challenge the content as well as the form of the dominant model of filmmaking. Mulvey insists that "women cannot be satisfied with an aesthetics that restricts counter-cinema to work on form alone" and reiterating the centrality of politics to feminist art and discourse she states that feminist experimentation "cannot exclude work on content."¹³⁵ Echoing this conviction in her re-vision of the history of avant-garde filmmaking that concentrates on woman practitioners, Lauren Rabinovitz stresses the role of representation in producing (and not simply reflecting) power relations:

Art is a language in terms of representations and sign systems as well as a cultural, ideological practice. As such, it constitutes a discourse by which power relations are sustained on several cultural levels, and it reproduces those relations in language and in images. In short, art presents the world from points of view that represent positions of and relations to power of sexes, classes, and races.¹³⁶

Mulvey refers to Julia Kristeva's notion of inhabiting dominant language in order to subvert it from within, suggesting that it is only through a clear engagement with language, by understanding and using it that we can alter it:

¹³³ Paul Arthur, *A Line of Sight: American Avant-Garde Films Since 1965* (Minneapolis: University Of Minnesota Press, 2005), p.xi

¹³⁴ Stan Brakhage included some representation and story in his films, but also scratched and painted onto the film surface, sometimes over images as in *Dog Star Man* (1962-64)

¹³⁵ Mulvey, 'Film, Feminism and the Avant-Garde' op. cit., p.124

¹³⁶ Lauren Rabinovitz, *Points of Resistance: Women, Power and Politics in the New York Avant-Garde Cinema, 1943-71* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2003), p. 5

Kristeva's important point is this: transgression is played out through language itself. The break with the past has to work through the means of meaning-making itself, subverting its norms and refusing its otherwise imperturbable totality.¹³⁷

Kristeva's position is crucial for arguing the usefulness of parody as a strategy for avant-garde cinema. Prominent women filmmakers such as Chantal Akerman, Yvonne Rainer, Agnes Varda, Su Friedrich, Abigail Child, and Lesley Thornton and even feminist pornographer Annie Sprinkle oppose dominant cinema through investigations of feminine spectator positions and alternative (and central) roles for female characters by harnessing dominant cinema's narrative conventions in order to revise them and to re-articulate narrative time and space. For instance in her autobiographical feminist porn films such as *Deep Inside Annie Sprinkle* (1981) Sprinkle uses direct address among other strategies to flout the voyeurism usually engendered by pornographic film. Mulvey cites the films of Hollywood 1930s/40s filmmaker Dorothy Arzner, suggesting that Arzner's heroines perform precisely the sort of transgressions that Kristeva advocates. Her characters participate in this form of re-vision of dominant language. Quoting a discussion about Arzner's films by Claire Johnston and Pam Cook she writes:

The central female protagonists react against and thus transgress the male discourse which entraps them. These women do not sweep aside the existing order and found a new female order of language. Rather, they assert their own discourse in the face of the male one, by breaking it up, subverting it, and in a sense, re-writing it.¹³⁸

In *Subversive Intent*, Suleiman also cites the function of re-writing as crucial to the contemporary feminist project, and in particular notes the work of poet Adrienne Rich, whose short essay 'When We Dead Awaken: Writing as Re-Vision' stresses the subversive potential of re-writing pre-existing texts. For Rich, really understanding the principles and character of traditions of representation is the only way to avoid reproducing them. She invites us to get to know the past "differently" so that, instead of merely regurgitating tradition for the next generation, we "break its hold over us."¹³⁹

¹³⁷ Laura Mulvey, 'Film, Feminism and the Avant-Garde, op. cit., p.121

¹³⁸ *ibid.*, p.114

¹³⁹ Adrienne Rich, op. cit., p.167-68

Suleiman points to the assertion by feminist discourse that “the stories we tell about reality construe the real, rather than merely reflect it.”¹⁴⁰ This construction of ‘the real’ then is all that we have and, as Kristeva would also have it, we cannot move beyond language or exist outside of it, but must find new ways to exist within it, accepting that it is subject to change, a process in flux rather than something static. Suleiman goes on to describe “the hope, that through the rewriting of old stories and the invention of new forms of language [...] it is the world as well as words that will be transformed.”¹⁴¹ Mellencamp echoes Suleiman in noting the promise of such alterations and critical revisions of language and stories. She restates the feminist conviction “that form, its [the male gaze’s] disruption, alteration, and revelation, could change the world, or at least cinema.”¹⁴²

Clearly, formalist filmmakers such as Gidal, emptied the image of all ‘meaning’ in an attempt to move as far away from the operations of dominant film as possible, warning that any inclusion of representation or narrative would replicate dominant cinema’s manipulation of the spectator. Such inclusions would spark the familiar identification processes of dominant cinema. In *A Theory of Parody* Linda Hutcheon notes the caution with which some critics treat parody, based as it is on referencing the very text it wishes to critique. Using Mikhail Bakhtin’s phrasing in describing it as “a form of authorized transgression,” she notes parody’s potential to reinforce the system of representation that it seeks critical distance from.¹⁴³

Hutcheon acknowledges then that parody can never establish a clearly separate and critical relationship to the parodied text since it imitates its principal forms and conventions and, in fact, that it is a common and therefore ‘authorized’ form of critique today. She notes the prevalence of parody in contemporary culture. We need only think of horror film to find examples of a genre that has been treated with heavy doses of irony

¹⁴⁰ Susan Rubin Suleiman, op. cit., p.143

¹⁴¹ *ibid.*

¹⁴² Patricia Mellencamp, *Indiscretions*, op. cit., p.18

¹⁴³ Linda Hutcheon, op. cit., p.xii

(a key feature of parody) from *within* dominant cinema of late.¹⁴⁴ Hutcheon observes that parody is now viewed by many as “a model of the prevailing norm” instead of “a way to new forms.”¹⁴⁵ Yet some modern examples of referencing within dominant cinema may be forms of allusion, imitation, or quotation devoid of the critical ironic distance that Hutcheon describes as a feature of parody. She distinguishes parody from pastiche by suggesting that “pastiche operates more by similarity and correspondence [...] parody is transformational in its relationship to other texts; pastiche is imitative.”¹⁴⁶ Later in her discussion these definitions are complicated when she states that quotation may become, and in fact often is, a modern form of parody.¹⁴⁷ Clearly, each text must be studied carefully to determine whether its quotation of another text may be described as parodic. Later, in a chapter that explores Moffatt’s direct quotation of Hollywood cinema, I cite recent studies that refute the common distinction between parody (critical engagement with a text) and pastiche (imitation for imitation’s sake) and argue that the distinction between these two forms is, if anything, *formal*, and not a distinction based on the work’s critical effect or lack of it. This thesis challenges the negative, but influential, view of postmodern practices of appropriation, arguing that pastiche can be a very effective form of critique. It is worth noting that forms of imitation produced within mainstream culture such as those found in the contemporary horror film, may be quite unproblematically described as forms of ‘authorized transgressions’ precisely because they are framed by the production, distribution, and exhibition procedures of the commercial cinema, nullifying their potential for critique. It is not just the film text that should be subject to re-vision, but how it is marketed and exhibited.

In questioning the potential political efficacy of the postmodern, Hutcheon invokes American theorist Fredric Jameson’s pessimistic characterisation of the postmodern as devoid of potency as a mode of opposition or critique. For Jameson protest now becomes

¹⁴⁴ For example Wes Craven’s *Scream* trilogy, 1996, 1997, 2000

¹⁴⁵ Linda Hutcheon, op. cit, p.28

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., p.38

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., p.41

just another image that props up the prevailing ideology.¹⁴⁸ She cites Jean-Francois Lyotard's theories of the postmodern as a more positive description of its political potential. This discussion argues for the critical potential of the postmodern, drawing in the last chapter on Jean-François Lyotard's postmodern theory by returning to his short essay 'Acinema' (1978) in an attempt to articulate a model for contemporary avant-garde cinema that necessarily includes aspects of conventional film. Lyotard argues for the introduction of moments of excess that rupture the otherwise conventional narrative film. The text that is involved in a process of parody may reproduce the parodied text in a way that is problematic for some, yet through this it also always provides a certain critical distance from the text, essential for exposing its conventions and assumptions. In other words it mixes a sort of reverence for the parodied text, expressed through its faithful imitation, with a deviation from it and its conventions. Criticism of the target text, therefore, is produced precisely *through* the repetition of all or part of its form and content. For Hutcheon:

Parody is fundamentally double and divided; its ambivalence stems from the dual drives of conservative and revolutionary forces that are inherent in its nature as authorized transgression.¹⁴⁹

In particular, she cites the work of contemporary women writers as exemplary parody, describing it as both "revisionary and revolutionary."¹⁵⁰ It is precisely this sort of revision of dominant texts that Claire Johnston recognises and advocates in feminist film. In 'Women's Cinema as Counter Cinema' Claire Johnston states that "it is possible to use icons, (i.e. the conventional configurations) in the face of and against the mythology usually associated with them."¹⁵¹ She suggests that a counter cinema can create ruptures, or what she refers to as "reverberations" by separating representations (iconic images) from the myths that they propagate. In other words, by separating the signifier from the

¹⁴⁸ Linda Hutcheon, *The Politics of Postmodernism* (London: Routledge, 2000), op. cit., p.94

¹⁴⁹ Linda Hutcheon, *A Theory of Parody*, op. cit., p.26

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., p.46

¹⁵¹ Claire Johnston, 'Women's Cinema as Counter Cinema' in Bill Nichols (ed.) *Movies & Methods Volume 1* (University of California Press, 1985), p.210

signified, it becomes possible to create discontinuities from within the linguistic system of commercial cinema, which promotes a masculinist ideology.¹⁵² For Johnston, in dominant cinema “[t]he image of the woman becomes merely the trace of the exclusion and repression of Woman.”¹⁵³ This trace is, in part, what this icon (the image of woman) signifies, especially in feminist readings of dominant cinema. It is this icon in particular then, that feminist filmmakers should engage with if they are to separate it from its connotation as secondary, its position as the repressed of the text, and a signifier of ‘absolute sex.’

There is a substantial body of feminist writing that convincingly argues that in order to present a challenge to dominant cinema, oppositional cinema must include some engagement with narrative. Even Malcolm Le Grice, one of the leading lights of the Structuralist/Materialist cinema, by 1979 was questioning his former anti-narrative position by asking whether “all aspects of narrative are irrevocably embroiled with the repressive social function it has come to serve?”¹⁵⁴ Although parody is not tied in any way to figuration (and it is possible to parody the abstract text), I hope that I have demonstrated by outlining the significance given by numerous critics to direct engagement with the ‘problem’ text that any attempt to critique conventional cinema must actively engage with the forms and content of that cinema (rather than flee from them into abstraction). Parody provides the critical filmmaker with a flexible model to interrogate standardised cinematic conventions, creating critical distance by evoking and drawing attention to those conventions. This involves parodying actual films and film genres but also the formal conventions of dominant cinema in general. Hutcheon makes the point that “[i]n the visual arts, parody can manifest itself in relation to either particular works or general iconic conventions.”¹⁵⁵ She notes that certain parodic texts can parody a specific work, and the conventions of the genre to which it belongs¹⁵⁶ and

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ Linda Hutcheon, *A Theory of Parody*, op. cit., p.211

¹⁵⁴ Malcolm Le Grice, ‘The History We Need,’ in *Film as Film: Formal Experiment in Film 1910-1975* (London: Hayward Gallery, 1979), p.113

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., p.12

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., p.13

that “any codified form can, theoretically, be treated in terms of repetition with critical distance.”¹⁵⁷ A purely formalist cinema then, has the effect of sidestepping away from the problem of representation, rather than addressing it.

In an article ‘The Avant-Garde and its Imaginary’ written in 1977 Constance Penley criticises the formalist avant-garde cinema of Gidal and fellow filmmaker Le Grice that “sees its political efficacy in offering a cinematic experience completely outside of and against the strategies and effects of dominant classical cinema”¹⁵⁸ promoting instead a cinema that contains some sort of narrative element, and / or linguistic commentary (verbal or written). For Le Grice and Gidal in the 1960s and 70s the main problem with representational cinema was its manipulation of the spectator through its various processes of identification. Penley points out that Le Grice’s and Gidal’s (now dated) definition of a truly avant-garde cinema as pure cinema excludes any works that refer to anything outside of basic filmic processes:

They are eliminated (partially or wholly) from this evolution because of their use of ‘associative,’ ‘symbolic’ imagery and narrative – elements always susceptible to being recuperated and becoming no different from dominant cinema’s use of these strategies for construction and manipulation of a passive spectator.¹⁵⁹

For Le Grice, Gidal and Structuralist filmmakers of the 1960s and 70s only those films that reduce the cinema to pure material, and draw attention to the film as process, that are reflexive and self-referential, refusing reference to anything external to the materiality of film itself, are permitted for consideration as avant-garde. Fiction, and any use of narrative are forbidden if a film is to be truly avant-garde. Only a concentration on the film as material process can produce a conscious spectator. This conscious spectator testifies to, what Penley describes as, the “political efficacy” of the films.¹⁶⁰ The assumption is that non-narrative films prohibit the identification processes fundamental to

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., p.18

¹⁵⁸ Constance Penley, ‘The Avant-Garde and its Imaginary’ in Bill Nichols (ed.) *Movies & Methods Volume 2* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), p.577

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., p.580

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

dominant cinema, thereby freeing the spectator from the manipulations of ideology into a space of knowledge. Penley lists a number of other dichotomies that inform Gidal's definition of Structural Materialist film set against dominant cinema, such as signifier vs. signified, non-narrative vs. narrative, real-time vs. illusionist time. As Penley notes, Gidal and Le Grice identified problems with the inclusion of any illusionistic or symbolic imagery as well as a manipulation of time and space through editing. The elimination of both of these from their filmmaking was a primary concern.

The process of identification that presents problems for Le Grice and Gidal however, is taken mainly to occur between the spectator and her / his on-screen surrogate, who is usually the film's main protagonist whose point of view we share. Penley points out that, since Christian Metz and Jean-Louis Baudry have established that the principal identification in cinema is between the spectator and the camera, or the entire apparatus of cinema, then the exclusion of all representation and narrative in film cannot eradicate all identification:

Metz emphasizes that what is 'characteristic of the cinema is not the imaginary that it may happen to represent, it is the imaginary that it is from the start.' Basic to the constitution of the cinematic signifier is that it is absent: unlike theatre, in which real persons share the time and space of the spectator, the cinema screen is always the 'other scene,' it is a recording and what it records is not there at the moment of its projection.¹⁶¹

She quotes Metz's declaration that 'every film is a fiction film' in that the space represented, however basic, is never actually there at the moment of projection. In a more than slightly mocking tone she pronounces the conviction at the heart of Structural / Materialist cinema when she writes:

Popular cinema only chained vision into outworn theatrical and novelistic forms but 'pure cinema,' 'abstract cinema' was to be the liberation and joyful education of vision in order to create the 'new man' of the 20th century.¹⁶²

¹⁶¹ Ibid., p.584

¹⁶² Ibid., p. 591

Penley asks: “is there any way to eliminate the imaginary relation between spectator and screen?” Attempting to answer this question she suggests that there may be just one possibility for complicating what she refers to this imaginary relation, which is through an engagement with language: “language can offer us an oblique route through the image; it can ‘unstick’ us a little from the screen as Barthes would say.”¹⁶³ She cites the films of Jean-Luc Godard and Laura Mulvey and Peter Wollen as examples that have acknowledged the importance of *commenting* on the image. Avant-garde films then, should provide a commentary on the image within the texts themselves as well as commentaries of and with the film.¹⁶⁴

Rather like Rich’s call to break with the hold that tradition has over us, Mulvey claims that a “[d]esire to break with the past is rational and passionate.”¹⁶⁵ For her the desire to forge a separation from the past is motivated both by “an instinctual retreat from forms associated with oppression and a conscious drive to find uncontaminated ground on which to build a feminist aesthetic.”¹⁶⁶ Having established the importance of the task of re-writing familiar cinematic images (i.e. to ‘work on content’) she goes on to question whether it is “enough to break with sexist content alone?”¹⁶⁷ Her point is that, because classical cinema prioritises content over form, or at least hides the film’s formal construction behind its content, a break with formal operations of the dominant model is also necessary. Conversely, Penley notes Stephen Heath’s suggestion that, rather than concentrate just on form, it is imperative that counter cinemas should focus on “the operations of narrativization.”¹⁶⁸ In other words, it is necessary to look at how icons relate to one another in a process of signification. There is a clear insistence by key theorists attempting to articulate a theory for counter cinema, and particularly a feminist counter cinema, that both the content and form of the dominant model need to be

¹⁶³ Ibid.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., p.596

¹⁶⁵ Laura Mulvey, ‘Film, Feminism and the Avant-Garde,’ op. cit., p.118

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ Constance Penley, op. cit., p. 597

countered simultaneously, and that this should involve a clear engagement with the processes of dominant cinema rather than a rejection of them.

Penley's article focuses on the problems of a purely formalist avant-garde cinema and notes that one current example of what she describes as "a politically motivated avant-garde practice"¹⁶⁹ can be found in the work of a number of women filmmakers that focus on feminist concerns and issues. She claims that these filmmakers prioritise an investigation of "narrative, fiction and the construction of another subject-relation to the screen,"¹⁷⁰ thereby avoiding the identification with patriarchy inevitable in an exclusion of narrative. Making a point that is of central importance to this thesis Penley asserts that an avant-garde cinema should emphasise "transformation rather than transgression."¹⁷¹ Instead of attempting to produce a cinema that is altogether outside of, or beyond, the conventions and practices of dominant cinema, counter cinema should comment on and transform those conventions.

This last section has attempted to outline the affinity between feminist theory's re-writing of classical cinema and parodic practices by surveying a number of key articles and books that argue for an engagement with dominant representational conventions in order to make explicit and to transform those conventions. The writing that articulates this most forcefully comes largely from feminist film theory and writing that has been influenced by it. While the second of Wollen's two avant-gardes, the Structuralist/Materialist cinema, is an historical movement that has been superseded by experimental cinema that engages with narrative, it is important to acknowledge it as another response to the perceived problem of the classical Hollywood model and to outline the reasons for its decline.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹ Ibid., p.596

I propose that the complicitous critique provided by parodic references to Hollywood in moving image art is currently a very lively and exciting site of challenge to the doxa of conventional cinema and its positioning of woman.

Conclusion

Hutcheon defines modern parody as “a kind of contesting revision or rereading of the past that both confirms and subverts the power of the representations of history.”¹⁷² She also describes it as “extended repetition with critical difference”¹⁷³ insisting that postmodern texts are ambivalent and contradictory presenting not so much a break with culture as a disruption to it from within. This thesis is interested in moving image art that inhabits old forms in order to promote change through a process of re-writing. In order to avoid reinforcing the established forms they imitate, the films should include various types of dislocations, ruptures, or excesses, thereby providing the critical difference described by Hutcheon.

Hutcheon states a commitment to searching for the political possibilities of the avant-garde, but concentrates especially on postmodernism, and asserts that “women and feminists rightfully belong in the center of such discussions and practices – in the middle of the margin, as it were.”¹⁷⁴ This thesis refuses to separate the histories of women’s and men’s filmmaking as Sitney has done or to isolate those histories as Rabinovitz has done (though this is an important and necessary project in order to redress the former exclusion of women filmmakers from histories of cinema). Instead it attempts to integrate them while placing women at the centre by defining the theoretical framework of this study using the principal assertions of feminist film theory. Feminist film theory performs a similar function to the films discussed here in that both theory and practice, through their respective processes of re-reading and re-writing, subvert the classical Hollywood text. This thesis draws on various aspects of that theory and combines it with writings on

¹⁷² Linda Hutcheon, *The Politics of Postmodernism*, op. cit., p.95

¹⁷³ Linda Hutcheon, *A Theory of Parody*, op. cit., p.7

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., p.190

parody, which as I've indicated is a form that permeates the work of contemporary filmmakers who imitate and quote Hollywood cinema for critical purposes.

My survey of literature on found footage film included here enhances my discussion of recent filmmaking that cites Hollywood as examples of parody; much of what this literature proposes regarding the political motivation of this appropriative practice is proposed by Hutcheon and others as key characteristics of parody. This writing on found footage film and on parody share an emphasis on strategies of repetition, elongation, juxtaposition and de-contextualisation that stage various interruptions to the system of the quoted text. Wees and Horwath both look to make a distinction between critically effective found footage film and examples of such film practice that foster a more ambivalent relationship to the texts they quote, suggesting that the latter is less politically potent. However, I suggest that if we turn to Hutcheon's conceptualisation of parody we can argue that films that express an ambivalent attitude to the material they reference provide a more effective critique than those that interrogate the work so completely that they utterly eradicate traces of its origins. Indeed there is a consensus amongst critics of found footage film and those who write about parody, that recognition of the origins of citations is essential for the effective critique of those origins. Tscherkassky points to a return to an interest in the analogous quality of film, stating that this is the result of the successful revelation of the materiality of film carried out by modernist filmmakers of the 1960s and 70s. Yet, a more convincing argument for an engagement with representation, with narrative and content, is provided by feminist scholars from Rich to Suleiman and those who advocate feminist film practices such as Wollen. These writers agree that a reproduction and harnessing of the language and conventions of a text is the only way to successfully expose its ideological foundations and to therefore produce a critique of it.

As already mentioned the films that provide the basis for discussion in the four following chapters have been selected as they represent disparate examples of parodic transformations of Hollywood re-contextualised in the gallery. Although disparate, they all examine the idea of woman constructed by the classical narrative film text and make explicit the various expressions of excess associated with this figure. An interest in this

image testifies to the influence of feminist film theory on contemporary filmmakers who wish to critique dominant cinema.

In addition to all being examples of Hollywood cinema resituated in an art gallery context, the case studies of this thesis all cite and reappraise various excesses of what is otherwise a tightly formulated cinematic model. I want now to briefly outline the excesses examined by the films I discuss. In my first case study, on a selection of Warhol's films, I draw on the writing of Doane and in particular her interest in the *femme fatale* of film noir as a figure that parodies femininity through the device of the masquerade; she displays excessive femininity to compensate for her possession of masculine traits, such as an overt sexual appetite, a villainous streak and her position as narrative agent driving the plot forward through her clever manipulations of an inept male character. Many other feminist film critics have written about film noir, looking in particular to celebrate the unusual Hollywood female character, perhaps the most notable being E. Ann Kaplan with her 1978 book *Women in Film Noir*.¹⁷⁵

My second case study examines Matthew Barney's *Cremaster* cycle, but particularly his citation of the opulent imagery of the Hollywood musical of the 1930s and 1940s, and especially the Busby Berkeley chorus line. Feminist critic Lucy Fischer has written about the reduction of woman to object in the musical and noted the excessive nature of the musical number that threatens both the flow of the narrative (interrupting it without motivation) and verisimilitude (people do not break into synchronised song and dance in real life).¹⁷⁶ Fischer's observations on the musical's reflexive construction 'image of woman as image' usefully combine with Siegfried Kracauer's¹⁷⁷ writing on the subversive potential of the mass ornament of entertainment cinema and both contribute to my discussion of the excess referenced by Barney.

¹⁷⁵ E. Ann Kaplan, *Women in Film Noir* (London: British Film Institute, 1978)

¹⁷⁶ See Lucy Fischer, 'Shall We Dance? Woman and the Musical' in *Shot/Counter-shot: Film Tradition and Women's Cinema* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1989), pp. 132-171

¹⁷⁷ Siegfried Kracauer, *The Mass Ornament: Weimar Essays* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995)

My third case study discusses Tracey Moffatt's citation of two cinematic stereotypes of womanhood, the black mammy and the (white) love object. The ambivalence of these performances in their original context of the Hollywood film designates them as another site of excess in that the mocking over-the-top adoption of the stereotype produces a rupture between that stereotype and its performance. Indian scholar Homi Bhabha points to the ambivalence of the stereotype, located in the fact that it purports to be already 'known,' and yet it needs to be consistently "anxiously repeated."¹⁷⁸ The effect of the stereotype is to produce a kind of probable truth or predictability, which for Bhabha is always "in excess of what can be empirically proved or logically construed."¹⁷⁹ There is, in other words, something that necessarily evades the stereotype, a mismatch between logic and culturally insisted-upon 'truths' and that schism, paradoxically, is the driver for its constant iteration. This chapter draws mainly on the writings of African American scholar bell hooks for its discussion of the stereotype but also makes recourse to Judith Butler's writing on the potential of subversive repetition and Richard Dyer's reappraisal of pastiche to understand Moffatt's particular use of parody.

Finally, Douglas Gordon's slowed down citation of Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho*, in his *24 Hour Psycho* foregrounds the tendency in the classical film text for images of idealised femininity to interrupt narrative flow. Unmotivated slow motion is a type of excess commonly associated with images of the ideal woman in classical Hollywood cinema and Gordon foregrounds that exceptional moment of excess and makes it a consistent aspect of his refashioned *Psycho*; a film that takes the voyeurism of cinema as a central theme. In classical cinema there is a correlation between stillness and the female body which is narrativised in Hitchcock's film as a correlation between death (absolute stillness) and the female (maternal) body.

¹⁷⁸ Homi Bhabha, 'The Other Question: Stereotype, Discrimination and the Discourse of Colonialism,' *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994), p.95

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

All of these excesses threaten to break the illusion of coherent narrative space constructed by classical cinema and the 'naturalisation' of stereotypes of gender and race it propounds and have all been of interest to certain feminist scholars and filmmakers, such as those I focus on here, in their search for subtexts, subversive pleasures and a space for women spectators.

Chapter 2: Skin Deep: Destruction of the Masquerade in the films of Andy Warhol

“Woman is situated as the substrate of representation itself, its unconscious material.”¹

Andy Warhol's cinema is *about* looking. While all cinema invites looking and is made to be looked at, Warhol's films self-reflexively invite a contemplation of the activity of looking, of our position as spectators in cinema and, more specifically, as bearers of the voyeuristic look that constitutes the conventional cinematic gaze. In her study of the femme fatale of Hollywood cinema, Mary Ann Doane makes the claim that woman is complicit – albeit not consciously - in her attraction of the gaze, and that in fact she is the central image of all representation, that we constantly look for her. In this chapter, I will focus on three Warhol films, *Beauty No. 2* (1965), *Thirteen Most Beautiful Girls* (1965), and *Poor Little Rich Girl* (1965), and their relationship to the codes of dominant cinema, particularly to the (so-called) male gaze that the dominant model constructs and depends upon, and its articulation through the close-up shot and the play between proximity and distance that accompanies the Hollywood image of woman.

Annette Michelson distinguishes two phases of Warhol's film production, divided by the 1968 attempt on his life by Valerie Solanis that left him badly injured. She describes this as “the moment when a systematic division of labor replaces a previous artisanal mode of production.”² As Michelson points out, prior to the shooting Warhol had made films for the sake of making films, but after, a commercial imperative dominates his work as he became more of a celebrity endorser and backer of the films that Paul Morrissey made in his name, in place of the filmmaker he had once been. Juan A. Suarez cites Thierry de Duve's distinction “between Warhol's ‘great art’ of the 1960s and his gimmicky,

¹ Mary Ann Doane, *Femmes Fatales* (London: Routledge, 1991), p.59

² Annette Michelson, ‘Where is Your Rupture: Mass Culture and the *Gesamtkunstwerk*’ in Annette Michelson (ed.) *Andy Warhol, October Files 2* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2001), p.93

frivolous social and artistic persona of the 1970s and 1980s.”³ It is these pre-68 films that are of particular interest here, not because of any preference for the ‘authenticity’ of the works made by Warhol himself, but because these films tend to enter into ambiguous relationships and dialogues with Hollywood cinema through both their content *and* form, that is diluted or lost in the later films.

Warhol’s use of pre-existing mass-cultural imagery involves a great dependence on images generated by classical Hollywood cinema, both in his reproduction and repetition of the images of actual film stars such as Marilyn Monroe and Liz Taylor in his silk-screens, and the generic glamour of Hollywood stars emulated by the creation of his very own superstars. In *A Theory of Parody* Linda Hutcheon describes parody as both imitating particular works and what she describes as “general iconic conventions.”⁴ Michelson describes Warhol’s earlier films (1960-68) as “the serial parody of Hollywood production,” particularly in their use of “extravagant acts, gestures” and ““numbers.””⁵ Suarez also comments on Warhol’s constant referencing of Hollywood and qualifies this tendency as a sort of parodic re-jeuvination of a fated institution and era.⁶ He notes that in Warhol’s cinema “superstars replace the old-fashioned star system with a parodic simulacrum.”⁷ That Warhol copied many Hollywood conventions and tropes is clear, but this mimicry surpasses simple homage to become parody, offering multiple instances of resistance to the homogeneity of the dominant film model and the operations of the industry in general. Naming his studio ‘The Factory’ he tips his cap at Hollywood’s industrial studio system, yet the anti-professional approach to filmmaking practiced by Warhol mocks the orderly systems of classical film production. For instance, his *Screen Tests* borrow the professional filmmaking convention of testing how actors look on screen, yet instead of using this process as a casting technique, these short films are strung together and become films in themselves.

³ Juan A. Suarez, *Bike Boys, Drag Queens and Superstars* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996)

⁴ Linda Hutcheon, *A Theory of Parody* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000), p.12

⁵ *Ibid.*, p.103

⁶ Juan A. Suarez, *op. cit.*, p.227

⁷ *ibid.*, p.228

Feminist film criticism and theory of the 1980s and '90s discussed the passive object / active subject binarism of classical cinema that reinforced a feminine / masculine opposition and its attendant hierarchy that privileges the masculine. A key question here is: In his parodic re-visions of Hollywood imagery and conventions, how does Warhol's cinema rearticulate the established subject / object positions of dominant cinema? At the end of her seminal essay that sparked the key debates in this area, Laura Mulvey looks optimistically towards oppositional cinemas, such as that of Warhol, for challenges to the problematic positioning of women and normative processes of identification in dominant cinema. For Mulvey "[t]he alternative cinema provides a space for the birth of cinema which is radical in both a political and an aesthetic sense and challenges the basic assumptions of the mainstream film."⁸

The Parody of Masquerade

In a number of films Warhol parodies heterosexist gender positions as well as presenting caricatures of the always already parodic subject position of 'camp.' While femininity is the focus of this discussion, the idea of 'camp' and 'drag' are key to understanding any gendered position as performative, to use Judith Butler's terminology.⁹ In *Beauty No. 2*, *Thirteen Most Beautiful Girls* and *Poor Little Rich Girl* Warhol presents parodies of Hollywood femininity, which – as I shall explain – is already a contrivance, a *version* of ideal femininity. In fact, all of these films present versions of caricatured femininity that the gaze of Warhol's camera and his particular approach to direction proceed to unravel through what Stephen Koch describes as "a much favored directorial mode in the Factory at that time: Taunt and betrayal."¹⁰ Taunting and betrayal were performed simultaneously at the level of narrative and in the formal approach Warhol adopts; by having one character taunt another on screen, and by the unflinching glare of the camera on its subject.

⁸ Laura Mulvey, 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema' in *Visual and Other Pleasures* (London: Macmillan, 1989), p.15

⁹ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble* (London: Routledge, 1990)

¹⁰ Stephen Koch, *Stargazer* (New York: Marion Boyars, 1991), p.68

Edie Sedgwick is the quintessential superstar common to all of the films discussed here. His partnership with her was also his attempt to parody the director / star or artist / muse relationship exemplified by the eminent Hollywood team of Josef Von Sternberg and his leading lady Marlene Dietrich. For a short time, mostly over the year of 1965, Sedgwick became Warhol's supreme object of fascination, with Paul Morrissey claiming that she and Warhol made roughly eleven films together in four months.¹¹ Edie's cropped bleached hair and dark eyebrows transformed her into a more beautiful and female version of Warhol, infusing their relationship with a sort of narcissism that recalls the Velvet Underground song title 'I'll be Your Mirror,' as though this was the promise each had made to the other. Sedgwick's obsession with her own appearance and hunger for fame as a model and actress brought together two of Warhol's greatest passions; stardom and fashion. She was a notable style innovator in her day, particularly renowned for wearing thick black tights that emphasised her long legs and she appeared in a number of prominent fashion magazines such as *Vogue* and *Life* over the duration of her collaborations with Warhol. Warhol's selection of people to star in his films, to become superstars, is perhaps the closest he comes to using a 'Readymade.' Although influenced by this Dada (and particularly Duchampian) device, Warhol's use of pre-existing, mass-produced items such as soup cans or Brillo boxes always involved some form of mediation or simulation of the object which is missing from the Dada Readymade that used actual objects, recombining and transforming them somehow. With his superstars such as Ondine and Edie Sedgwick, Warhol selected flamboyant characters who would simply become exaggerated versions of themselves in front of the camera. Edie's conventional good looks, self-absorption and wealthy family background combined to turn her into Warhol's most glamorous superstar, the one who most closely resembles the blonde beauties of the commercial cinema. It was in collaboration with her that Warhol produced some of his most vicious attacks on Hollywood femininity and its plasticity.

This investigation looks at some of the ways that the masquerade (or allusions to it) might function within Warhol's cinema. As a necessary part of this discussion I shall

¹¹ Paul Morrissey quoted in Jean Stein, *Edie: American Girl* (New York: Grove Press, 1982), p.281

concentrate on Mary Ann Doane's conceptualisation of the masquerade and to use this to analyse *Beauty No. 2*, and will later introduce Judith Butler's concept of identity as performative. By producing some meanings in an analysis of a small group of films I intend to demonstrate the potential for avant-garde film to demystify the female body by drawing attention to the mask. The masquerade is something that has been identified as a function within dominant (classical) cinema, and therefore it is also the focus of investigation for some avant-garde or alternative cinema. Oppositional cinema sets out to challenge the central assumptions of the dominant model and Warhol does this through the use of parody, in particular exposing femininity as a construct. In *Beauty No. 2*, Edie vainly attempts to maintain composure as each of her two co-stars both literally and metaphorically smudge her carefully manufactured appearance.

In her book *Femmes Fatales*,¹² Doane describes and discusses the recurrence of the motif of the veil in classical cinema, which is bound up with the fetishisation of the female form, particularly the female face. She describes the occurrence of the veil as "moments of slippage between vision and epistemological certitude."¹³ The veiling of the female form, in other words, pronounces a lack of trust in the visual field. What we see is not necessarily what it seems to be. The veil then, serves to foreground the incongruity between appearance and being. In illustrating her ideas, Doane cites the examples of Von Sternberg's films in which Marlene Dietrich's face is often literally veiled, but the masquerade involves other forms of covering up, of hiding, which are not always so literal. A play of shadows on the face, a fan, a mask or an excessive or obvious use of the feminine garb of make-up and costume perform the same task; veiling may be achieved in various ways. Whatever its form, the veil creates a barrier, a surface between the woman on screen and the spectator, which incites curiosity - inviting the spectator to look, while preventing a clear vision by obscuring the form. This activity works to distance the woman's face and seems to be concealing something, keeping something secret.

¹² Mary Ann Doane, op. cit.

¹³ Ibid., p.46

According to Doane, while these moments of masquerade are regular occurrences in classical cinema, they function in an unusual way in the text overall, as they place the realm of the visible in jeopardy, a realm that is usually stable and knowable. Doane stresses that the classical text is governed by the principle that "the visible equals the knowable, that truth resides in the image."¹⁴ Obscured in some way, the image of the woman becomes mysterious and uncertain. This tendency in classical cinema presents the question: Why jeopardize what is otherwise stable and secure? Why does the female body provoke or necessitate this contradiction within the classical text? Doane suggests that it is because sexuality is precarious and attributing instability to the female, lends stability to male sexual identity. The anxiety produced by the uncertainty of sexuality is reduced for the male by associating it with the female body. Unstable gender identity is therefore acknowledged, but only in relation to the woman. These moments of masquerade or "slippage," for Doane "illuminate something of the complexity of the relations between truth, vision, and the woman sustained by patriarchy."¹⁵

Both Stephen Heath in 'Joan Riviere and the Masquerade'¹⁶ and Martin Shingler in 'Masquerade or Drag?: Bette Davis and the Ambiguities of Gender'¹⁷ describe the tendency to 'perform' femininity in classical Hollywood cinema, claiming that occasions that offer an excessive display of femininity to the point where they draw attention to the mask are unusual. Like Doane, Heath cites the examples provided by many of Dietrich's performances, while Schingler explores Bette Davis' over-the-top performance in *Mr Skeffington* (Vincent Sherman, 1944). However, for Doane an excessive display of femininity is not that unusual in Hollywood cinema. Any instability in the visual field of classical Hollywood cinema is unusual, but the excessive display of femininity performed on and through the female body is practically a norm, a central feature of Hollywood film. Even though this display produces instability, it is the only occasion that such

¹⁴ Ibid., p.45

¹⁵ Ibid, p.46

¹⁶ Stephen Heath, 'Joan Riviere and the Masquerade' in Victor Burgin (ed.), *Formations of Fantasy* (London: Methuen, 1986) pp. 45-61

¹⁷ Martin Shingler, 'Masquerade or Drag?: Bette Davis and the Ambiguities of Gender' in *Screen*, Vol. 36, no. 3, 1995

instability is tolerated as it performs a vital function for the classical text.

It is impossible to explain these ideas fully without some recourse to their origins in psychoanalysis. Drawing on Lacanian psychoanalysis, feminist film theorists have variously attributed the function of the veil (and other fetishistic props) in classical cinema to reducing the threat posed by the female body. The perceived threat stems from the Freudian notion of castration anxiety, born as the child passes through the Oedipal phase.¹⁸ The mother's body, and by extension the female body, from this moment on signifies lack and the threat of castration. The term masquerade, and its usage by Doane and others within feminist film theory, has its roots in the essay 'Womanliness as Masquerade,' written in 1929, by Freudian psychoanalyst Joan Riviere.¹⁹ In this essay, Riviere claims that women wear "a mask of womanliness" in order to draw attention away from an inherent masculinity. The need to conceal this masculinity (by adopting a disguise) stems from a fear of retribution from the father. By revealing her masculinity and thereby taking control or power, the woman risks punishment. According to this definition, rather than something that she is subjected to or something that is placed upon her, the mask is *actively adopted* or performed by the woman. Either way, it works to conceal that which produces anxiety in both the male and the female subject, (the possession of masculinity for the female and the threat of castration for the male).

For Riviere (she is describing 'real' women, patients of hers - not representations), the mask is manifest both in the woman's physical demeanour (including her choice of dress) and in her behaviour (in the examples that she cites, the woman often plays down her

¹⁸ According to Freud, the male child, realising that his mother does not possess a penis, believes that she must have been castrated (as punishment for continual masturbation) and therefore that he must be superior to her. He fears a similar punishment will be carried out on him and her body is always a reminder of this threat. From this moment on she represents lack and the threat of castration. For an overview of castration anxiety experienced by the male child as he passes through the Oedipal stage of development see Sigmund Freud, *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud: New Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis and Other Works*, Volume XXII, Translated by James Strachey (London: Vintage, 2001), pp.85-86

¹⁹ Joan Riviere, 'Womanliness as Masquerade' in Victor Burgin (ed.), op. cit., pp. 35 - 44

intelligence or competence by flirting, becoming flippant or appearing foolish). The resulting attention from men works to reassure the woman and to quell her anxiety. Masquerade, with its emphasis on image and sexual identity, appearance and performance became an irresistible concept for studies of cinema, particularly those that sought to investigate cinema's treatment of the female body and to understand its dependence on a particular image of woman. As Heath points out:

Cinema has played to the maximum the masquerade, the signs of the exchange of femininity, has ceaselessly reproduced its - their - social currency: from genre to genre, film to film, the same spectacle of the woman, her body highlighted into the unity of its image, this cinema image, set out with all the signs of its femininity (all the 'dress and behaviour'). Which is not to say that women in those films are only those signs, that image, but simply that cinema works with the masquerade, the inscription of the fantasy of femininity, the identity of the woman.²⁰

The unmotivated disguising of the female form (disguise that is unmotivated by the narrative) is considered by Doane to be threatening or to signify "a dangerous deception or duplicity attached to the feminine."²¹ Masking facilitates the coincident foregrounding and reduction of the threat. Adorning the woman in representation, masking her somehow, veiling or obscuring her, painting and dressing her up, all of this activity, works to control her image, to produce an image of 'perfection' that (in its very production) acknowledges the threat posed by the woman while at the same time diminishes it by distancing her. It is this tendency in classical cinema that Heath describes when he explains that "cinema works with the masquerade." It repeatedly produces an 'unstable' image of femininity, or an image of femininity as unstable, which marks the woman on screen as desirable, yet dangerous. Doane mostly illustrates this tendency through discussions of the *femme fatale*, such as Lulu in *Pandora's Box* (1929), or Rita Hayworth's leading role in *Gilda* (1946), or the many *femmes fatales* played by Dietrich in the films of Josef von Sternberg such as *Morocco* (1930), or the earlier *The Blue Angel* (1930). Yet she also suggests that excessive uses of make-up and elaborate

²⁰ Stephen Heath, op. cit., p.57

²¹ Mary Ann Doane, op. cit., p.49

dress and hair styling, and shadows cast through lighting create a sort of disguise that alludes to something beyond the surface. Heath proposes that cinema depends upon this image of femininity as duplicitous and unstable and while this is most obviously played out through the figure of the *femme fatale*, in cinema, femininity itself is constructed as an enigma.

To return to a point made earlier, if the visible is the knowable, the stable, in classical cinema, the obfuscation of the image of the woman positions her as enigma in relation to this knowledge. But as Doane later points out, "The real does not lurk behind the surface: it resides on that surface or exists as a play of surfaces."²² Her status as enigma then, is ultimately a false one, for the surface, and the complication of the surface, the barrier is all there is to know. In psychoanalytic terms, she is hiding an absence or a lack. Veiling and masking attempts to hide the fact that there is nothing to hide, nothing to know and we are deceived by the pretence, the masquerade. Similarly, Riviere concludes that there is no such thing as genuine womanliness, that there is nothing to conceal and that the act of concealing or the appearance is all that there is.

The reader may now ask how I define womanliness or where I draw the line between genuine womanliness and the 'masquerade.' My suggestion is not however, that there is any such difference; whether radical or superficial, they are the same thing.²³

This conflation of the authentic and the copy, the real and the simulation, is evident throughout Warhol's work. For Warhol, as for Doane, there is no essence beyond the *appearance* of the body. Or, as Steven Shaviro puts it in *The Cinematic Body* "[t]he physical body does not signify beyond the silent, obsessive evidence of its own image."²⁴ In other words, the body is composed of representations of the body, with no essential 'core' beyond its surface appearance. Shaviro's critique of Warhol insists, in his words, on an "aggressively postmodern reading" of his work, one that accepts Warhol's claim

²² Ibid., p.57

²³ Ibid., p.38

²⁴ Steven Shaviro, 'Warhol's Bodies' in *The Cinematic Body* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), p.203

that his work is about surfaces, and Shaviro even extends this reading to Warhol's fabrication of his own celebrity image by suggesting that the 'real' Warhol never appears; all we see is a mask, but there is nothing behind the mask.²⁵ Shaviro's comments on Warhol's control over his appearance points to the performativity of all identity, of which gender is a key factor. The claim that identity is performative that is taken up by queer theory in the 1990s is initiated in Riviere's earlier work on femininity as masquerade. Echoing propositions made earlier by Riviere and Doane, Shaviro asks "But is 'feminineness' ever anything 'real'? Hyperbolic exaggeration ruptures the logic by which we accept as 'real' whatever conforms to a standardized 'representation of realness.'" ²⁶ Through a process of imitation inflected with heavy doses of exaggeration, the 'normative' or 'standard' image that is copied is exposed as just one possibility, and its claims to 'truth' or 'nature' are undermined. Although other possibilities are not necessarily imaginable, or available, the use of visual hyperbole suggests the plasticity of the image that up to this point had always appeared to be static. Referring to drag in Warhol films Shaviro writes:

These performances disrupt our inveterate habit of inferring identity from appearance and behaviour, of taking the latter as signs of the former [...] We are made oppressively aware that corporeal appearance and behaviour in fact precede identity, that they are quasi-causes [...] of which identity is a transitory effect, and that such quasi-causes are themselves incited and relayed by the presence of the movie camera, and by all the codes of cinematic display.²⁷

For Shaviro then appearance and behaviour precede any idea of identity, and in fact produce it. The repetition of certain behaviour comes to be accepted as 'real,' 'authentic' or 'natural' and informs a cultural consensus of what constitutes the real. Judith Butler also uses the example of drag as a disruptive practice that reveals the slippery relationship between sex and gender that is generally taken as pre-determined and 'natural.' Butler suggests that Divine's impersonation of women in the films of John Walters amongst other performances, "implicitly suggests that gender is a kind of persistent impersonation

²⁵ Ibid., p.106

²⁶ Ibid., p.226

²⁷ Ibid., p.230

that passes as the real.”²⁸ For Butler, Divine’s impersonation of women “destablizes the very distinction between the natural and the artificial, depth and surface, inner and outer through which discourse about genders almost always operates.”²⁹ These dichotomies are disrupted by the hyperbolic performance of gender that copies femininity so well that the authenticity of the original version (promoted by Hollywood for example) is eroded. According to Butler and Shaviro, even though drag is clearly an impersonation of a particular gender identity, the act of impersonation poses a series of questions about the presumption of a causal link between sex and gender and their framing by a heterosexist paradigm:

Is drag the imitation of gender, or does it dramatize the signifying gestures through which gender itself is established? Does being female constitute a “natural fact” or a cultural performance, or is “naturalness” constituted through discursively constrained performative acts that produce the body through and within the categories of sex.³⁰

Butler claims that the terms ‘female’ and ‘woman’ are now commonly viewed as unstable and ‘troubled’ notions that derive their meaning in relation to other unstable notions.³¹ Although Warhol’s films precede Butler’s writing and much of the writing that analyses categories of gendered identity, I suggest that Warhol’s films, and indeed all of the films examined in this thesis are examples of the ‘cultural practices’ that Butler identifies that “produce subversive discontinuity and dissonance among sex, gender, and desire and call into question their alleged relations.”³² In doing so, they make ‘trouble’ for these previously accepted terms, their presumed dependence on one another, and their causal relationship.

When the constructed status of gender is theorized as radically independent of sex, gender itself becomes a free-floating artifice, with the consequence that man

²⁸ Judith Butler, *op cit.*, p.xxviii

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p.xxviii

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p.xxix

³¹ *Ibid.*, p.xxix

³² *Ibid.*, p.xxx

and masculine might just as easily signify a female body as a male one, and woman and feminine as a female one.³³

Having briefly described the masquerade according to Doane and the development of these ideas in the work of other contemporary critical theorists, I will now make some observations on this concept in relation to the representation of the female body in *Beauty No 2*. Although it is quite an unusual project to try to locate an aspect of classical cinema in avant-garde representations, it should be noted that Doane has done just this in an essay entitled 'The Retreat of Signs and the Failure of Words: Leslie Thornton's *Adynata*.'³⁴ The subject of her discussion however is a feminist avant-garde film that critiques Orientalism and its tendency toward the excessive decoration of the woman, which, to an extent, may be considered a rather unproblematic undertaking. But what of films that do not easily fall into the category of feminist filmmaking, those films that do not directly address issues from a feminist perspective? How do other avant-garde cinemas, in their resistance of the dominant cinema, address the problem of representing the female body? If classical Hollywood cinema constructs 'woman' as enigma through the use of masquerade, how do alternative cinemas propose to demystify the image of woman? We could also ask why it is important that they do so. As noted earlier, Doane suggests that the role of woman as enigma gives order and stability to the narrative structure of the dominant model as a whole, and is essential to its economy. By targeting this enduring cinematic image of woman, oppositional cinemas may begin to decompose the commercial model. Warhol reproduces familiar images of woman in cinema only to rupture them, usually by insisting on a minimal aesthetic form that denies many of the (usually) peremptory conventions of classical cinema.

Writing about avant-garde filmmaking, David E. James comments that the hegemonic cinema and those marginal alternative cinemas which in part resist its domination, cannot be considered distinct and uninvolved cultural practices:

[F]ar from being categorically defined against a monolithic, uncontradictory

³³ Ibid., p.10

³⁴ Mary Ann Doane, op cit., pp.178-187

industry, these alternatives emerge from (and in certain circumstances merge with) a similar plurality of practices constructed in the margins of the industry or even as mutations within it.³⁵

Even within the film industry we can detect certain avant-garde impulses while the products of alternative cinema, insofar as they resist or work to subvert dominant modes of representation, are always in some form of relationship with these modes. Using this definition of the avant-garde, Warhol's film, with its aping of Hollywood studio 'assembly-line' production and star system combined with unorthodox technique and subject-matter becomes a perfect site for this study. While clearly underground cinema (at least until *Chelsea Girls*), Warhol's film work overtly references and engages with the industry model, unlike much earlier underground film.

A good starting point in considering the film's treatment of the female body and its play with traditional modes of representation is provided by the film's title. *Beauty No. 2* is more reminiscent of the title of a piece of fine art than a film, one belonging to a series of art works, other typical examples being *Untitled No. 2* or *Still Life No. 3*. The use of this title therefore fuses a convention of high art with a product of mass culture in a typically Warholian gesture. It therefore implies a *Beauty No. 1* and potentially a *Beauty No. 3* and others in a series. Even when the artist employs mass-manufacturing techniques, such as bronze or resin casting the art world emphasis on the uniqueness and rarity of the work imposes a limit on the amount of pieces reproduced, which is the case with the popular format of the edition. Warhol would have been aware of these contradictions and hypocrisies in contemporary art and its general disdain for mass production. The title of his film ironically attaches to the film the status of the unique or individual art object, yet film as we know is infinitely reproducible and is without an original. As Walter Benjamin describes, film, like photography, in its capacity for (and basis in) reproduction, cannot make any claims to uniqueness or authenticity.³⁶ Rather, these are

³⁵ David E. James, *Allegories of Cinema: American Film in the Sixties* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), p.22

³⁶ Walter Benjamin, 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction' in Charles Harrison & Paul Wood (eds.), *Art in Theory 1900 – 1990* (Blackwell Publishing), pp.512-520

the reserve of certain practices of the traditional disciplines of fine a, but particularly painting. In other words the title of this film foregrounds one of Warhol's chief concerns: the absence, or non-existence of an original. All that exists are copies without origins, copies of copies or simulations. Warhol's title (and much of the rest of his work) suggests an awareness of this argument and its relationship to modernist debates that attempted to draw very clear distinctions and hierarchies between the products of high art and mass culture. Perhaps the title's significance stops at this ironic use of an art-world convention, however I would like to explore another meaning that it suggests.

Reference is made to the title within the film when one of the three characters, while speaking the opening credits, notes that Gino, the young man on screen, is the beauty that is inferred by the title; he is its subject:

This is not just another pretty face
But Beauty No 2
Gino Piserchio

If Gino is the subject of the title, it follows that he is also the subject of the film and yet he is the most peripheral of all three characters, even though one of these is merely a voice and a reference point off-screen. We might argue that the title of the film was decided upon before its execution, which appears to be (in typical Warhol mode) an unrehearsed, unscripted performance with perhaps some kind of loose narrative structure decided upon in advance. Whatever degree of planning may have been involved prior to shooting the film it *appears* to be very loosely structured, thereby creating a space in which any dynamic between the three characters may evolve. It is conceivable then, that the intended protagonist of the film recedes somewhat from the spotlight over the course of the film, as the camera records the event.

There is, however, one aspect of this film that is clearly predetermined, and that is its compositional arrangement. The rigidity of this arrangement, the form it takes and its effects contest the idea that Gino was ever really meant to be the central character of the film. Each of the three characters occupies a definite position in relation to the two

others and to the camera and these positions are maintained throughout. The opening narration introduces Edie as “the first angle of the triangle,” affirming the film’s careful composition. The camera is pointed at the bed on which Gino and Edie sit while the third character Chuck, sits to the right of the bed, somewhere not too far outside of the frame. This arrangement places Edie at the centre of a series of lines of relationships and looks. She sits in the foreground stretched out diagonally across the bed, so that she is clearly seen from three points at once. These points are represented by Gino, who sits at the far end of the bed, Chuck, who seems to be facing her, and the camera to her right hand side, and she manages somehow to negotiate and maintain this difficult central position throughout the film. I should also note that her physical positioning supports her positioning with regard to the narrative. She is the reason that the other two characters find themselves in their present situation. Chuck is a friend of hers, while Gino is the young man that she hopes to seduce. According to Chuck (who discloses most of the information to us) Edie asked him to accompany her so that she would feel safe. It is she then, who has brought the group together and each of the two men fulfil a certain role for her. Mulvey describes the tension generated by the woman’s role as object of desire for both the male protagonist of the film and the spectator. That tension is magnified by the threesome contained within the claustrophobic narrative frame of *Beauty*:

Traditionally, the woman displayed has functioned on two levels: as erotic object for the characters within the screen story, and as erotic object for the spectator within the auditorium, with a shifting tension between the looks on either side of the screen.³⁷

Clearly Edie is the film's central character. Yet by suggesting that the film is about Gino, and then contradicting this by placing Edie as the central object of the film, dominating the visual space and strongly influencing the development of the narrative, we are invited to consider the role of the woman on screen. I am suggesting that she in fact becomes the ‘Beauty’ implied by the film's title. It is around her that the looks within the film are arranged and yet, because we are initially led to believe otherwise and our expectations are frustrated, the film highlights the normative practice of concentrating on the image of

³⁷ Laura Mulvey, op. cit., p.63

woman in dominant cinema. In its implication of another title and another central character the film articulates the generally undeclared centrality of the image of the woman to cinema. In other words, by self-consciously and obviously failing to acknowledge her central position (by the title) *Beauty No. 2* paradoxically foregrounds that position. As Doane points out, classical cinema "organizes its appeals to scopophilia around the figure of the woman as distanced surface."³⁸ I am suggesting here that this film enters into a parodic relationship to Hollywood cinema and that the centrality of the image of woman is its point of critique. I would suggest therefore that Edie's imitation of the Hollywood star persona positions her as the film's subject 'Beauty No. 2,' while 'Beauty No. 1' is the original Hollywood star that she emulates. In a point that complies with this, Stephen Koch introduces his discussion of the film by stating: "it is about Edie Sedgwick."³⁹

Even if we take Koch's explanation of 'Beauty No. 1' and 'Beauty No. 2' as the two men who star in the film, the reclining young Gino, and the off-screen Chuck, Edie is still placed as the central character that brings these two others together with her in this situation. To suggest that both the beauty of the film's title, and the other (preceding) beauty that it implies are both men, and that the 'gorgeous' young scantily clad Edie, reclining on the bed and dominating the frame is neither of these beauties is another interesting interpretation of the significance of the title. It is perhaps also part of the ammunition used to provoke anger or upset in the 'image-conscious' Edie, an attempt to 'taunt and betray' her as she offers herself up as erotic spectacle. In fact she comments on the title at the beginning of the film, asking "Hey. Didn't somebody say beauty number two?" and then gestures towards Gino, the dog and then herself in confusion saying "I just don't know who's who."

In *Popism*, Warhol refers to "the Beauty series," and recently an unreleased two-reel film called *Beauty No. 1* has turned up in the Whitney Museum of Art as part of the Andy Warhol Film Project collection. Warhol reminisces about this group of films:

³⁸ Mary Ann Doane, op. cit, p.74

³⁹ Stephen Koch, op. cit., p.66

We filmed a lot of movies over at Edie's place on 63rd Street near Madison. Things like the Beauty series that was just Edie with a series of beautiful boys, sort of roving around her apartment, talking to each other – the idea was for her to have her old boyfriends there while she interviewed new ones. All the movies with Edie were so innocent when I think back on them. They had more of a pajama-party atmosphere than anything else.⁴⁰

Beauty No. 1 then, does exist, as did others in this series, and Warhol's comments make clear that the 'beauties' referred to by the titles are a series of Edie's boyfriends who star in the films. Stephen Koch states that Chuck Wein, the off-screen voice in *Beauty No. 2* was an old boyfriend of Edie's, and Warhol's description of the basic premise of these films supports that (although this is never made clear in *Edie: American Girl*, Jean Stein's biography of Edie Sedgwick). Indeed, we are invited to enjoy the spectacle of the male body, a rather idealised male body, as Gino, moments into the film, strips down to his underwear. This tanned figure, veiled by shadow and held at a distance from the camera could be said to be an object of desire for the gaze of the camera, as well as the object of desire for Edie and perhaps also for Chuck (and of course, Warhol). In its opening narration the film acknowledges that Gino is the beauty of its title and this, coupled with Warhol's comments in *Popism*, suggests that the film is about the beautiful young man. However, according to Warhol in the above quote, Edie is supposed to hold an authorial position of some kind, as the interviewer. It is interesting then that she is the central focus of the film, dominating the frame, and it is her who is continually addressed, questioned and goaded by Wein. In fact she is the interviewee, the subject of the inquiry. At certain points in the film Edie and Chuck virtually ignore Gino, who becomes increasingly bored. In his brief discussion of this film in a short article 'Andy Warhol: The Big Wig,' Michael O'Pray describes Gino as "a rather superfluous young man,"⁴¹ superfluous to the narrative that is. Wein interviews Edie and Gino acts as the excuse for their performance. It is her and not him that we look at. As Koch suggests, although the film may purport to be 'about' Gino, it is really a film about Edie. Koch describes

⁴⁰ Andy Warhol, *Popism* (London: Pimlico, 1996), p.109

⁴¹ Michael O'Pray, 'Andy Warhol: The Big Wig' in *Sight and Sound*, October 1999, pp.20-22

Beauty No. 2 as “a portrait film”⁴² and Edie as an ideal subject for such a film.

Moreover, it is the off-screen male voice that orchestrates the scene like the puppet master, just out of sight, and not Edie, who at best barely manages to juggle each of the three gazes she becomes the object of.

From Kenneth Clark’s study of classical statuary⁴³ to Richard Dyer’s⁴⁴ and Abigail Solomon-Godeau’s⁴⁵ more recent writings, art critics and theorists have highlighted the male body’s continual resistance to objectification. While this was not the aim of Clark’s *The Nude*, its insistent observations on the tendency for the male figure to take the form of athletic poses equates the male body with *acting*, while Dyer’s study on the obvious musculature of the male body in representation suggests that it always expresses the *potential* to act. According to these writers the masculine body cannot be objectified, as to make it so would mean to place it in a passive position and thereby strip it of its masculinity. Mulvey echoes this viewpoint when she states that “[a]ccording to the principles of the ruling ideology and the psychical structures that back it up, the male figure cannot bear the burden of sexual objectification. Man is reluctant to gaze at his exhibitionist like.”⁴⁶ Even Germaine Greer’s recent exploration of the potential pleasures available to women when gazing at the male body focuses on the *ephebe*, the feminized body of the youth, claiming that this gaze is permissible, or rather simply available, as the youth is in no position to object, having not yet developed the authority of manhood.⁴⁷ The masculine, adult male body then is treated with a variety of strategies to deflect the controlling gaze and resist objectification.

Yet Warhol’s marginal cinema certainly provides plenty of examples of masculinity objectified, *My Hustler* (1965) being the prime example from the period focused on here.

⁴² Stephen Koch, op. cit., p.67

⁴³ Kenneth Clark, *The Nude: A Study of Ideal Art* (Princeton University Press, 1972)

⁴⁴ Richard Dyer, ‘Don’t Look Now: The Male Pin-up’ in *Screen*, Volume 23, Number 3-4, Sept/Oct 1982, pp.61-73

⁴⁵ Abigail Solomon-Godeau, *Male Trouble: A Crisis in Representation* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1997)

⁴⁶ Laura Mulvey, op. cit., p.63

⁴⁷ Germaine Greer, *The Boy* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2003)

In this film the muscular Paul America reclines on a beach, watched lustfully by two gay men and a straight woman, thereby defying the 'rules of looking' described by Dyer.⁴⁸ However, in the films that star Edie Sedgwick, masculinity on display is somehow legitimised or made safe through the presence of the conventionally beautiful starlet and its placement within a heterosexual coupling. While heterosexuality may render this image of the semi-naked male body 'safe,' I suggest that the main reason for the deflection of attention away from Gino is that this film is about Edie, and about the investigation of Edie's carefully constructed persona. This film is an investigation of femininity, particularly its cinematic representation.

A certain instability is produced – the first of several we encounter when looking at images of men that are offered as sexual spectacle. On the one hand, this is a visual medium, these men are there to be looked at by women. On the other hand, this does violence to the codes of who looks and who is looked at (and how) and some attempt is instinctively made to counter this violation.⁴⁹

Instability is intolerable when attached to the male body and must be circumvented somehow. Doane complies with Dyer's analysis by insisting that instability in the visual realm is only permissible when attached to the female body. The male body acquires its stability through its distance and difference from the unstable female body as we enter once again into the language of binary opposition. As Doane comments, the *mise-en-scène*, framing and general formal treatment of a scene works to produce the image of the woman filmed as desirable and beautiful, and is preoccupied with the surface appearance of the woman:

The woman's beauty, her very desirability, becomes a function of certain practices of imaging – framing, lighting, camera movement, angle. She is thus, as Laura Mulvey has pointed out, more closely associated with the surface of the image than its illusory depths, its constructed three-dimensional space which the

⁴⁸ It could be argued, however, that even though Warhol here offers us an example of the objectified male body, the film maintains key looking relations in cinema as the male gaze of the two gay voyeurs eclipses the gaze of the heterosexual woman, who herself becomes an object of the gaze when she goes down to the boy on the beach to 'mother' him by applying tanning lotion.

⁴⁹ Richard Dyer, op. cit., p.63

man is destined to inhabit and hence control.⁵⁰

The Close-up Shot

Returning more directly to the notion of the masquerade in this film, there are many points to be made, but I would like to concentrate on one and that is Warhol's camera's refusal to construct the female body as enigma. According to Doane, the instability in the visual realm, created by the representation of the female body in classical cinema, depends on the oscillation between proximity and distance, the former provided most commonly by the close-up shot. Annette Michelson explores the idea of the close-up and its repression in Warhol's pre-68 films. She comments on early cinema's development of editing processes that led spectators to infer a whole (space or body for example) out of a series of parts, largely attributed to Soviet filmmaker Lev Kuleshov's experiments with montage. Like many other film theorists Michelson acknowledges the centrality of the image of woman as desired object to the cinema stating that "the desire for the mode of representation which came to be that of the cinema is grounded in the phantasmatic projection of the female body"⁵¹ which is established in Kuleshov's experiments when we read the actor Mosjoukine's expression as one of lust or desire when cut together with an image of a woman, who we assume to be the object of his gaze.

Michelson describes the particular use of the close-up shot in avant-garde cinema. For instance she claims that films such as Maya Deren's *Meshes of the Afternoon* "works, through close-up, magnification, and its editing patterns, to disarticulate, to reshape and transform, the body into landscape,"⁵² and this is achieved in part by the absence of establishing shots and other aspects of conventional cinema's editing logic that allows us to 'make sense' of the narrative space. The body is fragmented through series of close-up shots, and the distance essential to the creation of woman as mystery is missing.

Michelson links this tendency to represent the "body-in-pieces" with Melanie Klein's psychoanalytic concept of the part object, where the child isolates a part of the parent's (usually mother's) body and this body part (often the mother's breast) becomes a source

⁵⁰ Mary Ann Doane, op. cit., p.20

⁵¹ Annette Michelson, op. cit., p.95

⁵² Ibid.

of extreme fascination and obsession later in adult life. Warhol's cinema seems to be the inverse of this avant-garde cinema exemplified by *Meshes* that presents the body as a series of close-ups, disconnected from any whole. Rather, Warhol shows us everything through the use of lengthy single shot films, usually employing a medium or medium close-up shot. Warhol seldom, if ever, makes use of the extreme close-up so that only an abstracted element of the body fills the frame.

His early films refuse to fragment, and thereby fetishise, the body in the ways that Mulvey and Doane describe. Here the oscillation between proximity and distance that completes the masquerade is utterly absent. *Beauty* critiques the representation of the glamorous and unattainable female body by completely exposing Edie to the glare and fixed gaze of the camera. He refuses to conceal her, to shroud her in mystery and secrecy by cutting between different types of shots of her, by moving the camera closer, or further away. He achieves all of this in the end by simply denying the cut. In *Beauty* Warhol presents us with an example of masquerading woman, one of his superstars performing femininity through the conventional language of preening and posing gestures, and proceeds to taunt her and fix her in the unflinching glare of the camera in order to shatter the illusion conventional cinema attempts to construct. She constantly tries to re-compose herself and all the while the camera stares on mercilessly. The camera, like the characters in the film, occupies a fixed position throughout. It does not move closer through zooming or tracking for example, and there is no cutting between different types of shots. The film is comprised of one long take using one medium shot, broken only to reload the film when the first reel is used up. Apart from making the spectator acutely aware of the construction of the composition within the frame, the camera's fixity also allows us to see Edie's 'performance' clearly, to read it as performance and, therefore, as a construction.

The film approaches a classical treatment of the female body in its *mise-en-scène*, but omits a vital element in the construction of woman as enigma, that being the close-up shot. Edie reclines on the bed wearing nothing but her underwear and a striking pair of long decorative earrings. There is no doubt that we are offered this image of her to

contemplate and admire (and desire), and yet the physical distance she is kept at seems to expose the artificiality of the image. Her performance appears exaggerated and contrived. She seems to mimic images of women from popular culture, striking and holding rather uncomfortable looking poses reminiscent of those of magazine fashion photography and adopts the coquettish demeanour of the familiar flirtatious female character of Hollywood cinema. In short, she is *performing* femininity, and her girlish giggles and childlike gasps of astonishment and wonder at Wein's comments recall the patients of psychoanalyst Joan Riviere who played down their competence in 'masculine' fields by adopting a clichéd version of femininity.

Edie is lit strongly and is clearly dressed as 'object on display.' She wears a skimpy outfit comprised of black lace bra and knickers which she refers to as her 'special costume,' indicating that she has carefully planned what to wear to appear in this typically unscripted, unrehearsed Warhol production. She wears dark thick eye make-up, fashionable in the 1960s. Throughout the film she maintains a relatively consistent position on the bed, always ensuring she shows her long legs off to their best advantage. The film is filled by the image of Edie smoking cigarettes and sipping on her drink, becoming increasingly drunk and confused, and there is a tension created within the frame by her attempts to remain composed, running parallel with her progressive agitation. Her confusion is exacerbated by Wein's aggressive mode of questioning and taunting. In relation to the film *Vinyl* (1965), Ronald Tavel, Warhol's scenarist from 1964-66 comments on Edie's acute awareness of how to dress for maximum impact: "The outfit she wore was certainly calculated ... she had no breasts, but she had legs that didn't quit, so why not show everybody the legs all the time?"⁵³ Tom Goodwin, close friend of Edie's and crew member on Edie's last film *Ciao! Manhattan* (1972), also remarks that "She was totally involved with her self-image ... or her vision of her self-image. It was like that awful voyeuristic thing of the one-way mirror."⁵⁴ In *Beauty* Edie pauses every so often to check her appearance in a mirror she keeps beside her bed, applying lipstick and face powder, or brushing her hair to ensure that she continues to

⁵³ quoted in Jean Stein, op. cit., p.230

⁵⁴ Ibid., p.212

look her best for the camera and for the gaze of the men in her company. Edie is preoccupied with her appearance in this film, and Wein orchestrates the narrative around taunting her about her narcissism. Characterising this treatment of Edie as cruel, we can see it as a parody of the much discussed sadistic treatment of women by the voyeuristic gaze of the Hollywood camera.⁵⁵

In describing Warhol's fixed camera technique, Koch suggests that cinema has become too familiar to us and too sophisticated for us to be interested in the simple human movements studied by Warhol (and the Lumiere brothers before him), but suggests that in *Beauty* "precisely that magic is felt once again."⁵⁶ In this film small, everyday movements such as Edie brushing cigarette ash from her leg, or the lazy way that she brings the cigarette to her mouth as she reaches a point of exhaustion and inebriation, become fascinating. Other single-shot films focus on and articulate equally compelling movement. For instance Sedgwick's trademark long earrings feature prominently in her section as the penultimate portrait of Warhol's *Thirteen Most Beautiful Women*. This film is comprised of a series of Warhol's screen tests, and though they are 'edited' together, each portrait is filmed in a single-shot from a fixed camera position. For her short section of film, Edie adopts a gypsy look wearing large hooped earrings and a headscarf. This film exclusively employs the close-up or medium close-up shot single shot, individually framing each of thirteen women's faces and we are captivated by the "magic" of every single movement. In *Beauty No. 2* and these screen test films that comprise *Thirteen Most Beautiful Women* the single shot prohibits the play between proximity and distance that Doane describes. Edie here displays one of her typical style innovations by dangling one earring hoop through another so that she is wearing two pairs at once. The pendulous movement produced by the earrings becomes fascinating and yet the availability of her image due to the generous duration of each film portrait, and the fixity of the camera, avoids any risk of fetishising the woman's face and turning it into a 'part object' as described by Melanie Klein and discussed by Mulvey in relation

⁵⁵ For example Laura Mulvey describes the sadism of the male gaze of dominant cinema in 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema,' op. cit.

⁵⁶ Stephen Koch, op. cit., p.67

to Hollywood's tendency to dissect the image of woman into a series of body parts. We notice Edie's deep dimple on the left side of her face as she smiles, the scar between her eyes, the slight pouting of her mouth, and the heavy eye make-up she is wearing. We study her face, and have complete access to it through this portrait that resists the conventional play between proximity and distance to which the image of woman is usually subjected. Other portraits in this film initially seem less eventful, less interesting than this one because of the mesmerising movement generated by Edie's earrings, and yet when we watch for long enough we notice small details of interest in them too like the curl at the end of one woman's hair, or the badly drawn streak of eyeliner sketched across the top of another woman's eyes.

Suarez notes that "[c]apturing ordinary, everyday occurrences that seemed too small for Hollywood pictures was a central interest of the underground."⁵⁷ Even the distinctive shape of one woman's eye can become a source of fascination for the spectator of these short unremarkable films. The way that another woman has shaped her eyebrows and the frequency of her blinking are memorable elements of one portrait, while others provide relative 'drama,' such as the tears slowly flowing down the cheek of the tenth woman's face, or Baby Jane Holzer in the sixth portrait slowly removing a stick of chewing gum from its wrapper using her mouth. For Suarez, Warhol's cinema is preoccupied with "elevating the everyday into a realm of aesthetic intervention. Style seemed to turn the superstars' whole lives into performances and dissolved traditional boundaries between public and private spaces."⁵⁸ This point is particularly important when we consider Butler's assertion of the performative basis of all expressions of gender. These everyday bedroom and bathroom rituals of making-up, of getting ready to go out and 'be seen,' of dressing up and masking such as those performed by Edie in *Beauty* and *Poor Little Rich Girl* are made public through Warhol's cinema and we are asked to notice the process of becoming a woman, or indeed of becoming a man.⁵⁹

⁵⁷ Juan A. Suarez, op. cit., p.223

⁵⁸ Ibid., p.239

⁵⁹ There are plenty of examples of 'becoming a woman' discussed in this chapter. In *My Hustler* we also see the preening and bathing rituals of young hustler character played by Paul America as he prepares himself for the desiring gaze of others.

Unlike *Beauty and the Beast* and *Poor Little Rich Girl*, this film is silent and is projected at the slightly slower than usual speed of sixteen frames per second. These already relatively inert films are decelerated, facilitating even greater scrutiny of the everyday movements they contain. Mulvey observes that the woman's "visual presence" in Hollywood tends "to freeze the flow of action in moments of erotic contemplation."⁶⁰ The repetition of these arrested moments in Warhol's film, cut together back-to-back with no respite, makes apparent their function in the classical film text. Isolated from the narrative that usually frames them, these protracted portraits of women become visible as a convention of dominant cinema. Both the slow motion used by Warhol and the repetition of this image of the 'beautiful woman' invites our contemplation of this type of cinematic image, effectively critiquing a Hollywood imperative.

All of the short portrait clips contained in this film are very simply lit, usually from one side, which creates a sort of mystery, a type of veiling described by Doane, as does the excessively styled hair and make-up worn by almost all of the women filmed. However, while they emulate fashionable Hollywood looks, Warhol's 'beautiful' women are not quite groomed enough to pass as film stars. Warhol employs the Hollywood convention of the screen-test, but uses it as the finished product, the film itself. What would be a preliminary sketch or a type of experiment for Hollywood, something that goes on behind the scenes, is the finished product for Warhol. In other words, in Warhol's cinema there are always departures and disjunctures introduced into what might otherwise be taken as straightforward mimicry or homage of Hollywood imagery.

Though the portraits in *Thirteen Most Beautiful Girls* are cut together, each one is a single-shot piece and editing is used in its most basic way to link them and thereby 'repeat' the portrait. As with the other two films focused on in this chapter, editing in this film is repressed, kept to a minimum, and not employed to aid narrative development or to code characters in any particular way. Whether in the modernist collisions of Eisenstein's montage, or the continuity editing of Hollywood cinema, editing is chiefly

⁶⁰ Laura Mulvey, op. cit., p.19

employed to manipulate the film audience. Crudely put, Eisenstein sought to 'move' the spectator to action through the use of shocking and provocative combinations of shots, while commercial cinema uses editing to focus the spectator's attention on key visual information in order to direct her / his understanding of the film's narrative. For both, the shot is merely a basic element, a cell, but must be joined together with other shots in a sequence in order to become a part of cinema. Film theorist V. I. Pudovkin, writing in 1958, compares the filmmaking system to language, describing the shot as a word and the sequence as a phrase, and sees editing as a "compulsory" element of filmmaking that "eliminates effort" on the spectator's behalf, guiding her / his vision towards only the most essential details in order to precisely direct the desired emotional response.⁶¹ Christian Metz also comments on the conventions of film editing and its essential part in a sort of cinematic language system. Though critical of the pedantic "montage or bust" attitude expounded by Eisenstein, Pudovkin, and the comparable version preached by Hollywood, Metz agrees that editing has become a vital part of cinema, if not its defining characteristic. Drawing on the writings of Pudovkin he writes that:

The isolated shot is not even a small fragment of cinema; it is only raw material, a photograph of the real world. Only by montage can one pass from photography to cinema, from slavish copy to art. Broadly defined, montage is quite simply inseparable from the composition of the work itself.⁶²

The uninterrupted flow and unfolding of time in a single shot then, is the antithesis of both modernist and classical cinema and Warhol's insistence upon it as a basic approach to his filmmaking marks his cinema as resistant and oppositional to both types of cinema. Warhol's early films refuse to direct the spectator's gaze towards this or that, allowing them instead to select for themselves details of interest and to contemplate a relatively uneventful cinematic image filled with the small, everyday movements that Suarez observes as part of a Warholian *mise-en-scène*.

⁶¹ V. I. Pudovkin, *Film Technique and Film Acting* (New York: Grove Press, 1960), p.73

⁶² Christian Metz, *Film Language: A Semiotics of the Cinema* (Chicago: University Of Chicago Press, 1974), p.32

In her discussion of masquerade, Doane claims that “the close-up has become crucial in the organization of cinematic language,”⁶³ particularly the close-up of the woman’s face. She explains that multiple close-ups of the woman work to designate her as the ‘property’ of the male gaze through what she describes as “glance-object editing.”⁶⁴ Generally then, the close-up of the woman’s face in conventional cinema is punctuated by images of a male protagonist and his desirous gaze. She is represented solely as the object of his desire, and by implication, the object of the ‘male gaze’ of the cinema audience. In the three films discussed here, this convention is notably absent. However, in two of the three films, the presence of a man or men either on screen or as reference points off-screen (Wein’s voice in two films) makes clear that the woman filmed is the object of a male gaze. Here we are presented with an instance of parody where the film adopts a certain conventional device, but stops short of employing it absolutely faithfully. The male gaze, articulated by glance-object editing is mobilized, but incomplete; we never get the ‘shot / reverse-shot’ sequence that alternates between over-the-shoulder shots of a man looking, to close-up shots of the woman looked at, that we are accustomed to expect.

Poor Little Rich Girl opens with an out of focus, grainy image of a face in close-up. The figure, clearly female, appears to be sleeping. We hear the distant noise of traffic on the streets outside. A voice, recognizable as Chuck Wein’s announces “Andy Warhol’s Poor Little Rich Girl” at which point the figure rises and walks out of frame saying “fuck you.” The voice and the blurred impression of the face are (to those familiar with Warhol’s work) unmistakably Edie’s. The camera moves up to capture her face again and pulls back a little. Already we witness a similar dynamic to the one we find in *Beauty*. Edie Sedgwick is the subject of this film and she is taunted both by the off-screen male voice and the filmmaker who mocks her with his film title. What sets this film apart from *Beauty* and from the screen tests that comprise *Thirteen Most Beautiful Girls* is that here the camera *moves*. It pans and tilts and gets closer to and further away from its subject by zooming in and out. However, like these other two, this film suppresses editing. There is one cut used to join the two reels that comprise the film, yet

⁶³ Mary Ann Doane, op. cit., p.46

⁶⁴ Ibid.

this is used not for dramatic effect, but simply as a necessary 'linking' device and an opportunity to make a film in two halves. The second half of the film is markedly different from the first, drawing attention to its division by this cut. This is a cut, a jerky cut marked by the flare at the end of one reel and the start of the other. It is not a (Hollywood) transition. Typically, and in complete opposition to the rules of continuity editing of dominant cinema, Warhol makes no attempt to conceal the edit.

The most significant formal transgression presented by *Poor Little Rich Girl* is the decision to shoot the first reel out of focus, so Edie's face is literally obscured (or veiled) as a result of the refusal to conform to a basic principle of the 'correct' way to film a scene – in focus. Focusing a shot contributes to the illusion that the spectator has direct access to the image, but also draws attention away from the process of filmmaking. Conversely, presenting the image out of focus draws attention to the camera as a recording device. In this first half Edie potters around her room, ordering food from the deli, listening to music like the Everly Brothers 'Bye Bye Happiness' and 'Wake up Little Suzie,' smoking cigarettes and performing half-hearted stretches and exercises. During all of this rather mundane activity her image is comprised of flat grainy shapes, the grain itself acting as a veil that obscures her image. By completely blurring the image in this way, the film paradoxically articulates our desire to see. We want to see, and this mystification of the image stimulates our desire to see more. Most of all, here, we long for the camera to pull focus. As if to tease us the camera does momentarily focus on a close-up of Edie's eye as she sits smoking, but very quickly returns to a blurred image again. This occurs twice more in this first half of the film, once almost focusing on her eyelashes, and once on her black lace bra as she walks across the screen. This is Edie's 'private' world, her bedroom where she walks around in her underwear, and our voyeurism is mocked by Warhol's errant lens.

Roughly half way through the film there is an abrupt cut to a close-up of Edie's body in focus, marking the switch to the second half of the film, all of which is in focus. She calls to Chuck, who once again remains off-screen, to see if he's awake. Typically, Edie spends the second half of the film fidgeting with her appearance and speaking with

Chuck in a muddled and distracted fashion. She complains about being disowned by her family who, up to this point, has subsidised her expensive lifestyle in New York. She applies and re-applies her make-up and changes her clothes a number of times before deciding what to wear that night. Edie is portrayed as a shallow, self-absorbed individual, whose chief concern is her appearance. Once again we are offered a clichéd version of femininity. Warhol has borrowed the title of this film from two older Hollywood films, one made in 1917 and starring Mary Pickford as a lonely rich girl who is neglected by her parents, the other a 1936 film starring Shirley Temple as a lost little girl who is found by a group of entertainers and included in their act. The narratives of both of these films resonate powerfully with Edie's own story as both a wealthy girl from a troubled family and a puppet in Warhol's cinematic experiments. While this film makes use of the close-up and generates some play between proximity to and distance from the subject it films, it does so without the use of the conventional edit and it also asks us to become aware of our voyeurism as cinema spectators by drawing attention to the material and the apparatus of cinema in the first half of the film. The accessibility of the second half of the film carries with it the 'critique' provided by its nebulous first half. In a discussion of Dietrich's heavily veiled face in Sternberg's *The Scarlet Empress* (1934), Doane suggests that "even when the woman is no longer fully visible, she is the support of [the film's] seduction of the spectator, its provocation."⁶⁵ *Poor Little Rich Girl* dramatises that point by taking the idea of veiling as far as possible, obscuring the image of woman through the very apparatus that strains to keep her within its frame. In this way, the woman is in the paradoxical state of being always in sight, but out of focus.

As Doane points out, veiling creates the *illusion* of depth. The veiling produced by cutting between the close-up and the medium shot for example also produces the illusion of depth. Warhol's suppression of editing therefore lays bare the surface of the image. Mulvey describes the Hollywood image of woman as "an illusion cut to the measure of desire."⁶⁶ In other words cutting between different types of shots of the woman, between proximity and distance, and fragmenting the image produces the idea of concealment, of

⁶⁵ Ibid., p.74

⁶⁶ Laura Mulvey, op. cit., p.25

a beyond, and therefore produces a desire to see, to *know*. As Doane points out “The ‘beyond’ is a function of desire.”⁶⁷ In *Beauty* Edie’s image is not ‘cut to the measure of desire’ but exposed as a performance of ‘ideal’ femininity, through scrutiny and questioning, through looking and continuing to look, through ‘taunt and betrayal.’ The usual Hollywood performance of femininity, that goes un-acknowledged as performance, relies on a movement between proximity and distance that is absent here:

With a kind of off-hand sadism, actors were baited and provoked, goaded into ‘freaking out’ or ‘acting out’ on screen; the point was to make their carefully constructed personas decompose, giving way to behaviour that, because of embarrassment, would be even more awkward and ostentatious.⁶⁸

In *Beauty* Edie decomposes. Her carefully constructed image of the femme coquette unravels and is revealed as performance; all the more effective because of the documentary technique produced by the unscripted, low-budget qualities of the film. Edie is not so much playing a character as acting out a loosely defined scenario as herself. Details of her relationship to Chuck Wein, exposed in both *Beauty* and *Poor Little Rich Girl*, correspond with information we have of their relationship from Jean Stein’s biography of Sedgwick and various accounts of The Factory regulars. In another conflation of generally distinct categories, her performance then sits somewhere between ‘reality’ and ‘fiction’ as we commonly understand them.

Writer George Plimpton discusses *Beauty No. 2* at some length in Sedgwick’s biography, which he edited, remarking on its difference from Warhol’s earlier silent films. Clearly he was mesmerized by Edie who he describes as “that pale, long-limbed girl on the bed,”⁶⁹ but he also suggests that Chuck Wein was more of an “inquisitor” than a voyeur in this film, recalling the sound of his voice as “nagging and supercilious and quite grating” while he asked a lot of “rather searching and personal” questions about her father in particular.⁷⁰ Wein does not in fact ask a lot of questions about her family, or her

⁶⁷ Ibid., p.64

⁶⁸ Steven Shaviro, op. cit., p.218

⁶⁹ George Plimpton quoted in Jean Stein, op. cit., p.240

⁷⁰ Ibid., p.242

father, yet his questions are generally very personal and clearly intend to criticise her for her vanity and her dependence on others, to ridicule her apparent embodiment of traditional femininity. Plimpton also recalls the tension created by the triangle, to which Edie is “the first angle” when he comments that “Edie was torn between reacting to the advances of the boy next to her and wanting to respond to these questions and comments put to her by the man in the shadows.”⁷¹ *Beauty*’s scenario is designed to place Edie at the centre of the film’s narrative and to frustrate and provoke her, to undermine and ridicule her, and reflects Warhol’s ambivalence towards his stars. He both adored and disliked them.

This ambivalence and ambiguity is at the heart of all of Warhol’s work and is a common feature of avant-garde practice. Suarez describes Warhol’s “ambiguous fascination with the pleasures of commercial cinema and with stardom, celebrities, and fame.”⁷² *Thirteen Most Beautiful Women* is simultaneously art and anti-art, parodic and plagiaristic. At one level this basic approach to filmmaking that even fails to eliminate flare at the beginning and end of reels can be read as easy, even careless. At another level we can see these as a series of carefully and elegantly composed portraits that produce a chiaroscuro effect through the use of strong side-lighting. Warhol’s filmmaking is riddled with such ambiguity and ambivalence.

Warhol’s films bring up opacities and unpleasures that resist the dynamics of commodification and exchange. These resistances, however, cannot be understood outside the equation of art and business that Warhol’s most commercial productions celebrate; on the contrary, [...] they are the inevitable excesses emanating from such an equation.⁷³

Suarez links the “irony that pervades Warhol’s work” with the pervasiveness of “commodity exchange” in that his work is never clearly either critical or affirmative of the culture it depicts. Like much avant-garde work then, there is an ambiguity at the heart of all of Warhol’s films. Consequently, for Suarez, Warhol’s films suggest that a

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Juan A. Suarez, op. cit., p.220

⁷³ Ibid., p.221

critical avant-garde practice cannot have independence from the operations of what he continually refers to as the “commodity form.” Suarez goes on to note the co-habitation of the two (properly) distinct operations of mimesis and criticism in Warhol’s work, and states that these two approaches have dominated avant-garde production over the three succeeding decades, although here they have remained “more or less distinct.”⁷⁴ He notes the convergence of these two approaches again in contemporary art and questions the sense of any separation between them suggesting that “there may be something suspiciously facile in separating the political engagement with commodity form and the acritical mimesis with it.”⁷⁵ Instead of looking to separate these two forms of engagement with “the commodity form” (or Hollywood cinema), Suarez advocates a fluid approach that acknowledges movement between the two and that even a single gesture can be read as either critical or mimetic (and perhaps critical because it is mimetic). So as well as affirming and celebrating contemporary culture Warhol’s films facilitate and provoke what Suarez refers to as “lines of resistance, opacities, and fissures in the mediation of experience by the commodity form.”⁷⁶ Suarez ends his chapter on Warhol by stating that, true to Warhol’s preoccupation with surface, while his films present cracks and fissures, they do not show “what might be seen through the crevices.”⁷⁷ He makes the point that, for Warhol, there is nothing beyond the surface appearance of things, hereby joining with Butler’s contention and Riviere’s before her in relation to gendered identity. As noted earlier, the beyond is a function of desire, and we can suggest then that Warhol’s cinema short-circuits desire.

For Butler “parodic repetition of ‘the original,’ [...] reveals the original to be nothing other than a parody of the *idea* of the natural and the original.”⁷⁸ She goes on to ask “what possibilities of recirculation exist? Which possibilities of doing gender repeat and displace through hyperbole, dissonance, internal confusion, and proliferation the very

⁷⁴ Ibid., p.257

⁷⁵ Ibid., p.258

⁷⁶ Ibid., p.259

⁷⁷ Ibid., p.259

⁷⁸ Judith Butler, op cit., p.41

constructs by which they are mobilized?”⁷⁹ Butler asks these questions in the assumption that “heterosexual constructs” are the only “available sites of power / discourse from which to do gender at all.”⁸⁰ Like Hutcheon, Kristeva and Sulieman then, Butler suggests that we must work with the limited positions available to us and offer a critique of these through a process of repetition and displacement. Or, to use Mulvey’s terminology, we must (at least initially) use the language of patriarchy to examine that very language: “There is no way in which we can produce an alternative out of the blue, but we can begin to make a break by examining patriarchy with the tools it provides.”⁸¹ Warhol achieves this with the three films discussed here and in doing so exposes the artificiality of the Hollywood image of femininity. The Hollywood image of woman is re-circulated by Warhol’s films through the repetition of certain conventions of femininity and displaced through the repression of basic elements of conventional film language, the cut and the close-up shot.

Warhol surrounded himself with glamorous and flamboyant characters, each one using the Factory and their associations with that scene as an opportunity to display their individual version of the superstar. Edie Sedgwick was one among many. All of Warhol’s superstars were highly concerned with their appearance and can often be seen preening and ‘fixing themselves’ in his films. For instance, in *Chelsea Girls* (1966) Nico spends a remarkably long time cutting her fringe to just the right eyelash-skimming length. Attention to appearance and the pleasure taken in the display of the ‘finished product’ are especially evident in the performances of the queer cohort of Warhol’s entourage. Many of Warhol’s superstars were transvestites and drag artists such as the three stars of *Women in Revolt* (1971) - Candy Darling, Holly Woodlawn and Jackie Curtis - who aped the already excessive femininity of Hollywood leading ladies such as Mae West, Marlene Dietrich and Marilyn Monroe. It is these actresses that provide a basis, or a sort of starting point, for the personae that each of these Warhol superstars construct. These stars, and drag artists in general, mimic and exaggerate the looks, styles,

⁷⁹ Ibid., pp.41-42

⁸⁰ Ibid., p.41

⁸¹ Laura Mulvey, op. cit., p.15

and gestures of quintessential Hollywood femininity, yet we should note that Warhol's attraction to the rituals of drag permeates his work and is also found in the performances of his female stars such as Edie Sedgwick. Sedgwick's preening and posing, and constant checking herself in the mirror, is a purposefully off-kilter imitation of the cool anti-heroine of film noir which simultaneously pays homage to and undermines that iconic duplicitous figure, who insinuates the terrifying idea of nothingness behind the veil. Indeed Warhol's other portraits of femininity, such as the screen-prints of Liz Taylor, always reference the iconic beauty of the age (often a screen star), but always slightly off-kilter. The application of the bright red lipstick and blue eye shadow on the Taylor portraits for instance renders her image clown-like, announcing the performative function of make-up and of representation in general. The deliberate mis-registration of this layer of ink onto the image that slightly misaligns the make up to the face, enhances the idea of femininity as masquerade; this smudging is emblematic of his many imperfect versions of ideal femininity. For Butler, and I suggest for Warhol, "[t]here is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender."⁸² Gender norms are nothing more than a kind of everyday drag that we all collude in and Warhol's cinema invites a reflection of that through his parody of classical Hollywood femininity and its dependence on the male gaze. The Warholian camera has been described as 'cool,' 'impersonal,' 'dispassionate,' and 'indifferent,'⁸³ yet I suggest that, while his films refuse to reproduce the conventional manipulations of the spectator effected largely by editing, on the contrary, this still camera is intensely interested in understanding what it observes and in exposing its own operations. While Warhol's early cinema may not articulate new places for women, it does effectively expose the plasticity and conventional arrangement of the places that have existed and, like all forms of parody, it alludes to the possibility of other places.

⁸² Ibid., p.33

⁸³ See especially Stephen Koch's chapter 'Stillness' in *Stargazer*, op cit., pp. 132-138

Chapter 3: An Ambivalent Recuperation of 'Distraction' in Matthew Barney's *Cremaster Cycle*

Even when the results are not as dramatic as a giant picture or kaleidoscopic pattern, virtually any precision chorus number involves a certain degree of objectification of the feminine – a loss of individuality as a result of being made part of a mass, synchronized unit. From its beginnings, the development of the musical has been closely bound up with the display of massed female bodies.¹

Mesmerising abstracted images of women's bodies are a staple of the musical genre of filmmaking and this captivating imagery has been quoted and imitated by many post-classical Hollywood films. In his book *Showstoppers*, about the cinema of Busby Berkeley, Martin Rubin describes the way that, when genres die out they tend to "become adjectives – i.e., qualities or colorations (e.g., picaresque, gothic) that can be employed in the context of other forms."² In other words genres are familiar historical forms that are easily referenced. Dan Harries' book *Film Parody* provides a theorisation of the operations of parody within mainstream film arguing that its prevalence since the 1960s constitutes a new popular canon of parodic films which in ways usurps the place of the classical canon, certainly for a younger generation of under-forties.³ While this younger audience may not be very familiar with 1930s and 40s film noir, they are likely to know the 1980s spoof of the genre *Dead Men Don't Wear Plaid* (1982, Carl Reiner). Harries claims that these films "serve as cogent markers of a culture steeped in an ever-increasing level of irony; an era where postmodern activity has become more the norm than any sort of alternative practice."⁴ Examples of musical parodies in mainstream film that illustrate its adjectival qualities include *The Boy Friend* (Ken Russell, 1971), *Grease* (Randal Kleiser, 1978), *New York, New York* (Martin Scorsese, 1977) and *Chicago* (Rob Marshall, 2002), though we could include examples from other national cinemas such as the French film *8 Women* (Francois Ozon, 2002).⁵ For Harries these examples all qualify

¹ Martin Rubin, *Showstoppers* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), pp.74-75

² Ibid., p.183

³ Dan Harries, *Film Parody* (London: BFI, 2000)

⁴ Ibid., p.3

⁵ These knowing resuscitations of the musical extend beyond the cinema and into television shows and pop promos. *Ally McBeal* offers a TV drama example of this ironic

as parodies because of their knowing resuscitation of a genre from the heyday of the classical Hollywood system of filmmaking.

As a genre of the classical era of Hollywood filmmaking the musical is a part of cinema history, constituted of very familiar conventions. It is therefore available as a style and format to copy or to incorporate into another text. In fact, according to Harries, of all the classifications of film that could be copied, such as the work of a certain auteur, or of a film movement, it is genre that is the system most often evoked in film parodies and this he claims is due to its having a clearly defined set of identifiable characteristics, including stock characters, shared setting, and recurring story-lines.⁶ Of course, the appeal of any classical genre for the parodist also has much to do with her/his wish to disrupt the stability of an established form and the cultural values it promotes. While Harries describes contemporary mainstream film's imitations of classical cinema as parodic, he also acknowledges parody itself as a distinct mode of filmmaking, which is therefore also available as a kind of adjectival quality or style. The prevalence and acceptance of film parody as a new version of film canon surely nullifies some of its critical potential, rendering it a knowing, light-hearted, and nostalgic reincarnation of familiar and much loved classics and their outmoded values.

For effective film parody, a high degree of replication of what Harries refers to as the "target text" is required. This provides the spectator with familiar forms and imagery and sets up audience expectations on the basis of tapping into their knowledge of the genre or type of film being referenced. Yet deviations from the target text are also essential in order to create the incongruities necessary for the critical effect of parody. The fine balance struck between replication and deviation generates the ambiguity at the heart of parody. Incongruities may be produced by changes to the context of the original film as well as to its text. Though Harries suggests a possible change of context for a film that could be considered parodic in the example of screening a 'weepie' film at a comedy film

revising of aspects of the musical, while the music video for Bjork's 'It's Oh so Quiet' provides an MTV example.

⁶ Dan Harries, op cit., p.33

festival, he fails to develop this idea of altering the extra-textual context of the film by changing its usual venue or reception location e.g. moving it into a gallery space or into an art context.⁷ Therefore, even though he does claim earlier in the introduction to his book, that he examines the ‘contextual determinants’ of film parodies, this aspect of parodic reframing goes largely ignored in his discussion.⁸

By taking film parody out of the institutional framework of cinema and transposing it into the different, though related, context of gallery art, I suggest that certain examples of film parody, though recognised as part of a *tendency* in film and video art, avoid becoming part of the new cinematic canon that Harries describes; such a cinematic canon can only have diluted critical potential. I should note here that, although Harries argues that film parody constitutes a new type of film canon, he also claims that it has some degree of critical effect. In the end, however, he contends that film parody “ends up losing most of its radical verve by becoming a normative system itself.”⁹ In light of the canonisation of film parodies in mainstream cinema a discussion of parodies of Hollywood cinema in film and video art seems even more significant as these may provide an incisive challenge to the normative values of the dominant model of filmmaking available today, both in its original and its parodic forms. The distance provided by shifting film parody into the institutional framework of art in place of cinema perhaps provides a better context from which to begin to examine and reframe established film conventions. Certainly the disruptions produced by moving image art that engages with classical cinema can be seen as greater than those of mainstream cinema because of the significant differences in the reception and circulation of the parodic text. This chapter discusses one artist’s imitation of elements of the musical genre and, drawing on the film theory of Siegfried Kracauer, explores its particular relationship to its target text.

Artist Matthew Barney’s epic five part series the *Cremaster* cycle makes frequent reference to the imagery of the musical, weaving it together with a plethora of other

⁷ Ibid., p.25

⁸ Ibid., p.6

⁹ Ibid., p.120

established narrative types and forms such as Celtic mythology and slapstick film. Importantly, Barney borrows both the abstracted ornamental imagery specific to the musical genre, as well as the more general narrative conventions of classical Hollywood cinema in which the male hero struggles to achieve his goal and each of these elements, both the genre-specific imagery and the more general narrative conventions, is subjected to quite different revisions within the cycle. While elements of the imagery of the musical number are reproduced quite faithfully, narrative conventions are replicated only to a certain extent, with very significant departures in terms of structure and conclusions. As with most instances of parody, the cycle's attitude to its target texts is highly ambivalent so that, while we may note general strategies, making any definitive statements about its treatment of the various quoted elements proves difficult and is especially onerous in this case because of the excessive use of referencing in the cycle.

What connects the two elements of musical imagery and classical narrative structuring, evident in both the original model of the musical and Barney's copied segments, is the theme of the (male) individual versus the anonymous (female) mass. The male protagonist pursues his individual goals and is dazzled by the group of women who display themselves for his pleasure. The "massed female bodies" of Busby Berkeley's cinema that Martin Rubin describes in my opening quote for this chapter can be seen as a metaphor for the feminization of the masses by their subordination to the rule of modernity, as theorised by Andreas Huyssen in his much cited essay 'Mass Culture as Woman: Modernism's Other.'¹⁰ In his essay Huyssen suggests that modernism rejects and denigrates the culture of the masses in an effort to protect its own boundaries, which is simultaneously an attempt to secure the superiority of masculinity. Modernist art expels kitsch art for instance, and all examples of mass culture are aligned with femininity and women. When considering the significance of the abstracted decorative patterns of grouped female bodies to popular cinema, and to Barney's epic film cycle, it is useful to refer to the writings of German theorist Siegfried Kracauer, who theorises these types of fragmented spectacle, which he names "the mass ornament." Kracauer

¹⁰ Andreas Huyssen, 'Mass Culture as Woman: Modernism's Other' in *After the Great Divide* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1988), pp.44-62

wrote his essays on the mass ornament from the 1920s to the 1930s, overlapping in time with the establishment of the musical genre in Hollywood. In these early writings on cinema he proposed the liberating potential of certain products of mass culture as they present the masses with a reflection of their own isolation and fragmented experience under the social and economic organisation of modernity and it is this recuperative view of mass culture as redemptive that marks his theorisation of the cinematic spectacle as significant. This chapter explores Barney's imitation of aspects of classical cinema, examining, in particular, the cycle's citation of the mass ornament and its attendant equation with femininity and resistance to the patriarchal rule of modernity, exploring whether or not it retains the progressive capacity attributed to it by Kracauer when it becomes a kind of adjectival addition to the reference-riddled *Cremaster* cycle.

By transforming women's bodies into pure objects, and pure abstraction, that collectively comprise a "mass synchronised unit," the musical openly acknowledges the general objectification of the woman's body by mainstream cinema and takes that objectification to extremes, often to ridiculous extremes. So, while the image of woman as object underpins the musical (as it does many genres of the classical era), this image is exaggerated and in this sense we could consider the musical to be an example of the subversion, sometimes detected from within mainstream cinema, that David E. James discusses in his book *Allegories of Cinema*.¹¹ While the musical usually includes a significant female character, her involvement in these displays of spectacle offers no pretension that her function exceeds pure decoration and object of desire for the male lead. In her essay 'Shall we Dance? Woman and the Musical,' Lucy Fischer makes the convincing point that, in Berkeley's musical numbers, woman is equated with the film image itself, "as plastic, celluloid screen object" that "in its pliancy, can be molded into the configurations of the Berkeley imagination."¹² She opens her essay by quoting Berkeley who makes no attempt to conceal his attitude, or the attitude of Hollywood, towards women in film: "What do you come to do, why do you go to a spectacle: It is not

¹¹ David E. James, *Allegories of Cinema* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992)

¹² Lucy Fischer, 'Shall we Dance? Woman and the Musical' in *Shot/Countershot* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), p.140

the story, it is not the stars, nor the music. What people want to see are beautiful girls.”¹³ Indeed, it is precisely because of this absolute unabashed equation of woman with decoration that, according to Fischer, “in the Berkeley numbers, the notion of women as sexual *objects* takes on a deviously witty relevance.”¹⁴

In the musical, but especially in the Berkeley musical, the woman’s physical attractiveness and its equation with her value are repeatedly pointed out. This point is made very well in relation to the dancers’ legs in the opening scenes of *42nd Street* (Lloyd Bacon, 1933), one of the most notable examples of the genre. In an early selection line up the girls are asked to raise their skirts so that the director can see their legs. They are shouted at to lift the skirts higher and instructed to turn around. The objectification of the women’s bodies and their value as part of a larger decorative object is reinforced a little later when the show’s financier, at first transfixed by the sight of so much female flesh, proclaims: “After three weeks of this a leg aint nothing but something to stand on.” This is followed by a full screen image of a mass of disembodied kicking legs superimposed onto a black background to create a large moving pattern, reminiscent of much surrealist imagery. The self-reflexive declaration of the woman as mass ornament combines with the spectacular musical numbers’ uneasy relationship to the film narrative, to mark the musical as an anomalous Hollywood genre, containing a number of subversive elements. Both the theoretical cinema of Kracauer and the actual cinema of Barney overlap in their interest in the musical. Both foreground the fragmentary and ornamental elements of this model of filmmaking, which suggests that, like Kracauer, Barney views this type of fragmentation as redemptive. Rubin comments on the awkwardness of the musical as a category of the dominant realist model of filmmaking:

For all its pursuit of integration and sophistication, the musical is an inherently unrealistic and somewhat anomalous genre within the institution of mainstream cinema. A throwback to earlier forms of entertainment, the musical film’s discursive complexity, contradictoriness, and even unwieldiness have always been more or less problematic.¹⁵

¹³ Ibid., p.134

¹⁴ Ibid., p.138

¹⁵ Martin Rubin, op cit., p.183

The musical's "discursive complexity" gives rise to a degree of ambiguity in the image that makes trouble for the usually unambiguous realist text. Musical numbers fragment the narrative and retard its flow, disrupting the essential causality of the classical narrative film. As already mentioned, the film parody is ambivalent towards its target text, both revering and critiquing it through a process that fluctuates between imitation and deviation. I suggest that an understanding of Kracauer's theory of the mass ornament and its redemptive qualities provides us with an understanding of Barney's particular citation of the musical. Barney emulates the fragmentary and indeterminate elements of the musical and, significantly, it is in his imitation of the mass ornament that he is most faithful. The abstracted spectacle of the semi-autonomous musical number is mostly quite carefully reproduced, while the narrative structure of the classical Hollywood film that frames these spectacles is subject to high degrees of variance and it is in this conflicting attitude to the musical and to Hollywood cinema overall that we find the incongruity essential to parody.

Matthew Barney is an artist whose work most often combines film or video with sculpture, though photography and drawing also play their part in his multifarious works, which sometimes take the form of installation art. The parodic elements of Barney's epic *Cremaster* cycle investigates a variety of cultural hierarchies and, through a process of what we might describe as allusion overload, both stages and disrupts each one.

Introduction to The *Cremaster* Cycle

The *Cremaster* cycle, the work for which Barney is best known, is a series of five films, made out of sequence over an eight-year period from 1994 to 2002, starting with *Cremaster 4* (1994), moving on to *Cremaster 1* (1995), then *Cremaster 5* (1997), *Cremaster 2* (1999) and finally *Cremaster 3* (2002). Alongside the films Barney exhibits a series of sculptures and photographs that depict objects and scenes from the films, adding a three-dimensional spatial element to the work, as well as offering an enhanced and unconventional viewing experience to cinema audiences. In the cycle art and film collide, the culmination of which is the site-specific exhibition in the Guggenheim Museum in New York in 2003. For the *Cremaster* cycle's first major exhibition as a

completed work, the films were screened both in a conventional theatre within the Guggenheim and on monitors throughout the installation in the gallery, emphasising the relationships between all of the project's constituent parts (sculpture, drawing, and photography). Central to the exhibition was a five-channel video work, suspended from the top of the museum's Rotunda, that screened different excerpts from 'The Order,' the segment of *Cremaster 3* that was set in the Guggenheim itself. In a typically self-referential move, the exhibition space is also the setting of the entire work's central section. 'The Order' stages a kind of Olympic game, or competition, but with only one competitor played by Barney himself, with each of the five levels of the building's spiralling ramp presenting the athlete with a different obstacle to overcome so he can eventually graduate to the building's pinnacle. For the 2003 exhibition, each level of this ramp represented a different episode of the cycle, just as they had done in 'The Order.'

While individual films have been screened since 1995, as a group the cycle's five films have been screened since their completion in 2002 in a variety of different venues. As well as screenings in art galleries and museums, the cycle has been screened in a number of cinema theatres. For instance, in the UK they were screened in the Ritz in Brixton in a marathon single day of screenings in October 2002 and broken up into one- and two-film screenings per day as part of the Edinburgh Film Festival in August 2003. The use of both the cinema theatre and the white cube of the art gallery as exhibition venues makes very clear the differences between moving image art and cinema (from art house and avant-garde cinema to mainstream fare), both in terms of the aesthetic conventions of the films themselves and in terms of the usual reception of each. Sitting in a darkened cinema space, giving full attention to the film from its beginning through to its end and its especially composed musical score, is a very different experience from popping on a set of headphones in a gallery space, watching and listening to the excerpt of the film that happens to be playing before you move on, distracted by other people moving around the space that you occupy and the other works that compete for your attention. In a gallery space the viewer has the freedom to walk away from the monitor / screen and return, yet something is undoubtedly gained from sitting through these films in their entirety and giving to them one's absolute attention. This second viewing experience is enlightening

in that it tests the spectator's patience due to the films' closer relationship to art than to cinema. Without suggesting that one type of screening venue is preferable, Barney's decision to use different types of venues and set-ups forces comparisons that lead to a heightened awareness of the differences between art and cinema spaces, and the conventions of their usual objects of exhibition.

For Jonathan Jones, who reviewed the cycle for *The Guardian* newspaper, "The *Cremaster* cycle by Matthew Barney is the first truly great piece of cinema to be made in a fine art context since Dali and Bunuel filmed *Un chien andalou* in 1929."¹⁶ He comments on the cycle's willingness to engage a cinema audience in the way that fine art often is not, as much video and film installations "function, and only aspire to function, in museums, protected from the dirty mayhem of mainstream cinema."¹⁷ While we might expect there to be many overlaps between cinema and art, and especially moving image art, Jones claims that they are quite distinct areas of cultural production and that "Cinema and Art have circled each other, squared up to each other, over the years, but only occasionally come together, as here, convincingly."¹⁸ He insists that Barney's cycle "should be seen not just as a major American work of art but as a real piece of American cinema."¹⁹ The cycle is a work of art that (perhaps because of its emphasis on spectacle) occupies the space of the cinema theatre as easily as it occupies the museum or gallery space. It would be much more difficult for many other examples of film or video art to make the same transition into the space of the cinema. However, rather than this being seen as some sort of failure or denigration of certain pieces that don't sit comfortably within the cinema space, I suggest that it is more to the point to note that artworks tend to be designed with an exhibition space and format in mind and that one of the interesting things about Barney's work is that it has been made for both the cinema theatre and the

¹⁶ Jonathan Jones, 'The Myth-Maker' in *The Guardian*, October 16th 2002

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

art gallery.²⁰ This decision is part of a process of recontextualisation carried out on the texts he imitates.

Although the films are most often screened in their 'proper' numerical running order, they can also be shown in their chronological order; in the order they were made. In the Ritz the films were screened in their numerical order, while the Edinburgh Film Festival chose to screen them chronologically.²¹ Indeed, it makes a good deal of sense to see them chronologically as *Cremaster 3*, the last film made, acts as a kind of summary of the themes explored in the other four films. Conversely, we can see the sense of viewing this film summary in the middle of the whole cycle. The legitimacy of at least two viewing orders is a part of a general ambivalence enshrined in the cycle. Yet the work is not so open-ended that it is devoid of any economy. Rather, this is in fact quite a tightly construed piece, with every part working to elaborate on a number of constituent themes. In comparison to conventional cinema, the cycle *seems* to be open-ended, for instance it refuses to provide a definite conclusion and is comprised of numerous interconnecting layers that are impossible to comprehend while viewing. Although there are a number of possibilities available to the viewer when it comes to interpreting the work, there are a few significant themes, carried through the entire project in a set of recurring motifs which could be crudely reduced to two: an interest in a prolonged state of indeterminacy (expressed in Barney's interest in a state prior to sexual differentiation), and a revision of established narrative patterns and normative imagery demonstrated through reference to a variety of cultural forms; myth, folklore, Hollywood film, art, religion, and the values that each of these promotes. Both of these interests – the exploration of the notion of indeterminacy and revisions of established conventions – are intimately connected.

²⁰ In considering Barney's multimedia cycle designed for different screening venues we are reminded once again of the pioneering film work of Warhol with his great *Gesamtkunstwerk*, the *Exploding Plastic Inevitable* (1967) which combined his signature slightly slow motion film projections with rock band The Velvet Underground's live stage performance in a nightclub setting.

²¹ Having attended both of these screening events, I can see the sense of both screening orders.

In her impressively detailed essay in the Guggenheim's tome-like catalogue for the *Cremaster* cycle, Nancy Spector points out that Barney's particular interest in indeterminacy centres on sexual indeterminacy, which he sees as symbolising a general state of pure potential.²² To be precise it is the stage of foetal development, prior to the designation of sex, when the body is neither female nor male that fascinates Barney, both in itself, and as a symbolic transgressive state that is beyond both the confines of sexual differentiation and the more general dichotomous divisions of culture. The cycle of films takes its name from the cremaster muscle that raises and lowers the testicles depending on the body's temperature, or external stimuli. It is the action of raising or lowering in pre-natal development that initiates the process of sexual differentiation; ascending to become female and descending to become male. Spector describes the pre-sexed stage of foetal development as a kind of hallmark for the films, symbolising a utopian space beyond the limitations of our prevailing social and biological orders. Here, in this concept of indeterminacy symbolised by a moment during early foetal development, we can see the idea of excess, and of spilling over borders, so central to Barney's work. Indeterminacy suggests formlessness, something un-containable and boundless and implies an excessive state before the imposition of boundaries that separate the sexes.

This momentary state of genital indeterminacy is emblematic for Barney; it functions in his work as a symbol for unadulterated potential, providing him with a metaphoric vocabulary with which to organize and describe his own aesthetic system.²³

His interest in the potential represented by the foetal stage of sexual indeterminacy is intimately tied up with his quotation of quintessential Hollywood character types. The clear differences between male and female cinematic characters, both in terms of their narrative functions and their appearance, here becomes the ultimate expression of differentiation and a kind of stasis that could be seen to represent a loss of potential. This stasis can be seen in the cultural insistence on, and repetition of, the polar positions of masculinity and femininity. The *Cremaster* cycle, though it is clear on the inevitability of

²² Nancy Spector, *The Cremaster Cycle*, (New York: The Guggenheim Museum, 2002),

p.6

²³ Ibid.

sexual differentiation,²⁴ articulates a 'what if' in relation to the idea of an identity being uncategorisable, or of blending two or more distinct categories, or of occupying a state of androgyny, and in-betweeness. The (differentiated) images of Hollywood gender norms act as barometers in this system as they represent the extreme points of mandatory gender roles that frame this in-between state and define it through a process of contrast.

The symbol of indeterminacy runs throughout the cycle and its related sculptural works, in the form of what Barney names the 'field emblem,' consisting of an elongated oval with a line running through its centre, representing what Spector describes as "the orifice and its closure, the hermetic body."²⁵ Although the cycle does finally reach its conclusion with the fully descended testicles, or the final accomplishment of male sexuality, it is the journey to get to this end point, its elongation, and the deferral of differentiation that is of interest to Barney. Spector comments on the importance of this journey, or network of possible journeys, to the organisation of the films:

Rather, it is the path travelled between the states of ascension (female) and descension (male) – and all the possible detours that can occur along the way – that activates and organizes Barney's mythological system.²⁶

While Barney expresses an interest in a state that defies categorisation, he uses recognisable versions of masculinity and femininity as consistent points of reference throughout the cycle. These orthodox images act as points of comparison to the various hybrid, androgynous creatures that inhabit his narrative spaces, in effect rendering the usually stable positions of male and female unstable and suspect. Familiar images of gender are also drawn as rather flat clichés so that, paradoxically, the most evolved states seem the least resolved. For Barney, the narrow cultural definitions of gender are a corruption of possible gendered identities. Spector cites a quote from Barney where he states that "[o]bviously there are articulations that are specifically masculine and

²⁴ Though Barney's appropriation of cultural images of gender suggest that it isn't really biological determinism that he is interested in, or which he sees as the ultimate designator of sex and gender roles.

²⁵ Nancy Spector, *op cit.*, p.7

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p.13

feminine, but I think there's a lot of space in between that has to do with other points on the graph."²⁷ Barney then asserts the malleability of identity set against the hypocrisy of strict, and mostly dualistic, gender codes.

To mobilise this state of indeterminacy Barney deploys familiar gendered images from Hollywood history and one in particular is the chorus line that was a staple feature of the musical, and especially of Busby Berkeley's high impact musical numbers. The chorus is a feature of every film in the cycle. In *Cremaster 1*, eight glamorous air hostesses are housed in two blimps while a chorus of young women perform a version of a Berkeley number on the ground below choreographed by the blimps' mistress, Goodyear, who is herself a platinum blonde starlet reminiscent of the Hollywood goddess. The chorines here wear replicas of the luxurious costumes worn for Berkeley's number 'The Shadow Waltz' in *The Gold Diggers of 1933* (Mervyn Le Roy, 1933). A Mormon choir provides the chorus for *Cremaster 2*, while in *Cremaster 3* versions of the Hollywood musical chorus is parodied in the section called 'The Order,' with both The Order of the Rainbow for Girls, a row of tap dancers in lamb costumes, and a group of bathing beauties who also act as 'gameshow lovelies' as they introduce all of the 'contestants' at the opening of this section of film. Three androgynous orange-haired characters, known as the trio of fairies, act as the chorus in *Cremaster 4*, and the hermaphrodite water sprites comprise the chorus in *Cremaster 5*. While generally faithful in his reincarnation of the chorus, in the last two examples Barney conjures up the familiar Hollywood imagery of the glamorous chorus girl, but deviates from it by placing androgynous and inter-sexed characters in what would usually be a clearly demarcated feminine space. Spector highlights the very significant role played by the chorus in the economy of the cycle overall:

In addition to his leading characters, Barney utilizes the dramatic device of the chorus as a connecting fiber in the increasingly layered *Cremaster* narratives [...] Although choruses manifest differently in each *Cremaster* instalment, they play a fundamental role in the cycle.²⁸

²⁷ Ibid., p.14

²⁸ Ibid., p.19

In particular, however, Barney's recreation of classical film images of femininity and the male-orientated quest narrative can be seen to critique the limitations of the quoted iconography and the gendered positions it both reflects and produces. While this may not have been the artist's intention, his preoccupation with gender and with the conceptualisation of a gender neutral state, as well as spaces filled with hybrid and androgynous creatures, provides plenty of scope to interpret Barney's imitations of Hollywood clichés of gendered identity as parodic and therefore as critical of their origins.

Spector suggests that Barney has no interest in entering a critical engagement with the films, or film imagery, he appropriates. According to her, Barney's use of appropriated cinematic imagery is not, unlike the work of Cindy Sherman and other appropriation artists of the 1980s, "in some kind of deconstructive act aimed at popular culture."²⁹ Instead, she claims, he uses the language that he appropriates, both aesthetic and structural, to develop his own narrative using the various genres he quotes as "host bodies" each of which must be meticulously copied to the extent that "each film must perform with the same authority as the genre it occupies; it must act and think like the form that harbors and nourishes it."³⁰

Yet, Barney invokes a variety of genres and narratives, such as the musical film, Celtic mythology, Masonic rites and rituals, art history, Olympic Games, and opera, and combines them with his own overarching themes of prolonged indeterminacy and the Oedipal drama; the psychoanalytic narrative that dramatises the loss of potential as the child takes up her / his proper place in the social order. With so many competing styles and narrative types it is difficult to view these appropriated genres as "host bodies" or as so accurate that they possess the authority of the original. The integrity of each genre and text is shattered as it is chopped up and, while elements of each might be perfectly simulated, they are simulated fragments nonetheless, and not entire works perfectly

²⁹ Ibid., pp.76-77

³⁰ Ibid., p.77

reproduced. While Spector's essay beautifully evokes Barney's films, explaining the various themes and motifs that connect them, this point that denies the films' critical engagement with appropriated imagery seems rather indefensible and certainly one that this discussion contests.

As we know from studies of parody, such Margaret A. Rose's detailed historical overview of theories and definitions of parody, *Parody: Ancient, Modern and Postmodern*, the authority of the text is located with the parodic text and not the one parodied.³¹ It is in this sense that the form or text that is imitated can never simply act as a 'host body' for advancing the filmmakers (parodist's) separate concerns. Rose insists that there is a clear differentiation between the parody text and the parodied text. The film parody does not occupy or reside within the established text that it references. Rather, it *incorporates* aspects of it, or emulates it, in order to transform it somehow. Contrary to Spector's claims then, Barney's films do not occupy pre-existing genres as host bodies. They *incorporate* them.

Barney evokes gender stereotypes by quoting iconic Hollywood imagery, as well as, for example, in his depictions of the exclusively 'male' space of Freemasonry and the 'female' space of domesticity (e.g. in *Cremaster 3*, the repetitious act of potato slicing symbolises the drudgery of housework). His overarching theme and narrative drive focus on the build up to the moment of sexual differentiation, and on the movement from femininity to masculinity. Barney is clearly fascinated with the biological and cultural categorisation of sex, particularly as poles of opposition (femininity is achieved through ascension, masculinity by descension). His appropriation of quintessential Hollywood male and female types cannot be seen as devoid of critique as he (the artist and the protagonist) strives to prolong a utopian state of indeterminacy, before and beyond the limitations of prevailing sexual categories.

³¹ Margaret A. Rose, *Parody: Ancient, Modern and Postmodern* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p.183

The cycle challenges the conventions of Hollywood cinema in other ways as part of its general critical engagement with it. There is a disquieting absence of dialogue, at times the narrative progression seems to be painfully slow, and the optional screening order displays ambivalence towards linear trajectory, ridiculing the necessity of plot and character development and the idea of a correct running order. The cycle also refuses to provide a clear conclusion. While the films construct perfect copies of Hollywood imagery, they flout conventional cinema's narrative conventions, making their critique, and ambivalent regard for it, discernable. Paradoxically, another consequence of this faithful reincarnation of silver screen imagery is to make apparent the differences between art and cinema. The cycle's slower pace, minimal dialogue, multiple narrative threads and dual screening order are more readily associated with art than with cinema.

Siegfried Kracauer's *Mass Ornament*

Before turning to a closer analysis of the *Cremaster* cycle and in particular 'The Order' segment of *Cremaster 3*, I would like to offer an explication of Kracauer's theory of distraction in relation to cinema and its usefulness for this discussion. *The Mass Ornament*³² brings together a collection of Kracauer's early writings on popular culture, roughly spanning the period from 1920-1933; otherwise known as the Weimar essays. Included in this collection is a series of essays either solely about cinema, such as 'Film 1928' and 'Cult of Distraction,' or that include cinema in their general theorising of popular culture, such as 'The Mass Ornament.' Both 'The Mass Ornament' and 'Cult of Distraction' advance a theory that recuperates certain elements of mass culture at a time when to do so would have been almost inconceivable amongst the intellectual elite. While most of the essays in *The Mass Ornament* support this recuperation of the objects of mass culture, it is these two essays that place it centre stage and discuss it in relation to cinema. They are therefore the two most useful essays to engage with for the purposes of this discussion. In his introduction to *The Mass Ornament* Thomas E. Levin explains the ambivalence of the mass ornament, such as that exemplified in the form of the legs of the dance troupe the Tiller Girls. In the patterns formed by these groups Kracauer sees "the geometry of the mass of Tiller Girls as both ornamentalization of function and a

³² Siegfried Kracauer, *The Mass Ornament* (London: Harvard University Press, 1995)

functionalization of ornament.”³³ We may also discern this ambivalence in the ornament’s mesmerizing of the masses who consume it and its coincident potential to awaken them to the conditions of their own existence in modernity, its simultaneous seduction and education. The mass ornament is a product of mass culture, which has been made to capitalize on the newly available leisure time of the urban working class. For Kracauer this ornament represents ‘progressive potential’ as it caters for a new kind of mass, one formed from a shift in social and economic organisation that replaces the old community with the new group of, what Levin describes as, “functionally linked individuals.”³⁴ The collective effort of the Tiller Girls, like the collective effort of the machine operatives in any typical factory, makes abstracted patterns, producing the “ornamentization of function,” an aesthetic expression of the labour whose purpose (function) is to entertain (Tiller girls) or to manufacture a product on an assembly line (factory workers).

What sets Kracauer apart from many of his contemporaries is his anti-elitist attitude to popular culture and his refusal to uncritically reproduce the insistent hierarchy imbedded in ideas of an ‘authentic’ and an ‘inauthentic’ culture, or high art and mass culture. Instead, he posits that enlightenment will only come from engaging with the mass ornament: “the path leads directly through the center of the mass ornament, not away from it.”³⁵ Of all aspects of popular culture, Kracauer favored photography and film, not because of their ability to reflect reality, but because of their ability to represent and reflect the fragmentary experience of modern life. It would be a mistake to suggest that he favored all forms of cinema, or all popular forms of cinema, as he did not. His main bone of contention about most types of cinema is that they failed to reflect social reality, instead staging “escape attempts”³⁶ in the contrived setting of the film studio. As he puts it: “They have no content. *Lack of substance is the decisive trait of the totality of established film production.*”³⁷ Perhaps surprisingly, these ‘escape attempts’ that

³³ Thomas E. Levin, ‘Introduction’ in Siegfried Kracauer, *ibid.*, p.18

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p.18

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p.19

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p.308

³⁷ Siegfried Kracauer, ‘Film 1928,’ *op. cit.*, p.319

Kracauer describes are not to be found in all forms of entertainment cinema, though we may be inclined to think that is where Kracauer's theory is going. Rather, it is in fact certain forms of entertainment cinema that he reifies and that he believes hold the promise of enlightenment for the masses. Kracauer celebrated and made claims for the importance of what he refers to as a "cinema of distraction," a cinema that reveled in and displayed its particular capacity for spectacle.

The musical genre, a subgenre of the classical Hollywood film which established itself in the late 1920s,³⁸ is an example of the cinema that Kracauer invests in and is exceptional in terms of its uneasy relationship to the conventions of the classical film. It is an example of a film genre that foregrounds the spectacular, even at the expense of narrative linearity and progression and ideas of economy so central to the classical Hollywood text. For Kracauer, forms of so-called 'lowbrow' culture reveal the discontinuity and splintering of modern life instead of trying to conceal it.³⁹ The musical also fully exploits what is specific to film as a medium, offering high key visual spectacle. The big song and dance numbers of the musical completely disregard narrative continuity and development. Realism and causality, two essential structuring elements of classical cinema, are sacrificed for the sake of total indulgence in pure spectacle.

In 'Cult of Distraction' Kracauer observes the growing numbers of Berliners who flock to the city's increasing number of elegant picture palaces in order to submerge themselves in the "total artwork [*Gesamtkunstwerk*] of effects"⁴⁰ in place of more bourgeois art events such as art exhibitions, opera, and ballet. To put it simply, bourgeois critics view distraction as bad, and see their culture as authentic and 'superior.' Kracauer regards distraction as a positive force as it more truthfully reflects contemporary social experience under capitalism, and deems the audience that seeks it out as more truthful than the pretentious bourgeoisie who contrive to make all cultural production 'sensible.'

³⁸ Martin Rubin claims that the musical took its shape around 1929, and *The Broadway Melody* is often cited as the first true musical. See Rubin, *Showstoppers*, op. cit., p.25

³⁹ Thomas Levin 'Introduction' in Siegfried Kracauer, op cit., p.23

⁴⁰ Siegfried Kracauer, 'The Cult of Distraction,' op. cit., p.324

His salient point with regard to the role of distraction is summed up in a few lines from this essay:

Here, in pure externality, the audience encounters itself; its own reality is revealed in the fragmented sequence of splendid sense impressions. Were this reality to remain hidden from the viewers, they could neither attack nor change it; its disclosure in distraction is therefore of *moral* significance [...] [T]he fact that these shows convey precisely and openly to thousands of eyes and ears the disorder of society – this is precisely what would enable them to evoke and maintain the tension that must precede the inevitable and radical change. In the streets of Berlin, one is often struck by the momentary insight that someday all this will suddenly burst apart. The entertainment to which the general public throngs ought to produce the same effect.⁴¹

In this section he also points out that “this is the case only if distraction is not an end in itself.”⁴² If distraction, seduction of the senses, and a total escape from day to day realities is an end in itself then some (misguided) attempt is made to combine the fragmented elements, so reflective of the audience’s lived realities, into a coherent whole. For Kracauer, this works against the ‘nature’ of the isolated fragments of which the work is comprised, artificially imposing order on something that is inherently disordered and chaotic.

In *The Society of the Spectacle* Guy Debord laments the general “‘loss of quality’ associated with the commodity-form or created by the ‘proletarianization of the world.’”⁴³ He opens the first chapter with a quote from Feuerbach’s *The Essence of Christianity*, which states that “‘illusion only is sacred, truth profane [...] the highest degree of illusion comes to be the highest degree of sacredness.’”⁴⁴ Debord also explains that this worship of the spectacle makes visible the “negation of life.”⁴⁵ In that sense then we can see that, while Debord clearly disapproves of the world’s colonization by the

⁴¹ Ibid., pp.326-327

⁴² Ibid., p. 326

⁴³ Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle* (New York: Zone Books, 1996), p.8

⁴⁴ Ibid., p.11

⁴⁵ Ibid., p.8

commodity and its resultant alienation of the spectator that it seduces he, like Kracauer, also suggests that it can expose the fragmentary and negated modern condition:

The origin of the spectacle lies in the world's loss of unity, and its massive expansion in the modern period demonstrates how total this loss has been [...] The spectacle thus unites what is separate, but it unites it, only *in its separateness*.⁴⁶

Debord wrote his book, which concentrates on the negative aspects of commodity culture and its imperialism, in 1967, some thirty or forty years after Kracauer's Weimar essays. This elitist attitude to popular culture has permeated intellectual discourse for much of the twentieth century. In his very useful account of Kracauer's concept of distraction in his essay on Kracauer and surrealism for *Screen*, Ian Aitkin opens by commenting on the early negative connotations of distraction, prior to Kracauer's elevation of it as a potentially enlightening mode of experience.⁴⁷ He writes that it moves from being seen as a mode that leads to "an impoverished and abstract encounter between the self and the world" that sits in opposition with the "contemplative forms of concentration and more unified modes of experience associated with the high arts"⁴⁸ to taking on more progressive implications in the 1920s as it was recognized as an anti-bourgeois cultural experience. In particular Kracauer valued the inherently distracted form of film and its mode of spectatorship. As Aitkin puts it, making reference to Kracauer's essay 'Cult of Distraction: On Berlin's Picture Palaces,' there is "a correspondence between the 'basic properties, affinities and identities' of the film medium, and the underlying properties of modernity."⁴⁹

Like Aitkin, Levin points out that the notion of 'distraction' as a category of cultural consumption, and in this case spectatorship, gains legitimacy through the writings of Kracauer and his fellow modernists (notably Walter Benjamin): "Stripped of its

⁴⁶ Ibid., p.22

⁴⁷ Ian Aitkin, 'Distraction and Redemption: Kracauer, surrealism and phenomenology' in *Screen* Vol. 39, no.2, Summer 1998, pp.124-140

⁴⁸ Ibid., p.125

⁴⁹ Ibid.

pejorative connotation, this category is here recast as the signature of a nonbourgeois mode of sensory experience.”⁵⁰ He cites velocity, constant flux and shock as emblems of modernity, all of which should be displayed to their maximum potential by cinema, rather than denied. Levin also asserts that distraction provides a challenge to “the bourgeois fiction of the coherent self-identical subject” and acts “as a barometer of the current state of mankind’s alienation from itself.”⁵¹

As Aitkin suggests, Kracauer disliked both avant-garde and art cinema as he believed them to be rooted in ideology because of their reliance on certain conventions and formulae.⁵² He favoured films that attempted to reflect reality, rather than to mould or transform it. For Kracauer, rather than encouraging the spectator’s awakening to the fragmentation of his/her existence and to rediscover the “texture of life”⁵³ that had been obscured by the abstract discourses, art film and avant-garde film cover reality. He rejected film with any sort of message that sought to transform reality, as it was not potentially redemptive. He also favoured episodic organisation in a film over a homogenous, linear structuring. As Aitkin puts it, certain films held the promise of allowing the spectator to rediscover the world and “this rediscovery takes the form of redeeming the world from abstraction through indeterminacy and the empirical.”⁵⁴ The abstraction he refers to here is the alienation that the modern subject experiences from reality and the various discourses that attempt to impose some sense of shape and logic on what is, in reality, a fragmented experience. Crucial to Kracauer was that a film would allow for a plurality of meanings to be derived, and those meanings depended on the interpretation of the spectator. Films should therefore be ambiguous and impressionistic, opening the text out to multiple readings rather than closing it down (as the classic Hollywood text does for instance).

⁵⁰ Siegfried Kracauer, op cit., p.26

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ian Aitkin, op cit., p.130

⁵³ Kracauer from *Theory of Film*, p.298, quoted in Aitkin, op cit., p.126

⁵⁴ Ian Aitkin, op cit., p.132

Aitkin provides an example of a film that Kracauer admires in order to illustrate the type of indeterminate cinema outlined by his theories. The film is *Regen* (1929) by Dutch filmmaker Joris Ivens and it centres on a rainstorm and its aftermath. The chief interest of the film is in the recording of the visual changes that the storm produced, such as changes to light and colour and texture on the city streets. He also notes that this is an example of an episodic film with a very loose composition. Also importantly *Regen* disregards continuity editing to assemble a variety of “impressions seen from a variety of viewpoints.”⁵⁵ It is important then that the spectator is allowed to interpret the image as she/he wishes and is given the freedom to do so. Kracauer admired the surrealists’ ‘stream of consciousness’ approach to filmmaking. However, he believed that ultimately surrealist symbolism *directed* the spectator’s interpretation. With surrealist film, as with most types of narrative film, images and shots are sewn into a meaningful whole and the spectator is instructed on how to interpret the image, or at least informed of the image’s significance in the context of the film:

For Kracauer, the over-determined symbolic function of the image in films such as *Un Chien andalou* restricts the image’s potential indeterminacy, and imposes a ‘strained meaningfulness’ on it.⁵⁶

Although surrealism permits the spectator to make whatever sense they wish of its various unexpected juxtapositions, Kracauer insists that its imagery is symbolic rather than ambiguous.⁵⁷ Contrarily, while Eisenstein’s cinema produced an emotional response in the spectator, therefore leading interpretation at least as much as surrealist symbolism did, there were aspects of it that Kracauer celebrated, and we can see from this that his idea of an indeterminate cinema is formed from a very diverse base of cinematic influences, as he is attracted to elements of Soviet montage, surrealism, and Hollywood cinema, though he put most faith in documentary modes of filmmaking.

⁵⁵ Ibid., p.134

⁵⁶ Ibid., p.136

⁵⁷ Ibid., p.137

What is it then about popular cinema that Kracauer sees as potentially progressive or liberating for its spectators? While popular cinema does not aim to educate, its form often reproduces the separation and fragmentation that characterize modern life, and this is its attraction for Kracauer. It is in its fragmentary form that it holds the promise of change. Aitkin describes the redemptive qualities of film for Kracauer as emanating from its offer to transcend “the abstraction inherent within modernity through its ability to disclose the sensuous and ephemeral aspects of reality.”⁵⁸

As already noted, for Kracauer, the audience’s “own reality is revealed in the fragmented sequence of splendid sense impressions”⁵⁹ produced by the cinema to which the masses flock. However, he also suggests that a kind of perversion, or corruption, takes place in the production of most examples of distraction, whereby there is some attempt made to impose coherence on the disorder of that cinema, but this is not always the case. ‘Cult of Distraction’ ends with the demand that filmmakers “should rid their offerings of all trappings that deprive film of its rights and must aim radically toward a kind of distraction that exposes disintegration instead of masking it.”⁶⁰ Of all Hollywood genres, the musical is an example of distraction that does not necessarily resolve the ‘problem’ of fragmentation that it produces. Instead fragmentation (and therefore disorder) remains a crucial feature of the musical. However, even within this errant Hollywood genre, attempts are made to harness the fragments into an organic whole. One film director, and director of the musical number sequences of many musical films, who avoids this holistic approach to the musical and indulges in its disjunctures and schisms is Busby Berkeley, one of the most celebrated of all musical directors and the one referenced directly by Barney.

The Mass Ornament of Busby Berkeley’s Musical Numbers

Martin Rubin’s book *Showstoppers* elaborates on the idea of the ‘Berkeleyesque’ as a kind of excessive cinematic spectacle exemplified by Berkeley’s musical numbers, but

⁵⁸ Ibid, p.125

⁵⁹ Siegfried Kracauer, op cit., p.326

⁶⁰ Ibid., p.328

evident also in some theatre productions that preceded it and in some cinema that followed it. What sets Berkeley's work apart from that of other musical directors is its refusal to integrate the musical numbers within the larger frame of the films' stories. In accordance with Kracauer's theories on the potential of the cinema to reflect modernity, Berkeley worked *with* the camera, designing numbers that would exploit its abilities to move (to track, to move on a crane etc.) and produced maximum spectacle, with little regard for the discontinuity it caused. In fact, discontinuity was the desired effect.

The musical makes mischief with dominant values of realism, consistency, and narrativity, dancing giddily close to their counterparts – contradiction, inconsistency, and showstopping spectacle. But as the musical film became more attached to a gospel of integration between story and music, Berkeley's brand of 'gratuitous' spectacle (i.e., not narratively functional) began to appear increasingly anachronistic, excessive, and even outré.⁶¹

Rubin describes an irreconcilable tension that exists between the integrative and nonintegrative elements of the musical genre, which can also be described as an antagonism between narrative and spectacle, verisimilitude and sensationalism. For him, this tension is edifying, particularly in the Berkeleysque musical as the semi-autonomous spectacle of the musical numbers resists incorporation by the narrative whole and arrests narrative flow. He notes that it is quite usual in Berkeley musicals for a part of the film's 'realist' narrative to dissolve into fantastic visions of absolute spectacle.⁶² He sees the musical film as based on the fruitful and ongoing volatility between integrative and nonintegrative elements and in fact argues that nonintegration is an essential characteristic of the musical.

Typically, the more integrated the musical, the more respected it is by critics. He offers the examples of this supposedly more sophisticated model in *Oklahoma!* (Fred Zinnemann, 1955) and *Show Boat* (George Sidney, 1951). These films work to produce seamless transitions between 'realist' narrative sections and musical numbers, often by

⁶¹ Martin Rubin, op cit., p.2

⁶² He gives the examples of 'Shanghai Lil,' 'I Only Have Eyes for You,' and 'Spin a Little Web of Dreams.'

using the device of the stage performance, or community dance, to legitimize the song and dance elements of the film. In a move that accords with Kracauer's ideas of redemptive cinema, the aggregative model, on the other hand "works to maximize heterogeneity, excess, and spectacle."⁶³ In this model, the 'absurdist' or anti-realist tendency for actors to suddenly burst into song and dance routines, accompanied by 'strangers' on the street, against an abstract set is not explained away or smoothly linked to other non-musical sections of the film.

Berkeley's musicals push the aggregative model as far as they can, clearly stating a preference for the self-enclosed spectacular number. For Berkeley the autonomy or even semi-autonomy of the musical number from the narrative was a very positive and liberating force that left him free to choreograph these scenes however he pleased, without any prohibitions dictated by 'realism' or the restrictions of having to maintain some kind of link from verisimilitude to spectacle. The aggregative model is characterised by a high degree of, what Rubin names, 'impossible' numbers; those musical elements that cannot be rationalised by the narrative.⁶⁴ The tight economy and causality of the classical Hollywood text is flouted in favour of their complete opposites, superfluity and excess, and the logic and sense of the realist text gives way to indulgence in the irrational and the abstract:

Of crucial importance to the creation of Berkeleysque spectacle is a sense of gratuitousness, of uselessness, of extravagance, of rampant excess, of over-indulgence, of flaunting, of conspicuous consumption, of display for the sake of display, of elements calling attention to themselves rather than serving a higher, all-encompassing concept such as the narrative. (Narrativity, on the other hand, is a more economical process, working to 'use up' its elements – to contain them, absorb them, and invest them into their function within the plot).⁶⁵

By using a fragmented form the musical genre is pitched in an awkward, anarchic relationship to the dominant model of filmmaking to which it belongs, shattering its homogeneity and verisimilitude. Barney appropriates elements of the musical,

⁶³ Ibid., p.19

⁶⁴ Ibid., p.37

⁶⁵ Ibid., p.41

acknowledging its subversiveness, echoing and furthering its fragmented structure by placing slices of it within his own multivalent narrative, resulting in a complex interweaving of various narrative threads and generic tropes.

The Cremaster Cycle's Recuperation of Distraction

In the *Cremaster* cycle, Barney conjures up the glamorous spectacle of the cinema of 'distraction' that Kracauer exonerated and praised in the face of the anti-Hollywood criticism of his contemporaries. Although there are obvious elements of other Hollywood genres such as the western, the action film and slapstick comedy evoked in the cycle, the musical is the film genre most frequently cited, and the chorus line the most routinely summoned aspect of that genre.

The musical's disaffected relationship to the dominant model of filmmaking elects it a useful ally to Barney in his own critical revisions of Hollywood. Barney's allusion to the musical, and particularly to the chorus, can be seen as a part of the cycle's overall investigation of mythical male and female characters and the clear distinctions that are drawn between them. The cycle's narrative centres on a dynamic male hero who must struggle to overcome certain physical and intellectual obstacles in order to reach his goal. In 'The Order,' the section of *Cremaster 3* that the remainder of this discussion will mostly focus on, Barney must overcome a number of obstacles, the ultimate one represented by a half-woman half-cat character, in order to succeed in passing his initiation rites and graduate to Master Mason. This narrative pattern directly imitates that of the classical film text, usually described as having a four-act structure, with the presentation of the obstacle and its eradication comprising acts two and three, while a state of equilibrium and a return to equilibrium define acts one and two.

Among the familiar imagery evoked in the cycle are the clichéd versions of gender insisted on by Hollywood cinema, which tend to position the woman as object and the man as subject of the narrative. Generally in classical Hollywood film, the male protagonist is the central figure, driving the narrative forward through his attempts to obtain the object of his desire, while the female character tends to represent that object of

desire and is a fairly mysterious and underdeveloped character by comparison. The objectification of the woman's body may take many forms, and has been discussed at length by feminist film criticism since the 1970s, usually involving various strategies that fetishise the woman's body rendering her unthreatening and reassuring to the anxiety ridden male spectator. Often this takes the form of turning her into an idealistic yet enigmatic image through a particular use of editing and *mise-en-scène*, as discussed in my earlier chapter on Warhol's films.

In the musical, the woman's objectification reaches its ultimate expression in the chorus line. While there is always a key female character in these films, there is also a significant female presence represented by the large group of chorus girls who supply the films' moments of gratuitous spectacle. As well as noting the tendency to turn the woman's body into an object (a flower, a cigarette, a Zeppelin, a violin), Rubin points out the more frequent tendency in Berkeley musicals, and musicals in general, to treat the woman's body as an object itself, as pure decoration that contributes to a large pattern formed by the group. He likens the dancers' bodies to machine parts claiming that these groups of women that form the chorus line resemble the factory assembly line and describes the patterns they form as "conveyor-like treadmills, and elaborate revolving machine-like structures."⁶⁶ So the chorine loses all sense of individuality and becomes meaningful only in her contribution to the structure of the pattern that she, in part, forms. Rubin notes a certain level of objectification that may involve the woman becoming a part of the architecture of an interior, but goes on to describe a more extreme version of objectification that produces the woman as "deindividualized unit"⁶⁷ within a larger decorative schema. Fischer comments on Berkeley's deliberate choice of girls who looked alike to form these perfect patterns of his, each one becoming what she describes as "biotic tile in an abstract mosaic."⁶⁸ It was more important that they looked alike and were beautiful than that they could dance. She quotes Berkeley who expresses

⁶⁶ Ibid., p.52

⁶⁷ Ibid., p.71

⁶⁸ Lucy Fischer, op. cit, p.138

satisfaction at selecting new girls for his homogenous line-up that, when placed alongside the others, “matched like pearls.”⁶⁹

Rubin lists a number of recurring types of patterns that transform the individual woman into one of these “deindividualized units,” that includes the kaleidoscopic patterns seen from overhead shots of the dancers, the “parade of faces” which consists of close-up shots of a line of smiling faces (a device derived from the beauty pageant where the girls’ faces are revealed one at a time), and a shot that involves tracking through the legs of dancing girls. For Rubin, this level of abstraction of the body achieved by Berkeley is “startling and even disturbing.”⁷⁰

It is interesting that in these moments of distraction or spectacle, that are considered so progressive by Kracauer, extreme abstraction and objectification of the human body is predominantly associated with the woman’s body. We could suggest then that these patterns, as well as foregrounding the alienation and fragmentation of the modern subject for Kracauer, also acknowledge modernity’s persistent trading on the image of woman as object.⁷¹ They also give visual expression to the feminisation of the masses in modernity that Huyssen describes. These abstract spectacular elements of Berkeley’s cinema are the expression of Kracauer’s redemptive mass ornament.

The Natural History of the Chorus Girl, a book that maps the historical development of the chorus, defines the chorus girl as “any young lady who, unnamed, has trod the boards in the company of her friends.”⁷² According to its authors Derek and Julia Parker the sole function of the chorus girl was to provide “a picture of feminine beauty for the delight of an audience of admiring men.”⁷³ While this is a rather uncritical study overall,

⁶⁹ Ibid., p.137

⁷⁰ Martin Rubin, op. cit., p.72

⁷¹ Modernist representation has always acknowledged the ‘value’ of women from Edouard Manet’s depictions of Parisian prostitutes to Duchamp’s mechanistic *Nude Descending a Staircase*.

⁷² Derek & Julia Parker, *The Natural History of the Chorus Girl* (New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1975), p.6

⁷³ Ibid.

it usefully comments on the decorative function of the chorus and the anonymity of its members. The lack of individuality inherent in any chorus line suits Barney's agenda of suppressing character development. The chorus line is never comprised of individuals, of *characters*. Each member of the chorus is "unnamed," significant only in her contribution to forming the decorative unity of the grouped bodies. While the anonymity of the chorus in any film is a given, Barney extends this prohibition of character development to his central protagonists. Spector quotes Barney as he describes his interest in restraining the development of each character so that she/he seems in ways inanimate, becoming a kind of sculptural form, an object:

[T]here is a resistance to character development beyond a certain point, beyond a kind of threshold between a sculptural entity and something that might be an overdetermined element. In that way there is a lack of character development that interests me – the fact that they can quiver between something understood as a character with agency and something that operates more as a state of some sort, or a zone.⁷⁴

All characters in Barney's films, whether male or female, part of a group or an individual, a central protagonist or a supporting actor, are underdeveloped two-dimensional objects that function as part of the general *mise-en-scène*. The central figure, played by Barney himself, is left incomplete, only roughly sketched. We expect the chorus to offer spectacle and pattern without any attention to characterisation. We do not expect a two-dimensional protagonist, and this adds to our anxiety as spectators attempting to access the films through learned identification patterns. Barney reproduces the dynamic between the individual and the group so central to the musical and, as we can see, this tends also to be divided along gender lines as a dynamic between male and female zones. Spector points out that where the chorus is female, and drawn from popular imagery, it provides a familiar point of reference in the films that is welcomed by the spectator in the midst of an otherwise confusing mesh of narrative fibres:

Given Barney's tactical restraint in preventing his main characters from developing beyond a basic communicative level, the choruses are often the most

⁷⁴Matthew Barney quoted in Nancy Spector, *op cit.*, p.19

accessible entities in the work, providing, in some cases, entertainment, comic relief, and pure visual pleasure.⁷⁵

For both Berkeley and Barney the individual character, and her/his peculiarities and motivations, is not important. There are of course central protagonists in the work of both filmmakers, but in both character development is retarded and at most the function and interest of the main protagonist becomes her/his relationship to the group; an undifferentiated conglomerate of body parts. Although Berkeley's lead characters are developed to a greater extent than those of Barney, he used enough restraint in his development of them in order to ensure that they did not pose any competition to his spectacular numbers. Rubin makes numerous references to the generic looks of "pleasant but low-key"⁷⁶ actors such as Ruby Keeler and Dick Powell, who Berkeley selected as they lacked the screen presence of other big stars and therefore posed no threat to the real stars of his films; his show-stopping numbers. In its deviation from cinematic norms, Barney's prevention of characterisation in relation to the key male protagonist serves to critique the substantial discrepancy between the usually limited characterisation of the female by comparison to the much more developed characterisation of the male.

As noted earlier, the aggregative musical stages a battle between narrative and spectacle in which spectacle wins out. In the musical, as in 'The Order' section of *Cremaster 3*, the individual is the male hero who propels the narrative forward through his journey from one place to another. He is pitched against the group, which is inherently female and produces the spectacle element of the film. Barney's athletic hero must overcome a series of obstacles, two of which are presented by the feminine entities of the chorus and the cat-woman creature. There is a significant break in the narrative as Barney's character, The Entered Apprentice, stops to look while the dancers, of the Order of the Rainbow for Girls, mesmerise him with their rhythmic tapping and smiling faces, while dressed in lamb costumes. Earlier the bathing beauties on the ground floor command our gaze as they frolic in their foamy bath. Though she is not part of a group, the cat-woman performs a ritualistic seduction as she circles the Apprentice, staging a literal

⁷⁵ Ibid., pp.19-20

⁷⁶ Martin Rubin, op cit., p.98

battle of the sexes. In each example the female presence, associated with spectacle, hypnotises the protagonist and arrests the narrative by delaying his progress.

Barney's narratives tend to be both basic and highly complex at the same time. They are basic insofar as the central action seems to be provided by clear (though often difficult) tasks. In this sense we can see that the pared down narrative element of the *Cremaster* films is devoid of convoluted plot structure. Indeed, at times, by comparison to the Hollywood films they allude to visually, nothing much seems to happen. Take for instance the narrative of *Cremaster 1* in which a double figure Goodyear (played by burlesque dancer Marti Domination) simultaneously occupies two blimps that hover over the playing field of Bronco Stadium in Barney's hometown of Boise, Idaho. In each blimp, tended to by four airhostesses, there is a table covered in grapes and a large sculpture made from petroleum jelly, one of Barney's signature materials. Seated underneath the table in each blimp, and encased by the long drapes of the tablecloth that hang all around her, Goodyear proceeds to direct the movement of the chorines by arranging grapes into symmetrical patterns, that they must imitate on the pitch below. Eventually we see Goodyear herself dancing and smiling radiantly alongside her troop of dancers, each of whom wears a replica of the pink, hooped outfits worn in 'The Shadow Waltz' sequence of Berkeley's *The Gold Diggers of 1933*. The intricate patterns formed by the Goodyear Chorus Girls and directed by Goodyear herself outline the image of the still undifferentiated, or androgynous, reproductive organs, also represented by the shape of the two blimps that float above them. While the patterns formed are complex, in relation to activity and setting this is quite a straightforward narrative.

Cremaster 4 and *Cremaster 5* also follow relatively straightforward (though in no way familiar) plots, however, the narratives of *Cremaster 2* and *Cremaster 3* are more complicated and involve many more characters and settings. Like *Cremaster 1*, in *Cremaster 3* we have mirrored narratives, an overarching one and 'The Order' a central segment framed by the main narrative, each set in a different landmark building. In the main narrative, staged in the Chrysler building, Barney plays The Entered Apprentice who must go through three stages of initiation rites in order to become a Master Mason.

The father figure, played by the artist Richard Serra, is the sinister mythic figure of Hiram Abiff who supposedly built Solomon's Temple and has special knowledge of all of the mysteries of the world. In the sub-narrative of 'The Order' Serra plays himself at the height of his career, a figure that epitomises the masculinity of much 1980s art as he occupies one of the levels of the Guggenheim that the Apprentice must try to conquer and ascend. Serra flings hot petroleum jelly at the walls of one of the Guggenheim's ramps in a re-enactment of his earlier *Splash* (1968-70) pieces, in which hot lead was splashed against the spaces that connect wall to floor. Barney challenges the senior, and world-renowned artist, Serra, whose place he aspires to take. Both Barney and Serra stage epic and heroic works of art, yet while Serra's are the genuine article, Barney's are always conversant with and critical of traditional notions of heroism and masculinity and are therefore tinged with degrees of self-reflexivity and parody. Barney reproduces the 'autonomous segment within the film' device of the musical in 'The Order,' which is a self-enclosed section of *Cremaster 3*. In the main narrative the Apprentice climbs to the top of the Chrysler to confront the Architect / Master Mason, again played by Serra, mirroring the 'contest' stages of 'The Order.'

In the examples given here we can see some of the ways that Barney's particular parodic activity works. Like any parodist, Barney is involved in an ongoing process of imitation and alteration of the target text. Unlike many examples of film and video art, Barney's cycle is a big-budget glamorous spectacle that emulates the high production values of Hollywood, as well as its sleek branding and marketing strategies. His films also accurately reference particular Hollywood imagery, especially in his use of the chorus line in both *Cremaster 1* and *Cremaster 3*, though versions of the chorus are also evident in each of the other films and especially in *Cremaster 5* with its group of underwater sprites. In *Cremaster 1* Goodyear is a perfect copy of the platinum blonde Hollywood starlet while the Goodyear Chorus Girls wear copies of actual costumes from a Berkeley musical and move in unison to create the hypnotic spectacle of a classical musical. In *Cremaster 3* The Order of the Rainbow for Girls perform a number that incorporates two of Berkeley's signature motifs, the parade of (smiling) faces, and the through the legs tracking shot. The girls create a captivating combination of synchronised sound (made

by their tap shoes) and image pattern reminiscent of Berkeley's routines. Also in *Cremaster 3*, another chorus of four women re-enact the cliché of bathing beauties as they innocently blow frothy bubbles into the air. It is with this imagery that the cycle accurately imitates the musical film of classical Hollywood.

As expected in any instance of parody, the cycle makes an equal amount of deviations from the quoted text. While Barney places the male character as active central agent of the narrative, thereby following another Hollywood convention, he stops short of providing classical cinema's familiar ending by destroying the hero at the film's conclusion in *Cremaster 3*. Additionally *Cremaster 5*, the cycle's final segment if screened in numerical order, refuses to offer any clear, definitive ending, closing instead on images of two circles rippling outwards on a surface of water, representative of the Magician, the film's hero who has just plunged into the river Danube, arms and legs shackled, attempting a feat of escapology, and the Queen of Chain, his lover and the film's heroine, who appears to have poisoned herself believing the Magician to have taken his own life. This refusal to offer a definite ending in *Cremaster 5* and the tragic fate of the hero of *Cremaster 3* frustrate our usual expectations of cinema and certainly the expectations prompted by the cycle's referencing of familiar genres and narrative patterns.

In addition to these changes Barney creates disjunctures in relation to one of the most fundamental conventions of the musical; its combination of song and dance. While the cycle features song and dance, it never features them together and in fact makes great effort to separate them. For instance the protagonist from *Cremaster 4*, the Loughton Candidate, tap-dances his way through a floor, yet there is no music to announce this as a number. A dance number runs throughout *Cremaster 1* and, although extra-diegetic music, a part of the cycle's original score composed by Jonathan Beplar, plays over the top, there is no singing and the music sits awkwardly with the movements of the dance. In *Cremaster 3* the tap dancing chorus in 'The Order' is unaccompanied by song. Earlier in the film the Maitre d' sings a song, unaccompanied by music, except for the sounds and notes he makes by playing the elevator shaft as though it were an instrument;

opening and closing its doors to create wind sounds and twanging its steel cables as if playing a harp. The general disconnection of song and dance in the cycle demonstrates a rather mutinous attitude towards the essential codes and rules of the Hollywood musical.

Familiar character types are also modified. Set against the known templates of Hollywood gender norms, evoked by figures such as Goodyear, the chorines, and the athletic hero, is an array of hybrid, and split or doubled characters. In *Cremaster 3* for instance, Barney plays both the Entered Apprentice in the main part of the film's narrative and a pink-tartan-wearing version of him in 'The Order.' Aimee Mullins, the double-amputee model and world record holding Paralympic athlete, also appears in the film in numerous guises. Significantly, she plays Barney's alter ego, his third obstacle, who he eventually kills in 'The Order.' Wearing a variety of prosthetic legs Mullins is already a hybrid being and this is emphasised in the film by one identity in particular, which transforms her into part-human part-cheetah using the athlete's own specially made running legs, modelled on those of a cat. She also appears as The Entered Novitiate in the main narrative. As this character she sits in a small room off the Cloud Club bar in the Chrysler building slicing potatoes into wedges with a blade she has attached to the sole of her shoe. She performs this tedious repetitive task while sitting in a silver lame cocktail dress and high heel shoes, with a pair of cosmetic prosthetic legs, the feet arched in order to wear high heels. Both her enclosure and the strange attachment on the end of her shoe tie her to the ultra-feminine character of Goodyear from *Cremaster 1*, who herself has a funnel attached to the sole of one of her shoes, from which grapes drop to the floor for her to arrange into patterns. She is a glamorous woman performing one of the most unglamorous chores (representative of female domesticity). She pushes the sliced potatoes under the foundations of the building causing it to lean and create disorder. She appears again as this character in 'The Order' dressed in a white apron and headscarf. She and the protagonist stand together on the third ramp of the Guggenheim and embrace. For this short section she wears clear Perspex legs. As well as these two characters, Mullins also plays Barney's girlfriend in the film's main narrative and Oonah MacCumhail, the mythical Irish hero Finn MacCumhail's wife in the opening section of the film.

These examples demonstrate the ways that Barney problematises the notion of the individual, an idea promoted by dominant cinema and indeed a requirement for the spectator's successful engagement with the narrative through conventional identification patterns. As noted earlier, Kracauer values distraction as a mode of experience because it breaks with the fiction of a coherent single subject and reflects the alienation and fragmentation at the root of contemporary subjectivity.⁷⁷ This fragmented or split identity also problematises the task of categorising characters and identifying with them in order to engage with the film's narrative. Apart from these doubled or split characters, some of which have been mentioned, many of Barney's characters are also hybrids, or types of cyborg. In *Cremaster 3* Barney plays The Loughton Candidate, a half ram, half human narcissistic tap-dancing creature, while in *Cremaster 5* he plays The Giant, a fusion of plant and human form. The bodies of his characters also become sites for the collapse of other distinctions and boundaries, in particular, gender distinctions. In *Cremaster 4* the trio of orange-haired faeries are physically androgynous, most easily described as masculine women, but in reality they are two women and one man, all body builders. As a result of excessive weight training, the women's breasts have transformed into pectoral muscle while the man's voluminous pectoral muscle resembles breasts, and all of them have similarly angular faces. While the faeries are characterised as female they are decidedly androgynous in appearance. The Fudor Sprites of *Cremaster 5* are a group of underwater hermaphroditic sprites, all young women, with prosthetic genital attachments.

Excess

Using elements of an already fragmentary genre (the musical), one which is somewhat antagonistic to the usual flow of Hollywood narrative, and transposing them into a narrative that borrows aspects of other narrative forms creates further and very complex layers of fragmentation analogous to the visual opulence of high baroque in their complexity. The cycle contains too much information, too many references for us to process and follow in a single viewing. In an article for the *Guardian*, Jonathan Jones

⁷⁷ Siegfried Kracauer, op cit., p.26

sums up the problems created for the viewer by Barney's excessive use of quotation from a variety of disparate sources:

The troubling thing is that The Cremaster Cycle's layers of myth don't add up. They are mutually contradictory. You could (if you were mad enough) follow each line of thought and produce a single reading of the series of films and accompanying sculptures and photographs, but that is beside the point. Barney's aesthetic is one of overload. There are simply too many images, too many ransackings of history and religion, to digest.⁷⁸

Although Barney's "ransackings of history and religion" are prodigious, the practice of referencing multiple texts and forms and placing them together in a single new text is now quite familiar to us as the postmodern practice of pastiche. There have been countless examples of film pastiche throughout the 1970s, 80s and 90s, which include *Last Action Hero* (1993), a pastiche of action movies, and *Dead Men Don't Wear Plaid* (Carl Reiner, 1982), a pastiche of film noir movies, or *High Anxiety* (1977), Mel Brook's pastiche of Hitchcock films. Though there is generally a clear distinction made between the pillaging practices of parody and pastiche – generally that pastiche is about imitation while parody is about transformation - interestingly, all of the examples of film pastiche mentioned here, many of which are film spoofs, fall under the category of parody according to Dan Harries. This is because Harries does not agree with the absolute separation of parody and pastiche that appears in much postmodern theory. He cites Fredric Jameson who contends that pastiche imitates merely for the sake of imitation, without parody's intention to transform and therefore has limited, if any, critical effect.⁷⁹ For Harries, the act of 'tearing' parts of texts from their 'original context' itself constitutes a transformational and deconstructive activity.⁸⁰ Harries quotes Jameson's much cited description of pastiche as being "without parody's ulterior motives,"⁸¹ which focuses on its negative and purely derivative impulses, defining it as a product of the exhaustion of innovation and experimentation that marks the emergence of the postmodern. Harries argues that the practice of mixing miscellaneous references to

⁷⁸ Jonathan Jones, *The Guardian*, op cit.

⁷⁹ Dan Harries, op cit., pp.30-31

⁸⁰ Ibid., p.31

⁸¹ Ibid.

different texts, commonly named pastiche, and understood by many to be “an indiscriminate appropriation of elements which lack depth and coherence”⁸² can in fact aid in the recontextualisation of what he refers to as the prototext (the original text that is imitated), enhancing the critical distance required for its transformation. In this case, pastiche is used in a parodic mode to juxtapose borrowed elements of the target text/s with a variety of elements from dissimilar texts. For Harries:

[P]astiche often works within a parodic mode by creating incongruity through incorporating elements that are unrelated to the transformation of the prototexts, therefore engendering absurd connections between unrelated elements and aiding the creation of critical distance from the prototextual system.⁸³

While Jameson and other cultural theorists have suggested that the sheer volume of appropriated elements eliminates the critical potential of allusion, due to the inability of the work to engage in any depth with any single text or type of text, Harries proposes pastiche as a type of parodic strategy.⁸⁴ This is not to suggest that all examples of pastiche have a significant critical effect, and many are simply concerned with the style and surface of the borrowed text, but as an approach it seems too simplistic to completely write off its potential to subvert and challenge the forms it appropriates. While this chapter will limit itself to these initial comments on the critical potential of pastiche, this discussion is developed further in my next chapter, which contests more fully the authority given to particular formulations of Jamesonian theory. The *Cremaster* cycle is crammed full of references to different forms and narratives creating a tension between conflicting ideological frameworks. Although Jones is right to stress the impossible challenge set for the spectator in attempting to decode Barney’s narratives while viewing them, we can, given time to reflect, trace some of these tensions through the narratives if we wish. For instance, *Cremaster 3* draws on both history and mythology as explanations for the creation of places. Barney situates the history of modernity as the building of the great modern metropolis in his use of iconic buildings such as New York’s Chrysler building and Guggenheim museum. The Chrysler, completed in 1930,

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

in particular, was a part of a race to erect the tallest building on the New York skyline, keeping plans of its eighteen-foot Nirosta steel spire secret from its competitor, The Bank of Manhattan building, originally designed to be two-feet taller than the Chrysler, in order to secure its status as loftiest. Of course, its success was short-lived with the building of the Empire State Building a year later, exceeding it by approximately two hundred feet.

This story of innovative modern engineering and prestigious domination of the skies is coupled with the Celtic myth of the building of Northern Ireland's impressive east-coast basalt columns, the Giant's Causeway. Often described as the 'eighth wonder of the world,' it is said to be the pathway built by the legendary Irish giant Finn MacCumhail to fight the Scottish giant Fingal who lived across the Irish Sea. While both narratives celebrate the greatness of men who build, one bases itself in historical fact, while the other attempts to explain natural phenomena through mythical tales carried down through the oral tradition of storytelling in Gaelic cultures. Linking these two narratives are continual references to Irishness in the representation of the Chrysler, in part an acknowledgment of the 'heroic' Irish labour force who risked their lives constructing many of the city's great buildings. In Barney's *mise-en-scène* the Chrysler's sixty-sixth floor Cloud Club Bar is a replica traditional Irish bar that serves only Guinness which becomes the basis for a slapstick routine involving a lot of froth and a frustrated barman sliding around trying his best to pour a 'decent pint' for one of his customers, while potato wedges stuffed under the floor of the bar create chaos. Off the bar is a 'snug,' a small enclosed room often found in pubs in Ireland, originally designed for women to drink discreetly in pubs separated from the exclusively male space of the bar, and later the place where republicans would gather to discuss politics in private. Irish tenor Paul Brady plays the *Maitre d'* who sings the story of the Chrysler's construction in Gaelic and plays the broken elevator shaft as a harp, in effect playing the building. Also, the green and gold of the Irish flag appear on the carpet in the bar and later all three colours of the Irish tricolour are seen in the long ribbons that circle the building's spire in a maypole dance.

We can see then from this short outline of references that Barney combines the heroic building of the Chrysler, one of the great stories of the construction of the modern metropolis, with Celtic mythology, Masonic rituals, Irish nationalism, and film slapstick, weaving them together into a narrative that ultimately centres on a man's determination to graduate from novice to master. These are just a few of the enormous amount of forms, texts, and ideologies alluded to in *Cremaster 3*, which we can decipher if we want to. Barney also draws on the tradition of Olympic games and the celebration of physical endurance and fitness in the game that he stages in 'The Order' inflected by our knowledge of his past as an athlete, as well as Mullins' own athleticism. The cycle at other points references opera, Hollywood film, heavy metal music, car racing, and the biographies of Harry Houdini and Gary Gilmore.

Since quotation and referencing have become established forms within popular culture, as noted by Harries, Barney's cycle could be seen to parody the eclecticism of many pop cultural texts. The cycle could be described as a 'knowing' imitation of contemporary pastiche. In reference to the sheer volume of allusion in the cycle, Jonathan Jones in his *Guardian* article suggests that it is "so dense with potential meaning that it mocks us [...]" Barney's world is foaming with meaning, drowning in it."⁸⁵ The notion of excess of spilling beyond the proper confines of the forms quoted is central to Barney's use of them – it is his point in referencing them in the first place, to problematise them and their unities, and in turn the unity of his own film texts.

The idea of excess proliferates the cycle so that it is located not just in the abundance of references it makes to other texts but also specifically in its recreation of the abstract spectacle of the musical and the related lingering on the female body. As noted earlier, the musical's grandiose moments of spectacle are excessive, both in terms of their over-the-top visual impact and their disconnection from the narrative. Rubin describes the space of Berkeley's musical numbers as "a labyrinthine, amorphous, slippery space that casts itself loose from narrative space and moves into the realms of abstraction and

⁸⁵ Jonathan Jones, op cit.

spectacle.”⁸⁶ Musical numbers, particularly the more abstract examples, do nothing to advance the film’s narrative and therefore are superfluous to the (tight) economy of the classical model of filmmaking within which the musical operates. In addition, the fetishistic attention to the woman’s body that does not directly feed the development of the narrative is also an example of ‘overspill’ in classical cinema. Musical numbers and the associated close-up shots of the woman on screen work to disrupt the flow of the narrative and threaten to dismantle the ‘cohesion’ so strained for by the economical Hollywood text. Each is excessive to the drive and logic of the classical film text and Barney harnesses these disruptive elements in his recreation of classical cinema, with little, or perhaps only negligible, deviation from them. With Barney’s interest in challenging the idea of the infallibility of the Hollywood hero, or the mythical male hero type, we can see the attraction for him in faithfully recalling what is already subversive about the cinema from which that hero emanates. The musical already begins to corrode the normative gender positions of mainstream film:

In Berkeleysque cinema, the interrelated pulls of the female and the abstract are powerful ones, and their regulation by structures of male dominance (often associated with narrative) is relatively weak.⁸⁷

As noted in the previous chapter on Warhol’s cinema, Mary Ann Doane explains that these disruptive elements (the female and the abstract) are, paradoxically, part of what gives the dominant text its stability; they are both associated with the feminine, while stability and narrative drive is associated with the masculine. Both break with narrative progression and they often coincide in images of women performing. In Berkeley’s cinema, the abstract and the feminine (which are interrelated) threaten the stability of the male-dominated narrative space. The realist text that contains the abstract segments is associated with the masculine, while the abstract is associated with the feminine and, although the abstract is ultimately *contained* by the realist text, for Rubin it is a powerful element of the musical film that threatens male dominance and remains problematic; its aberrant position unresolved. In Barney’s films, following along a familiar course of

⁸⁶ Martin Rubin, *op cit.*, p.153

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p.136

narrative development, the male character is tested in various ways and succeeds in accomplishing various missions often at the end of enduring great physical difficulty, while the female characters represent obstacles that stand between him and the accomplishment of his goals. Clearly Barney's films take us even further from the realms of realism than the musical does due to factors such as the suppression of dialogue, his mixing of numerous narrative types, and his creation of imaginary hybrid creatures.

However, significantly, in the cycle the hero does not triumph to take the place of the father. With the end of 'The Order' we return to the main narrative space of the film in the Chrysler building, this time at the top, inside its spire, where the Apprentice murders the Master Mason (the Architect), and is himself then killed by the building. Each of these characters is punished for some form of arrogant pride, or hubris. One of the Apprentice's tests is to chisel the perfect Ashlar, a symmetrically hewn stone. Believing himself to be above the rules he casts this stone instead, thereby cheating part of his initiation rites. The film then refuses to offer us an image of the honourable triumphant male character, rewarded for his bravery and for enduring difficult physical trials. The overarching narrative of the male quest so familiar to us is replicated, with a very significant alteration at the end. The hero's demise mocks his great efforts to achieve his ultimate goal and retroactively asserts the futility of his quest.

Barney copies the musical number (and already abstract format) and abstracts it further, not in the sense of creating more complex geometric patterning, but by distilling and simplifying it. There is something robotic about his nymphs and lambs. They resemble automata, emphasising the fact that they are copies of familiar images. Goodyear's double identity brings to mind ideas of cloning, and of creating perfect copies. She is double, two identical characters, accentuating the mimetic activity of much of both *Cremaster 1* and the cycle. She is a copy of something iconic which is available to be copied endlessly. Where Berkeley highlighted the chorines' sex appeal, Barney's condensation of the chorus line, and its associated imagery, seems to strip them of it.

In so many ways Barney seems to merely imitate aspects of Hollywood cinema but, like Warhol's copies, these imitations are subject to degrees of refinement and distillation so that, here, the copied image becomes even more abstract than the original, or at the very least it reinforces the abstraction of the former. In addition, the combination of these imitations with imagery borrowed from a variety of other established cultural forms adds another significant dimension of critique to his referencing activity in the cycle.

Spector describes *Cremaster 1* as "the most undifferentiated of the instalments, though the sensibility of the piece is decidedly feminine."⁸⁸ This statement may seem somewhat paradoxical, in that Spector is suggesting that sexual ambiguity coincides with gender certainty, however, in Barney's diegesis the feminine is associated with undifferentiation (and pure potential) while the masculine is associated with differentiation and certainty. It is as if the feminine is a permanently promising state, or a neutral state prior to differentiation. Clearly, we can see from this that Barney's narratives are ultimately concerned with the journey to manhood, from undifferentiation (femininity) to differentiation (masculinity), and not at all concerned with the journey to womanhood, which in his conceptualisation would consist of hovering forever in a state of pure potentiality. Is this another of Barney's parodic engagements with patriarchal narratives, this time specifically Freudian as well as cinematic?

Cremaster 1 provides an example of an exclusively feminine space within the diegesis of the cycle as a whole. As well as having a female protagonist and being predominantly populated by female figures, its *mise-en-scène* stages clichéd femininity with an emphasis on a colour scheme of white and pink. Goodyear embodies the classic Hollywood femininity as she sits beneath the table dressed in a satin teddy with stockings, garter, and high-heeled shoes. Her platinum blonde hair is perfectly coiffed back from her face in a sculpted shell shape, and her make up is flawless; reminiscent of the greatest Hollywood stars of the golden era, with ivory skin, red lips and immaculately shaped eyebrows. The film's isolation of the feminine, its production of an exclusively feminine space, reproduces what Rubin refers to as the seraglio effect of the Berkeleysque:

⁸⁸ Nancy Spector, op cit., p.33

This type of demarcation of an all-female space could be called the ‘seraglio effect.’ It recurs in later Berkeley numbers that create, in whole or in part, voyeuristic, ‘no-men-allowed’ areas that can be penetrated only by the viewer’s gaze.⁸⁹

The feminine space of *Cremaster 1* is dreamlike, what Spector refers to as “pure utopia, a narcissistic paradise of total undifferentiation.”⁹⁰ While this might be what Goodyear and her world represent in the trajectory of the cycle overall, which moves from pure potential to definitive categorization, we recognise Goodyear as a familiar image, as a definite and categorizable image. She is a concrete and reassuring point of reference for us, as are the chorines that she instructs from her womb-like enclosures beneath the tables in each of her two blimps. This space is also utopian as it represents the triumph of spectacle over narrative as this entire film is comprised of a musical number, unencumbered by the usual narrative constraints of the musical. The entire composition of the film is formed by cutting between shots of the interior of the blimps where Goodyear arranges patterns of grapes to choreograph her dancers and shots of the dancers on the pitch below obediently following her instructions. Here in *Cremaster 1* then, we are offered a tantalising mix of triumphant spectacle, undifferentiation, and femininity. The space of the spectacle is always associated with the feminine as well as excess and ambiguity and is in opposition to the purposeful narrative that is associated with the masculine. While the seraglio effect may serve a voyeuristic male gaze when used in an isolated musical number, here it lasts for the entire length of the film, thereby losing its appeal as covert access to a private feminine space.

Conclusion

While Barney’s *Cremaster* cycle is not an example of Kracauer’s indeterminate cinema, we can use Kracauer’s theorisation of the function of the mass ornament to attempt to understand Barney’s reincarnation of particular iconic images from popular cinema of the classical era. The indeterminacy of the image so valued by Kracauer is also central to Barney’s interest in image making and, paradoxically, is his motivation for employing homogenous cinematic images of gender. Mixing these familiar homogenous cinematic

⁸⁹ Martin Rubin, op cit., p.92

⁹⁰ Nancy Spector, op cit., p.34

types with his strange hybrid creatures, Barney questions the naturalisation and limitations of the gender positions promoted by mainstream culture. His interest in an episodic film form also relates to Kracauer's conceptualisation of a redemptive cinema. The ambivalence of the mass ornament, with its simultaneous seduction and education of the masses, is echoed by the film parody's ambivalence towards its target text. Indeed cinema in general is a paradoxical medium for both Kracauer and the parodist, as its inherent potential to remove the 'false consciousness' produced by bourgeois representation is constantly tempered by its manifestation as dominant cinema, which consistently asserts the notion of a singular subject who is master of all he surveys.

A type of mythological heroism, correspondent with Hollywood narratives, that focuses on the male subject overcoming enormous obstacles in order to achieve something valuable, is the overriding theme of all of Barney's work, but in the *Cremaster* films that myth is blown apart by the futility of the hero's efforts; an effect of the corruption at the heart of all such myths (the hero has cheated in his task). Though Barney quotes other forms such as folklore and opera, his closest engagement is with cinema since film is his chosen medium. His particular interest is in Hollywood cinema and, at key points, the aesthetic of the musical number. The cycle articulates a state of pure potentiality, symbolised by the sexual indeterminacy of the foetus at a certain developmental stage. The films re-enact this stage through various ritualistic displays circumscribed by clichéd versions of fully formed gender norms, particularly drawn from established cultural narratives such as those of Freemasonry and Hollywood cinema. The stage of undifferentiation is an optimistic one, even if it is acknowledged as a temporary state, and the ambiguity at its core is the antithesis of the fixed imagery of the classical Hollywood film. The collapse of binary oppositions in this stage of undifferentiation creates confusion, as our discursive frameworks require sexual determination in two 'opposite' sexes. The mass ornament of the musical produces moments of indeterminacy and excess, which Barney intimately imitates, harnessing these qualities in his quest for an expression of inchoate identity.

If we follow the logic of Kracauer's argument, the objectification of the woman's body around which the spectacle of the musical pivots is redemptive because it reveals to the masses their fragmentary experience under the rule of modernity. Modernity's production of fragmented experience and its tendency to objectify the woman's body are collapsed here in the musical spectacle. The chorus element of the musical where these moments of indulgent spectacle are located is the one most faithfully quoted by Barney. However, while Barney could be seen to celebrate the revelatory and emancipatory potential of the spectacle, so reflective of the fragmentation and abstraction of modern life, he also deviates from it substantially elsewhere. Defying the notion that the spectacle should be an exclusively feminine space, Barney produces androgynous and hermaphroditic choruses (as well as those feminine ones familiar to us from Hollywood cinema).

Distraction is excluded from cinema by the ordering language of classical cinema yet the cinematic spectacle, produced by Berkeley's musical numbers for instance, provides us with the perfect site for the expression of the sensorial inundation we experience in modernity. This site of excess is simultaneously attractive and problematic for feminist theory in that it *reflects* the equation of woman with disorder, irrationality and sensuality – modernism's 'other' as Huyssen puts it – while reinforcing that equation. As already noted, Barney's imitation of the mass ornament is faithful in places, providing us with familiar points of reference with which to access this very challenging work, but also providing him with static images against which to plot possible alternative and fluid expressions of identity. The mass ornament gives us our point of entry, essential for the effective functioning of parody, and gives Barney the mythological material he wishes to transform. He does this by re-imagining the chorus line as groups of androgynous and inter-sexed figures, thereby separating the feminine and the spectacle.

While this discussion has focused on the production of gender ambiguity, the cycle produces ambiguity in general, denying its audience the solace of closure, or a marked beginning or ending, or obvious narrative order. This is a cycle of films in the true sense of the word forming an enclosed circle that scorns the notion of linearity. Attempting to

analyse the operations of parody in the cycle is a frustrating task, as we are deprived the comfort of certainty achieved through evidence of a consistent approach to referencing. The cycle articulates a space of indeterminacy and so it is fitting and, in fact, essential that its attitude to the forms it parodies is uncertain and prone to constant shifting.

Kracauer describes an “exploratory activity within the spectator,” which he also refers to as a “disinterested perusal”⁹¹ of the film imagery (akin to the gaze of the *flâneur* as he considers the fast-changing shape of the modern city), produced by the textual ambivalence of his preferred cinema. The deluge of visual information, both familiar and unfamiliar, in the *Cremaster* cycle, discourages, if not completely inhibits, *interpretation* of the text and instead facilitates this distracted, disinterested perusal of the images that flood the spectator’s visual field.

⁹¹ Siegfried Kracauer, op. cit., p.134

Chapter 4: *Lip* and *Love*: Subversive Repetition in Tracey Moffatt's Pastiche Films

Even when representations of black women were present in film, our bodies and being were there to serve – to enhance and maintain white womanhood as object of the phallogentric gaze.¹

The critical task is, rather, to locate strategies of subversive repetition enabled by those constructions, to affirm the local possibilities of intervention through participating in precisely those practices of repetition that constitute identity and, therefore, present the immanent possibility of contesting them.²

This chapter discusses two short films, *Lip* (1999) and *Love* (2003) by the Australian artist Tracey Moffatt, drawing on the writings of postcolonial cultural critic bell hooks to elucidate the implicit racist and sexist assumptions of Hollywood, emphasised through the use of what Judith Butler describes as “subversive repetition” in the artist’s particular employment of pastiche. In other words Moffatt’s films use repetition to critique, through a combination of imitation and quotation, dominant cinema’s own repetitions of normative categories of identity. As well as exploring the critique of Hollywood gender and race norms advanced by Moffatt’s films, this chapter also *illustrates* the critical or parodic potential of pastiche. While not suggesting that pastiche is always parodic, these films illustrate that it can be and a discussion of them, therefore, makes a useful contribution to the recent revival of interest in this often referenced but misunderstood, and even maligned, form. While the last chapter argued that “pastiche as imitation” can be parodic, this chapter explores examples of “pastiche as combination” to use the distinction made by Richard Dyer in the first chapter of his book *Pastiche*.³ It is this second type of pastiche that is most associated with the superficial regurgitation and recombination of imagery dismissed by many critics of postmodern culture, notably Fredric Jameson and those mobilising Jamesonian definitions in their discussions. It is worth taking some time, therefore, in this chapter to contest Jameson’s definitions and to

¹ bell hooks, ‘The Oppositional Gaze: Black Female Spectatorship’ in *Reel to Reel* (London: Routledge, 1996), p.201

² Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble* (London: Routledge, 1999), p.188

³ Richard Dyer, ‘Pastiche and Company’ in *Pastiche* (London: Routledge, 2007), pp.7-51

assert pastiche as a type of parodic practice. Recent contestations of the ascendancy of Jameson's definition of pastiche harmonise with Butler's endorsement of the "pastiche-effect"⁴ of certain forms of parody that employ 'subversive repetition' to illuminate the factitiousness of categories that pose as 'natural,' or 'authentic.' This chapter explores Moffatt's use of such strategy in two of her pastiche films.

Moffatt is an exemplary pasticheur. Her work persistently reframes pervasive pop cultural images and representational conventions, and is mostly concerned with revising dominant cinematic images. At times her revisions entail an exaggerated imitation of familiar genres, while at others she directly samples or quotes from pre-existing texts. *Lip* and *Love* are principally examples of the latter approach, both using the same 'cut-up' method that recombines fragments of quoted material to emphasise certain norms of representation regarding race and gender within Hollywood cinema. Although they were made a number of years apart, and are discrete pieces of work, when viewed (and considered) together they effect a comprehensive critique of the standardised norms of womanhood and race espoused by dominant cinema (which are repeated so often as to appear natural) and make a powerful case for the critical potential of 'combinatory pastiche.' Together these films demonstrate Hollywood's privileging of whiteness, in particular its casting of the white woman as *the* love object, while the black woman is positioned in the supporting roles of domestic servant and nanny. Taken as a pair these films also demonstrate the ultimate privileging of white men within a hierarchy of racial and gendered identity, and present a damning critique of heterosexual love as projected by Hollywood, viewing the role of love object as a deeply unattractive one for women, who are ultimately positioned as oppressed by that (so-called) love and who resort in the end to the appropriation of phallic power.

Moffatt has made numerous short experimental films and videos, including *Nice Coloured Girls* (1987) and *Night Cries: A Rural Tragedy* (1989). The second of these is her most personal and best known but in both films we see the themes that permeate the rest of her work. A central concern of hers is to challenge cinematic representations that

⁴ Ibid., p.186

categorise black and white, woman and man, through their *separation*, and the hierarchies that such a separation supports. *Night Cries* uses a highly stylised *mise-en-scène* that flaunts its artifice to explore a complex white mother / aboriginal daughter relationship. This relationship mirrors Moffatt's own history and is a product of the Australian government's controversial 'assimilation policy,' that advocated removing part-aboriginal children from their natural parents and fostering them into white Australian families so that they would assimilate into white culture,⁵ a practice that is thought by some to have been originally developed as a ruse to provide white families with slave labour.⁶ In the film a middle-aged aboriginal woman cares for her frail white mother with a tense combination of diligence and barely veiled vexation. In general terms Moffatt's oeuvre is concerned with exploring relationships between the coloniser and the colonised and the ways that those relationships have changed, or are perceived to have changed, in recent years. In *Night Cries*, as in all of her films, she depicts an ambiguous relationship between black and white that combines virulence, fear and love, and complicates the usual binary opposition set up between coloniser and colonised, black and white. Instead she insists on their interdependence, but not necessarily in terms of providing opposing meanings for one another. This is a point made by artist Isaac Julien and academic Mark Nash in their co-authored essay 'Only Angels Have Wings':

Meanwhile, her questioning of Aboriginality, and her view of it and whiteness as interrelated, undermine the binaristic positioning of Europeans and Otherness so prevalent in race relations.⁷

Julien and Nash, who wrote this essay for the catalogue of Moffatt's 1997 exhibition at Dia Center for the Arts in New York, also provide some insightful commentary on *Nice Coloured Girls*. The film tells the story of Aboriginal girl hustlers who go out on the town to party, courtesy of the white man's wallet they steal as part of their game. They

⁵ According to Ewa Lajer-Burchard this policy was in existence from the 1930s to the mid-1960s, 'A Stranger Within' in *Parkett*, no.53, 1998, p.42

⁶ Isaac Julien and Mark Nash, 'Only Angels Have Wings' in *Tracey Moffatt Free-Falling* (New York: Dia Center for the Arts, 1998), p.16. Julien and Nash date the earliest implementation of this policy back to 1910.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p.19

lure the white men - who they refer to as their 'captains' borrowing the name given to these older white men by the girls' mothers and grandmothers – with the promise of sex, and then ridicule them by stealing from them. Julien and Nash discuss the way that this film compares the activities of these “young ‘coloured girls’ searching for ‘capital’”⁸ with the relationship between the Aboriginal women and white male colonists of the past:

Where Aboriginal women once went on board the colonists' ships and exchanged their bodies for bags of coin, their descendants seduce modern-day captains by getting them drunk, dancing with them, and eventually snatching their wallets.⁹

Rather than seeing this ritual of theft as an act of revenge to celebrate, the writers suggest that perhaps it illustrates that things have not moved on as much as they may at times appear to have, claiming that “these women still have to play with the colonial masters to earn a living.”¹⁰ This interest in exploring the interdependency of Aboriginal and white cultures in contemporary Australia is an enduring one in Moffatt's work.

As well as film and video, Moffatt also produces series of photographs, yet even when she produces still images her work can be described as cinematic. Julien and Nash, agree with many critics that her photographic series imply a “profilmic reality.”¹¹ Her groups of dramatic photographs often contain generic cinematic references, particularly reproducing a visually heightened version of classical Hollywood *mise-en-scène*. While much of her work, both films and photographs, avoids a linear trajectory, cinematic narrative is implied in many of the dramatic scenes depicted that move between the isolation of the individual and a struggle between two figures as she stages scenes of love and the loss of it. In a short essay in the art journal *Parkett*, Adrian Martin considers the specifically Aboriginal Australian concerns of Moffatt's work, yet he also asks “why then does one keep hearing, almost like a brazen, nagging taunt, the echoes of Old and New Hollywood playing all around Moffatt's imagery?”¹² For Martin, Moffatt's art is

⁸ Ibid., p.10

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid., p.20

¹² Adrian Martin 'Moffatt's Australia (A Reconnaissance)' in *Parkett*, op. cit., p.22

simultaneously local and universal or, as he puts it, “simultaneously shockingly specific (to Australians) and non-specific, inhabiting some shared, global dreamland, able to travel.”¹³ Lynne Cooke echoes this observation in her catalogue essay for Moffatt’s 1997 exhibition at Dia Center for the Arts, when she notes that Moffatt’s work “deftly uses paraphrase and pastiche” to locate “the archetype within the stereotype, the mythic within the mass cultural.”¹⁴ Moffatt’s preoccupation with the parent / child relationship that we see in *Night Cries* recurs frequently in her work, and she is particularly interested in the divisions of power along race lines within that relationship. The relationship in *Night Cries* represents a real and painful part of Australia’s past, but it also becomes symbolic of the larger parent-coloniser / child-colonised relationship within Australia and other colonised nations, particularly ones where whiteness imposes itself as supreme and casts all ‘others’ as objects and servants.

The “shared, global dreamland” that Martin refers to above is found in the ubiquitous imagery of dominant cinema that Moffatt pastiches, and that provides the universal appeal of her work. The regurgitation of elements of that cinema is a prerequisite for any critique that the parodist produces in relation to it. Her work also speaks to the many cultures (not only Aboriginal culture) that are marginalised as a consequence of the aggression of globalised (i.e. American) culture. Dominant (American) cinema can be seen as a conduit for the coloniser’s attitudes and is itself a colonising force, eradicating or suppressing the cinema of smaller nations. Moffatt’s work, both her photography and her films, explicates the colonial aggression of white culture by reframing the iconic (racist) imagery of dominant cinema. Her work demonstrates the inherence of racism and sexism to Hollywood, by emphasising, through repetition, fixed patterns of signification. Before examining the ways that repetition operates to expose the insidious prejudices of cinema, the following section will establish Moffatt’s films as examples of *critical* pastiche.

¹³ Ibid., p.22

¹⁴ Lynne Cooke, ‘A Photo-Filmic Odyssey’ in *Tracey Moffatt Free Falling*, op. cit., p.24

Defining Moffatt's Critical Pastiche (Contesting Jameson's 'Blank Parody')

[P]ostmodern pastiche, shedding the genre's vague image, will be portrayed as aspiring to attain the status of a critical art that could legitimately claim to represent an emancipatory aesthetics, i.e., art that fosters critical thinking.¹⁵

Both *Lip* and *Love* are comprised of a recombination of snippets of pre-existing texts (in this case Hollywood films); a technique most often described as pastiche. This is a term that is predominantly understood by its conceptualisation in the influential writings of cultural critic Fredric Jameson. Jameson dismisses pastiche as the nihilistic end point of modernism, wherein artists of the late twentieth century, faced with the impossibility of innovation, were left with no option but to plunder "'the imaginary museum" of yesterday's dead styles. Most memorably in his 1983 essay 'Postmodernism and Consumer Society' he writes: "all that is left is to imitate dead styles, to speak through the masks and with the voices of the styles in the imaginary museum."¹⁶ Although written over twenty years ago Jameson's theorisations of the postmodern are regularly used as shorthand descriptions of characteristics (e.g. eclecticism, quotation for quotation's sake) for a broad range of contemporary art practices, and it is therefore crucial to question the appropriateness of the categories we have inherited from his seminal writings. Too often we describe as pastiche art that directly quotes from the art of the past, or that references familiar images that circulate within popular culture. When we do so, it is Jameson's rendition of pastiche that we invoke.

However, as noted in the previous chapter on Matthew Barney's *Cremaster Cycle*, other theorists such as Margaret A. Rose and Dan Harries have offered a broader interpretation of pastiche and argue for its critical potential in certain forms. Part of the reason for the privileging of parody over pastiche is that parody always provides some sort of critical

¹⁵ Ingeborg Hoesterey, *Pastiche: Cultural Memory in Art, Film Literature* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), p.xii

¹⁶ Fredric Jameson, 'Postmodernism and Consumer Society' in *The Cultural Turn: Selected Writings on the Postmodern, 1983-1998* (London: Verso, 1998), p.7

re-evaluation of its target text, while pastiche *can* but need not. The task of categorising these forms is made difficult by the fact that some pastiche may operate like parody. Most theorists of parody and pastiche emphasise the strong imitative aspect of pastiche. In some cases this involves a copying of the form and content of a work, or it may involve quoting from actual works. Pastiche then is tied closely to its target text through its imitation of both its form and content, whereas parody may create a greater distance between itself and the text it parodies; alluding to generic characteristics for instance without faithfully reproducing them (as with Warhol's films discussed in chapter two). Linda Hutcheon gives the example of parody's use of adaptation and refers to the distinction that Gérard Genette makes between the two terms in his discussion of pastiche in his book *Palimpsests*¹⁷ by stating that "parody is transformational in its relationship to other texts; pastiche is imitative."¹⁸ Hutcheon agrees with Genette that this is the one clear distinction that can be made between the two terms: "pastiche operates by similarity and correspondence" while parody "does seek differentiation in its relationship to its model."¹⁹ Yet, Hutcheon's own definition prevents her from making the distinction that casts pastiche as 'serious' imitation and parody as the ridiculing of its target text. In other words, while there may be greater distance between the parody and its target text than there is between the pastiche and the text it imitates, a prescribed degree of distance is not a prerequisite for critical engagement with the model text. The only certain difference between parody and pastiche, it seems, *is formal*, and this formal difference is not commensurate with a difference in their critical potential.

Recourse to Jameson's writings on postmodern pastiche does little to illuminate the many examples of this form that clearly present some critique of the texts they incorporate. There has been a recent revival of precisely this discussion, prompted by the frustration felt by a number of scholars at the dominance of Jameson's negative theorisation of pastiche, and the coincident endurance of practices of appropriation both in popular culture and in art. While we have examples of pastiche in art practice dating back to

¹⁷ Gérard Genette, *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree* (University of Nebraska Press, 1997)

¹⁸ Linda Hutcheon, *A Theory of Parody* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000), p.38

¹⁹ *op. cit.*, p.38

Dada artists' use of collage, it emerged as a significant tendency in the 1980s which took the name 'appropriation art,' when the quotation of familiar imagery was foregrounded as a central aspect of the work itself.²⁰ Despite the supposed superficial concerns of appropriation art, and its positioning by art theory as the end point to modernist innovation and experimentation, it has spanned a period of thirty years and continues to constitute a major tendency in contemporary art practice, suggesting that we need to reassess its historical positioning and the relevance of Jameson's writings to discussions of it. Hoesterey states that "pastiche structuration in the arts both high and low is a ubiquitous presence"²¹ from the late twentieth century and into the twenty-first century. It seems obvious that Jameson's influential description of appropriation practices as pastiche is no longer useful or relevant to our understanding of the now substantial and diverse body of contemporary art that falls into the category of 'appropriation art.'

Two significant recent studies on the subject of pastiche also protest Jameson's influence and make convincing arguments for the critical potential of this form. Both Ingeborg Hoesterey's *Pastiche: Cultural Memory in Art, Film, Literature* (2001)²² and Richard Dyer's *Pastiche* (2007)²³ challenge the definition of pastiche as "blank parody" through discussions of examples of films and art and by citing alternatives to Jameson's theory. Hoesterey's study is particularly motivated by the chasm between contemporary critical discourse and art practice, stating that critical theorists "have been curiously shy about challenging the common notion of pastiche as *quantité négligeable*."²⁴ In *Parody: Ancient, Modern and Post-Modern*, first published in 1993 (and so succeeding Jameson's key writings on this subject by some ten years), Rose already offers a less stark differentiation of pastiche and parody than Jameson does by describing pastiche as "a

²⁰ I have identified Dada as a movement that provides one of the earliest examples of pastiche in the form that I am discussing it in this chapter, however, critics such as Richard Dyer trace the history of pastiche back much further. Dyer gives the example of the eighteenth century genre of painting known as *capriccio* in which "geographically distant features are shown occupying the same space." Richard Dyer, op. cit., p.12

²¹ Ingeborg Hoesterey, op. cit., p.118

²² Ibid.

²³ Richard Dyer, op. cit.

²⁴ Ingeborg Hoesterey, op. cit., p.ix

more neutral practice of compilation which is neither necessarily critical of its sources, nor necessarily comic.”²⁵ She also describes its formal approach as “the recombination of different elements.”²⁶ Rose agrees then with the general description of pastiche as a ‘cut-up’ approach, a process of combination, but proposes that it may function in a similar way to parody, or at least that it is not absolutely distinct from parody. Claiming that it is not necessarily critical of its sources nor comic implies that it may, in certain cases, be both. Rose also explains that many of the terms that denote practices of appropriation and referencing such as parody, pastiche, and montage, have lost their nuanced definitions in recent usages and that even dictionary definitions often confuse them. Rose’s study looks to retrieve the clear and subtle differences between these various practices of referencing and, in doing so, she insists that pastiche differs from its close relative montage by involving high degrees of integration between the sampled or quoted texts. Montage, such as the photomontage of Dada artist Hannah Höch, or the three-dimensional assemblage techniques of Robert Rauschenberg, uses actual fragments of pre-existing material (usually mass produced images and objects) and places these together to compose new artworks, always careful to leave evidence of the edges of these fragments in place. Particles are “mounted together with less of the integration than is usual in the pastiche.”²⁷ In montage, torn or cut edges are evident, while in pastiche, according to Rose, the seams between the quoted fragments are less visible.

We can see just how confused these terms have become when we turn to Dyer’s markedly different definition of pastiche, which posits that it is a combination of fragments of pre-existing texts that maintains the identity of each fragment used and therefore it does not usually attempt to integrate each of its elements into a smooth new composition that erases the act of tearing from one source and pasting into another, that is the principal method of pastiche. Yet such contradictions are to be expected for, as Hoesterey rightly points out in his first chapter that maps the historical uses and manifestations of pastiche, “discursive conventions come about through displacements

²⁵ Margaret A. Rose, *Parody: Ancient, Modern and Post-Modern*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p.72

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

and transformations, through successive rules of use.”²⁸ Dyer distinguishes pastiche as combination from pastiche as imitation by naming the first type ‘pasticcio.’ Here he is using an Italian name given to a type of painting that comprises elements taken from numerous sources and combined in a new work. Pasticcio originally means ‘pie’ in Italian but, according to Dyer, was first used in relation to art in the early seventeenth century when attempts were made to pass off the work of one artist as the work of a more famous, more renowned, artist.²⁹ He defines pasticcio further by stating that it is “a particular principle of combination”³⁰ that maintains the identity of each of the elements combined. In other words the memory of the originary text from which each element has been culled remains accessible, clear, available to the reader.

In contradiction to Rose’s definition of pastiche as combination then, Dyer maintains that the pasticcio (or what I refer to here simply as pastiche) combines disparate texts (though there is no hard and fast rule about how disparate these texts should be) but has no interest in the creation of an illusory whole. For Dyer the pasticcio may emphasise the differences between its various component parts “by strong textural contrasts, shifts in affective register, the sense of interruption and so on.”³¹ In short the cut or border between the fragments must remain visible. Both Rose and Dyer always note exceptions to the rule, but are interested mainly in proposing a clear and useful general definition of the terms, genres, and forms that they discuss and catalogue. Yet for Dyer the maintenance of the identity of each element of the pasticcio is its fundamental characteristic, the one that distinguishes it from other forms that collate multiple quotations. He claims that the differences between elements can be more or less played down by the individual example of pasticcio, but differences are always fairly easily detected. For him, contemporary examples of pasticcio tend to emphasise “the different traditions and provenance of elements”³² and indeed as we shall see later in a discussion

²⁸ Ingeborg Hoesterey, *op. cit.*, p.5

²⁹ Richard Dyer, *op. cit.*, p.8

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p.9

³¹ *Ibid.*, p.17

³² *Ibid.*

of Moffatt's films, the maintenance of the identity of the fragment is essential for the pastiche to produce an effective critique of the texts it combines.

One important correspondence between the definitions of pastiche proposed by Dyer and Rose is their mutual rejection of the common assumption (in part generated by Jameson's repudiation of it) that it is simply and straightforwardly an uncritical stylistic approach to art making that is otherwise described as 'hotchpotch' or 'mish-mash' or 'medley' and that declares sentiments of cynicism and exhaustion. As noted in the previous chapter, Rose claims that "pastiche may be used in imaginative rather than derivative ways."³³ For Rose, pastiche starts out in historical writings about it as "a neutral technique of compilation"³⁴ but in some of its recent uses has been appointed with rather pejorative connotations. In general today and largely due to the far-reaching influence of Jameson's writings, it is considered a common and inferior approach to art making that has no critical purpose.

As noted above, Rose seems to favour a definition of pastiche as a formal approach that involves the compilation of directly quoted sections. Certainly this is one commonly used definition, but the term pastiche is also used to describe obvious allusions to and imitations of pre-existing texts that are in some way over the top and even, at times, camp in their exaggerations of the characteristics of the target text. To clarify the dual meaning of pastiche, we can turn to the useful definitions offered by Richard Dyer in *Pastiche*. Dyer opens his discussion by stating that pastiche "has two primary senses, referring to a combination of aesthetic elements or to a kind of aesthetic imitation."³⁵ He then states that his book is concerned with the latter. Although other films discussed in this thesis do employ the pastiche of Dyer's interest, notably Barney's *Cremaster* Cycle, the pastiche discussed in this chapter is principally the former kind. Generally pastiche artworks involve either combination or imitation, but some works incorporate both approaches. Aesthetically both *Lip* and *Love* are examples of composite pastiche, yet they also imitate

³³ Ibid., p.74

³⁴ Ibid., p.75

³⁵ Richard Dyer, *Pastiche*, op. cit., p.1

the narrative structure of the dominant film text. While Moffatt mixes both types of pastiche in these films, other works of hers are clear examples of pastiche as imitation. Adrian Martin commends her limitless skill as a “pop pasticheur”³⁶ noting her adeptness at evoking the mood and atmosphere of classical Hollywood cinema in films such as *Night Cries* and photo series such as *Scarred for Life* (1994). In the films that concern us here, she recombines a series of readymade clips, and in this new composition she imitates (through exaggeration) the narrative structuring of the films they are taken from, doing so for the express purpose of critiquing the quoted texts.

Lip and *Love* are examples of Dyer’s pasticcio. Because each clip incorporated by these films is a direct quotation from a particular film, it clearly stands apart from every other. One simple distinction between clips is that some are in colour, others in black and white, but there are many other obvious formal indicators of difference (in terms of film stock, age of film, cinematography, directorial style). Another obvious mark of the shift from one clip to another is that the characters are different in each of the films, though some actors appear in more than one of the films quoted. For instance in *Lip* Hattie McDaniels, the actress who spent her career typecast by Hollywood in the ‘mammy’ role, appears in at least three of the films quoted, most famously *Gone With the Wind* (Victor Fleming, 1939). While this typecasting does create some confusion for the spectator in differentiating between the various films cited, that confusion serves a useful purpose here, emphasising the repetition of the mammy role and its limitations, both in terms of it being the only option for many black actresses in Hollywood and in terms of the advocated appearance of the black maid (McDaniels clearly fulfilled the criteria). As well as spanning a few decades, the films are also *set* in different times; many of the films depicting black servants are period dramas. It is also worth noting that cuts within a clip are noticeably different from cuts between clips as there is no attempt made to link these discrete parts into a ‘sensible’ seamless narrative whole that keeps the spectator invested in the film. In short, identifying the shifts from one film source to another is quite straightforward. These shifts are not simply signalled by the cuts that join them.

³⁶Adrian Martin, op. cit., p.26

These obvious cuts also serve the purpose of suppressing many of the essential formal operations of the films they quote from, thereby avoiding the spectator's immersion in the film narrative. Therefore, while they reference dominant cinema, they simultaneously disrupt many of its formal processes. For instance continuity editing is absent, except within the individually sampled clips. The soundtrack also jumps from the original soundtrack of the clips included to Moffatt's own selection of songs that plays over the top of certain clip sequences (providing an inconsistent linking device). While her inclusion of particular songs makes sense in terms of the 'point' Moffatt makes within both of the films discussed here, it does not correspond with the familiar composition of a film soundtrack. Also lacking is a plot and establishing shots that orientate the spectator at the beginning of a scene. As a result of Moffatt's use of pastiche and the maintenance of the identity of each of the films sampled, the viewer does not give herself over to either *Lip* or *Love* in the same way that she would if viewing any one of the quoted films in its entirety. The identification processes normally operative in any narrative film - any of the films in Moffatt's compilations - are absent here. They are evoked within the individual clips, and particularly in those clips that include shot / reverse shot sequences (which most of these clips do as they depict dialogue between two characters), but then quickly disrupted as the film cuts to the next quote. The 'suture' effect that we experience within these clips, that moves us from a sense of loss to a sense of control and orientation (upon which our relation to the narrative film text is normally predicated), is ruptured very quickly when another clip, from a completely different film, is introduced. Film theorist Slavoj Zizek notes that a disruption of the "appearance of seamless continuity," by interrupting the usual process of cinematic suture, is characteristic of various avant-garde film practices that aim to defamiliarise cinematic conventions.³⁷ While the discrete shot / reverse shot sequences draw us in through this suture effect, jumping between shots and sequences from different films is disorientating as the spectator becomes invested in one scene and one set of characters only to be torn away and catapulted into the next, similar but distinct, scene or shot. Dyer describes the "aesthetic possibilities of pasticcio" when he states that:

³⁷ Slavoj Zizek, 'Back to the Suture' in *The Frigate of Real Tears* (London: British Film Institute, 2001), p.33

The contrasts and clashes of style, the pushing at and beyond the boundaries of balance and structure, the sense of surprise, shock, chance and disorientation, propulsive flow heightened by rupture, all these can feel energetic, exuberant, tonic. Equally the quantity of connotations, associations and echoes available in pasticcio's semiotic mix allows for stimulating intellectual and affective play between the elements.³⁸

Certainly *Lip* and *Love* feel "energetic, exuberant, tonic." Maintaining the distinction between the clips quoted is one of the chief concerns of both films. It is important to Moffatt's critique of the enduring reductive stereotyping of Hollywood to demonstrate the frequent appearance of particular character types and narrative patterns across a number of texts, over a significant period of time. It is essential therefore that the spectator can discern the amount of different film texts quoted from and the historical period represented. *Lip* comprises fifty-six film clips though a few films, such as *For Pete's Sake* (Peter Yates, 1974) and *Reflections in a Golden Eye* (John Huston, 1967) are quoted from more than once. While we do get the propulsive flow and clashes of style Dyer describes, these films are not in any way 'eclectic' and, in fact, a high degree of similarity between the carefully selected quotes is essential. Moffatt's critique *requires* the viewer to ascertain that they are being presented with remarkably similar scenarios across many different film texts. Each clip in these pastiche films is distinct, its beginning and end eminently evident and its source discernible. Contrarily, with regard to the narrative content of the clips, it is their *similarity* that is accentuated. That is not to say that we could confuse any of the individual quotes. No, they are clearly distinct, but their *relationship* in terms of subject matter is equally conspicuous. All of this is perfectly consistent with Dyer's definition of pastiche as combination (which he differentiates from pastiche as imitation by referring to it as pasticcio):

Pasticcio is then a compilation of disparate elements, though they may be more and less disparate, and the work overall may foreground or play down the disparities, make more or less apparent its organising principle.³⁹

³⁸ Richard Dyer, op. cit., p.20

³⁹ Ibid.

In the following statement Rose attempts to demarcate the basic difference between the effect of quotation in pastiche and in parody, yet, again we can see that Rose's definition is somewhat different from Dyer's. Pastiche, for Rose, involves the 'non-parodic' quotation of contingent, not disparate, texts and is therefore not involved in attempts to uncover the latent identity of those texts:

While the non-parodic quotation found in some pastiche may be described as leading a reader or viewer to make associations between two contingent and usually compatible works, the function of the quotation in the parody can be said to be to connect and contrast disparate texts so that either their concealed identity or lack of identity will be brought to the foreground with some comic effect.⁴⁰

Although this statement may seem useful in trying to categorise different forms of quotation, it creates some problems for the understanding, or classification, of Moffatt's films, as we shall see. Formally, Moffatt's films are examples of pastiche, but they produce a parodic effect, or, an effect most usually ascribed to parody. Perhaps it is better to simply contend that her films are examples of pastiche that function critically, as Dyer and Hoesterey would. However, Moffatt uses contingent and compatible texts to produce a critique of the hegemonic Hollywood text. The clips she uses are sourced from different films, predominantly Hollywood films, and they are further related by their common depiction of either the classic love scene or scenes of the lippy black maid.⁴¹ Rose states that the quotation of disparate or incompatible texts used in parody, combined with some comic effect, can reveal the texts' concealed identity. Yet Moffatt's films illustrate the possibility of combining related texts with some comic effect to reveal the hidden identity of the Hollywood film. In her case revelation takes the form of outing

⁴⁰ Margaret A. Rose, op. cit., p.77

⁴¹ The vast majority of films quoted by Moffatt are Hollywood films and those that were made elsewhere are either films that follow the classical narrative model of cinema consolidated by Hollywood (such as the New Zealand film *Once Were Warriors* (Lee Tamahori, 1994) included in *Love*) or they satirize the stereotypes of Hollywood cinema (as in the British TV show *French and Saunders* included in *Lip*). Although the Maori centred story of *Once Were Warriors* is specific to New Zealand the film employs the standard conventions of the classical narrative model of filmmaking and it is this dominant model of filmmaking that Moffatt targets.

dominant cinema as indisputably and ludicrously racist and sexist (and she makes this point emphatically, which is in part a source of the comedy).

The contingency of the texts is precisely what allows Moffatt to 'out' Hollywood in such a convincing manner. The repetition of similar types of scenes emphasises the prevalence of certain attitudes and values in the Hollywood text. Judith Butler proposes that identity is performative, that it is produced through processes of repetition and ritual. She suggests that "what we take to be an internal essence of gender is manufactured through a sustained set of acts positioned through the gendered stylization of the body."⁴² She argues that 'realities' of categories of identity and their associated power relations are constructed by the repetition of certain acts, or representations, so that they take on the appearance of being natural. The policing of these 'realities' takes place at all levels of society and culture, in part through their repetition in cinematic narratives and representations. Although she theorises the performativity of gender, she notes that other scholars have used the theory she develops in *Gender Trouble* to explore the performativity of race, and insists that "these categories always work as background for one another, and they often find their most powerful articulation through one another."⁴³ In her first book, *Aint I a Woman: Black Women and Feminism*, hooks also argues that the categories of race and gender are interrelated, and that discussions of sexism that "divorce the issue of race from sex" and vice-versa are "distorted, biased, and inaccurate."⁴⁴ In her introduction to the volume *Talking Visions*, about multicultural feminism, Ella Shohat echoes this sentiment by describing various categories of identity based on class, gender, race, nationality as "parts of a permeable interwoven relationality"⁴⁵ and, as we shall see, Moffatt explores this relationality that complicates and critiques the hierarchies implied in binary oppositions, insisting instead on the intersectionality of all of categories of identity. By isolating stock Hollywood scenes that depict sexist and / or racist imagery and stringing them together, Moffatt succeeds in revealing and parodying Hollywood's own habitual repetition of those images, and in

⁴² Judith Butler, op. cit., p.xv

⁴³ Ibid., p.xvi

⁴⁴ bell hooks, *Aint I a Woman: Black Women and Feminism* (London: Pluto, 1982), p.12

⁴⁵ Ella Shohat, 'Introduction,' *Talking Visions* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1998), p.1

removing these fragments from their place within the economy of the individual Hollywood film to which they belong (and thereby removing their narrative 'justification') she allows us to fully appreciate just how shocking they are. While Butler advances her discussion of subversive repetition with reference to pastiche as imitation, particularly in the example provided by drag, the kind of repetitions that form the basis of Moffatt's composite pastiche films also undermine the claim to 'nature' these repetitions make in their 'original' form.

Using Butler's terminology then we can suggest that Moffatt's films 'make trouble' for the hegemonic Hollywood text by constructing their critiques from the very material they appraise. By isolating and combining groups of carefully selected film fragments she condenses the norms they endorse. Rose describes the techniques that parody employs to 'comically refunction' the text it quotes. She lists "juxtaposition, omission, addition, condensation" and "discontinuance of the original structure and/or content" of the quoted (or evoked) text as strategies that facilitate the coincident citation and transformation of a text. As she suggests the parody, and in this case parodic pastiche, is always "at least some extent ambivalently constructed from the target which it refunctions."⁴⁶ Moffatt collates particles of texts derived from examples of dominant cinema; the main target of her revision. By tearing these particles from their sources, she discontinues the original structure of each film she quotes (and the structure of the hegemonic text they are products of) and stitches them together to produce her own highly exaggerated version of classical cinema's four-act narrative structure. Juxtaposing numerous versions of the same scene with the same characters and the same dialogue condenses the signification of any one of these scenes, announcing it clearly for the spectator. Staging examples of the narratives that the films attack, and giving expression therefore to all of their inherent misogyny and racism, is fundamental to their operation as critical pastiche. Moffatt's is a carefully executed critique of the hegemonic film text achieved by pastiche. Butler describes the necessity for the parody to mobilise the very truths it seeks to denaturalize when she writes:

⁴⁶ Margaret A. Rose, op. cit., p.83

Although the gender meanings taken up in these parodic styles are clearly part of hegemonic, misogynist culture, they are nevertheless denaturalized and mobilized through their parodic recontextualization.⁴⁷

For Jameson many of the characteristics of postmodernism, are just more superficial versions of modernist practices. Pastiche takes parody, the style of quotation favoured by modernist writers such as James Joyce, and copies it, but without parody's 'ulterior motive.' According to Jameson, parody is an artistic practice that seeks to "cast ridicule" on the distinctiveness and idiosyncrasies of other styles, the singular and innovative styles of modern literature for instance, and it does so "with respect to the way people normally speak or write," in defence of "the linguistic norm" if you like.⁴⁸ (For instance Joyce's great modernist novel *Ulysses* (1922) uses the structure of Homer's epic *Odyssey* to tell a story of ordinary working class Dubliners.) Other examples, cited by Jameson, of the distinctive styles found in modernist literature are the long sentence favoured by William Faulkner and the nature imagery characteristic of the work of Wallace Stevens.⁴⁹ However, the fragmentation of language expressed by these idiosyncratic modernist styles has, for Jameson, become widespread, and no longer constitutes a "specialized aesthetic curiosity."⁵⁰ What he terms "stylistic diversity and heterogeneity" is everywhere, eradicating the notion (and possibility) of a linguistic norm, against which we compare these unusual and distinctive styles.⁵¹ Pastiche then is imitation "without that still latent feeling that there exists something *normal* compared with which what is being imitated is rather comic."⁵² One section in his essay 'Postmodernism and Consumer Society' is entitled, 'Pastiche Eclipses Parody.'⁵³ For him, the emergence of stylistic diversity and heterogeneity that characterises the postmodern destroys the conditions necessary for parody, and instead allows pastiche to thrive. Yet, it is highly contestable, if not completely wrongheaded, to suggest that heterogeneity governs in an era that is marked by exactly the opposite force - globalisation, which ensures precisely a

⁴⁷ Judith Butler, op. cit., p.176

⁴⁸ Fredric Jameson, op. cit., p.4

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid., p.5

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid., p.4

lack of diversity and threatens local cultures and traditions. Globalised culture provides us with a 'norm' against which we can continue to recognise the unusual, so parody it would seem is still a possibility. He states that pastiche, like parody, is "the imitation of a peculiar or unique style,"⁵⁴ but claims that in postmodernity a proliferation of unique styles is all that there is, with no sense of the normal to compare these to.

Yet it is perhaps in his insistence that the object of parody is the *unusual*, that we locate the main reason for Jameson's unwillingness to accept contemporary forms of pastiche as forms of parody, or even as parodic. He contends that the 'proper' target of parody is the exceptional, the unusual, the excessive, and gives the example of modern literature noted above. However, critical pastiche tends to take the everyday, the ubiquitous, the pedestrian as its object of scrutiny and derision. Where Jameson may view the imitative texts discussed in this thesis as 'purposeless' regurgitations of everyday imagery, I propose (in a statement that chimes with the central contentions of Rose, Dyer and Hoesterey) that they are representative of an influential parodic tendency in art since the 1980s that mimics the language of dominant culture in order to reveal its mechanisms and therefore to effectively critique it. In his seminal essay 'Myth Today' Roland Barthes describes the way that myths or 'truths' are constructed through utterances in various modes of writing and representation, including photography and cinema.⁵⁵ He cites the example of a photograph on the cover of an issue of the magazine *Paris-Match*, where "a young Negro in a French uniform is saluting, with his eyes uplifted, probably fixed on a fold of the tricolour."⁵⁶ This utterance, according to Barthes, signifies "that France is a great Empire, that all her sons, without any colour discrimination, faithfully serve under her flag" and he infers the propagandistic function and purpose of such representations when he states "that there is no better answer to the detractors of an alleged colonialism than the zeal shown by this Negro in serving his so-called oppressors."⁵⁷ Barthes also describes the propagandistic effect of representations that are not overtly political, such as everyday social interactions and rituals that become 'normalized.' For him "the

⁵⁴ Ibid., p.5

⁵⁵ Roland Barthes, 'Myth Today' in *Mythologies* (London: Vintage, 2000), p.110

⁵⁶ Ibid., p.115

⁵⁷ Ibid.

further the bourgeois class propagates its representations, the more naturalized they become.”⁵⁸ For Barthes, myth works to make the historical appear natural, it denies the contingency of things and “makes them innocent, it gives them a natural and eternal justification, it gives them a clarity which is not that of an explanation but that of a statement of fact.”⁵⁹ The role of the parodist then is to de-naturalise the everyday image that is presented as truth and to re-politicise it. Instead of ridiculing the eccentric, pastiche (parody in one of its current forms) mocks the normal, the ordinary (and reveals the insidious way that those ‘ordinary’ cultural spaces enshrine doctrines of oppression). Butler describes the “sedimentation of gender norms” that produces the notion of a ‘natural sex,’ explaining that this process of sedimentation can form various “social fictions” that are repeated so as to appear natural.⁶⁰ Perhaps we can account for this shift in parody’s function by suggesting that the video art of Moffatt, and the other artists discussed in this thesis (for instance), can be seen as a continuation of the early 20th century parodist’s project within the current political climate of post-colonialism and globalisation. Pastiche then, is not simply diluted simulation of parody, but can be a parodic form in itself.

Part of Jameson’s problem with the object of artistic pastiche is that it belongs to low cultural forms and not the high cultural forms that were the parodist’s concern. Clearly, for him, the distinction between high art and mass culture is something to be preserved and he reproduces precisely this distinction in his own definitions of parody (high art) and pastiche (mass culture). Launching his study from a challenge to the authority of Jamesonian theory on pastiche, Hoesterey states that his book “attempts to refigure the mercurial pastiche genre from the Other of high art to an aesthetic of difference.”⁶¹ For Jameson, the postmodern artist’s interest in mass cultural artefacts such as “the Late Show and B-grade Hollywood film” and “airport paperback categories of the gothic and the romance” for instance blurs the distinction between high art and popular culture “to the point where the line between high art and commercial art forms seems increasingly

⁵⁸ Ibid., p.140

⁵⁹ Ibid., p.143

⁶⁰ Judith Butler, op. cit., p.178

⁶¹ Ingeborg Horsterey, op. cit., p.x

difficult to draw.”⁶² This much discussed feature of postmodernism aims to quash the binary opposition between high art and mass culture in order to challenge the elitism of high culture and, by implication, all hierarchies imbedded in a system of binary opposition. While it is true that high and low art forms may *resemble* each other now more than at any other point in history, they are still quite distinct; occupying different cultural spaces and performing different functions. For instance, when feminist artist Barbara Kruger posts one of her famous slogan posters that carry messages such as ‘I shop therefore I am,’ she is emulating, even infiltrating, the language of advertising while simultaneously drawing on René Descartes’ famous early seventeenth century philosophical statement ‘*cogito, ergo sum*,’ producing an act of artistic intervention that critiques consumerist culture and its immense influence on our lives. As discussed in the first chapter of this thesis, the artwork must employ the language of the form it wishes to critique in order to lure the viewer (in this case, the consumer) in before asking them to reconsider the everyday activity in which they are engaged. Of course, eventually consumer culture, in a counter attack, incorporates the language of any work or activity that undermines it, but for a short period of time these interventions pose successful, thought-provoking critique of the forms they imitate. The purpose of the parodic referencing of mass culture is to critique that culture as well as to revel in its appointed status as ‘bad taste’ and not simply the latter, as Jameson would suggest. As we know from any analysis of popular culture there are certain elitist (sexist, racist, classist) attitudes enshrined within its artefacts and it is those attitudes and values that the pasticheur of the popular looks to reveal and critique.

Contrary to Jameson’s forecast, heterogeneity does not reign (except at the most superficial level), and there persists an ordinary language, a common language, from which people speak. The space of the ordinary, such as that produced by dominant cinema, is the object of investigation and revision of the vast majority of contemporary art. Instead of pointing out the ridiculousness of the exceptional from the point of view of the ordinary (as Modernist parody does) the pasticheur scrutinises the ordinary with

⁶² Fredric Jameson, op. cit., p.2

equal measures of pleasure and suspicion, both celebrating its low status and making explicit its chief ideological concerns.

We can conclude that Moffatt's films by clearly using pastiche to parodic ends contradict Jamesonian definitions of parody. Moffatt's films are situated within a fine art context and take mainstream Hollywood films as their target texts. This shift of context alone (as explained in the previous chapter on Matthew Barney) is enough to signal a critical treatment of the quoted works. Challenging Rose's definitions yet corresponding to Dyer's, Moffatt uses pastiche critically by quoting from autonomous yet contingent texts. The following section of this discussion will provide some close analysis of *Lip* and *Love*, investigating how pastiche has been used by Moffatt to effectively critique the entrenched prejudices of dominant cinema.

The Parodic Repetitions of *Lip* and *Love*

Hence, there is a subversive laughter in the pastiche-effect of parodic practices in which the original, the authentic, and the real are themselves constituted as effects.⁶³

In the introduction to his book Hoesterey writes: "Postmodern pastiche is about cultural memory and the merging of horizons past and present."⁶⁴ The cultural memory that is the focus of Moffatt's films is formed by enduring cinematic images, from films that made particular impressions on her because of their mythologizing of women, especially their over-representation of white women as love object and their limited inclusion of non-white women as servants. It is those aspects of cultural memory that Moffatt evokes and reconsiders, producing what Hoesterey calls "pastiche as cultural critique." As Cooke asserts, Moffatt's work focuses on the historiography of representation.⁶⁵ Her pastiche films collapse distinctions between original and copy, revealing the 'natural' as a construct excessively repeated.

⁶³ Judith Butler, op. cit., p.186

⁶⁴ Ingeborg Hoesterey, op. cit., p.xi

⁶⁵ Lynne Cooke, op. cit., p.39

Moffatt's target text is dominant cinema, from classical Hollywood to current mainstream film. In *Lip* she combines clips from numerous classical Hollywood films that depict exchanges between the black woman housemaid and the white woman for whom she works, while in *Love* she samples various types of heterosexual love scene, from sweet passionate embraces, to the deterioration of love that shockingly culminates in violence. The films that Moffatt quotes from are certainly related (contingent and compatible) in terms of belonging to dominant western cinema, and many of them belong to similar genres within Hollywood – the period drama recurs in *Lip*, while the romance film features regularly in *Love*. However, the frequent appearance of particular genres is not the most obvious similarity between the clips included, and indeed each film quotes from numerous different genres. Clearly each clip has been chosen as it depicts either a relationship between the black maid and her mistress (*Lip*), or a heterosexual love relationship (*Love*). These films are not then illustrative of quotation being used to parodic ends in order to compare and contrast disparate texts revealing, in the process, their concealed identity (as Rose would put it). The approach adopted by Moffatt for both of these works is more suitably described as the identification and collation of recurring imagery across *contingent* texts. The repetition of sameness is a primary concern of these films, which then provide us with a significant illustration of the parodic quotation of contingent texts.

By quoting from films that span a few decades, we could suggest that Moffatt does also forge certain gaps between these works that perhaps generate the disparities that both Rose and Dyer identify as a common element of parodic quotation. For instance *Lip* includes filmic images of the 'liberated' black woman who dances down the street in bright glitzy clothing that is the antithesis of the modest maid's uniform we see her wearing in the vast majority of clips in the film. No longer a house servant (and certainly no longer a slave) in these clips, that form part of a longer sequence that comprises the last section of the film, the black woman's liberation is expressed in song and dance by the familiar black soul diva dressed in sequins. Playing over the top of this sequence of clips is 'queen of soul' Aretha Franklin's 1968 hit song 'Think,' which is cut in from the

beginning of the lines that repeat the word ‘freedom,’ thereby focusing on and borrowing the song’s anthemic, celebratory quality. Although essentially a tune for troubled lovers this song, both lyrically and at the level of tempo, here (and in general) can be seen as a glorification of the successes of the civil rights movement. Using a 1968 hit, the soundtrack applauds the pivotal year for civil rights in the US that saw the conflicting events of the signing of the Civil Rights Act and the shooting of the African American political leader Martin Luther King.

Two of the clips in this final sequence are very similar and are placed side by side, each one depicting a trio of slim glamorous black women. In the first clip they are dressed in matching baby-pink dresses, dancing around an older, larger black woman who walks across the street while they dance around her. The older woman (certainly in the context of Moffatt’s film) is representative of the now mostly obsolete, stereotype of the black woman in Hollywood – the hard working, obese, slightly grumpy, sensible black mammy. In the second of these clips the three women are dressed in scarlet floor length gowns and carry with them a ghetto blaster, confidently striding down the street singing and ‘strutting their stuff.’ In these feminine colours and textures, with their hair long and styled, they could not be more dissimilar from their cinematic forebears. Yet the black soul diva in many ways represents just another more recent form of stereotyping (i.e. black people are more physical, and therefore have better rhythm, than white people – whose talents are intellectual). The resilient black woman who sings of suffering at the hands of her man is another stock (inoffensive) character we are comfortable with. hooks eloquently sums up this point in an essay on Isaac Julien’s film *The Attendant* in her book *Reel to Reel* when she writes that the two central characters, a black attendant and a white conservator, elucidate the way that “certain hierarchies of race and empire merely reinvent themselves in the present in different forms (black bodies no longer slaves are now servants).”⁶⁶

⁶⁶ bell hooks, ‘Thinking Through Class: Paying Attention to The Attendant’ in *Reel to Reel* (London: Routledge, 1992), p.4

While there are, then, a number of disparities between the texts, produced by combining images that are taken from different periods of Hollywood filmmaking (the film quotes from a period that roughly spans from the 1930s to the 1980s) that provide us with seemingly contrasting images of the black woman as servant and the liberated black woman, on closer analysis the disparities seem rather superficial. Perhaps the most aberrant quotation in *Lip* is the one that is not taken from cinema, but is already itself a parody of the cinematic norms that Moffatt's film critiques, and is taken from a television sketch show by the British comedy duo Dawn French and Jennifer Saunders. In this clip that satirises the relationship between Scarlett O'Hara and her 'Mammy' in *Gone With The Wind*, a black woman character dupes a young white woman into believing that she embodies the stereotype of the self-sacrificial black mammy, only to let the air out of her fat suit and put on her reading glasses as soon as the young woman leaves the room. The sketch overplays the classic role of the black maid to such a degree that it suggests that the young white woman wants to be duped (we should note here that Dawn French plays an 'outsize' Scarlett in this sketch, pouring scorn on another reductive stereotype of the film it 'skits'). The black mammy is a figure of the white imagination; a figure of Otherness that elevates the white woman's social standing. The inclusion of this clip then serves as a self-reflexive gesture that acknowledges other works that parody the norms of Moffatt's critique. It also provides us with a hyperbolic imitation of those norms, the sort of exaggeration that Moffatt produces through her use of repetition and resultant condensation of meaning. *Lip* includes a clip from *Gone With The Wind*, the iconic text that narrativises the black servant / white master relationship, and a clip from a text that parodies that 'original.' Yet, both so-called 'original' and 'copy' mobilise the same clichés, and are situated amongst a host of other clichés, some of which are from films that predate *Gone With The Wind*. Scarlett and Mammy are the distillation of stock cinematic types, with no definite original. The proliferation of these types in cinema obliterates any notion of an original of which successive performances are copies and instead, what *Lip* stages is a selection of copies for which there exists no original.

While the satiric comedy clip stands apart from the others in terms of its generic difference and its status as a television text rather than cinema, its narrative content, its

sarcastic performance of the simple-minded subservient black maid, reminds us of other knowing, resistant performances of black identity in *Lip*. In an earlier clip from Douglas Sirk's *Imitation of Life* (1959) a classic 'tragic mulatto' character Sarah Jane (Susan Kohner) delivers a mocking over-the-top performance of the devoted black housemaid (the job of her black mother in the film) replete with the southern drawl and distinctively black dialect (a key part of the caricaturing of the African American in Hollywood) that marks the 'performed' character as uneducated, in sharp contrast with her white mistress. This imitation of black servility within the film announces this character's resistance to her positioning within Sirk's narrative. Her performance is made all the more synthetic by the knowledge that the actress who plays this part is in fact Jewish-Mexican, and not mixed race African-American and white (the part she 'plays' in the film). These obvious performances of clichéd black womanhood are examples of what Butler describes as "hyperbolic exhibitions of 'the natural' that, in their very exaggeration, reveal its fundamentally phantasmatic status."⁶⁷ These clips, together with all of the other clips that depict the wisecracking black maid that comprise this film, contain the same sort of ambivalence that is characteristic of the Busby Berkeley images that Barney imitates. They simultaneously reinstate and resist reductive stereotyping. These clichéd performances and performances of clichés constitute what Butler describes as "sites of ambivalence produced at the limits of discursive legitimacy."⁶⁸ Also, as with Barney's parodic quotation of cinematic imagery, the images' ambivalence (as potentially subversive moments within dominant cinema) is reflected in the ambivalent attitude that Moffatt's pastiche holds of them (simultaneously applauding the 'back-talk' and critiquing the stereotype). As we can see, despite certain degrees of disparity between some of its component parts, there is overall a clear commonality that binds the selected clips that comprise *Lip* together.

Let us look more closely now at the films' particular critiques of Hollywood's imperialist assumptions, firstly at *Lip* and moving onto an analysis of *Love*, also noting the way that

⁶⁷ Judith Butler, op. cit., p.187

⁶⁸ Judith Butler, 'Gender is Burning: Questions of Appropriation and Subversion' in *Feminist Film Theory: A Reader* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999), p.337

each film is bound up in the critique of the other. *Lip* opens with a clip from the 1974 film *For Pete's Sake* starring Barbra Streisand. In this scene, Streisand's character Henrietta Robbins walks to the door, while asking: "Who is it?" to which the person on the other side replies: "It's me. The coloured woman." Robbins opens the door and an Afro-wearing, casually dressed black woman enters the house and removes her jacket while Robbins scolds her lightly: "Loretta. That's a terrible thing to call yourself: the coloured woman." Loretta then proceeds to make her position, and her resentment of that position, very clear, providing us with a perfect example of the ambivalent resistant performance of servility described above:

That's what I am: The coloured woman. Who comes to clean up for the white woman, who's too lazy to clean up for herself. I clean so 'missus white folk' won't chip any nail polish off her lily-white hands.

Here we see the familiar Hollywood portrait of maid and mistress, with some significant adjustments. The maid wears fashionable casual clothing that does not distinguish her status from that of her mistress in any way. Her irreverence is also more direct, less ambiguous, than in earlier examples of this relationship (she essentially calls her mistress lazy and superficial). What is perhaps most jarring about this particular portrait when we consider it in terms of the construction of otherness is that Loretta, the maid, refers to her obviously Jewish mistress as 'white.' Streisand is synonymous with Jewish womanhood in America, as one of the very few Jewish actresses to star in movies, who famously refused to alter either her name (beyond the simple change of her first name from Barbara to Barbra), or one of the most visible signifiers of her ethnicity, her distinctly Jewish nose. The image of a Jewish woman with a black maid demonstrates a great shift in the status of Jewish Americans, from being classified as 'black' in the nineteenth century to their successful assimilation into whiteness. That aside Streisand, with her distinct ethnicity and Brooklyn accent, cannot easily be accepted as an unproblematic symbol of the privilege of whiteness. Yet the maid accepts Streisand's character as white, as indeed the film does overall. As an employer of black domestic staff she represents white privilege and she steps into the shoes of the former slave-owning class.

A number of studies on the whiteness of Hollywood describe the ways that certain ethnicities such as Jewish, Irish and Mexican can be described as borderline white, in that they have at times been designated to the outer edges of whiteness and even considered beyond its boundary, as black, at one point. In his influential book *White*, Dyer reproduces a number of the nineteenth century illustrations that tried to persuade the readers of certain journals and magazines that the Anglo-Teutonic race was superior to both the African and the Irish Iberian races, which were closely related.⁶⁹ People of non-Anglo-Saxon European origins have had to negotiate their relationship to whiteness, which is therefore a rather slippery category, its edges constantly shifting to accommodate these changes in membership. Dyer explains that these borderline ethnicities were “often excluded, sometimes indeed being assimilated into the category of whiteness, and at others treated as a ‘buffer’ between the white and the black or indigenous.”⁷⁰ Harry M. Benshoff and Sean Griffin note, in their book *America on Film: Representing Race, Class and Sexuality at the Movies*, that changes to the constituency of whiteness are always made in order to maintain the stronghold of white privilege and power within white patriarchal capitalism.⁷¹ Diane Negra in *Off-White Hollywood* also comments on the adept ability of whiteness to “re-fashion its boundaries to adjust to new circumstances.”⁷² This sort of classification of ethnicities in relation to the dominant category of whiteness has meant, to quote Dyer, that “some whites are whiter than others,” an ideological position that has justified the massacres upon which British imperialism, the US empire and the spreading of Nazism were built.⁷³

Lip opens then with an image that illustrates the subservient position of the black woman in relation to her white counterpart, and in many ways this is the stock Hollywood image of the discourteous black housemaid, but this particular clip also provides us with an

⁶⁹ Richard Dyer, *White* (London: Routledge, 1997), p.53

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p.19

⁷¹ Harry M. Benshoff & Sean Griffin, ‘The Concept of Whiteness and American Film’ in *America on Film: Representing Race, Class and Sexuality at the Movies* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), p.53

⁷² Diane Negra, ‘Whiteness and its Border Spaces’ in *Off-White Hollywood* (London: Oxford, 2001), p.5

⁷³ Richard Dyer, *White*, op. cit., p.19

image of the desirability of whiteness and the possibility and promise of assimilation (posed to all Americans by the myth of 'the American dream'). The Jewish woman has acquired whiteness and, according to the film's narrative, her black maid covets the same status for herself. This becomes much more apparent in the subsequently quoted clips from this film where Loretta sits lazily around the house gambling with a male friend of hers that she's invited over, and who she later tells that she intends to go to a 'high-class beauty farm' with her winnings – an appropriate space for the leisurely (idle) wealthy white class, and not a suitable place for the black domestic servant.

Although her white employer is constantly rushing about the house, tidying up, putting away groceries, and carrying laundry bags, Loretta insists on treating her as the epitome of white privilege and laziness while she continues to issue 'bitchy' retorts to every instruction given and request made by Robbins. When Robbins tells her she has already cleaned the living room and the bedroom so all that remains to be done are the bathroom and the kitchen, Loretta replies "They always leave the worst for us." In the numerous clips included from this film it is clear that here these two characters, the character types that feature throughout *Lip*, misunderstand each other profoundly. The maid character perceives of whiteness according to stereotypes of white privilege (partly propounded by cinema) and aspires to live that pampered idle life herself – a life that is not evidenced in the characterisation of her boss. The white employer cannot quite bring herself to give all of the cleaning chores to the maid. In an act of 'white guilt,' she helps her maid with her duties, patronising her in the process (by leaving the worst jobs for her).

This film was made in 1974, at the height of the women's rights movement, a fact that is reflected in the characterisation of the anti-authoritarian white woman boss and the retaliating black maid, whose impudent dialogue is inflected by an awareness of civil rights issues (in one scene Loretta announces "And they wonder why we become militants!"). Yet despite the apparent raising of consciousness, these two characters remain tied together in what should by this point be an antiquated relationship; one that protects white privilege, even as it acknowledges the exploitative charade that is required to do so. Although she may 'steal the scene' with her witty ripostes, the black actress

here plays her usual supporting role, mirroring the secondary role she plays within the narratives of these films as the white woman's domestic 'help.' In *Aint I a Woman*, hooks comments on the fissure between consciousness raising and societal transformation, noting in particular the hypocrisy of the notion of sisterhood in feminist discourse:

The rhetoric of sisterhood and solidarity suggested that women in America were able to bond across both class and race boundaries – but no such coming together had actually occurred.⁷⁴

She elaborates on this point, stating that instead of uniting black and white women, the women's movement had revealed the rather disturbing fact that white women were not prepared to forego or in any way jeopardise the privilege afforded to them, by what she terms "white supremacy," in order to advance the interests of every woman.⁷⁵ In fact, hooks goes further to suggest that white women had the most to gain from slavery, being its "most immediate beneficiaries."⁷⁶ She writes: "Slavery in no way altered the hierarchical social status of the white male but it created a new status for the white female."⁷⁷ With the introduction of domestic servants (slaves), the white woman becomes a figure of authority in the domestic sphere. Her status is immediately elevated. For hooks, sisterhood (and this must be across racial and class boundaries) is a prerequisite for feminist revolution.⁷⁸ In *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center*, hooks develops this critique of a feminism that is achieved through the exploitation of black and working class women. She opens her discussion by noting a major failing in Betty Friedan's ground-breaking feminist text *The Feminine Mystique* (1963), that she did not discuss who would carry out the middle class white woman's domestic chores if she were to gain access to the professional world of men.⁷⁹ For hooks, dependence on the exploitation of the black woman is feminism's greatest flaw. *Lip* serves to illustrate the

⁷⁴ bell hooks, *Aint I a Woman: Black Women and Feminism* (London: Pluto, 1982), p.136

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Ibid., p.153

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Ibid, p.157

⁷⁹ bell hooks, *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center* (Cambridge MA: Southend Press, 1984), p.1

very separate social and political spheres occupied by black and white women throughout the twentieth century, staging their separation as a battle, albeit mostly a verbal battle fought at the level of banter between a white boss who issues instructions and a black maid who sarcastically responds before complying. To some extent hooks advocates “verbal disagreements” amongst women as a way to participate in the confrontation that may lead to “revolutionary change,” or to the transformation of the individual or the collective.⁸⁰ However, this type of confrontation is considerably different from the power struggle that is waged between the white woman and her black domestic ‘help.’ Cinematic representations reinforce the separateness of black and white women, a tendency made explicit by its repetition in the numerous clips that comprise *Lip*. In many of the exchanges it is the black woman who gets the last word. The last word may be her only source of power, all that she has in order to express anger or dissatisfaction with her lot. Yet, the last word is a limited sort of victory, while the black woman remains locked into her position of subservience. In fact, ‘lippiness’ is part of a characterisation of the black woman as resentful of her superior white mistress, and serves to further disconnect the two women. Lamenting the lack of solidarity or a sense of a collective effort between women hooks writes:

We are taught that women are ‘natural’ enemies, that solidarity will never exist between us because we cannot, should not, and do not bond with one another. We have learned these lessons well.⁸¹

Writing about Moffatt’s photo series *Something More* (1989), Cooke describes the work as the depiction of a conflict or rivalry between women.⁸² This work is a series of nine large colour and black and white photographs that show ‘filmic’ scenes of a mixed race Aboriginal woman, played by Moffatt herself, and her antagonist, a slovenly bottle blonde who apes macho gestures, set against a highly stylised, artificial rural backdrop that mocks any idea of the countryside being the ‘natural’ counterpart to the artifice of the city. The mixed race woman is clearly pushed out of her home. Replaced by this

⁸⁰ Ibid., pp.63-64

⁸¹ bell hooks, *Feminist Theory*, op. cit., p.43

⁸² Lynne Cooke, op. cit., p.24

aggressive white counterpart, she looks beyond the frame of the picture and dreams of 'something more.' In Moffatt's work, even within the single frame of a still image women are separated and their separateness is, therefore, all the more apparent.

Cooke makes the interesting point in her analysis of *Something More* and *Night Cries* that the style produced by combining so many references and allusions to painting, film, and theatre addresses the "complexity of a postcolonial society in which mixed-race relationships, such as this between mother and daughter, cannot be approached as already known, as preordained."⁸³ Dominant cinema repeats certain images, including ones of relationships between different races and ethnicities, and fixes them so that they appear to be preordained. Discussing Moffatt's work Paul Antick describes the products of popular culture as "immediately knowable"⁸⁴ or, at least, as he explains, we are led to believe that they are immediately knowable, only referring to themselves. It is these familiar products that Moffatt invokes. In the opening quote of this chapter hooks observes the historical exclusion of black women from representation, stating that their only acceptable presence was as servants of whiteness – "our bodies were there to serve"⁸⁵ – and of white womanhood in particular. Elsewhere in the same essay she describes cinema's "violent erasure of black womanhood."⁸⁶ The subjugation of the black woman facilitates the elevation of the white woman to the status of object of the male gaze, a dubious honour indeed, as keenly observed in *Love*. Relationships between black and white characters tend to focus on the master / servant relationship, and not the mother / daughter one. Moffatt's photos and films unhinge the fabricated certainty of images generated by dominant culture, tearing elements from high and low culture, the past and the present, and blending them to propose some expression for the complexity of contemporary relationships that cross racial lines, especially when those relationships are intimate. As well as giving representation to the relatively taboo relationship of white

⁸³ Ibid., p.28

⁸⁴ Paul Antick, 'Tracey Moffatt's Scarred for Life or The Unenviable Task of Parenting and Being Parented' in *Subject to Representation: Essays on the Politics of Representation* (Ottawa: Gallery 101, 2000), p.17

⁸⁵ bell hooks, *Reel to Reel*, op. cit., p.201

⁸⁶ Ibid.

mother / black daughter, in her work, the *love* between mother and daughter that is an assumed (preordained) fact is bound up with resentment and other, less readily acknowledged, emotions. Moffatt uses two different approaches (often combining them) to get to the same point of interrogation of normative categories. Some works are attempts to express the complexities of relationships considered representational taboos, while other works regurgitate representational norms, such as the “pervasive assumptions about natural and presumptive heterosexuality”⁸⁷ that Butler writes about, and that are a given in dominant cinema.

Both *Lip* and *Love* combine numerous examples of the ‘known’ representational norms of the particular cinematic relationship they explore (mistress/maid; heterosexual couple) with a few unusual examples of those relationships that test our expectations. For instance *Lip* juxtaposes familiar images of the cheeky, but servile, housemaid who despairs of her white boss’s ways, with an image of friendship between these two characters that is more representative of a relationship between equals than that of mistress / servant. In one clip from *Reflections in a Golden Eye* (John Huston, 1967) Elizabeth Taylor giggles and pranks around the house with her black maid in a manner that is quite informal and transgresses the codes of behaviour between these characters illustrated in most of the clips that are quoted.

However, as with the earlier example of the ‘liberated’ black woman, this seemingly atypical scene is limited in its difference from the majority of images in *Lip*. Despite the casual manner in which these characters seem to interact, the maid still performs her usual domestic chores and waits attentively on her white mistress. She also wears a uniform and ties her hair up neatly while Taylor’s flows luxuriously over her shoulders. The first of the two clips from this film included in *Lip* makes clear that this is in fact quite a traditional relationship between a maid and the lady of the house. Although they laugh throughout as though it is a game, Taylor’s foot on her maid’s behind as the maid struggles to pull off Taylor’s boot can be read as doubly demoralising; for the chore she must carry out and the way her body is treated by her mistress. Laughter here works to

⁸⁷ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble*, op. cit., p.xx

conceal the degradation of the black woman. And indeed it does, as the uncontrollable laughter of the two women is infectious and we laugh along with them, in some way curtailing any discomfort we might have felt while watching this scene. With the successful removal of the tight boot Taylor casually says "I think I'll have my drink out here," instructing her maid to 'fetch and carry,' to pander to her whims, cater for her needs. The relationship engendered by this instruction is exactly in keeping with every other relationship between mistress and maid depicted in *Lip*. We recall for instance the clip where a young woman preens herself while sitting at her dressing table while her maid toils away in the background. The young mistress tells her maid (McDaniels once again) that she is ready for her bath, to which her maid responds with a question, asking if she would like bubbles or ass's milk. The maid's emphatic pronunciation of the word 'ass's' makes it very clear what she thinks of her idle employer, and her instructions.

While Moffatt offers us examples of these stock relationships that appear to be against the norm, they are only superficially different from the more obvious subservience of the uniformed black maid in other clips who agrees (mostly disapprovingly) to carry out her employer's instructions. hooks comments on the pecking order of patriarchy that makes women play a passive role in relation to men, but "an assertive, even domineering role" in relation to "those individuals, female or male who have lower social status, who they see as inferiors."⁸⁸ In a rather obvious point, hooks comments that women absorb and reproduce sexism in the same way that men do, claiming that "we act out this hatred in our daily contact with one another."⁸⁹ She makes the point that the black woman is a more threatening figure than the black man, as she infiltrates the domestic space of the white home, working closely or, as hooks puts it, "intimately" with the white family.⁹⁰ The threat that she poses is dissipated and controlled by the creation of the stereotype of the black mammy; a comforting, reassuring black woman character, who puts the needs of the white family before her own:

⁸⁸ bell hooks, *Feminist Theory*, op. cit., p.91

⁸⁹ Ibid., p.47

⁹⁰ bell hooks, *Aint I a Woman*, op. cit., p.20

She was first and foremost asexual and consequently she had to be fat (preferably obese); she also had to give the impression of being not clean so she is the wearer of a greasy dirty headrag; her too tight shoes from which emerged her large feet were further confirmation of her bestial cow-like quality [...] The mammy image was portrayed with affection by whites because it epitomized the ultimate sexist-racist vision of ideal black womanhood – complete submission to the will of whites.⁹¹

As previously mentioned, the iconic cinematic image of the mammy is Hattie McDaniels in *Gone With the Wind*. Here the mammy (whose name in the film is 'Mammy') is the obese, headrag-wearing, 'devoted to white folks' archetype described by hooks. She is the polar opposite of the ivory-skinned, thin, sexually attractive Vivien Leigh who plays Scarlett O'Hara. In other clips quoted in *Lip* the mammy is a loveable drunk, who slothfully shuffles about the house in a semi-confused state. Cinema, along with other aspects of popular culture, has successfully rendered the black woman unthreatening, stripping her of every ounce of sex appeal and even, at times, intelligence. Another black actress who became typecast as a maid (mammy) character, and who is seen in a number of clips in *Lip*, is Butterfly McQueen who played Prissy, another of Scarlett's domestic servants in *Gone With the Wind*. McQueen is highly memorable for her distinctive high-pitched voice and her tendency to play the stupid, child-like black maid character. McDaniels and McQueen spent most of their careers on screen fetching and carrying, opening doors, serving food, fretting about and protecting the white folk they worked (slaved) for. This character type represents one instance of what Barthes refers to as "recognized places."⁹² Indeed, the mammy and tragic mulatto types constitute the two most prevalent 'recognised places' for black womanhood in cinema, their purpose being to distance the threat of the black woman and secure the privilege of the white woman. Culture regulates irreducible Others, those that it cannot assimilate, their difference being too obviously marked, as in the example of skin colour, by imagining a fitting place for them. Barthes writes "There is here a figure for emergencies: exoticism. The Other becomes pure object, a spectacle, a clown." Exoticism then positions the Other in these

⁹¹ Ibid., p.84

⁹² Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, op. cit. p.152

“recognized places” where she / he “no longer threatens the security of the home.”⁹³

Shohat describes the limited visibility of the black woman in the nineteenth century western culture, citing the ‘recognized places’ of the circus, the auction block and popular scientific expositions, which designated the “hyperbolized pathological visibility”⁹⁴ of the black body:

Organizing the world as a spectacle, exhibitors paraded indigenous Americans, Africans, and Asians before the West’s bemused anthropological / zoological eye as a variety of exotic ‘pathologies.’⁹⁵

hooks describes the shift in nineteenth century America away from the strict religious doctrines that had governed social relations up to that point; the result of a general growth in prosperity. This shift coincides with the many changes taking place in Victorian Britain, which no doubt influenced American society and culture. Where previously all women had been seen as sexual temptresses, now white women were characterised as pure and noble, appointed with the responsibility of safeguarding the moral good of men. Of course such an elevated place was not afforded to all women, only those deemed respectable; in other words, only white married women, or white women of good social standing. The role of temptress was clearly occupied by the prostitute in Britain and, hooks states that this role was also given to the black woman in America. The elevation of white womanhood was made at the expense of black women, who became synonymous with low values, a lack of morals and degradation.⁹⁶ In keeping with a system of binary thinking, a contrast was set up at this point between the virtuous white woman and other types of women; perpetuating another version of the virgin / whore dichotomy. We see evidence of this dichotomy in both of Moffatt’s films. The black woman was utterly desexualised by the creation of the mammy character, successfully dissipating the threat she posed in the white woman’s home, while white women were divided into either virgins to marry or whores to have sex with.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Ella Shohat, op.cit., p.24

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ bell hooks, *Aint I a Woman*, op. cit., p.31

In *Lip*, black women are continuously positioned as inferior to white women, and at times are punished by these white women with harsh beatings for their errant ways (no doubt their crime being the 'inadequate' performance of domestic chores). In *Love* the women that men profess to love in the early clips (while driven by lust), are cruelly rejected in a series of clips that comprise the middle section of the film, reinforcing once again the virgin / whore dichotomy mentioned above. In one clip the male character tells his lover: "I don't think I want to marry you any more. You're not clean enough to bring in the house with my mother." In another, a male character who has promised the young woman of his desire anything she wants in an earlier scene now tells her coldly: "I'm going out. Be gone when I get back." In yet another clip a female character tells her man "You said you loved me" and he replies "I meant it at the time." All of this sentiment is encapsulated in the following dialogue spoken by a man to a woman in one of the scenes quoted in this sequence: "I still love you Rose. But all the vows from here to doomsday couldn't make you a wife. I want a wife Rose!" This series of clips insistently articulates the narrative categorization of women as either sex objects or wives, contaminated or pure, and the impossibility of crossing or straddling these categories.

One of the main points made by the repetition of 'love' scenes in *Love* is the standardisation of the white woman as object of desire. In all but two of the clips included the 'desired' women are white and in the exceptions where she is black she is 'appropriately' paired with a black man. Like all exceptions, these ones prove the rule. In *Aint I a Woman* hooks describes the impact of this conflation of white woman with object of desire on black men and women. She asserts that if the ultimate object of desire is the white woman then the black man will compete with the white man in order to win her, thereby designating the black woman an inferior prize. hooks posits that black men's achievements are diminished "if they cannot also possess that human object white patriarchal culture offers to men as the supreme reward for masculine achievement."⁹⁷ At times and in cultures where mixed-race relationships are not approved of, cinema is one space where black men could look at white women without fear of reprisal, unleashing

⁹⁷ Ibid., p.113

what hooks calls “the repressed gaze.”⁹⁸ In a short essay, ‘Good Girls Look the Other Way,’ on Spike Lee’s *Girl 6* (1996) hooks once again states that “everyone understands that in the world of representations whiteness is the essential ingredient necessary for ultimate fulfilment.”⁹⁹ She describes “the longing for young white flesh” that is everywhere in the sex industry, the industry around which the narrative of *Girl 6* is built, and suggests that this mirrors the longing for young white (female) flesh in Hollywood. She commends Lee for his critique of white images of glamour and his assertion that the beauty of the black woman gives her access to Hollywood only in the role of ‘sexual servant.’ For her “glamour, beauty, sensuality and sexuality, desirability are all coded as white.”¹⁰⁰

The other significant (and related) point compounded by the repeated imagery that forms *Love* is the connection between love and violence in popular narratives. hooks suggests that for many people this association is in fact made during early childhood socialisation due to various disciplinary practices of parents. She also comments on the popularity of romance novels, which reproduce the same sort of narratives as the films quoted in *Love*. Indeed many of the films cited are adaptations of popular novels. hooks make her point strongly when she writes that these novels asked women “to accept the idea that violence intensifies sexual pleasure.”¹⁰¹

We can almost hear the mocking tone of Moffatt’s ironic title when we consider the hypocritical way that love is defined by dominant cinema, condensed here to expose it in all its hypocrisy. hooks writes: “Like men, women in the United States have a high tolerance for witnessing violence, learned through excessive television watching.”¹⁰² For Martin, the central “animating subject” of Moffatt’s work is its dramatisation of “the

⁹⁸ bell hooks, ‘The Oppositional Gaze: Black Female Spectators’ in *Reel to Reel*, p.200

⁹⁹ bell hooks, ‘Good Girls Look the Other Way’ in *Reel to Reel*, op. cit., p.13

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., p.14

¹⁰¹ bell hooks, *Feminist Theory*, op. cit., p.124

¹⁰² Ibid., p.130

primal violence of socialisation ” that forcibly inserts individuals into “an ever-widening set of social, institutional frames: family, school, community, nation.”¹⁰³

hooks observes that in a progressively illiterate world, images are increasingly powerful. She, like Moffatt, is repelled by the dogmatic visions of race and sex propounded by Hollywood. She is concerned about what she describes as the audience’s “profound complicity with the status quo”¹⁰⁴ and their desensitisation to violence in general. She suggests that an audience’s familiarity with a particular genre, and the stereotypes it produces and repeats, provides a certain reassurance that many would prefer to see unchallenged:

Male violence against women in personal relationships is one of the most blatant expressions of the use of abusive force to maintain domination and control. It epitomizes the actualization of the concept of hierarchical rule and coercive authority. Unlike violence against children, or white racial violence against other ethnic groups, it is the violence that is most overtly condoned and accepted, even celebrated in this culture.¹⁰⁵

There is an escalation of violence in *Love* that portrays the so-called love bond between a man and a woman as a power struggle, a battle, with the conflict initiated by the man (in his claim to ‘coercive authority’), and ended when the woman finally reaches for a gun, metaphorically taking the phallus and thereby becoming the loathsome ‘castrating bitch’ these masculine (Oedipal) narratives construct her as. This amplification of violence mirrors the narrative structure of classical cinema, and therefore the narrative structuring of each individual film cited, but it also magnifies the cruelty to women that forms a key part of the drama of each of these ‘romances.’ The brutality begins as verbal debasement and rejection. For instance, in one rather dismissive and callous attack that directly conflates sex and violence the female character tells her male lover; “You’re so cruel” to which he responds: “Cruel? I haven’t touched you yet.” In another odious piece of dialogue a male character tells his cowering lover: “That’s right. Be afraid of me, a little

¹⁰³ Adrian Martin, op. cit., p.26

¹⁰⁴ bell hooks, ‘Artistic Integrity: Race and Accountability’ in *Reel to Reel*, op. cit., p.74

¹⁰⁵ bell hooks, *Feminist Theory*, op. cit., p.120

afraid at least. A woman's no good to a man unless she's a little afraid of him." This sort of anti-woman sentiment intensifies, culminating in clips of men beating women.

Various clips show her retaliating to her abusive treatment in suitably feminine ways by slapping his face, throwing her drink at him, or pounding feebly on his chest; gestures that seem comic when compared with his brutal rage. In one clip a man kicks a woman and shouts at her: "You pig! You lying pig." The level of violence accelerates until we are shown a succession of images where she finally declares: "I can't take this anymore" just before she resorts to pointing a gun at his head, prompting his change of heart when once again he tries again to woo her with sweet words.

While these images would not normally be viewed together like this, they 'belong' together in more ways than one. Despite our familiarity with such images, it is shocking to see a succession of them, especially those that conflate love and violence against women. This strategy of isolating fragments of film from their narrative 'justification' and combining them works to re-sensitise us to mainstream cinema's degradation of women.

Moffatt's Authorship

As *Lip* and *Love* are composite pastiche films, they may seem to be without a coherent authorial voice. Dyer describes this 'lack of authorship' or lack of original and singular authorial voice in the pasticcio as a contributory reason for its denigration by many modernists, who value "unity, simplicity and consistency, of harmony and decorum (of what properly goes with what)."¹⁰⁶ The confusion produced by the sampling of so many different texts, and their respective authors' voices and styles is not a quality that is seen as in any way redeemable to the modernist (or indeed the classicist). Moffatt's films involve many different authorial voices, but her voice is the organising agent that selects and shapes these other voices into a new filmic whole, while careful to maintain the identity of each individual clip. She does this by imposing a narrative structure on the collection of clips and by making a clear overarching critique of the images selected. It is

¹⁰⁶ Richard Dyer, *Pastiche*, op. cit., p.20

in this organisation of material and the purpose (clearly conveyed) of doing so, that her voice reverberates loudly.

In both films Moffatt combines quoted sections of films (sometimes a single shot, sometimes a section of a scene) and, through the use of soundtrack (both original and added) and the grouping of particular clips into clear segments, she appoints a narrative structure to them. In *Lip* the soundtrack is used to help us to interpret images that are grouped together in a particular way. At the start of the film we see a few clips with their original soundtrack so that we are introduced to some exemplars of the lippy black maid's dialogue and the sort of cinematic relationship that the film spotlights. We then see a group of images that augment the point by depicting the servile maid performing various tasks in the home of the white woman. Over the course of this second sequence she cooks, cleans, bathes children, and is beaten by her mistress. Instead of using the original soundtrack of each clip for this montage-type sequence, Moffatt plays the Aretha Franklin 1967 classic 'Chain of Fools' over the top of it. Rather than silencing the lippy black maid that the film simultaneously celebrates and ridicules, the choice of song continues to vocalise the black maid's resentment:

You got me where you want me
I aint nothin' but your fool
You treated me mean
Oh you treated me cruel

The lyric 'chain of fools' aptly describes this formal succession of images of black characters drawn as fools of one sort or another by dominant cinema. In this song a woman reprises her cruel lover but, when used in this context, her male lover is substituted for her female boss; two figures who represent the cruel exploitation of the black woman. As described earlier the last sequence in *Lip* uses another Aretha Franklin song to express the supposed 'liberation' of the black woman, from domestic servitude in the white home. In *Love* the soundtrack functions in a similar way, aiding the structuring of the film into cohesive segments. This film again opens with a series of clips that introduce and exemplify the focus of the film - the amorous embrace - using their original

soundtracks. The saccharine dialogue amuses us, and is rendered even more comic by clumping so many examples of the passionate clinch together. In one clip the couple declare their love through the following exchange:

Him: You take my breath away

Her: Do I? You make me feel ... oh, I don't know ... warm.

Him: Wanted? Beautiful?

Her: Yes

Him: When I'm close to you like this there's a sound in the air like the beating of wings. You know what that is?

Her: No.

Him: My heart beating like a schoolboy's.

Her: Is it? I thought it was mine.

After this sequence, the original soundtrack is substituted with a song, predictably the song that was released following the popularity of the instrumental theme tune of the film *Love Story* (Arthur Hiller, 1970). 'Where Do I Begin' (1971) plays over the top of a group of clips that develop the point made in the opening sequence: the cliché of romantic love encapsulated in the image of the passionate embrace. The spectator's amusement increases with the introduction of this song and its opening line: "Where do I begin to tell the story of how great a love can be?" The artist is, of course, asking herself this question with heavy doses of irony and sarcasm. Just as the song is swelling to its first high point it screeches to a sudden halt, as if the needle has been hurriedly whipped off a vinyl record, which coincides with Lana Turner, in a clip from *The Bad and the Beautiful* (Vincente Minnelli, 1952), looking over the shoulder of the man she's embracing to see a young brunette standing on the stairs in his house. This is the moment she realises he has replaced her and her love story is abruptly over. The brunette snaps: "Thought you said you were gonna get rid of her quick." These uses of soundtrack to complement and interpret the way that Moffatt has arranged her chosen quotes is just one example of her authorial presence. Clearly pastiche presents a vast amount of styles and voices, one of which is the organising voice of the pasticheur, but in this instance it is hardly disorderly mayhem. Dyer suggests that in contrast to the "stimulating array" of pastiche, "the singular, homogenous and univocal character of other forms of art can be

seen as the voice of authority that seeks to make all conform to its will or programme.¹⁰⁷ He describes the tendency in pasticcio for the vibrancy of the combination of elements to thwart the controlling forces of narrative, genre, or medium, even when these are introduced to the work:

Even in the most controlled examples, where there is a dominant or very evident central thread, the latter may serve to highlight the feeling of exuberance or pleasing pandemonium set against it – the simple pattern against the busy fabric pieces in many patchworks.¹⁰⁸

There is certainly a central thread in each of Moffatt's films and, while that may be eclipsed, or deputised, by the vivacity of the combination of elements in some examples of pastiche, it is here too evident to be a peripheral concern. Her work is intensely interested in history, both personal and cultural, and is particularly interested in the relationship between a dominant figure and a figure who is exploited in some way. Throughout Moffatt's work and particularly evident in the pieces that are 'set' in an Australian landscape, the mother figure as well as being a figure of parental authority is also a figure of whiteness, and so becomes doubly representative of authority. Moffatt's work is always in a process of revising familiar forms and genres. She employs them, either by imitating or sampling them, thereby activating all of their associated meanings and the memories we have of them, but she also defamiliarises them somehow.

These films' ambivalent attitude to dominant cinema is clear. They produce a critique of the dominance of white culture at the expense of all others, and that culture's positioning of black women in particular, but are simultaneously mindful that dominant cinema forms part of a collective cultural memory; it is the stuff that informs Moffatt's own cherished memories. The ambivalent attitude to her past, expressed in all of her work, fuels Moffatt's role as pasticheur. Cooke explains that "although Moffatt [...] is a pasticheur as much by passion as by calculation, her subject is ultimately, and always, the

¹⁰⁷ Ibid, p.21

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., p.20

historicity of representation.”¹⁰⁹ Moffatt invokes the familiar precisely to draw attention to its contingency, its malleability - simultaneously regurgitating and reframing it. This ambivalence is evident in *Lip* where the peripheral and degraded, yet highly memorable, black female character is criticised and celebrated in equal measure. The maid often upstages her white counterpart, the film’s (supposed) star, who she should in fact make fairer by contrast. In *Love* a condemnation of violence is effected by the repetition of images of brutality, yet there is also a pleasure derived from the candy-coated dialogue in some of the earlier clips and in the ludicrous enforcement of a ‘happy ending.’

Conclusion

For the purposes of this thesis, Moffatt’s films illustrate one example of composite pastiche as a powerful interrogation and transformation of aspects of dominant cinema, consequently challenging Jameson’s prominent characterisation of the imitative aspect of postmodern culture. Pastiche, as a form of imitation and quotation, is certainly not as distinct from parody as Jameson maintains. In fact, an exploration of the key writings on parody and pastiche has revealed that the only clear distinction between the two terms is that pastiche displays a higher degree of correspondence to the text it refunctions (which is essential to its effective critique of the target text). A close analysis of *Lip* and *Love* not only permits us to understand yet another type of parodic approach, it also illustrates the ways that pastiche can be employed in a clear, decisive manner to challenge the conventions and assumptions of dominant texts, in place of its characterisation as the expression of a lack of alternatives, as Jameson would (rather pessimistically) assert.

Julien and Nash observe that Moffatt’s films (unlike the films they quote) refuse endings, and suggest that this is due to the cultural crossroads that Australia is experiencing today: “In terms of race, the assimilationist narrative has been eviscerated; but there is no utopian multicultural narrative to take its place.”¹¹⁰ Even though *Love* ends as it began, with a sentimental shot from *Grease*, and therefore reproduces the circuitry of Hollywood narratives that return us to a slightly improved version of the equilibrium we departed

¹⁰⁹ Lynne Cooke, op. cit., p.39

¹¹⁰ Isaac Julien & Mark Nash, op. cit., p.18

from at the film's outset, this is clearly a contrived conclusion that cannot 'resolve' the flood of images of violent conflict we have just been assaulted by. Danny and Sandy stand on the beach, waves crashing in the background, and stare lovingly into each other's eyes as she asks: 'Is this the end?' and he replies: 'No it's only the beginning.' These lines, as well as heavily-handedly and ironically signalling the end of Moffatt's film, also articulate the perpetual reprisal of the circular Hollywood narrative, that takes us from equilibrium, through conflict and struggle, to return to equilibrium, as just illustrated by Moffatt's composition of stock scenes. Her selection and compilation of these clips mimics and ridicules the formulaic structuring of the Hollywood film, and its disingenuous resolution of conflict in the requisite 'happy ending.' Moffatt's accelerated replication of the narrative structure of the feature films she quotes, compresses its usual screen time from roughly ninety minutes to eleven minutes in *Lip* or twenty-one minutes in *Love*, effectively exposing the formulaic structuring of dominant cinema. As well as using pastiche as combination, Moffatt also uses pastiche as imitation in her condensed and exaggerated mimicry of the narrative structure of classical Hollywood cinema. Both types of regurgitation are in turn incessantly repeated through the now conventional video installation device of the loop (a device that also serves to emphasise the circularity of the Hollywood narrative). Cooke describes Moffatt's "burgeoning preference for the conjectural over closure."¹¹¹ While Moffatt mockingly imitates the contrived conclusions of dominant cinema, none of her work proposes an alternative vision of race relations outside of the binary oppositions constructed by the classical Hollywood cinema. She may allude to the possibility of 'something more' but refuses to make that manifest, preferring instead what Butler describes as:

[T]he parodic inhabiting of conformity that subtly calls into question the legitimacy of the command, a repetition of the law into hyperbole, a rearticulation of the law against the authority of the one who delivers it.¹¹²

Lip and *Love* critique the hegemony of the texts of which they are comprised, forcing snippets of them to sit alongside each other for the spectator to survey their racist and

¹¹¹ Lynne Cooke, op. cit., p.39

¹¹² Judith Butler, 'Gender is Burning,' op. cit., p.337

sexist assumptions. Moffatt's work in general complicates the simplistic terms based on binary oppositions through which we understand and discuss the world and, as Martin points out, she concerns herself with 'agitation' of the status quo, rather than offering any conclusion, or optimistic, idealistic proposition for 'something better':

But there isn't always a clear or even edifying politics to that theatre of self and other, sometimes there's only agitation – a tearing, unquenchable restlessness, coupled with a dim longing for something better. Utopia – the hoped-for world of 'something more' which suffuses her imagery – is also a strange place in the art of Tracey Moffatt.¹¹³

Julien and Nash claim that Moffatt, like other black artists such as Kara Walker, "seek to avoid the burden of black representation by hyperbolic use of stereotypes."¹¹⁴ They state that race signifies in particular ways and, while Moffatt's work draws on stereotypes, exaggerating, repeating, and reframing them, it also importantly portends that it is impossible to find an adequate representation for all of the individual tragedies that have resulted from colonisation, and it therefore exposes the impotence of representation in many respects. They describe her art as a "phantasmatic repetition of the loss and injury that Aboriginal peoples, among others, have suffered"¹¹⁵ and claim that her work is "about reparation" in that it performs a kind of cathartic function, but one that needs to be repeated, "freeing the ghosts whose presence haunts the living"¹¹⁶ which is a necessary stage in comprehending the status quo, the historical events that produced it, and the systems that ensure its persistence. Ewa Lajer-Burcharth also comments on the ghosts that haunt Moffatt's work in a short essay in *Parkett*. She focuses on the way that assimilation transforms the assimilated person's (the Aboriginal child, the African American) "original parent" into a ghost, leaving the child with an unassimilable sense of loss.¹¹⁷ It is this sense of loss that is so clearly expressed for Moffatt, hooks, and others through the absence of the 'original parent' from dominant representation, especially in cinema. The assimilated child is asked instead to identify with a whiteness from which

¹¹³ Adrian Martin, op. cit., p.22

¹¹⁴ Isaac Julien & Mark Nash, op. cit., p.19

¹¹⁵ Ibid, p.20

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Ewa Lajer-Burcharth, op. cit., p.42

she clearly deviates, begetting a crisis of identity that leaves her struggling to negotiate simultaneous drives to deny and remember origins. The assimilated person who cannot deny their ethnicity (for whatever reason) is asked to identify with a range of servile characters that have been created to appease a sovereign white culture. This loss is then narrativized in Moffatt's pastiche films that reframe sections of cinema that particularly express the absence of the original parent (her / his ghostly presence) with a combination of poignancy and humour. Through various strategies of pastiche Moffatt confronts her cultural memories, partly formed through cinematic representations of the separation of black and white identity (and the associated subordination of black identity), insisting that effective critique necessitates working with and through popular cultural artefacts, not disregarding them in favour of utopian alternative visions.

The removal of the part-Aboriginal child from her birth parents and their culture mirrors the American atrocity of the slave trade that removed African people from their homes and shipped them in brutal dehumanising conditions to America to work as slaves in the houses of wealthy white Americans. In *Lip and Love*, Moffatt mimics this tearing gesture that removes elements from their places of origin and imports them into a new distorted whole, where they sit somewhere between assimilation and otherness. Pastiche here is used to critical ends by facilitating the repetition of stock narrative images and scenes from dominant cinema, that work to denigrate (particularly black) women, in order to emphasise their pervasiveness in that cinema. In other words Moffatt's films employ repetition in order to illustrate and reveal dominant cinema's own repetition of certain narrative 'norms.' Barthes writes about the "ceaseless, untiring solicitation"¹¹⁸ of what he calls 'utterances,' that so that they eventually take on the appearance of truth and nature: "Bourgeois ideology continuously transforms the products of history into essential types."¹¹⁹ Moffatt's films insist on the historical contingency of the 'naturalised' images they reframe.

¹¹⁸ Roland Barthes, op. cit., p.155

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

For hooks it is necessary to reconceptualise power rather than compete to win the power that will always exploit various groups of people. One way for women to protest against the system as it stands is to withhold their consumption, to purchase nothing but the bare essentials and to switch off their television sets, in effect withholding their consumption of the cinematic images critiqued by Moffatt.¹²⁰ The consumption of such imagery makes us all complicit in its racism and sexism. As hooks suggests, many “black women do not ‘see differently’ precisely because their perceptions of reality are so profoundly colonized, shaped by dominant ways of knowing.”¹²¹ In an essay titled ‘Naked Without Shame: A Counter-Hegemonic Body Politic’ hooks laments the status of the black woman as a construct of a white racist and sexist imagination and recalls her childhood desire to delight in her own naked body, without the shame that was a product of its taxonomic labelling as ‘sexually available’:

In search of glory, I find my body. I search it out standing naked in front of mirrors, watching and giving my body sight – visibility. I’m looking at my Black-girl body, seeing it clearly, learning its trace, learning to place myself outside history, re-inventing paradise, a garden of nakedness, a place where brown flesh can be known and loved.¹²²

hooks’ dream to place herself outside history in order to ‘visualise’ the black woman’s body is utopian, and adversarial to the strategic use of parody made by Moffatt and other artists such as Kara Walker and Adrian Piper. She refers to this section of her essay, its short preface, as “an act of critical intervention”¹²³ that reclaims the black woman’s body, as part of a challenge to racist and sexist representations. Later in this essay she states that “[w]e must decolonize our minds and imaginations in ways that empower us to create subversive and alternative images.”¹²⁴ While subversions are manifestly possible and empowering, in that they illuminate constructed categories, alternatives that are outside of or beyond history can only really exist at the level of conceptual fantasy.

¹²⁰ bell hooks, *Feminist Theory*, op. cit., p.92

¹²¹ bell hooks, *Reel to Reel*, op. cit., p.210

¹²² bell hooks, ‘Naked Without Shame: A Counter-Hegemonic Body Politic’ in Ella Shohat (ed.) op. cit., p.66

¹²³ Ibid., p.73

¹²⁴ Ibid.

The repetition of certain images, that elevate whiteness and subordinate blackness and continually separate the two, work to dissipate anxiety and to maintain the myth of white privilege as a foregone conclusion. Dyer suggests that “measures to ‘protect’ whiteness indicate a serious cultural anxiety about the permeable borders between white and non-white races”¹²⁵ while hooks observes that the “obsession to have white film stars be ultra white was a cinematic practice that sought to maintain a distance, a separation between that image and the black female Other.”¹²⁶ It is precisely that separation, and its continual reiteration, that Moffatt explores through the isolation and collation of moments of interaction between the white woman and her black maid. The particular relationship between white and black women that Hollywood has manufactured becomes clear when subjected to Moffatt’s analytic practice. We can see how Hollywood has used humour to soften the excessively repeated prejudicial casting of black women as maids, which works to equate blackness (but particularly black womanhood) with servitude and to privilege whiteness, but it also casts black people as objects of derision. While the black woman often gets the best and most humorous lines (often the punch-lines and the last word) she does so while speaking in ‘flawed’ English, and wearing a maid’s uniform.

¹²⁵ Richard Dyer, *White*, op. cit., p.57

¹²⁶ bell hooks, *Reel to Reel*, op. cit., p.202

Chapter 5: Fascinating Paralysis: The Politics of Slowness in Douglas Gordon's *24 Hour Psycho*

In 1992 I had gone home to see my family for Christmas and I was looking at a video of the TV transmission of *Psycho*. And in the part where Norman (Anthony Perkins) lifts up the painting of Susanna and the Elders and you see the close-up of his eye looking through the peep-hole at Marion (Janet Leigh) undressing, I thought I saw her unhooking her bra. I didn't remember seeing that in the VCR version and thought it was strange, in terms of censorship, that more would be shown on TV rather than in the video, so I looked at that bit with the freeze-frame button, to see if it was really there.¹

The origin of Douglas Gordon's *24 Hour Psycho* was the artist's fascination with the sinister moment from Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho* (1960), and his VCR player's ability to freeze what is already, in cinematic terms, a frozen moment, to facilitate scrutiny of the enigmatic image of his (and the murderer's) obsession. Gordon here emphasises his (our) identification with the murderous peeping tom Norman, and subjects the vulnerable image of the undressing woman to an even more intensified degree of scrutiny than either Hitchcock's narrative or its cinema audience ever did. If Warhol's cinema is about looking, Gordon's is about the analysis, scrutiny, and dissection of the cinematic look. Gordon's actions parallel those of Norman on screen affirming the cinematic coding of the body of woman as 'unknowable,' a mystery to be solved. In her essay for the 1996 exhibition *Spellbound: Art and Film* at the Hayward Gallery, Amy Taubin states that regardless of Gordon's claims to have been curious about censorship of the video version of the film, "it was his fascination with the illicit image [...] of a woman's body and his need to verify whether or not something was there (that something, a woman's hand unhooking her bra, being a sign of sexual difference) that set *24 Hour Psycho* in motion."² I would like to suggest that this explanation of the film's inception also, therefore, encapsulates its most significant object of fascination and enquiry – the classical cinematic image of woman, produced through various techniques that articulate a voyeuristic, fetishistic look. In *The Remembered Film* Victor Burgin points to the

¹ Douglas Gordon, quoted in Amy Taubin, 'Douglas Gordon,' *Spellbound: Art and Film* (London: Hayward Gallery & British Film Institute, 1996), p.70

² Ibid.

“exponentially expanded [...] range of possibilities for dismantling and reconfiguring the once inviolable objects offered by narrative cinema.”³ VCR and DVD players and now computer editing software allows for “such symptomatic freedoms as the repetition of a favourite sequence, or *fixation* upon an obsessional image.”⁴ Modern viewing technology, therefore, seems to provide Gordon with the promise of finally understanding what he sees when presented with the woman as fetishised object on screen. Commenting on his generation’s relationship to film spectatorship, he states: “things could happen (physically) on screen because we made them happen.”⁵ It should come as no surprise that the illicit image of the woman undressing is Gordon’s starting (and perhaps whole) point in making this film, as it was also Hitchcock’s, whose film, from its opening shots where the camera penetrates the closed venetian blinds of a hotel window to reveal the post-coital semi-dressed Marion reclining on a bed, articulates the obsessive gaze that, as we know, eventually murders its beautiful object.

Simply put *24 Hour Psycho* quotes Hitchcock’s *Psycho* in its entirety, but at a severely slowed down pace and without the soundtrack. Although it was later transferred to DVD at the requisite slowed down speed, at its inception *24 Hour Psycho* was shown on VHS (an ordinary VHS copy of Hitchcock’s *Psycho*) using a VCR with a jog/shuttle control that facilitates the playing of videos in extreme slow motion. *Psycho* is one hour and forty-four minutes long but, for Gordon’s *re-presentation* of it, is projected at a dramatically slowed down pace to last twenty-four hours. There is a neat synchronicity between the significant number of screening hours and number of frames screened per second here; the usual cinematic projection time of twenty-four frames a second is thwarted in a film that lasts twenty-four hours, and projects at a rate of approximately two frames per second. Including the number twenty-four in the work’s title serves to remind us of the usual film projection rate of twenty-four frames per second and the expansion of cinematic time that concerns the work. Like Warhol’s *Empire* (1964), which is eight hours and six minutes long, Gordon’s film is not intended to be viewed in its entirety,

³ Victor Burgin, *The Remembered Film* (London: Reaktion Books, 2006), p.8

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Douglas Gordon, *Déjà-Vu: Questions and Answers Volume 2 1997-1998* (Paris: Museum of Modern Art, 2000), p.75

though some die-hard art lovers have tried to do so, for instance the 1993 exhibition of the film in Berlin at Kunst-Werke the gallery remained open for the first twenty-four hours of the screening to accommodate (challenge) those who may have wished to view the work from start to finish. One viewer lasted eleven hours.⁶

Because it is, in effect, one long quote, Gordon's *24 Hour Psycho* is not a straightforward example of parody. It resembles Tracey Moffatt's *Lip* and *Love*, in that it quotes and transforms pre-existing film, but instead of inserting a section of pre-existing film into another film, or combining numerous quoted film clips, it quotes only one film, Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho*, and quotes it in its entirety. Both Warhol and Barney imitate familiar cinematic images, regurgitating certain norms and conventions, while withholding or transforming certain others to produce parody's essential ambiguity. Gordon's piece is not an example of imitation even if it is using VHS and DVD versions of Hitchcock's film. In fact, his work has been categorised, along with work by many other artists such as Austrian artists Martin Arnold and Peter Tscherkassky and French artist Pierre Huyghe, as found object art because it treats the film as found object.⁷ Citations of many studies of parody throughout this thesis support a general definition of parody as a work that combines degrees of replication of a pre-established text or form with deviation from it, the balance between these giving rise to the ambiguity characteristic of parody. To return to one theorist frequently cited in this thesis, Linda Hutcheon defines modern parody as "a form of repetition with ironic critical distance, marking difference rather than similarity."⁸ Hutcheon also describes parody as the paradoxical combination of conservative (repetition) and revolutionary (critical distance) drives, and her definition remains as open as this to allow for the many different examples of parody

⁶ Klaus Biesenbach, 'Sympathy for the Devil,' *Douglas Gordon: Timeline* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2006), p.14

⁷ For instance Alexander Horwath includes references to Gordon's quotation of the cinematic image to contextualise the practice of Tscherkassky in Horwath, Alexander, 'Singing in the Rain,' in Alexander Horwath & Michael Loebenstein (eds.), *Peter Tscherkassky* (Vienna: Österreichisches Filmmuseum, 2005), p.44. Gordon's work was also included in the exhibition *Cut: Film as Found Object in Contemporary Video* at the Milwaukee Art Museum in 2005

⁸ Linda Hutcheon, *A Theory of Parody* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2000), p.xii

that she observes in contemporary culture, with a particular focus on art. Even the briefest consideration of Hutcheon's definition in relation to *24 Hour Psycho* facilitates its framing within this discussion as an example of parody; a parodic revision of one of the best-known films of all time. Using Gérard Genette's definition of the hypertext, we could describe Gordon's relationship to *Psycho* as *palimpsestual*, in that he writes over the work of another author. The hypertext, which is the main type of palimpsest - or "text in the second degree [...] a text derived from a preexistent text"⁹ - in which Genette is interested, is a text that is grafted onto an earlier text (the hypotext) in a relationship that marks the absolute dependence of the former on the latter. Without Hitchcock's film, Gordon's would not exist. Usually with this type of relationship between texts, the transformation of the hypotext is quite simple or direct, and Genette provides the example of James Joyce's *Ulysses* that simply transfers the action of Homer's *Odyssey* to twentieth century Dublin. Gordon simply slows Hitchcock's film down. His revision makes a slight alteration to the original text, but a highly effective and transformative one. Indeed, Gordon describes his practice as the carrying out of slight modifications to someone else's work, or pre-existing imagery, when he states in one interview: "in some ways I'd feel more confident to say that I am a good editor rather than a 'good' artist."¹⁰ We should bear in mind here that Genette also acknowledges as hypertextual a kind of indirect transformation that consists of an imitation of the hypotext, and it is this sort of relationship that Gordon has to the contextual determinants of Hitchcock's film. He shifts the exhibition / viewing environment of the film, but retains (imitates) certain characteristics of its original context.

On my first encounter with *24 Hour Psycho* I was reminded of a short essay, 'Acinema,'¹¹ written by Jean-François Lyotard in 1973. The essay proposes 'senseless' movement, such as immobility and excessive movement, that violates the usual

⁹ Gérard Genette, *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997), p.5

¹⁰ Douglas Gordon in an interview with Jan Debbaut in Francis McKee & Jan Debbaut, *Douglas Gordon: Kidnapping* (Eindhoven: Stedelijk Van Abbemuseum, 1998), p.39

¹¹ Jean-François Lyotard, 'Acinema,' in Andrew Benjamin (ed.) *The Lyotard Reader* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1992), pp.169-195

projection of the cinematic image at twenty four frames a second and does not serve any narrative purpose, as potentially transgressive in that this movement produces a kind of *jouissance* that disrupts both the unity of the cinematic text and the unity of the spectator. While Gordon's video is not the materialisation of Lyotard's theory some twenty years later, and there are discrepancies between the art work and Lyotard's essay, it provides us with a useful theoretical model with which to try to advance an understanding of the particular effects of Gordon's perverted quotation. Using this model then, this chapter will explore the politics of slowness as an antidote to the accelerated time of modernity.¹² Although Lyotard identifies both narratively unmotivated (illegitimate) slowness *and* speed as important transgressions of the usual rate of projected cinematic time, this chapter concerns itself only with the former, and not simply because it is the transgression employed by the work being discussed. Slowness has been a significant avant-garde film aesthetic at least since the work of the surrealists in films such as René Clair's *Entr'acte* (1924). This particular film, for instance, combines exhilarating fast-paced shots of the city and its attractions with bizarre slow motion shots of a ballet dancer performing a variety of jumps shot from underneath a glass table, and a group of men in a funeral procession leaping and jumping strangely as they try to keep up with the hearse. The use of slow motion by avant-garde filmmakers from Clair to Gordon may in part be a reaction to the acceleration of time introduced by modernity.

In her book *The Emergence of Cinematic Time*, Mary Ann Doane describes the standardisation and stabilisation of time that was facilitated by the technological advancements of modernity. It was in 1884 that an international conference on time standards ruled that the world should be divided up into twenty-four time zones, and at that point local discrepancies in time were ironed out in response to, and in order to facilitate the efficient functioning of, new networks of communication and travel: "The sheer speed of transportation and communication worked to annihilate the uniqueness

¹² Using different techniques of interruption, all of the films in this thesis ask us to pause and reflect on the seductive spectacle of cinema, one of the key cultural experiences of the twentieth century and part of a continuum of spectacular space manufactured by modernity.

and isolation of the local.”¹³ Doane’s observations about the standardisation and accountability of time, the drive to make all time productive and efficient, are reflected in Lyotard’s descriptions of the ordering of cinematic time. Doane states that the main goal of new industrial regimes such as the assembly line was “to eliminate unproductive time from the system.”¹⁴ She notes that in early industry, including the emerging film industry (and the film *text* that both Doane and Lyotard theorise) “ideally there is no loss or excess in the system.”¹⁵ The newness of speed was exciting for early avant-garde groups such as the Italian futurists, but its relentlessness, and the standardisation of experience that it fosters, becomes oppressive and prompts a critical response that calls for its opposite; a reflective slowing down of time. In 1936 in his influential essay ‘The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction,’¹⁶ Walter Benjamin embraces cinema with its tendency to shock, and its status as spectacle, as the most appropriate art form to reflect the experience of modern life. If cinema is the aesthetic correlative to modern life, what effect does the expansion and retardation of cinematic time have on cinema, the quintessential art form of modernity? Although his modification of the original is relatively simple, we can see Gordon’s intervention in the cinematic text, and cinematic time in particular, as a disruption of the status quo of cinema. Indeed he is clear that it is the role or the “duty” of the artist “to spot the status quo and to go in and do something about it.”¹⁷ Illegitimate slow motion critiques this modern art form, especially the monolithic industrial product it quickly became.

Linda Hutcheon’s conviction “that theory should be derived from (and not imposed upon) art”¹⁸ seems to be in direct conflict with Lyotard’s proposition for a postmodern avant-garde cinema outlined in ‘Acinema,’ which he writes as a manifesto of sorts (evident in

¹³ Mary Ann Doane, ‘The Representability of Time,’ *The Emergence of Cinematic Time* (London: Harvard University Press, 2002), p.5

¹⁴ Ibid., p.6

¹⁵ Ibid., p.10

¹⁶ Walter Benjamin, ‘The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction,’ Charles Harrison & Paul Wood (eds.), *Art in Theory 1900 – 1990* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1993), pp.512-520

¹⁷ Douglas Gordon in interview with Jan Debbaut in Francis McKee & Jan Debbaut, op. cit., p.41

¹⁸ Linda Hutcheon, op. cit., p.xi

statements such as: “We are not demanding a raw cinema, like Dubuffet demanded an *art brut*”¹⁹). In this short essay, Lyotard’s only essay about cinema, he sketches a model for an alternative critical cinema that, although not prescriptively parodic, has close affinities to the key characteristics of parody that combines both conservative and revolutionary drives to produce an ambivalent, dualistic text. Conflict with Hutcheon’s conviction emerges from the model’s existence as a *proposition*, rather than one that has been arrived at through analysis of examples of such cinema. For Hutcheon theories should only be proposed as ways of understanding certain tendencies, or patterns, that the theorist observes in art, rather than as a model for art to adhere to. However, we can infer from this that theories then are subject to change and revision, as art forms and genres take new and different directions. Theory, in this sense, should remain a vital dynamic discourse. Indeed this is the attitude to theory that Hutcheon displays in her revision of theories of parody to locate a definition that appropriately reflects the scope of modern parody. This chapter uses Lyotard’s concept of acinema as the basis for a critical model of cinema, but is not concerned with proposing Gordon’s work as an ideal example of that cinema. Rather, my intention here is to explore the usefulness of Lyotard’s essay to understandings of Gordon’s piece. This discussion will treat Lyotard’s proposed model of cinema as a creative discourse to draw on in order to accommodate a reading of the function and effect of deceleration of the temporal order of classical cinema.

Taubin quotes Gordon as saying that “It was as if the slow motion revealed the unconscious of the film.”²⁰ Gordon’s comments are echoed in a statement made by another artist, whose work is also concerned with the transformation of pre-existing scenes from conventional cinema. In an interview with Scott MacDonald in *A Critical Cinema 3*, artist Martin Arnold states:

The cinema of Hollywood is a cinema of exclusion, reduction, and denial, a cinema of repression. In consequence we should not only consider what is shown, but also that which is not shown. There is always something behind that

¹⁹ Jean-François Lyotard, op. cit., p.170

²⁰ Amy Taubin, op. cit., p.70

which is being represented, which was not represented. And it is exactly *that* that is most interesting to consider.²¹

Like Gordon, Arnold's interest in transforming familiar film scenes - and his work focuses particularly on the domestic scene - was sparked by his introduction to a technological innovation that facilitates the artist's / spectator's intervention in the film text. He explains to MacDonald that a friend of his had used a scene from a film, *The Human Jungle* (Joseph M. Newman, 1954), to demonstrate the capacity of a computerised projector to project film at different speeds ranging from two to twenty-five frames per second. The demonstration used four frames a second, startlingly transforming the perfectly mundane action of a man preparing a sandwich into what looked like the prologue to a murder, as the husband slowly reaches into the kitchen drawer for a knife. Arnold notes that "it was fascinating to see that miniscule shifts of movement could cause major shifts in meaning."²² These shifts in meaning are a pointed critique of the "dreams, hopes and taboos of the epoch and society"²³ expressed in the particular film that Arnold transforms. While Arnold's re-framings of popular cinema are the result of laborious, careful manipulation of the original, or the re-photographed original, Gordon's transformation of his target text is technically far less complicated. He simply projects a VHS recording of *Psycho* at a much slower rate, and shifts its venue from the cinema (and the television monitor) to the gallery (much like American filmmaker Ken Jacobs had begun doing three decades earlier). Yet, this simple adjustment produces a fascinating critique of the basic principle of cinema; the illusion of movement. Both Arnold and Gordon use slow motion as an intervention in the hopes of discovering the latent meaning of the films they scrutinise. As Arnold remarks, developing an analogy produced by Taubin in a discussion of the stuttering aesthetic of his work, "I inscribe a symptom onto it, which brings some of the aspects of repression to the surface."²⁴ For him, his intervention into the film text "gives an idea of how, behind

²¹ Martin Arnold quoted in Scott MacDonald, *A Critical Cinema 3* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), p.354

²² Ibid., p.352

²³ Ibid., p.349

²⁴ Ibid., p.362

the intact world being represented, another not-at-all intact world is lurking.”²⁵ We are reminded once again of Godard’s epic citation piece in Arnold’s suggestion that the possibilities for him to intervene in these ways constitute a “revenge on film history.”²⁶ While Arnold’s work is not examined here, he serves to illustrate another example of the use of technology to analyse and transform the conventional film text, searching for its latent meanings, and his comment on Hollywood as a ‘cinema of exclusion’ will be of particular importance to this discussion. In a discussion of the work of Ken Jacobs, one of his former students, Richard Herskowitz, describes the way that Jacobs’ films taught him “not so much how to watch experimental films, but how to watch all films experimentally.”²⁷ He also describes the unconscious or repressed aspects of film released by the use of slow motion when he claims, in relation to Jacobs’ retardation of a short French porn film, that “in the expansion of this material, something independent of, transcendent of the original takes place,” where the voyeuristic look was completely displaced and “something repressed in the original is liberated”²⁸

Slowing action down in the work of Gordon, Arnold and Jacobs makes it read differently than intended, as we continue to understand the action on screen according to the conventional language of cinema. Slow motion is sometimes used in cinema to protract the moments just before a terrible crime is committed, or an awful accident occurs, to capitalize on and build the suspense of the audience, creating a rhythm for the scene that keeps the audience gripped. Certainly seeing a hand reaching for a knife in slow motion connotes danger in some form, and in conventional cinema usually signals an immanent murder, or a violent attack, not the everyday domestic act of food preparation that Arnold’s film quotes.

Marion Crane, the anti-heroine / victim of Hitchcock’s *Psycho* trembles on a large translucent screen situated in the middle of the first gallery space entered for Douglas Gordon’s mid-career retrospective at New York’s Museum of Modern Art. Walking

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Scott MacDonald, op. cit., p. 158

²⁸ Ibid., p.161-162

around the screen the spectator sees a mirror image of the film on the other side. The trembling is slightly faster than a heartbeat, though its consistency somehow recalls that persistent beat or makes you aware of your body, of your breathing, and of your physical presence in front of the screen and in the space of the gallery, which, as we know, is contrary to the cinema spectator's experience, which effects a loss of awareness of the body to prioritise vision and a total immersion in the cinematic image. This trembling is described by Klaus Biesenbach, the curator of MoMA's Department of Film and Media, as an 'oscillating image,' produced by the film moving between odd and even frames.²⁹ According to Biesenbach, Gordon chose the film because it is a classic, what Biesenbach calls a "household word."³⁰ As the following comments suggest, *Psycho* acts as a trigger for personal and collective cultural memory around the world (pointing to the ubiquity and dominance of the American cinema). In his essay for the catalogue of the 1996 exhibition *Spellbound* at the Hayward gallery in London, film critic Ian Christie suggests that Gordon treats *Psycho* as a classic piece of cinematic history that he makes available to us in a museum context, presenting it as an object to scrutinise through today's viewing technologies and conventions.³¹ In another essay in the same catalogue, Taubin also points out the film's status as part of a collective memory when she writes:

Regardless of your age or cultural orientation you are likely to know something about Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho*, even if it is only that a woman is slashed to death in a shower by a maniac whose sexual identity is somewhat confused.³²

For Taubin, however, the film's familiarity not only emanates from previous viewings or knowledge of it, but because it "taps into primal anxieties about sex, castration and death."³³ In his discussion of *Psycho*, French *Cahiers du Cinema* critic Jean Douchet refers to these as "the great ancestral fears."³⁴ In a more general point in his essay for the

²⁹ Klaus Biesenbach, op. cit., p.14

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ian Christie 'The Odd Couple' in *Spellbound: Art and Film* op. cit., p.44

³² Amy Taubin, ibid., p.69

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Jean Douchet, 'Hitch and his Audience' in Jim Hillier (ed.), *Cahiers du Cinema 1960 – 1968: New Wave, New Cinema, Reevaluating Hollywood* (Cambridge: Harvard university Press, 1992), p.152

Spellbound catalogue, film critic Ian Christie describes “cinema’s omnipresence as the folklore of the twentieth century.”³⁵ Like Gordon’s piece, Jean-Luc Godard’s epic video work *Histoire(s) du Cinema* also quotes from Hitchcock’s cinema (as one of many filmic sources he quotes). In fact this work opens with the image of James Stewart in *Rear Window* (1954), looking through the lens of his camera, at the drama unfolding in the homes of his neighbours who live on the other side of his back courtyard. As well as being “emblematic of a particular moment” in the history of cinema, for Godard, Hitchcock “was fairly universal, he made people shiver everywhere.”³⁶ In an essay about the film in her latest book, Laura Mulvey also notes the positioning of *Psycho* at the crossroads between old Hollywood and new independent filmmaking in America.³⁷ As discussed in the first chapter, Chantal Akerman’s film *The Captive* (2000) is a parody of Hitchcock’s *Vertigo* that, like Gordon’s film, is especially interested in the protagonist’s (the audience’s) voyeuristic relationship to the *image* of woman. The familiarity of Hitchcock’s films, noted by various critics, provide artists with a valuable focus for their revisions of established cinematic norms. This filmmaker’s enormous significance to cinematic history and immense influence on contemporary art can be seen in two major exhibitions, one of which has been already mentioned here, that appropriated Hitchcock film titles as their own, *Spellbound: Art and Film* at the Hayward Gallery in 1996 and *Notorious: Alfred Hitchcock and Contemporary Art* at the Museum of Modern Art Oxford in 1999. The first of these explored the relationship between art and cinema in general and included Gordon’s *24 Hour Psycho* along with many other works that had been influenced by cinema such as the Disney-inspired paintings of the Portuguese artist Paula Rego. *Notorious* specifically looked at art works that are influenced by Hitchcock’s cinema such as Gordon’s video work and French artist Pierre Huyghe’s 1995 film *Remake*, which is a remake of Hitchcock’s *Rear Window*, in much the same way that Gus Van Sant remade *Psycho* (using the Hitchcock title) scene for scene in 1998 for commercial release.

³⁵ Ian Christie, op. cit., p.51

³⁶ Jean-Luc Godard, Godard & Youssef Ishaghpour, *Cinema* (Oxford: Berg, 2005), p.64

³⁷ Laura Mulvey, *Death 24 x a Second* (London: Reaktion Books, 2006), p.85

The Striptease

The moment where Marion unhooks her bra (whether actually seen or imagined) represents the quintessential moment of the striptease; the moment of heightened eroticism that delineates the teetering line of ambivalence between erotic play and its end. In a short essay 'Striptease' in *Mythologies*, Barthes describes the contradiction upon which striptease is based: "Woman is desexualized at the very moment when she is stripped naked."³⁸ Her semi-undress presents the promise or possibility of complete nakedness, and reminds us of the opening scene of *Psycho*, where Marion sits on a hotel bed wearing a white underskirt and bra, suggesting both the state of undress and the sexual liaison that has preceded it and that has preceded our entry into the film's narrative. This is our introduction to the film's female protagonist and object of desire (an unusual combination of roles in classical cinema) and our introduction to the film. The later image of Marion that prompted Gordon's interest in this film as a source for an artwork, then, is informed by a similar vision of her in the opening scene of the film, where we are given access to the private intimate space of the hotel room and that access is announced as illicit by the camera's seeming penetration of the hotel window through the always secretive device of the venetian blinds. The voyeurism of this earlier scene is emphasised by its narrativisation in the later one where Norman looks at Marion through the hidden spy-hole. Gordon's compulsion to freeze-frame this moment of illicit looking may be about his interest in censorship, but it is also in effect a prolonging of the erotic moment of the peep show striptease. In this case it is as though the peep-show voyeur's money has inconveniently run out just at the point of revelation (because we know that in this instance we don't see Marion naked), but the promise of that vision is held (and for Gordon suspended) in the moment of uncertainty about the unhooking of the bra. Of course she does unhook her bra, but we don't see this. Norman does. We are excluded from this pleasure as the camera switches between shots from Norman's point of view and shots of his eye in profile as he gazes through the hole at Marion. In an essay on the significance of the striptease in *Gilda* (Charles Vidor, 1946), Doane confirms the importance of the "glimpse rather than the ambivalent satisfaction of the full, sustained

³⁸ Roland Barthes, 'Striptease' in *Mythologies* (London: Vintage, 2000), p.84

look”³⁹ to the production of Gilda as a fascinating object. Although Barthes is describing live performances of striptease at strip clubs (and not cinematic representations of the same, which are inevitably subject to censorship), he places all of the significance of the act in the lead up to the final revelation of the naked body, which when stripped of all its fetishistic adornment, is an inevitable disappointment. He writes:

[W]e are dealing in a sense with a spectacle based on fear, as if eroticism here went no further than a sort of delicious terror, whose ritual signs have only to be announced to evoke at once the idea of sex and its conjuration.⁴⁰

He describes the function of the various props and garments used to veil the body in the striptease as distancing the naked body, making “the unveiled body more remote.”⁴¹ The luxurious objects in which she is draped, such as furs, gloves, and fish-net stockings “makes the living body return to the category of luxurious objects which surround man with magical décor.”⁴² He refers to the “ultimate triangle” of the diamond or sequined covered G-String, stating that its sharply defined geometric shape and the hardness of its material acts as a barrier to the woman’s sexual parts, thereby aligning women with the inanimate world of objects “the (precious) stone being here the irrefutable symbol of the absolute object, that which serves no purpose.”⁴³ Although Marion’s large black bra is not exactly the fetishistic garment of the theatrical striptease, it is nonetheless a barrier, a sort of doubled and inverted version of the triangular G-String form described by Barthes, an undergarment that is not meant for public display (which adds to its fascination) and that provides the thin veil between the eyes of the spectator and the woman’s nakedness. Apart from their colour, her lacy bra and underskirt are exactly the same as those she wears in the opening scene. The black undergarments in this scene are a simple device of Hitchcock’s *mise-en-scène*, which code Marion as corrupt and overtly sexy; a visual mark of her unlawfulness.

³⁹ Mary Anne Doane, ‘Gilda: Epistemology and Striptease’ in *Femmes Fatales* (London: Routledge, 1991), p.106

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid., p.85

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid.

Interestingly, Barthes goes on to outline the performances of the amateur stripper in the popular stripping contests, which are 'stripped' of many of the devices of the professional version. Instead of furs and feathers women wear unremarkable everyday clothes such as suits and coats, much like the attire of Marion in *Psycho*, and the awkwardness and lack of technical accomplishment they display in removing their clothing denies these women "the alibi of art and the refuge of being an object" which, for Barthes, imprisons these women "in a condition of weakness and timorousness."⁴⁴ The inexperienced stripper, the one who is not versed in the language of the performance is disempowered, or 'weak.' Certainly, the image of woman undressing in *Psycho* - though a performance for the camera in the sense that Janet Leigh is acting in a film - is not coded as a performance within the diegesis of the film in the same way that for instance Rita Hayworth's provocative striptease scene is in *Gilda*. Indeed it is its everyday-ness that makes our access to this act of undressing so disconcerting. Douchet, among others, has commented on the everydayness of Marion when compared with other more glamorous Hitchcock heroines. Her ordinariness and lower middle class economic positioning is what makes her vulnerable to temptation (she steals money) *and* to Norman's gaze.

Within the diegesis of the film, the woman we see in this vulnerable half-undressed state has not consented to our look. Moments of objectification of woman within cinema usually involve the oscillation between proximity and distance that Mary Ann Doane describes as essential to the building of the woman as enigmatic object of the gaze, which is outlined in the second chapter in this thesis. In her discussion of the striptease she explains that fetishism, to which the striptease is closely linked, avoids the look that grants full access to the naked female body, favouring instead "a prolonged hesitation at the outskirts, the margins of desire."⁴⁵ The oscillation she describes that teases the spectator with glimpses of flesh, while withholding the full look, is certainly a feature of the three scenes where Marion is seen in her undergarments (at the hotel with her lover; at home packing to run away; at the motel), especially the third; the scene that

⁴⁴ Ibid., p.86

⁴⁵ Mary Ann Doane, 'Gilda: Epistemology and Striptease,' op. cit., p.106

immediately precedes her death. What differentiates the cinematic striptease (whether literal as in the performance in *Gilda*, or metaphorical in the oscillation between revealing and concealing parts of the woman's body), from the live performance of the striptease to which Barthes refers is, as Doane points out, that "[t]he props and stereotypes of the striptease are all there but its product – the completely nude body – is not."⁴⁶ Mulvey and other film theorists describe images of woman as the cause of frozen moments in the narrative of the film, but domestic viewing technology allows us to physically freeze the already decelerated moment of her image on screen. Yet, if pausing the VHS recording of *Psycho* to interrogate this shot was Gordon's point of departure for *24 Hour Psycho*, the freeze-frame is not the main interrogatory tool employed by the film. Rather this work makes elegant use of slow motion.

Acinema

In a statement that recalls the comments made by Gordon and Arnold with regard to the unconscious or repressed aspect of cinema, Lyotard writes that cinema operates on a principle of "exclusions and effacements."⁴⁷ Exclusions are those aspects of content, or of technique that are so far beyond the usual repetitions of cinema that, according to Lyotard, most filmmakers are not even aware of them, while effacements are those 'mistakes' such as extreme glare in a shot or a boom microphone entering the frame, that are eliminated over the course of production and postproduction. He describes the general rule of conventional cinema that all "movements" are used up by the film text as a whole. In other words the conventional film operates according to a tight economy that only includes necessary information, or movements, as Lyotard would have it, cutting out all superfluous, 'unproductive' movement:

[E]very movement put forward *sends back* to something else, is inscribed as a plus or minus on the ledger book which is the film, is *valuable* because it *returns* to something else.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Ibid., p.104

⁴⁷ Ibid., p.173

⁴⁸ Ibid., p.170

This essential economy excludes what Lyotard refers to as the “*sterile difference*,”⁴⁹ which, as he explains, is the movement that is unproductive, outside of the economy of the film text, not necessary to the whole or to making sense of the whole. To illustrate productive movement he describes the striking of a match that belongs to “the circuit of capital”⁵⁰ whereby the match is used to light the gas that heats the water with which coffee is made, which then provides the drinker with energy on their way to work. Since the match has initiated a chain of production, it is not an example of sterility. He usefully illustrates the concept of the sterile difference through the example of a child striking a match just for the pleasure it:

[W]hen a child strikes the match-head to see what happens – just for the fun of it – he enjoys the movement itself, the changing colours, the light flashing at the height of the blaze, the death of the tiny piece of wood, the hissing of the tiny flame. He enjoys these sterile differences leading nowhere, these uncompensated losses; what the physicist calls the dissipation of energy.⁵¹

The cinematic equivalent of the match-head lit for pure enjoyment is located in two extremes of movement that Lyotard simply describes as “immobility and excessive movement.”⁵² According to him, cinema’s use of these transgressive movements frees it from its imperative to order, instead producing “true, that is, vain, simulacrum, blissful intensities, instead of productive/consumable objects.”⁵³ To explore this, Lyotard offers the example of *Joe* (1970, John G. Avildsen), a film that provides both extremes of movement he describes, each one used when we see a murder on screen; in one the “hail of fists”⁵⁴ that kills the character supplies excessive mobility, while a freeze-frame shot is used to depict another killing, with the character frozen in mid-fall, having been shot. Lyotard explains that these effects are achieved by relinquishing the essential rule of representational cinema that insists on ‘real time’ by recording and projecting at the rate

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid., pp.170-171

⁵² Ibid., p.172

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid., p.174

of twenty-four frames per second.⁵⁵ However, he quickly disqualifies these examples as instances of the sterile difference that he advocates, claiming instead that in this example what he refers to as “this greater or lesser perversion of the realistic rhythm”⁵⁶ actually progresses the narrative by accentuating both the emotional charge of the events depicted and the response of the spectator. These “arrhythmies,” as he describes them, rather than transgressing order, in fact prop it up, marking the film “with a beautiful melodic curve, the first accelerated murder finding its resolution in the second immobilized murder.”⁵⁷

For Lyotard, film direction is an ordering job that he names “a profoundly unconscious process of separation, exclusion and effacement”⁵⁸ that orders both the cinematic object (the film) and the ‘real’ world it purports to reflect:

[I]n order for the function of representation to be fulfilled, the activity of directing (a placing in and out of scene, as we have just said) must also be an activity which unifies all the movements, those on both sides of the frame’s limit, imposing here and there, in ‘reality’ just as in the real (*reel*), the *same norms*, the same ordering of all drives, excluding obliterating, effacing them *no less off* the scene than on.⁵⁹

He puts this succinctly when he describes it as the “primordial function of an exclusion spreading to the exterior as well as to the interior of the cinematographic playground.”⁶⁰ His attribution of a social regulatory function to cinema reminds us of Barthes’ writings on the operation of myth in various modes of representation. Mulvey’s seminal essay, which was written in the same year as Lyotard’s, also investigates “cinematic codes and their relationship to formative external structures”⁶¹ claiming that looking relations in cinema reflect and augment looking relations in society. Lyotard proposes that the cinema acts as an instructive, or organising agent both in terms of its own *mise-en-scène* (understood in the broadest sense) and in terms of organising social norms. The social

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid., p.175

⁵⁹ Ibid., p.175

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Laura Mulvey, ‘Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema,’ *Visual and Other Pleasures* (London: Macmillan, 1989), p.25

order is as fabricated as the film object, the function of both being “the subordination of all partial drives, all sterile and divergent movements to the unity of an organic body.”⁶² Lyotard identifies the central problem of these organising systems as the continual “exclusion and foreclosure of all that is judged unrepresentable because non-recurrent.”⁶³ All of those impulses, movements, and experiences that are outside of a system of capital exchange, outside of a system of return, are banished through these organising cultural forms. To sum up his hypothetical disruptive cinema, he writes:

The acinema, we have said, would be situated at the two poles of the cinema taken as a writing of movements: thus, extreme immobilization and extreme mobilization.⁶⁴

He points out that these two poles are possibly evident in the resistant models of experimental and underground cinema, and we have already cited the example of slow motion in *Entr'acte* by René Clair, as well as in the work of numerous other filmmakers who have appropriated and transformed sections of pre-existing films. However, Lyotard seems to differentiate his model of alternative cinema from these others by insisting that representation and familiar points of identification must be maintained to facilitate a critique of conventional cinema. Only then can sterile differences shatter the unity of the film. To summarise, he suggests that his acinema is not located in any pre-existing type of alternative cinema as it requires a high degree of conventional cinema in its composition. Yet, the experimental films of Joseph Cornell, the underground films of Ken Jacobs, as well as the moving image art of Martin Arnold and Douglas Gordon are all types of alternative filmmaking that contain, through a process of appropriation, the familiarity of conventional cinema, and none more so than Gordon's *24 Hour Psycho*. The practice of citing conventional filmmaking (most importantly films that are recorded and projected at the standard rate) lends many experimental and underground films, and moving image art, the familiarity that Lyotard posits as a requisite of his disruptive cinema. The replication of familiar forms, as we know, is also a requisite of all forms of

⁶² Ibid., p.176

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid., p.177

parody. While Jacobs appropriates lesser-known French porn cinema (amongst other genres), Arnold and Gordon appropriate classical Hollywood film, the most conventional of all cinemas. Yet Gordon's appropriation of Hitchcock's film lends his work the highest degree of familiarity of all of the examples of film appropriation described here. Spectators of Gordon's work do not require specialist knowledge of marginal film genres, such as porn film or B movies to recognise the source that it quotes, or to infer from it the standard rate of recording and projection of twenty-four frames a second. The universal knowledge of *Psycho*, that Mulvey, Godard, and Taubin have described, marks this film as an ideal source for a parodic form of Lyotard's acinema. In a catalogue essay for Gordon's 2006 retrospective at Edinburgh's National Gallery, Holger Broeker makes clear that the artist's selection of Hitchcock's film was a deliberate, considered one, led by the premise that the film he used should be "etched in the collective consciousness."⁶⁵

In 'Acinema' Lyotard describes the importance of invoking the normative projection time of twenty-four frames per second in order to activate the audience's usual expectations of cinema, but he also claims that a radical transgression of that time, that is completely 'unreasonable' with regard to the narrative sense of the film must also be included. Gordon does not project the film at the regular projection speed only to then slow it down, as this is not necessary in this case for the invocation of normative projection time. The almost universal knowledge of Hitchcock's *Psycho* is enough to invoke the standard cinematic projection rate. It is inferred in our recognition of the text and, importantly, invoked by our memory of it. It is his particular choice and use of quotation that allows him to maintain a consistent slow motion throughout the piece rather than move between conventional screening time and an unprovoked perversion of that. In fact our knowledge of the film prompts us to continually run forward with the plot in our mind's eye while watching the slowly paced version, and the previously unnoticed details it reveals, unfold before us. When asked in one interview to identify the central themes of his work, Gordon responds by saying that he is "interested in those areas where

⁶⁵ Holger Broeker, 'Cinema is Dead! Long Live Film! The Language of Images in the Video Works of Douglas Gordon' in *Douglas Gordon Superhumannatural* (Edinburgh: National Galleries of Scotland, 2006), p.63

perception breaks down”⁶⁶ and commenting on *24 Hour Psycho* elsewhere he claims that the viewer is drawn into the past through the memory of the film, and at the same time into the future by anticipating the next movement on screen, but that this somehow results in a confusion since “the story, which he already knows, never appears fast enough.”⁶⁷ Taubin comments on Gordon’s conviction that slow motion made the film more chaotic, rather than clearer.⁶⁸ Indeed viewing *24 Hour Psycho*, perception is superseded by *apperception* as we become acutely conscious of our experience, both of looking at the temporally modified work in the present and having watched it many times in the past.

While Lyotard explores two models where the poles of movement he describes may become manifest, he is convinced by just one of these, and that is the production of immobilization, or what he describes as “the most intense agitation through [the] fascinating paralysis”⁶⁹ of the *image*, while maintaining the familiar support of cinema. Immobility of the image, of the film content, is the most promising form for his acinema, which must maintain high degrees of familiarity:

[R]epresentation is essential to this fantasmatic; that is, it is essential that the spectator be offered instances of identification, recognizable forms, all in all, matter for the memory: for it is at the price, we repeat, of going beyond this and disfiguring the order of propagation that the intense emotion is felt.⁷⁰

Hitchcock’s films are exemplars of ‘matter for the memory,’ offering very familiar, standardised ‘instances of identification’ and ‘recognizable forms.’ Familiarity takes the form of our depth of knowledge of this one film, and of its uses and augmentation of cinematic norms and formulae. Lyotard stresses that this fascinating paralysis should be directed only at the image, the content of the film and that the support of the film (the

⁶⁶ Douglas Gordon quoted in Francis McKee & Jan Debbaut, op. cit., p.34

⁶⁷ Douglas Gordon quoted in ‘Oscar van der Boogaard talks with Douglas Gordon,’ *Déjà-Vu*, op. cit., p.43

⁶⁸ Amy Taubin, op. cit., p.70

⁶⁹ Jean-François Lyotard, op. cit., p.178

⁷⁰ Ibid., p.178

conventional role of the cinematic apparatus) should remain hidden, as it is in conventional cinema:

[T]he support itself must not submit to any noticeable perversion in order that the perversion attack only what is supported, the representation of the victim: the support is held in insensibility or unconsciousness.⁷¹

Lyotard explores the possibility of the support becoming visible, mobile – as it is in modernist films such as Dziga Vertov's *Man With a Movie Camera* (1929) or Stan Brakhage's *Mothlight* (1963) - but concludes his essay by questioning the effectiveness of that as this model turns the 'client' (the spectator) into the 'victim' (the content) of the film. He asks if it might in fact be crucial to the production (and experience) of the sterile discharge that representation remains, and expands on this by asking: "And if so, must we then renounce the hope of finishing with the illusion, not only the cinematographic illusion but also the social and political illusions?"⁷² Here he is suggesting that the myth of unity that notions of the body, the self, and society are built on, are perhaps necessary illusions. The spectator must be able to recognise the object they view as an object of cinema which is achieved, according to Lyotard, by the maintenance of the usual identification patterns and the usual disavowal of the look of the camera and the look of the audience to prioritise and only acknowledge the look of the characters within the frame. As we know it is a central contention of parody that reproduction of much of the order of the target text is necessary for its effective critique.

Because Gordon revises a pre-existing film, the support of the original film remains largely intact and, although he shifts its context from the cinema (and television) to the gallery, he maintains enough contextual continuity in the scale of the projection on the large screen to secure our recognition of the quoted work as an object of cinema. While Gordon's projections are not as large as even small cinema screens, they are large by the standards of gallery-installed video art, and large within the space of the gallery. He usually uses ten-by-twelve foot screens, and these range from screens on gallery walls, to

⁷¹ Ibid., p.178

⁷² Ibid., pp.179-180

the freestanding translucent screens mentioned earlier. Like most instances of parody these works combine fairly equal degrees of replication and deviation from the original contextual aspects of the revised text. In a comment that confirms Gordon's determination to circumvent expectations by placing this familiar object (*Psycho*) in an unfamiliar setting he says: "entertainment is primarily to do with the fulfilment of expectation. But surely an aspiration of the museum should be to allow for the unexpected."⁷³ Unlike Lyotard's ideal model of acinema then, Gordon's work does simultaneously pervert aspects of both the form and the content of the work in his one simple modification of the text, but the reproduction of what is for many a mythic film text, allows for a displacement of both without sacrificing audience recognition and the operation of conventional cinematic identification patterns.

Gordon's film does not use immobilisation, such as the freeze-frame mentioned by Lyotard in his earlier example, or the freeze-frame that played a key part in the instigation of this work as Gordon looked to verify what he thought he had seen on the screen. Rather, he uses an extreme deceleration of usual cinematic time, projecting a film that has been filmed at twenty-four frames per second at the rate of two frames per second. Taubin summarises the two key uses of slow motion in cinema when she writes: "In the voluminous history of slow motion in the movies, two not entirely separate purposes emerge. One is analytical, one expressive."⁷⁴ She describes slow motion as part of the "everyday vocabulary"⁷⁵ of American avant-garde filmmakers after the Second World War, but states that "it is probably only Andy Warhol and Ken Jacobs who have employed it in the same single-minded fashion that Gordon has in *24 Hour Psycho*."⁷⁶

Expressive slow motion is slow motion that accentuates narrative concerns, that is productive (to use Lyotard's vocabulary), whereas analytic slow motion is more akin to the type of slow motion used by Jacobs and Gordon to study dominant conventions in

⁷³ Douglas Gordon quoted in Francis McKee & Jan Debbaut, op. cit., p.32

⁷⁴ Amy Taubin, op. cit., p.71

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

existing films. In her contextualisation of Gordon's work Taubin refers to Ken Jacobs' stretching of the 1905 short *Tom, Tom the Piper's Son* by Billy Bitzer to produce a two-hour version of the same name in 1969. Jacobs achieved this by the use of an analytic projector, which had the capacity to project films at a rate of anything between one and twenty-four frames a second, and was the same as the projectors used in university classrooms to study cinema.⁷⁷

Gordon's use of slow motion in *24 Hour Psycho* is analytic, facilitating our perception of moments and movements that would normally evade us, and allowing us to generally reflect on the cinema. We become very aware of camera angles, and the way that the camera moves for instance. We notice details such as the crookedness of Leigh's bottom row of teeth as she screams when attacked, a detail lost by the brevity of that shot on screen in the original film and by its subservience to the compelling story unfolding on screen. However, slow motion here only reveals what is recorded on each frame, and not all of the details in between frames. In fact, that missing information and the limits of what is caught by the camera becomes very apparent by the use of slow motion. For instance, we notice the detail of the shapes that a mouth makes as it speaks a word, but only the shapes registered by each frame (these shapes are all the more noticeable because of the absence of the soundtrack and therefore the absence of the sound of the word being spoken). Doane describes this repression of the gap between frames in cinema: "In concealing the division between frames, it refuses to acknowledge the loss of time on which it is based."⁷⁸ The jerkiness of the image when slowed down announces the omitted movements in between each frame; one of the exclusions described by Lyotard. Another effect is that small, slow movements remain subtle, while fast movements sweep dramatically across the surface of the screen, displaying the greater gaps of action between frames.

As described in the second chapter of this thesis, in *Thirteen Most Beautiful Women* and his other *Screen Test* films Warhol uses slow motion and combines it with the single take,

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Mary Ann Doane, *The Emergence of Cinematic Time*, op. cit., pp.41-42

usually at close-up, or medium close-up, to scrutinise the image, and to break with cinematic conventions. Gordon's use of slow motion also breaks with cinematic conventions, but the effect of slowing the film (or the VHS copy of the film) down is dramatically different from Warhol's more slight expansion of cinematic time (Warhol's *Thirteen most Beautiful Women* is projected at sixteen frames per second). The delicate, poetic slurring of the image in Warhol is subtle when compared to the staccato movement produced by Gordon's more radical use of slow motion. *24 Hour Psycho* produces a disruptive cinema that includes Lyotard's sterile difference as immobility. Here, as in Jacobs' films, slow motion is not productive, not a necessary part of the economy of the film; not a servant of the narrative.

The expansion of the screening time of *24 Hour Psycho* is not concerned with representing 'real' time as an alternative or opposition to the illusion of cinematic time. No, the ellipses of the original film text that serve to cut out superfluous narrative detail obviously preclude Gordon's film ever showing the whole story time of the narrative. In this sense the piece *emphasises* some of the exclusions that Lyotard writes about in 'Acinema.' In addition, and most importantly, the slowing down, or elongation of screening time, critiques cinematic time by demystifying the illusion of movement that we still find so fascinating about cinema.

The ultimate illusion of cinema as *moving* image is shattered, with our ability to detect each and every still image the film is composed of. Like Warhol's camera, Gordon's gaze subjects the film (his object of scrutiny) to close, almost unforgiving analysis. Despite this, and perhaps surprisingly, a type of movement is sustained, though not the illusory movement of conventional film time. While we could possibly make the claim that Gordon uses the freeze frame because each image is perceptible, 'frozen,' on screen for half a second, the overall effect is one of jerky movement. As Taubin puts it "the film retains just enough motion for us to feel how each image is pulled towards the next."⁷⁹

⁷⁹ Ibid., p.69

In a more recent work in the same vein, *5 Year Drive-By* (1995) expands the time of the film, this time to correspond with the timeframe represented by the film's narrative. Though it has yet to be completely realised, the conceptual intention of this piece is to project John Ford's film *The Searchers* (1956), originally a two hour film, over a period of five years, resulting in each frame remaining on screen for over fifteen minutes and therefore what should be a second of screen time is protracted to last almost seven hours.⁸⁰ Although this work is impressive in its ambition and duration, by unequivocally presenting the stasis of the film image it loses the ambivalence of Gordon's earlier piece. The balance between stillness and movement generated by the stretching of the film to project at a rate of two frames a second maintains enough of the original cinematic text to function as parody, whereas *5 Year Drive-By* becomes a succession of still images, rather like a slide show of closely related images, or a study by photographer Eadweard Muybridge, whose used multiple cameras to record the motion of animals and people.

Looking at Looking at Woman

This thesis is concerned with the effect on the image of woman of various parodic practices that reframe conventional cinema and, as we have established, the image of woman plays a crucial role in the economy of the Hollywood film. She is the desirous object central to the narrative propulsion of the film in that she is often the prize that the protagonist hopes to win but, as observed by Doane, and described in the second chapter of this thesis, she is also the precarious object of cinema; the image that points to the possibility of excess, that threatens to destabilise the tight economy of that system, the order of the film text. She represents a necessary paradox, being essential to the film, but also usually its only instance of threat. What is the affect on the image of woman of Gordon's protraction of film?

Gordon's scrutiny of the film perfectly mirrors the scrutiny of Hitchcock's protagonists as they try to see those things forbidden to them. For instance Jeffries (James Stewart) in *Rear Window* thinks he has seen a murder, or seen the 'before' and 'after' scenes of a murder, and continues to survey the window opposite his to try to get to the truth, to

⁸⁰ Klaus Biesenbach, op. cit., p.25

uncover the mystery. In *Psycho*, Norman looks at Marion as she undresses before her shower just as Gordon studies her, convinced there is more to see, or unsure of what he had seen previously, as this vision did not exactly confirm his memory of the film. Gordon identifies perfectly with the protagonist and becomes implicated in his desire to see and to own the image, exactly as Hitchcock intends. Douchet explains this process when he writes: "Hitchcock first excites the worst feelings of his audience and then, through his spectacle, authorizes them to be satisfied."⁸¹ According to him Hitchcock's spectator "finds himself as unarmed as a primitive, subject to the great ancestral fears."⁸²

In 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema' Mulvey describes the "flowing movements compatible with the human eye,"⁸³ essential to the cinematic illusion of truth, that are achieved by the conventional projection speed of twenty-four frames a second. This conventional speed, together with the disavowal of two of the three looks contained by cinema – the look of the camera and the look of the audience are subordinated to the look of the characters within the film – ensures the "reality, obviousness and truth"⁸⁴ of the fiction film. Gordon's appropriation of a work of cinema, and his various alterations to that text, through slowing down the film, displaying each frame, and substituting the cinematic audience for the gallery spectator, disrupts all of these essential conventions (while our memory of the original continually attempts to restore them to their 'proper' position). This substitution of cinema audience for gallery spectator can perhaps be seen as the transformation of the 'immersed' cinema audience into a critically engaged audience, this transformation effectively freeing "the look of the audience into dialectics and passionate detachment."⁸⁵ This is not to suggest that there is a simplistic opposition between passive cinema audience and active art audience – indeed Douchet makes the point that "Hitchcock needs the active participation of the audience"⁸⁶ - but that by shifting the context of the cinematic text from its proper place of reception in a cinema

⁸¹ Jean Douchet, op. cit., p.151

⁸² Ibid., p.152

⁸³ Laura Mulvey, 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema' in *Visual and Other Pleasures* (London: MacMillan, 1989), p.26

⁸⁴ Ibid., p.24

⁸⁵ Ibid., p.26

⁸⁶ Jean Douchet, op. cit., p.150

theatre (or television screen) into the gallery space, that enough critical distance is provided for the spectator to think differently about the familiar object presented. Using suitably Hitchcockian terms, Gordon has described his appropriation of film texts as ‘abductions,’⁸⁷ as he quite literally steals a film and holds it captive in an entirely different space. He also describes the shift in viewing activity, from art audience viewing fine art objects to art audience viewing (and remembering) cinema, that is effected by the physical abduction of the film, as a ‘kidnapping’ of the audience:

[I]n social terms, I use the mechanisms of films to ‘kidnap’ people and bring them out of the situation they expect to find – an artistic situation – so that they are compelled to think of other spaces. It does not matter whether they reflect on the film, the projection has another scope, like fitting out a new room in a house.⁸⁸

The look of the cinema spectator is replaced by the look of the gallery visitor who moves around the screen as object (prompted by accepted behavioural patterns for gallery attendees). As noted earlier the spectator is ever mindful of her / his physical presence in the gallery and, because of the particular pulsing rhythm of the projected image, of her / his breathing, and heartbeat. The look of the audience is, in Gordon’s appropriation of *Psycho*, not disavowed as it is in the original version of *Psycho*. Nor is the look of the camera, as the mechanism of the recording technology is laid bare through the demystification of cinematic movement. In the preface of her recent book *Death 24 x a Second*, Mulvey explains the nuanced shift in her interests from her earlier 1970s writings to today:

Then, in the 1970s, I was preoccupied by Hollywood’s ability to construct the female star as ultimate spectacle, the emblem and guarantee of its fascination and power. Now, I am more interested in the way that those moments of spectacle were also moments of narrative halt, hinting at the stillness of the single celluloid frame.⁸⁹

⁸⁷ Douglas Gordon quoted in Francis McKee & Jan Debbaut, op. cit., p.42

⁸⁸ Douglas Gordon, *Déjà-Vu*, op. cit., p.23

⁸⁹ Laura Mulvey, *Death 24 x a Second* (London: Reaktion Books, 2006), p.7

That 'hinting at the stillness' of which cinema is comprised, provided by the 'moments of spectacle' that centre on the fetishised image of woman, is taken to an extreme point in Gordon's film; a film that Mulvey discusses in her book. As she notes, the moments of spectacle provided by the image of the desirable woman on screen, are already subversive in the context of the classical film text because they arrest the narrative and thereby hint at the stillness of the image. In Gordon's film, the entire film announces the stillness that comprises the cinematic image. Mulvey's interest in *24 Hour Psycho* derives from her general interest in "an altered perspective, informed by the problems and possibilities of the present."⁹⁰ This altered perspective is facilitated by the development of new technologies, the very technology that prompted Gordon's intervention into Hitchcock's film, his interruption of the narrative flow, his scrutiny through the process of rewinding, pausing, and reviewing the 'problem' he wanted to solve. She refers to the process illustrated by Gordon's intervention as 'delayed cinema,' whereby the spectator can literally delay the film by slowing it down, but also in the sense that there has been a delay in discovering certain pieces of information, only facilitated by new technologies through which we can scrutinise films. By staging delayed cinema in the gallery, we might suggest that Gordon is inviting us to review the past, and to reconsider its relevance to the present; both the present of the gallery visitors (and the place cinema occupies in their memories), and the present of moving image media. However, the type of delay effected by Gordon's film is not exactly the sort that Mulvey describes. She is interested in the freeze-frame, and processes of repeating, and reviewing sections, and moments of a film that produce an interruption to the linear progress of the film's narrative, rather than the consistent slowing down of the film, uninterrupted, just expanded.

For Mulvey "movement tends to assert the presence of a continuous 'now,' stillness brings a resonance of 'then' to the surface."⁹¹ In other words acknowledgement that the moving image is composed of a succession of still images, brings the past, or what she later refers to as a 'then-ness' into focus, allowing access to the time of the film's

⁹⁰ Ibid., p.8

⁹¹ Ibid., p.13

registration. Mulvey explains that the photograph makes the animate inanimate, but that the projection of the filmstrip of still images, in other words 'cinema,' "reverses the process, by means of an illusion that animates the inanimate frames of its origin."⁹² She describes the recognition of the stillness at the heart of cinema as a sort of acknowledgment of the death of which the cinema is comprised. It is a record of things past, of moments forever lost, that deceptively poses as a living entity. She describes a point, which is "essentially located in the single frame, where the cinema meets the still photograph, both registering a moment of time frozen and thus fossilized."⁹³ Doane also describes the way that cinema seems to breathe life back into the past, to make it appear present once again, stating that cinema was seen as "a prophylactic against death"⁹⁴ that could register "life itself in all its multiplicity, diversity, and contingency."⁹⁵ Yet Doane also notes that this resuscitation of things past, this illusion of present-ness, is merely the immaterial *experience* of the present, "a presence haunted by historicity."⁹⁶ We apprehend the artefact recorded on film as present in the moment of its screening, but it is past, and our only perception of it is in its immateriality (ghostliness) in the present.

The freeze-frame, or pause function, afforded by modern technology, for Mulvey "brings the presence of death back to the ageing cinema."⁹⁷ Cinema then is "torn between the stillness of the celluloid strip and the illusion of its movement."⁹⁸ In *Psycho*, the moment of Marion's death, and Janet Leigh's impressive performance of the stillness of death, returns the fiction film "to the secret stillness that lies concealed within it."⁹⁹ This is represented not by a still image, though Leigh's stillness gives that impression. Her fixed blank stare at the camera represents lifelessness, and freezes the flow of the narrative. This deathly stillness is prolonged to an even greater extent in Gordon's film, yet the scrutiny to which the film is subjected by the use of slow motion allows us to see more

⁹² Ibid., p.15

⁹³ Ibid., p.102

⁹⁴ Mary Anne Doane, *The Emergence of Cinematic Time*, op. cit., p.22

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Ibid., p.23

⁹⁷ Laura Mulvey, *Death 24 x a Second*, op. cit., p.22

⁹⁸ Ibid., p.26

⁹⁹ Ibid., p.87

clearly the tiny subtle movement of Leigh as she plays dead. The *mise-en-scène* of the murder setting, the house and motel, is riddled with corpses - the stuffed birds and Norman's dead mother – that, according to Mulvey, represent “the inanimate residue of a once living being.”¹⁰⁰ Drawing on Mulvey's comments about the deathly composition of the film, there is a correlation between the corpses that fill the *mise-en-scène* and the still images that comprise the film on a material level, between content and form, neatly collapsed in the filming of the corpse. Indeed there is a clear causal link between desire (our desire set in motion through identification with Norman's voyeurism) and murder (death and stillness).

Much of Mulvey's discussion concerns the maternal body, and she observes Hitchcock's knowing references to Freudian ideas of the mother's body as the first ‘home,’ and its transformation by death, narrativised by the presence of the corpse, into the uncanny.¹⁰¹ Like many film critics and theorists she discusses Hitchcock's preoccupation with women, and in particular with objectifying women through what is described by film critic William Rothman as a ‘murderous gaze.’¹⁰² Mulvey notes that Hitchcock's beautiful blondes distanced this feminine ‘other’: “The glamorous beauty of Hitchcock's blonde stars had acted as a veil for that other, repressed, side of the female body: the uncanny body of the mother.”¹⁰³ Yet she points out that with *Psycho* Hitchcock departed from the high production values lavished on the image building of his other starlets to instead represent an ordinary, middle-class woman. While this may have been Hitchcock's intention, it is difficult for us to accept Janet Leigh as ordinary, even if she is dressed in the film as an exemplar of lower-middle-class womanhood.

In an essay ‘Hitchcock, Feminism, and the Patriarchal Unconscious’ Tania Modleski claims that Hitchcock's films have played a central role in the establishment of feminist film theory, in particular they have been used to illustrate “how women in classical

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., p.97

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² William Rothman, *Hitchcock: The Murderous Gaze* (London: Harvard University Press, 1982)

¹⁰³ Ibid.

Hollywood cinema are inevitably made into passive objects of male voyeuristic and sadistic impulses.”¹⁰⁴ She then outlines an alternative reading, proposed by a number of critics, of Hitchcock’s heroines as powerful and therefore threatening to the masculinist narrative structure of classical cinema. However, her position straddles these two. She focuses on an often-overlooked aspect of Hitchcock movies, which is that they provide identification (sympathy) with the female character as well as subjecting her to an objectifying gaze (misogyny). It is this “thoroughgoing ambivalence about femininity”¹⁰⁵ in Hitchcock films that she explores. In relation to *Psycho* this ambivalence and identification with the woman – both the audience’s identification with Marion in the first half of the film and Norman’s (over-)identification with his mother – is explained by Modleski as an expression of the difficulty the boy child has in separating from his mother in order to identify with a male figure and thereby enter successfully socialised into the symbolic order:

Psychoanalysis has shown that the process by which the male child comes to set the mother at a distance is of very uncertain outcome, which helps to explain why it is continually necessary for man to face the threat woman poses and to work to subdue that threat both in life and in art.¹⁰⁶

For Modleski the male child’s difficulty and sometimes inability to “distance woman and make her his [property]”¹⁰⁷ results in the violence towards women that we see in many Hitchcock films. She continues to explain that “masochism, and the preoedipal relationship with the mother in which it is rooted, are in fact repressed by the male in adult life.”¹⁰⁸ She also describes the connection between “the masochistic aesthetic” and “the equation of women with death”¹⁰⁹ in classical cinema. According to Modleski then the classical film text becomes a site for working through, and revisiting, this stage of

¹⁰⁴ Tania Modleski, ‘Hitchcock, Feminism, and the Patriarchal unconscious’ in Patricia Erens (ed.), *Issues in Feminist Film Criticism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), p.59

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., p.60

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., p.61

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., p.65

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., p.68

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

male development that is resolved (if at all) only with great difficulty. Preoedipal identification with the mother is the repressed of patriarchal culture that is given some expression in cinema only to be resolved through the death of the woman with which we (or the male character on screen) perversely identify.

In his book *Hitchcock: The Murderous Gaze*, William Rothman makes similar comments on the significance of death in *Psycho* to an acknowledgement of death as the repressed of cinema in general.¹¹⁰ He concludes his lengthy textual analysis of the film with the following reflection on the morbid aspect of all cinema: "Every film image is a death mask of the world."¹¹¹ His comments resound with Mulvey's, as they both contend that this film in particular articulates death as a fundamental aspect of film (as it is of life). He writes that "[w]hat lures us into the world of a film may be a dream of triumphing over death, holding death forever at bay" but *Psycho* informs us that "[a]t the heart of every film is a truth we already know; we have been born into the world and we are fated to die."¹¹²

Writing in 1982, Rothman makes a prescient statement about Hitchcock's film, in contemplating the death of cinema that *Psycho* (and the murder/s it contains) seems to mark (and we may recall Mulvey's comments to the same effect cited earlier), by suggesting that this film may generate new directions for art: "*Psycho* is made out of a continuing commitment to the art of film to which Hitchcock had dedicated his life. Perhaps this art may yet be reborn out of its own ashes."¹¹³ If *Psycho* marks the death of cinema (or, for some, a turning point for cinema that marks the end of the classical system and the start of something new) its investigation by Gordon revives it by re-situating it within one of many contemporary contexts for the moving image (moving image art installed in the gallery). But Gordon's scrutiny of this exemplar of classical filmmaking *barely* breathes life back into it, introducing just enough movement to maintain *a sense of* movement, of 'now-ness,' in the original text, but also revealing in

¹¹⁰ William Rothman, op. cit.

¹¹¹ Ibid., p.341

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Ibid., p.255

the jumps from one frame to another, the 'then-ness,' that conventional cinema tries to erase. We can also consider Rothman's prophetic comments about the resuscitation of *Psycho* in light of Hutcheon's view of parody as a continuation of outmoded genres and forms:

I see parody as operating as a method of inscribing continuity while permitting critical distance. It can, indeed, function as a conservative force in both retaining and mocking other aesthetic forms; but it is also capable of transformative power in creating new syntheses.¹¹⁴

In reference to Gordon's piece Mulvey writes: "This work creates a dialogue between the film and technology to discover something that is not there in the original as screened but can be revealed within it."¹¹⁵ Again she describes the 'unconscious' or hidden elements of cinema. As already mentioned, Mulvey's interest has shifted in more recent work to the way that the image of woman in classical cinema hints at the stillness that resides at the heart of cinema itself. This stillness is the ultimate exclusion of cinema. As we know from our earlier discussion of Warhol's films, the fetishistic treatment of the woman's body represents the only tolerable pause to the narrative development of the film. Her presence, her image, then, threatens to divulge cinema's preciously guarded secret. Indeed, we recall that, for Doane, "[w]oman is situated as the substrate of representation itself, its unconscious material."¹¹⁶ In *Psycho* the equation of woman with stillness, the collision of the two repressed elements of dominant cinema, is narrativised and made literal through the death of the beautiful young woman we have objectified, and the old woman (the mother) who Norman perversely identifies with the maternal corpse in the basement with her empty sightless eye sockets and the beautiful young woman who lies staring both blankly and accusingly at the camera / us. Through the slowness (stillness) that accompanies the image of woman the past becomes visible, the illusion of movement revealed. This is a general condition of classical cinema, but it is announced at the level of narrative in *Psycho*.

¹¹⁴ Linda Hutcheon, op. cit., p.20

¹¹⁵ Laura Mulvey, *Death 24 x a Second*, op.cit., p.101

¹¹⁶ Mary Ann Doane, 'Veiling Over Desire: Close-Ups of the Woman,' *Femmes Fatales*, op. cit., p.59

If this stillness is hinted at by the fetishised image of woman in classical cinema (and therefore in *Psycho*), then it is loudly declared in every movement of *24 Hour Psycho*. Even the non-fetishised images of women in *24 Hour Psycho*, those that don't freeze the flow of the narrative but propel it along, are reminiscent of the decelerated moment of erotic contemplation that is emblematic of classical cinema. Consequently, the very threat that the image of woman poses in the classical film is hereby (at least in part) understood as the threat of everything coming to a halt, the ultimate prevention of narrative progression.

Conclusion

In *24 Hour Psycho*, the duality of parody, of a piece of moving image art that both replicates and deviates from a work of cinema, is reflected contextually in the dual image produced by the use of the translucent free standing screen that presents us with a 'right' and 'wrong' image of the film, as well as textually in the split personality of the protagonist of *Psycho*. This schizophrenia, or this splitting of an image and an idea into the diametric opposites (symmetries) of good and evil permeates Gordon's work, from his video pieces to his ambiguous text based works that brandish double-edged statements such as "I am aware of who you are & what you do." The male over-identification with the mother that Norman's psychosis displays is also explored in some of Gordon's more recent works, such as the photo series *Staying Home and Going Out* (2005), self-portraits of Gordon in full woman's make up and blonde or brunette chin-length wigs, with a glimpse of a hairy chest or arm acting as the clear mark of a failure to *pass*. These works recall an earlier photograph of the artist entitled *Self-Portrait as Kurt Cobain, as Andy Warhol, as Myra Hindley, as Marilyn Monroe*, that he used in the publicity for his nomination, and subsequent winning, of the Turner Prize in 1996. Art critic David Hopkins points to the artificial bloneness of the ill-fitting wig that Gordon wears as possibly "encoding a vacillation between good and evil."¹¹⁷ He cites Marina

¹¹⁷ David Hopkins, 'Douglas Gordon as Gavin Turk as Andy Warhol as Marcel Duchamp as Sarah Lucas' in *292: Essays in Visual Culture*, issue 2, Edinburgh Projects, Faculty of Art & Design, Edinburgh College of Art, 2000, p.95

Warner to explain that fair hair traditionally connotes purity and cleanliness, so an artificial ('bottle') blonde signals that there is something being concealed; a darkness within. He later describes the "offhand"¹¹⁸ cross-dressing performed by Gordon in this portrait in that his facial stubble (presumably a few days growth) and the bad fit of the wig articulates the instability of gender norms. Although *24 Hour Psycho* does not *target* gender constructs in cinema in an overt way, clearly much of Gordon's oeuvre contests the too neat and limited binary opposition of masculinity and femininity and, as we know, an interest in the gender coding of looking relations inscribed by the classical film text was the genesis for this scrutinous work. His work stages the merging of values and aesthetics that are usually presented as binary oppositions, creating an ambivalence and a duality that is enhanced by the use of parodic strategies in his practice.

Undoubtedly *24 Hour Psycho* has received more critical attention than any of Gordon's other works, which has much to do with his careful choice of film for this piece. As mentioned, Hitchcock's text already contains a heightened awareness of cinematic spectatorship and of the equation of woman with death. Gordon's parodic abduction of the film, that alters its viewing context and allows us to perceive the individual stills that comprise it, makes those concerns explicit. The ultimate exclusion of cinema is revealed through the unmotivated slowing down of the film (which in Lyotard's formulation is an exclusion in itself). What we are left with is, in Lyotard's terms, the fascinating paralysis of the image, a type of disrupted seduction, but one that exceeds the usual collapse of woman and stillness that provides the momentary threat, which paradoxically proves the resilience of the film text. *24 Hour Psycho* is entirely composed of moments of fascinating paralysis. It is one long disrupted seduction, but one that relies on memories of earlier viewings of Hitchcock's films and a familiarity with the conventions of dominant cinema in general.

Gordon's entire film is feminised, stripped of masculinity, as the action becomes slurred in favour of a tentative forward movement that is so hesitant that any sense of causal narrative development is confused if not altogether lost. Here I am referring to the

¹¹⁸ Ibid., p.96

association made by the classical film text between the image of woman and a deceleration of the narrative while the male figure is associated with the forward movement of the action, with narrative development. The unity of the film, and therefore the significance of the individual parts within its tight economy, is lost in this expanded version. The gallery visitor does not see the entire film, she sees just a portion of it, and cannot determine therefore the value or significance of each movement to the whole, becoming distracted instead by a fascination with the large silent hypnotic image that fills her vision. The uncertainty that previously only accompanied the halted (and *halting*) image of woman is now carried through every movement in the film. In a sense this general deceleration of the image removes from woman the burden of representing the precarious object of cinema. Slow motion alters her position in relation to the rest of the text, yet our memory of conventional cinema, and of this film in particular, constantly battles to intervene. The whole film has a quality that previously only the image of woman had. It is seductive and hypnotic, while at the same time the changes that have been made to the text and its context maintain an awareness of our physical selves that is usually lost in cinema. The entire piece, therefore, is one elongated sterile difference; all movement in this protracted projection is unmotivated, unproductive. Gordon denies his audience the pleasures of the conventional film they recognise in his work. Instead he creates the conditions for critical distance, which facilitates an understanding of those immersive cinematic pleasures.

The abundance of books on Gordon's work (I refer to those generated in collaboration with the artist and usually in conjunction with an exhibition) and his willingness to do interviews, sometimes even extended conversations with particular interviewers that take place over a period of years,¹¹⁹ suggests to me that these texts (and not just his 'official' text pieces) all form part of his work. In interviews he has a tendency for 'storytelling' and he also demonstrates an awareness of key philosophical and theoretical positions that impact upon his work. These books often contain narratives that position Gordon as the protagonist in his own fiction film or novel. For instance, Gordon plays a character in a

¹¹⁹ For instance the two-year conversation with curator Jan Debbaut, excerpts of which are published in Francis McKee & Jan Debbaut, op. cit.

short ghost story set in modern-day Edinburgh in novelist Ian Rankin's contribution to the catalogue for Gordon's show *Superhumannatural* at Edinburgh's National Gallery in 2006.¹²⁰ Gordon himself wrote two short stories that mix autobiography with fiction for the book *Douglas Gordon: Kidnapping*.¹²¹ Critical texts sit alongside Gordon's 'stories,' clearly mixing fact with fiction, though I doubt the artist would make such a clear distinction in relation to the narrated events. As an illustration of this point let us consider his letter pieces, short ambiguous statements, sent to friends and colleagues over a period of years (1991-2003). They were signed by the artist and contained statements such as: "There is something you should know" and "Someone is looking." However, he also sent one - complete with postage stamp and address - to the fictional character of Lars Thorwald from Hitchcock's *Rear Window*, which, like the note sent in the film, simply reads: "What have you done with her?" It was, in due course, returned to sender. Caught up in a world of half-truths, parody lends itself perfectly to his practice. I suggest, therefore, that we regard Gordon's explanation for his initial interest in *Psycho*, quoted at the opening of this chapter (as it is in many critical writings on this work) as yet another parodic engagement with the film text. In this narrative Gordon places himself in the role of Norman, then takes his voyeurism one step further. In an interview with Spector, Gordon makes the point that after voyeurism comes sadism, described as a progression from looking to touching:

Sadism seems to me to be the logical progression in the beautiful and torrid relationship between the viewer and the screen. It's a post-voyeuristic state. Once we have had enough of looking, then perhaps we start touching. But the touch must be based on the already established relationship to the gaze.¹²²

He follows this comment by saying that his generation are aware that they can *make things happen* on screen (by touching the technological apparatus that plays the film). Gordon steps further into the role of film protagonist by trying to affect the course of

¹²⁰ Ian Rankin, 'Sinner: Justified' in *Douglas Gordon Superhumannatural*, op. cit., pp.19-24

¹²¹ Douglas Gordon, 'By Way of an Introduction' and 'Lost, then Found, then Lost Again; a True Story, after Samuel Beckett,' Francis McKee & Jan Debbaut, op. cit., pp.7-8 and pp. 121-123

¹²² Douglas Gordon, *Déjà-Vu*, op. cit., p.75

action of the unfolding narrative. Mulvey describes this exclusively masculine role in narrative cinema when she writes: “the split between spectacle and narrative supports the man’s role as the active one advancing the story, making things happen.”¹²³ For Doane “[n]arrative’s containment of the image of the woman is generally mediated by the male character who demystifies, possesses, or sadistically punishes the woman.”¹²⁴ In his parodic mimicry of Norman’s actions, and his related parodic reframing of Hitchcock’s text, Gordon, like Norman, is omnipotent. Like Norman, he is “free to command the stage, a stage of spatial illusion in which he articulates the look and creates the action.”¹²⁵ Like Norman, he moves beyond voyeurism into sadism. He also plays the part of the male subject, described by Mulvey, who attempts to escape castration anxiety by obsessively re-enacting the moment of trauma at the realisation of the mother’s difference (lack), “investigating the woman, demystifying her mystery.”¹²⁶ Doane suggests that our endless interest in the repetitious narrative of classical cinema derives from the fact that “the cinema, like the *fort/da* game, constitutes itself as a continually renewed search for a lost plenitude.”¹²⁷ Mulvey points out that in Hitchcock’s films the woman is made an object of both voyeurism and sadism, justified at the level of narrative by making the woman guilty of some crime.

We could agree with Taubin that Gordon’s interest in this film is ultimately the ubiquitous interest in studying the illicit image of the woman’s body, cultivated by classical cinema. By this account, he slows down this film to scrutinise the image of woman, in effect exaggerating this already ‘frozen’ image of woman, to simultaneously designate her as a mystery to be solved and to further her appeal as enigma. However, I suggest that Gordon’s parodic engagement with the film extends beyond its textual and contextual reframing in the gallery space and enters his commentary and mythmaking about the genesis of the work. By doing this he parodies (rather than simply repeats) the

¹²³ Laura Mulvey, ‘Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema,’ op. cit., p.20

¹²⁴ Mary Ann Doane, ‘Gilda: Epistemology as Striptease,’ op. cit., p.101

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Laura Mulvey, ‘Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema,’ op. cit., p.21

¹²⁷ Mary Ann Doane, ‘Gilda: Epistemology as Striptease,’ op. cit., p.102

looking processes of its chief protagonist, and the cinema audience in general, as well as refunctioning the image of woman through the use of slow motion.

Doane describes the way that film “strove for the status of total record”¹²⁸ and was (is) “understood to contain the potential for flawless storage,”¹²⁹ which claimed, therefore, to triumph over or overcome death. However, she also states that film’s *apparent* ability to record anything and everything in space and time, produces in the subject “the anxieties of total representation.”¹³⁰ It is in order to quell those anxieties that cinema becomes an ordered system, of which “time is produced as an effect.”¹³¹ Controlling and ordering time is a way of placing some limits on the overwhelming capacity of film to document reality and marks the transition of film as a medium that records actuality to film as orderly economical narrative text. The classical film text, however, is haunted by film’s limitless capacity to represent reality, which Doane describes as an “excess of sensation that excludes meaning and control.”¹³² Although she does not make the analogy here, this description is consistent with the psychoanalytic concept of the pre-oedipal stage; the Imaginary. As described in chapter two, in cinema, limitlessness and excess are values associated with the feminine. Arrested narrative progression in classical cinema coincides with a complete focus on the glamorous spectacle of woman, the text’s one legitimate expression of the excess that haunts it, which as we know is *regulated* by the ordering principle of the text overall (which reigns in and punishes this errant aspect). In classical cinema it is the image of woman that implies the stillness, the ‘then-ness,’ at the heart of cinema, and threatens to rob the form of its illusion of ‘now-ness.’ Woman, and especially the close communion with the image of woman as plenitude, is equated with death, with a loss of self (a return to the preoedipal identification with the feminine).

However, as we have noted, film is not a perfect record of time, but one that records certain moments, omitting certain others in the gaps between frames. Mulvey makes the

¹²⁸ Mary Ann Doane, *The Emergence of Cinematic Time*, op. cit., p.68

¹²⁹ Ibid., p.62

¹³⁰ Ibid., p.68

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² Ibid., p.32

point that: "It is said that analysing pleasure, or beauty, destroys it"¹³³ which is the intention of much of her writing, and in a sense, the intention of Gordon's work. As mentioned, Gordon's work frees woman from her signification as ultimate threat in cinema, the paradoxical position that Doane describes as "the 'moving' representation of stasis."¹³⁴ As Mulvey notes in the opening section of *24 x a Second*: "The cinema has always found ways to reflect on its central paradox: the co-presence of movement and stillness, continuity and discontinuity."¹³⁵ The equation of woman with death has been the dominant method of reflection in classical Hollywood cinema. By defying the cinema's conventional ordering of time, Gordon disarms its regulatory framework, which would usually acknowledge excess, but only to firmly reposition the misbehaving figure. *24 Hour Psycho* then, critiques the insistence of classical cinema that then-ness (death) is synonymous with woman and preoedipal plenitude, and is ultimately controllable.

¹³³ Laura Mulvey, 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema,' op. cit., p.16

¹³⁴ Mary Ann Doane, 'Gilda: Epistemology and Striptease,' op. cit., p.101

¹³⁵ Laura Mulvey, *Death 24 x a Second*, op. cit., p.12

Conclusion

While the recent prominence of practices of appropriation, imitation, quotation and allusion have often been categorised as parasitical and expressive of the impossibility of originality and experimentation, the remarkable diversity of approaches and texts produced through these practices contests any such easy dismissal. The diversity of these practices and the new works they produce is partly responsible for the various contradictions in definitions of parodic forms, and is the reason for Hutcheon's rather inclusive and flexible definition of parody as the combination of conservative and revolutionary drives, a combination of replication and critical distance facilitated by degrees of deviation. As Leo Steinberg insists in his 1978 essay "[t]he varieties of artistic trespass or repercussion (or whatever you call it) are inexhaustible."¹ In a point that clearly aligns his views with those of critics such as Rita Felski and Dietrich Scheunemann, who argue convincingly for the continuity of the avant-garde, he appoints these practices with the quintessential characteristic of modernism when he claims that "there is as much unpredictable originality in quoting, imitating, transposing, and echoing, as there is in inventing."² Steinberg identifies the wit of practices of appropriation, and instead of insisting that appropriative acts 'take' something from the sources they cite, he describes a "hospitableness"³ that leads artists to fuse other work with their own.

This thesis has presented an overview of strategies of appropriation that reframe cinema within moving image art, arguing that these are examples of *parodic* transformations of cinema. Various films by four artists are examined in detail to illustrate the range of parodic approaches employed by artists working in this way, and to demonstrate the usefulness of combining film and art criticism to develop an understanding of the operations of each example. This thesis does not develop a singular argument traced through each successive chapter. Rather, it begins by defining the historical (1960 to

¹ Leo Steinberg, *Art About Art* (New York: E.P.Dutton, 1978), p.25

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

today) and theoretical (feminist film criticism combined with theories of parody) parameters of its discussion, and follows that with a close analysis of a number of significant examples of the tendency it focuses on. Hutcheon is clear that we can only understand and properly explain the operations of parody by close examination of parodic texts, and each of the four chapters on individual artists included here advances our understanding of a different aspect of parody.

The tendency to characterise strategies of revision as purely derivative focuses solely on parody's conservative aspect and refuses to acknowledge its other essential component; its revolutionary drive that expresses a political impetus. Parodic texts effectively transform established texts and forms by harnessing the very language they seek to critique. Suleiman sums this up when she writes of "the hope, that through the rewriting of old stories and the invention of new forms of language [...] it is the world as well as words that will be transformed."⁴ Penley describes the necessity of engagement with problematic and reductive images, language systems, and forms, rather than rejecting them in an attempt to locate an absolutely new, uncontaminated language, when she writes that avant-garde cinema should emphasise "transformation rather than transgression."⁵ Instead of attempting to imagine a cinema that is altogether outside of, or beyond, the conventions and practices of dominant cinema, then, a counter cinema should comment on and transform those conventions. This thesis acknowledges, in particular, the writings of feminist film theorists in proposing a counter cinema that engages the classical Hollywood film text. While counter cinemas should include work by various 'ex-centrics' to borrow Hutcheon's term, the developments in both the theory and practice of counter cinema, made by feminists is immense, and should be recognised in any discussion of a counter cinema. Feminist film criticism has argued that the image of woman is absolutely central to the logic and order of the classical film text, and we

⁴ Susan Rubin Suleiman, *Subversive Intent: Gender, Politics, and the Avant-Garde* (London: Harvard University Press, 1990), p.143

⁵ Ibid., p.596

recall that Doane sums this up by describing her as “the substrate of representation itself, its unconscious material.”⁶

I have chosen to concentrate my analysis of artists’ films on the staging and disruption of cinematic gender norms. Woman is central to the economy of narrative cinema, and many revisions of cinema in art seem to, if not re-position her, then certainly expose and undermine her position. Feminist film criticism (and I include the work of men and women critics in that, in accordance with bell hooks’ convictions on the allegiance between men and women in discussing gender politics) has developed a strong case for the political effectiveness of parody, more recently also advanced from within the discourse of queer theory and, in particular, in Judith Butler’s conception of parody as the subversive repetition of representational norms that problematise the presumed distinction between the so-called original (inscription of gender) and its perfect imitation.

Godard’s *Histoire(s) du Cinema*, in many ways the ultimate revision of cinema in moving image art (in this case video), is often cited as evidence of the death of cinema.⁷ While his series of fragmented and layered quotations announces the death of cinema in one sense, it is also a vanguard work of cinema in itself, using video to point to a new direction for cinema (and indeed many of his films mix video and film and other filmmakers such as Mike Figgis and the Danish collective *Dogme 95* have made very interesting use of video), and he also suggests that the CD-Rom could provide other possibilities for a future form of cinema. Most significantly though Godard’s cinema refuses commercial sponsorship by which, according to him, his work avoids contamination by advertising, which would change it utterly. Felski describes the lack of connection between transgressive aesthetics and political effect “between stylistic rupture and processes of social change”⁸ in today’s commodity-driven art market, “controlled by

⁶ Mary Ann Doane, *Femme Fatales*, op. cit., p. 59

⁷ For a discussion of this see Jean-Luc Godard & Youssef Ishaghpour, *Cinema* (Oxford: Berg, 2005)

⁸ Rita Felski, *Doing Time: Feminist Theory and Postmodern Culture* (New York: New York University Press, 2000), p.186

a managerial elite of dealers and curators.”⁹ This is a significant point. However, as Dan Harries points out, parodies of cinema now constitute a new and highly successful genre of *conventional* cinema. As a part of commercial cinema, these parodies, or *spoofs*, are relatively ineffective, and therefore a parodic engagement with cinema must position itself elsewhere; at the very least at the margins of commercial cinema and not its centre. Although Felski is describing transgressive aesthetics in general, my discussion has focused on the ‘hijacking’ of the cinematic text from its ‘proper’ institutional and industrial framing into the institutional forum of art, a shift that already situates the cinematic object within a critical frame. Additionally, and to further refute Felski’s point about the impotence of art today, the gallery system has provided experimental filmmakers with a new forum in which to make and exhibit their films and for many, provides the financial support necessary to realise their work, especially due to the unprecedented growth of the art market in recent years. Hutcheon also laments the restriction of political aesthetics to the colluding format of parody and its inability to forge change. However, she concludes her discussion of parody by asserting that parody represents a necessarily compromised form, claiming that it is only through critical engagement with convention that alternatives can be indicated.

Does the entry of the cinematic object into the art institution constitute the death of cinema? Is the tendency we have been exploring tantamount to the mummification of cinema in the museum? I suggest that this interpretation of the persistent revision of cinema in artists’ films is too simplistic and denies the various transformative formal interrogations of the text that I have examined here. The continuing prevalence of this tendency suggests that these critical revisions are attempts to disarm what is still a potent form. For Hutcheon parody does not constitute an embalming of the decaying corpses of the older forms and genres. It is an act that rejuvenates, operating as a “method of inscribing continuity, while permitting critical difference.”¹⁰ The reader or viewer must be able to recognise and engage in familiar forms in order for parody to work, again testifying to the continued relevance of the conventional film text to the contemporary art

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Linda Hutcheon, op. cit., p.20

audience (the same audience that goes to the cinema). Indeed parody is only a possibility because of the existence of “a certain aesthetic institutionalization which entails the acknowledgement of recognizable, stable forms and conventions.”¹¹ What the ‘encoder’ and ‘decoder’ share is an amount of cultural capital. The films discussed here do not treat the text as a museum object, to be viewed with a cool distant eye, rather it draws the viewer in, demands an engagement with its object of revision and produces enough discontinuity to facilitate criticism.

Like Godard himself, Mulvey describes the quotation (and I would add other parodic strategies such as allusion and imitation) of cinema as not necessarily the writing of cinema history – indeed Godard’s own title points to the plurality of possibilities for such a project – but the production of cinema as “raw material that can be the site of reflection and contestation.”¹² Indeed, it is precisely this stage of reflection and contestation that marks a turning point for cinema, a period of self-scrutiny, rather than its death. For Mulvey that turning point hinges on Douglas Gordon’s *24 Hour Psycho*, which because of its shattering of the ultimate illusion of cinema, operates “like an elegy, marks a point of no return for the cinema itself.”¹³ In the closing paragraph of her essay on his work she describes Gordon’s film (and I suggest numerous other and earlier examples of moving image art, such as the work of Ken Jacobs and Tracey Moffatt) as heralding the dawn of a new expanded cinema. In this she agrees with Godard, who, despite his disappointment with cinema, remains hopeful of the possibilities and is clear on cinema’s still unfulfilled potential.

Rita Felski suggests that aesthetics “can be a space of resistance as well as conformism.”¹⁴ Like Hutcheon, Suleiman, Penley and others, she is advocating a use of the established language of art, rather than a rejection of it. Change requires a direct engagement with the forms one opposes. She suggests that a postmodern perspective opens up new possibilities for political aesthetics beyond the two alternatives provided by

¹¹ Ibid., p.75

¹² Laura Mulvey, *Death 24 x a Second* (London: Reaktion Books, 2006), p.24

¹³ Ibid., p.102

¹⁴ Rita Felski, op. cit., pp.183-184

modernism, which were “radical change outside institutions or total co-option and death inside them.”¹⁵ In a point that counters her earlier questioning of the political efficacy of art, encased as it is by a commercial institution, she concludes that “[t]he museum, the gallery, and the seminar room do not destroy the potential social resonance of art.”¹⁶ Her main point echoes with the central contention of this thesis, as outlined in the first chapter; that in order to produce effective critique of a form, one must engage with the governing conventions and aesthetics of that form.

Hutcheon points to the problem of parody’s complicity with the status quo, it can only ever offer the promise of *transformation* of existing forms and conventions. It is limited to making innovative alterations, rather than radical changes. However, the accumulation of voices that make convincing arguments for parody as the only politically charged avant-garde form is difficult to ignore. Indeed Hutcheon concedes that this may be *the only* politically effective strategy, which may operate as a conservative force, but “is also capable of transformative power in creating new syntheses.”¹⁷ The diverse body of work that constitutes revisions of cinema in contemporary moving image art facilitates an advanced understanding of the assumptions in which we are drenched (to evoke the words of Adrienne Rich), particularly as they are inscribed and repeated in cinema. An extended study of this work is, I suggest, invaluable to studies of cinema in general, and counter cinemas in particular. The necessarily complicitous critique effected by these works is accomplished by a diverse range of strategies that extend from subversive repetition to fascinating paralysis, dislodging the myths sustained by dominant texts. Each instance of this critique requires close examination to better understand the political cogency of the latest manifestation of this enduring avant-garde form.

¹⁵ Ibid., pp.187-88

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Linda Hutcheon, op. cit., p.20

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