No Job For a Lady: Women Directors in Hollywood

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To Jonathan, Mum and Dad. Thank you for all your help and support.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	"[D]irecting was no job for a lady"	1
Chapter One	"[T]hese are the audacities of *hommes de cinéma*": Towards a Feminist Examination of Auteur Theory	18
Chapter Two	"I spent twenty years getting to where I am, which is at the beginning of my career": Breaking In, Hanging On and Dropping Out of Hollywood	49
Chapter Three	"It's Like Painting Toys Blue and Pink": Marketing and the Female-Directed Hollywood Film	90
Chapter Four	A Woman in Man's Clothing: The Androgynous Nature of the Director as "Star"	113
Chapter Five	A Tale of Two Star Images Part One: A Case Study of Jodie Foster, Hollywood's New Dorothy Arzner	140
Chapter Six	A Tale of Two Star Images Part Two: A Case Study of Penny Marshall, Hollywood's New Ida Lupino	169
Chapter Seven	Dealing With Difference: An Examination of Some Critical Responses to Kathryn Bigelow's *Blue Steel* (1990) and *Strange Days* (1995)	202
Chapter Eight	Bettys, Bodies, Dumb Blondes...and Jane Austen: Charting the Reception of *Clueless* (1995)	229
Conclusion		269
Bibliography		275
Appendices		

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Appendix A

Fig. 1 . "Big Difference" by Bonnie Timmons and Monica Parker. in Caroline Kirk Cordero. "The Numbers Never Lie. Tracking the Progress of Women in the Industry." Premiere Women in Hollywood Special Edition 1993: 36.

Appendix B

Fig. 1. Press Ad Range from Deep Impact (1998) Press Kit.

Fig. 2. Deep Impact (1998) poster image from Deep Impact Press Kit.

Fig. 3. Advert for Titanic (1997) in Empire Feb. 1998: 6.

Fig. 4. Deep Impact (1998) Lobby Card, available to buy on Ebay 30 Mar. 2000 <http://www.ebay.com>.

Appendix C

Fig. 1. Photo of Steven Spielberg, in Richard Corliss, "Peter Pan Grows Up. But Can He Still Fly?" Time 16 June 1997, International ed.: 100.

Fig. 2. Photo of Kathryn Bigelow, in Jim Shelly, "LA is Burning," Guardian 23 Dec. 1995: 12

Fig. 3. Photo from Premiere Sept. 1990: 95.

Fig. 4. Photo of Jodie Foster by Naomi Kaltman, in Jon Stevens "Jodie Foster Goes 'Home' for her Second Feature," DGA Magazine Jan.-Feb. 1996, DGA Magazine Online Archives 2 Sept. 2001 <http://www.dga.org/index2.php3>.

Fig. 5. Photo of Mimi Leder on the set of The Peacemaker (1997) by Myles Aronowitz, in Patricia Troy, "Mimi Leder Helms DreamWorks First Feature," DGA Magazine Sept.-Oct. 1997, DGA Magazine Online Archives 2 Sept. 2001 <http://www.dga.org/index2.php3>.

Fig. 6 Photo of Kathryn Bigelow, in Elissa Van Poznak "Steel Magnolia," Elle Dec. 1990, U.K. ed.: 71.

Fig. 7. Photo of Nora Ephron by Andrew Eccles, in Randy Sue Coburn "An Affair to Inspire," Premiere July 1993: 55.

Fig. 8. Photo of Nora Ephron, in Xan Brooks, "The Mother Confessor," Guardian 19 Feb. 1999: 3.

Fig. 9. Photo of Woody Allen, in Simon Braund, "The World According to Woody," Empire May 1998: 66-7.

Fig. 10. Penny Marshall on the cover of New York Times Magazine 24 May 1992.

Fig. 11. Penny Marshall on the cover of Lawrence Crown, Penny Marshall: An Unauthorized Biography of the Director and Comedienne (Los Angeles: Renaissance Books, 1999).

Fig. 12. Photo of Kathryn Bigelow on the set of Blue Steel (1990), in Christina Lane, Feminist Hollywood: From Born in Flames to Point Break (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2000) 104.

Fig. 13. Photo of Joan Micklin Silver, in Janis Cole and Holly Dale, Calling The Shots: Profiles Of Women Filmmakers (Ontario: The Quarry Press, 1993) 203.

Fig. 14. Photo of Jodie Foster on the set of Little Man Tate (1991), in Philippa Kennedy Jodie Foster: A Life on Screen (New York: Birch Lane Press, 1996) n.pag.

Fig. 15. Photo of Betty Thomas on the set of 28 Days (2000), in Jill Bernstein, "The Wedding Planner," Premiere Women in Hollywood Special Edition 2000: 60-1.

Fig. 16. Photo of Betty Thomas' megaphone, in Jill Bernstein, "The Wedding Planner," Premiere Women in Hollywood Special Edition 2000: 63.

Appendix D

Fig. 1. Photo of Jodie Foster, in Premiere Women in Hollywood Special Edition 1993: 10.

Fig. 2. Jodie Foster on the cover of Interview Oct. 1991.

Fig. 3. Photo of Jodie Foster, in Ingrid Sischy, "Jodie Foster: The One and Only," Interview Oct. 1991: 78.

Fig. 4. Photo of Jodie Foster, in Ingrid Sischy, "Jodie Foster: The One and Only," Interview Oct. 1991: 80.

Fig. 5. Photo of Jodie Foster, in Ingrid Sischy, "Jodie Foster: The One and Only," Interview Oct. 1991: 83.

Fig. 6. Photo of Jodie Foster, in Ingrid Sischy, "Jodie Foster: The One and Only," Interview Oct. 1991: 82.

Fig. 7. Photo of Jodie Foster, in Ingrid Sischy, "Jodie Foster: The One and Only," Interview Oct. 1991: 85.

Fig. 8. Dorothy Arzner on the set, in Judith Mayne, Directed By Dorothy Arzner (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1994) 65, fig. 25.

Fig. 9. Dorothy Arzner, ca. 1937, in Judith Mayne, Directed By Dorothy Arzner (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1994) 73, fig. 28.

Fig. 10. Dorothy Arzner and cameraman AL Gilks, 1927, in Judith Mayne, Directed By Dorothy Arzner (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1994) 171, fig. 58.

Fig. 11. Photo of Greta Garbo by Clarence Sinclair Bull, in Greta Garbo Photographs 1920-1951 (Munich: Schirmer Art Books, 1990), plate 56.

Fig. 12. Photo of Greta Garbo by Clarence Sinclair Bull. in Greta Garbo Photographs 1920-1951 (Munich: Schirmer Art Books, 1990), plate 58.

Fig. 13. Photo of Lauren Bacall from Silverscreensirens.com 20 June 2001 <http://www.silverscreensirens.com/galleries/bacall4.html>.

Appendix E

Fig. 1. Cover of Clueless (1995) on video.

Fig. 2. Free promotional leaflet available at a screening of Clueless (1995) in October 1995 at the UCI Cinema in Solihull.

Fig. 3. Free promotional leaflet available at a screening of Clueless (1995) in October 1995 at the UCI Cinema in Solihull.

Fig. 4. Kmart advert from Premiere Women in Hollywood Special Edition 1998: 15.

Abstract

No Job For a Lady: Women Directors in Hollywood.

This thesis explores the position of female film directors working in Hollywood. It is intended to address an area in feminist film theory which has often been overlooked. Although it is incorrect to say there has been no feminist analysis of the "mainstream" woman director, most of the work which has been done concentrates either on finding the feminism or femininity of her films, or studies only a select few directors. This research widens the debate by validating the study of all women directors, and moves away from the search for definitive feminist meaning in the cinematic text. It employs a contextual and multi-theoretical approach to interrogate the multiplicity of meanings embodied by the phrase "woman director".

The first chapter interrogates auteur theory because any discussion of female authorship must confront this critical perspective. The female director makes a problematic auteur since that figure is traditionally gendered as masculine. Chapter two is a "state of the industry" examination of the position of the woman director in Hollywood, with a special emphasis on mentoring. Chapter three examines the marketing of Mimi Leder's films The Peacemaker (1997) and Deep Impact (1999). Chapters four, five and six explore the construction of the woman director as "star", presenting in-depth case studies of Jodie Foster and Penny Marshall. Chapters seven and eight look at the reception of Blue Steel (1990) and Strange Days (1995) directed by Kathryn Bigelow, and Clueless (1995) directed by Amy Heckerling.

Each chapter is designed to contextualise and historicise the woman director in order to better understand why her gender has prevented her from being seen as a "natural" director: that is, why directing has been viewed as a suitable job for a man but "no job for a lady".

Introduction

"[D]irecting was no job for a lady" (Lillian Gish)[1]

In discussions about the subject of this thesis someone would inevitably comment, "I didn't think there were any women directors working in Hollywood. I can't name any." I mention this since such a reaction emphasises the need for a study of these directors, and helps explain my motivation for undertaking this research in the first place.

While a disproportionate amount of material has been written about so-called "avant-garde" or "independent" female filmmakers (particularly White European and Antipodean ones), the women who make films from deep within the Hollywood "mainstream" have still to be given sufficient critical attention: be it in film studies generally, or feminist film studies in particular.[2] For instance, the list of books on the subject of contemporary women directors working within "mainstream" Hollywood (rather than studies of female directors which draw almost entirely on independent filmmakers as examples) is a short one. One can point to Ally Acker's Reel Women which catalogues most female directors, including the Hollywood ones, but is simply designed to provide a brief description of their career; Janice Cole and Holly Dale's Calling The Shots, which is a collection of interviews with a variety of women directors including several, such as Amy Heckerling, Martha Coolidge and Penelope Spheeris, who have made studio films; Jim Hillier's The New Hollywood which contains a chapter on the position of female directors in the contemporary industry; and Christina Lane's Feminist

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[1] Quoted in Annette Kuhn, ed., Queen Of The 'B's: Ida Lupino Behind the Camera (Wiltshire: Flicks Books, 1995) 43. Kuhn takes Gish's quote from Andrew Sarris, The American Cinema: Directors and Directions 1929-1968 (New York: Dutton, 1968) where it is used to back up his own feelings that women do not make successful directors.

[2] It is obviously not practical to list every publication which explores the work of "independent" female filmmakers. Thus I will confine myself to stating that, at least until recently, feminist film critics have privileged the films of non-mainstream female directors, rather than those based in Hollywood, as the subjects of their work. For example, in Women and Film: Both Sides of the Camera London and New York: Routledge, 1983) E. Ann Kaplan writes exclusively about independent feminist filmmakers. Similarly it is these figures who receive the most attention in Lucy Fischer's Shot/Countershot: Film Tradition and Women's Cinema (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989); Barbara Koenig Quart's Women Directors: The Emergence of a New Cinema (Westport, Connerticut: Praeger, 1988); and also in those essays which mention women filmmakers in Issues in Feminist Film Criticism (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990) edited by Patricia Erens; and Women and Film: A Sight and Sound Reader (London: Scarlet Press, 1993) edited by Pam Cook. It is not my intention to suggest that women directors who have worked or do work in Hollywood are never discussed (Judith Mayne's work on Dorothy Arzner is just one example which proves otherwise), nor to overlook the fact that some contemporary

Hollywood which is an in depth examination of a number of previously neglected female directors, such as Tamra Davis, Darnell Martin and Martha Coolidge. There are also a number of titles, such as Yvonne Tasker's Working Girls, Rachel Abramowitz's Is That A Gun in Your Pocket?, and Linda Seger's When Women Call The Shots, which consider the position of women in contemporary Hollywood more generally: as producers, stars, screenwriters and so on, as well as directors. In short, with a few exceptions discussion of the woman director working in Hollywood has been severely limited.[3] The first aim of my thesis is, then, to recognise this theoretical imbalance and go some way towards redressing it.

In the event that contemporary "mainstream" female directors are discussed by feminist film criticism the same few individuals are referred to time and again: the most obvious example being Kathryn Bigelow. It is thus inevitable that this thesis will also devote some attention to Bigelow because she is one of a very limited number of women directors who have had the opportunity to work on fairly high-profile and high budget studio-backed films. However it refuses to believe that Bigelow is the *only* viable candidate for this kind of study, and as a result does not overlook the careers of other female directors (or actor-directors) working in Hollywood, such as Penny Marshall, Amy Heckerling and Jodie Foster.

Apart from the fact that the potential number of candidates for this kind of study is, thanks to the scarcity of women directors in the industry, rather limited anyway, one reason for this critical over-emphasis on Bigelow might be that she is a figure whose career (and indeed persona) exists on the borderline between "art" and "popular" culture, making her an easier target for feminist recuperation than, say, those directors who make teen movies or romantic comedies. Her intellectual and fine art background, combined with the perception (aided by her own comments in interviews) that she is interested in picking apart the

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"mainstream" directors are starting to be placed under the microscope of feminist film criticism, but rather to acknowledge the existence of the imbalance which I have described.

[3] Ally Acker, Reel Women: Pioneers of the Cinema (London: Batsford, 1991); Janis Cole and Holly Dale, Calling The Shots: Profiles of Women Filmmakers (Ontario: The Quarry Press, 1993); Jim Hillier The New Hollywood (London: Studio Vista, 1992); Christina Lane, Feminist Hollywood: From Born in Flames to Point Break (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2000); Yvonne Tasker, Working Girls: Gender and Sexuality in Popular Cinema (London: Routledge, 1998); Rachel Abramowitz, Is That A Gun in Your Pocket? Women's Experience of Power in Hollywood (New York: Random House, 2000); Linda Seger, When Women Call The Shots: The Developing Power and Influence of Women in Television and Film (New York: Henry Holt, 1996).

conventional narrative structures of cinema at the seams, make it possible to explain away her interest in, and contact with, the popular, the generic, the commercial (in other words the Hollywood film industry) because they suggest that she exploits them for her own (feminist) purposes rather than being exploited by them. In this way feminist film criticism's preference for those women directors who either reject the forms and practices of "mainstream" filmmaking and turn instead to independent or "avant-garde" cinema, or those who, thanks to their background in independent cinema and/or their cinematic self-consciousness, keep their distance from these practices, can be seen to put a specific feminist twist on "the art versus business" conflict that Steven Bach has said "remains the dominating central issue of American motion pictures to the present day."[4]

In Women and Film for example, E. Ann Kaplan sets up the independent women's film as a positive alternative to Hollywood cinema which refuses to give women "a voice, a discourse," and subjects their desire to "male desire". She also states that there is a necessity for a "debate" about what constitutes the most 'correct' cinematic strategy."[5] This idea is problematic because it assumes that the independent film is the best and most logical vehicle for the assertion of a feminist point of view and thus takes a prescriptive approach to women's filmmaking. Kaplan, I would argue, is too quick to embrace a Hollywood film is bad/independent film is good dichotomy which is a huge over-simplification of the issues involved, not least because independent cinema (particularly as it becomes even more intricately entwined with the Hollywood film industry) can pose many of the same problems of access for women and other marginal groups as the dominant cinema. For example, Jesse Algeron Rhines writes that in 1990 New Line cinema called for screenplays by and about women of colour, yet never actually produced any of these projects. New Line was acquired by the Turner Broadcasting Corporation in 1993, and one is compelled to wonder if this merger had the effect of making executives more cautious about the kind of material they

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[4] Quoted in Richard Maltby and Ian Craven, Hollywood Cinema: An Introduction (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995) 5.
[5] E. Ann Kaplan, Women and Film: Both Sides of the Camera (London and New York: Routledge, 1983) 11.

green lighted.[6] Whether or not this was the case in this particular instance, the fact remains that "independent" cinema, like "mainstream" cinema, is a white male-dominated arena. To quote John Pierson, the "problem [of women directors' scarcity] isn't as pronounced in lower-budget independent ranks, but you won't find parity. (Women come closer to holding their own in the supporting role of producer.)"[7]

All too often the search for the truly "alternative" feminist film, or the pure unadulterated "female" discourse, seems to have become the holy grail of feminist film criticism. As a result feminist film critics have been distracted from either considering work which has already been produced, or examining those filmmakers who operate from within the dominant discourses of Hollywood cinema. Yet would it ever be possible, or even desirable, to define this pure "feminine" space which is unsullied by Patriarchy? Wouldn't this work against the feminist filmmaker by proving that women do indeed naturally possess qualities which the dominant discourse has come to call "feminine" (even if they are re-envisioned as positive ones) and, as a result, justify the continuation of the very discourse which it seeks to undermine. A feminist counter-cinema, or indeed any concrete "feminine" or "feminist" aesthetic, might too easily be dismissed as something marginal or "other" since it refuses to work within the boundaries of recognisable cinematic discourse, either in form, or content, or both. This is not to say that such cinematic productions are never necessary or profitable, but that it is problematic to assume that they are the *only* or the *best* option.

This thesis is designed to move away from the idea that popular art (in this instance a Hollywood film) and/or the popular artist (the female director who makes Hollywood films) must either be obviously feminist or woman-centred in theme, or else easy to interpret as feminist, in order to make it or them worthy of the feminist film theorist's attention. Such an idea is not only naïve but also dangerous in that it immediately closes off a number of

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[6] Jesse Algeron Rhines, Black Film/White Money (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1996) 88-89. For a discussion of New Line's acquisition by Turner see Justin Wyatt, "The Formation of the 'Major Independent': Miramax, New Line and the New Hollywood," Contemporary Hollywood Cinema, eds. Steve Neale and Murray Smith (London and New York: Routledge, 1998) 74-90.

[7] John Pierson, Spike, Mike, Slackers and Dykes: A Guided Tour Across a Decade of American Independent Cinema (London: Faber and Faber, 1996) 102.

potentially interesting avenues for study. This is not to imply that Kaplan's previously cited view about the superiority of independent cinema for feminist filmmakers is the only one, or that all feminist film theorists are guilty of short-sighted thinking when it comes to the popular. For example, a significant number of feminist critics have given theoretical attention to the themes and structures of so-called popular "women's genres", such as soap operas, romance novels and "weepies" or melodramas, as well as the role they might fulfil in women's lives.[8] However, when it comes to popular Hollywood films directed by women feminist film criticism has been far less forthcoming. In order to counter such reticence my research sets out to distance itself from the frequently futile and arguably self-defeating quest to discover what makes a film (or indeed any other art work) *truly* "feminist": a quest which as I have already stated has tended to exclude those works made in spheres perceived to be hostile to feminism, such as Hollywood. I make it a priority of my work to avoid falling into the trap of assuming that only those we consider to make valid "feminist" films (which crucially assumes that there is a single, clear-cut definition of feminism rather than acknowledging that the term is mutable) are worthy of sustained analysis, while the others rightly deserve to be ignored. As Sigrid Weigel argues in a comment about literature which is equally apt here: "The *partisanship* of feminist literary criticism must not be allowed to take the form of voluntarily sorting the sheep from the goats, that is, taking care of the goodies and leaving the baddies to the mercies of male criticism."[9]

In addition to arguing for the validity of researching the "mainstream" female filmmaker, my work also distances itself from the idea that biology ensures either the

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[8] See for example, Ien Ang, Watching Dallas: Soap Opera and the Melodramatic Imagination (London: Methuen, 1985); Christine Geraghty, Women and Soap Opera (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991); Jackie Byars, All That Hollywood Allows: Re-reading Gender in 1950s Melodrama (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991); Christine Gledhill, ed., Home is Where the Heart Is: Studies in Melodrama and the Woman's Film (London: BFI, 1987); Barbara Klinger, Melodrama and Meaning: History, Culture and the Films of Douglas Sirk (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994); Tania Modleski Loving With a Vengeance (Connecticut: Shoestring Press, 1982); Janice Radway, Reading the Romance (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984); Helen Taylor Scarlett's Women: Gone With the Wind and its Female Fans (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1989); Charlotte Brunsdon, Screen Tastes: From Soap Opera to Satellite Dishes (London: Routledge, 1997); Joanne Hollows, Feminism, Femininity and Popular Culture (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000).

[9] Sigrid Weigel, "Double Focus: On the History of Women's Writing," Feminist Aesthetics, ed. Gisela Ecker (London: The Women's Press, 1985) 60.

"feminist" or "feminine" content of a female-authored art work. A thesis which invests in this belief would be in danger of evolving into what one might refer to as a gynocritics of the cinema. I refer here to the term coined by Elaine Showalter to describe her concentration on what she sees as the particular nature of women writers and their writing. In "Toward a Feminist Poetics" Showalter posits the need to develop a framework for the analysis of women's literature which is based on new theoretical models informed by the collective experiences of female writers rather than one which relies on male models and theories.[10] In "Feminist Criticism in the Wilderness" she also asks how we can "constitute women as a distinct literary group? What is *the difference* of women's writing?" Unlike Showalter I am not searching for what supposedly makes a female director's films different from a man's, but like other women's. I do explore the marginality of these women (and I use the word marginality deliberately since separateness would suggest that these directors exist apart from Hollywood which they clearly do not) in industrial terms: for example, their lack of equality within Hollywood when it comes to getting jobs, being given equal budgets, or the same access to A-list stars or projects. However I do not make a case for a shared thematic or aesthetic difference, but rather highlight the ways in which views such as those expressed by Showalter may work to sustain the woman director's, or indeed any female artist's, marginal position by endorsing traditional gender stereotypes, and investing in the idea that "woman's art" (which for critics such as Showalter is erroneously seen to mean "women's art") is naturally different from man's rather than the product of social, cultural and political circumstances.[11]

In my opinion the search for definitive "feminine" of "feminist" meaning in the female-authored text has lead to an over-emphasis on the textual which my work sets out to avoid. A study which concentrates simply on what a female director's films "mean" tells us little about that figure as a historical subject and more about our own personal and theoretical

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[10] Elaine Showalter, "Toward a Feminist Poetics," The New Feminist Criticism: Essays on Women, Literature and Theory, ed. Elaine Showalter (London: Virago Press, 1986) 131.
[11] Elaine Showalter, "Feminist Criticism in the Wilderness," The New Feminist Criticism, ibid., 248.

biases as film critics. Of course these are not entirely unavoidable since all criticism is, as Richard Maltby has argued, subjective.[12] On the other hand the insular nature of textual criticism may make this tendency more pronounced. As Christina Lane has said, directors do not exist in a "vacuum" but rather should be situated "within a series of complex discourses".[13] To this end my thesis seeks to put the woman director in context rather than concentrating on interpreting her filmic texts. Thus I do not primarily examine her films but instead the studio publicity which surrounds her; the various articles, interviews and biographies which have been written about her; the historical and biographical facts of her career; the reception of her work; the ways in which she has been theorised by others (academics and non-academics alike); the ways in which she has been "sold" as an image or product by others; and the ways in which she similarly "sells" herself. This contextual approach means that I do not have to find the "feminism" or "femininity" of the female director's films or rescue them for feminism, but am able to highlight the complexities and ambiguities of her position instead of explaining them away.

In order to examine the role of the contemporary woman director in Hollywood I have taken what can best be described as a multi-theoretical approach. While I have drawn on feminist film theory to illuminate my work I have not used any particular form or mode (sociological, psychoanalytical, or otherwise) to *read* the films of a woman director: as I have already stated my interests are contextual rather than textual. If forced to categorise my research I would say it falls loosely within Judith Mayne's definition of a "women's cinema" approach to feminist film criticism. That is, a feminist examination of film history which entails "both exploring women's involvement with film production in the past and examining recent examples of women's filmmaking."[14] In other words my primary concern is to explore the intersection between the woman director and the Hollywood film industry in all its various

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[12] Maltby and Craven 416.
[13] Christina Lane, Feminist Hollywood: From Born in Flames to Point Break (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2000) 47.
[14] Judith Mayne, "Feminist Film Theory and Criticism," Multiple Voices In Feminist Film Criticism, eds. Diane Carson, Linda Dittmar and Janice R. Welsch (Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 1994) 57-8.

permutations: namely theoretically, which requires that I examine ways in which the cinema and the director have been conceptualised, and the female filmmaker's poor or uncomfortable fit within that theory (hence my exploration of auteur theory in chapter one); biographically, which means that I focus on the career of the contemporary woman director in Hollywood and try to account for her precarious and unequal position within that industry (chapter two); commercially, which entails a study of the methods by which the female director and her films have been marketed, and indeed by which she has sometimes marketed herself (hence my examination of the marketing of Mimi Leder's action films in chapter three, and chapters four, five and six which consider the woman director's star image); and finally in terms of reception by considering the ways in which reviewers have interpreted two female director's films (chapters seven and eight). Mayne's definition of "women's cinema" is perhaps a little vague, but I see this as a positive attribute rather than a negative one in that its indefinite nature allows me to study the role of the "mainstream" female director in an inclusive rather than an exclusive/exclusionary manner. Or to put it another way, it allows me to avoid tying myself to one specific theoretical area of film studies and providing a narrowly focused examination of this female figure. Instead it permits me to used varied theoretical approaches (auteur theory, star theory, ideas about the marketing of films, reception studies, general and feminist film theory and so on) to illustrate the complex, multi-layered nature of the woman director who must be understood not only as existing historically and biographically outside her texts, but also in multiple and sometimes contradictory guises: for example, as star, as auteur, as marketing tool, as the industry outsider who works inside the dominant system, as a Hollywood hack or a *true* artist, as a feminist icon or a feminist disgrace.

In chapter one I begin my contextualisation of the woman director at what I believe to be the most logical starting point: auteur theory. Since the concept of the "auteur" was an attempt by film critics to conceptualise the role of authorship in the cinema, it follows that any examination of the woman director must deal with this theoretical model. I address auteur theory from a feminist perspective, and explore the difficulties as well as the attractions of the

theory for feminist film criticism. For instance, the female director makes a problematic auteur since that figure is traditionally gendered as masculine. yet she may also feel compelled to embrace the ideas of auteurism if she is to assert her rights to authorship in the cinema. This chapter functions simultaneously as a feminist rebuttal to auteur theory and a consideration of what, if anything, it has left to offer feminist film criticism.

In chapter two I move away from the overtly theoretical and undertake a "state-of-the-industry" examination of the position of the woman director in Hollywood. I look at the career path taken by these "mainstream" directors, highlighting the difficulties the majority of them have had in breaking into the industry and sustaining a career there. I contend that Hollywood is a business which is dominated by white males, and paint a statistical picture to prove this. As a result of this domination the act of male to female "mentoring" becomes a necessity for many female filmmakers, and indeed for many of the women working in Hollywood in other behind-the-scenes capacities. Chapter two puts the notion of the "mentor" under the microscope, asking what problems it raises for both the women in the industry and the feminist film critic, while simultaneously questioning whether there are any viable alternatives, such as networks of so-called "minority" mentors (women, blacks, Latinos, Asians and so on).

Chapter three begins my examination of the way women directors and their films are packaged and sold by Hollywood, and what this can tell us about the gender stereotypes and preconceptions associated with these individuals. In this chapter I consider the way in which a female artist's gender can be used as a marketing tool in the promotion of her films, eventually arguing that her biology can become one concept, one marketing hook, in the "high concept" film. I begin by offering some general observations on the subject, and then undertake a specific case study of the marketing of Mimi Leder's The Peacemaker (1997) and Deep Impact (1999).

In chapters four, five and six I employ film criticism which has explored the role of the star in the film industry as a theoretical basis for an examination of the female director as

"star". These chapters are designed to illustrate that, as Allen and Gomery point out, filmmakers can exist as more than simply "credit lines on their films"- they can also be "public figures." The " 'facts' of their lives, their production practices, and their pronouncements are conveyed to the public via journalists, reviewers, their own publicists, advertising materials for their films, memoirs" and so on, resulting in the creation of a "biographical legend" which functions as an "important historical background" against which to read their films.[15] In other words these chapters argue that the "woman director" is as much a construction (both self-constructed and constructed by others) as she is a *real* person, and set out to evaluate the range of meanings of her media-created "star image". Chapter four works as an apologia for the use of star theory in this instance by arguing for the relevance and utility of studying the director as "star".

This introductory chapter is followed by the linked chapters five and six which provide case studies of the star images of two female actor-directors (Jodie Foster and Penny Marshall) and work together in a compare and contrast model. These directors were chosen because they possess star images which are almost the direct opposite of one another. Whereas Foster is most commonly represented as a female hero and/or feminist icon, Marshall is frequently depicted as an woman who is too "feminine" (too passive, neurotic, etc.) to be a good feminist and/or a good director. These comparison chapters are structured around the complex and fluctuating meanings of "female" "feminine" and "feminist" which inform the star images of these directors and influence how they (as women directors) and the films they make are publicly represented and understood. If, as Richard Dyer has written, stars can be understood as figures who "speak to the crisis as to what a person is" (the crisis of subjectivity), then these three chapters could be said to speak to the crisis of what a woman is, and more specifically to what a woman director is (the crisis of female subjectivity). What expectations does her gender bring to bear on the way she acts, the way she looks, the kinds of

[15] Robert C. Allen and Douglas Gomery, Film History: Theory and Practice (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1985) 88-9.

films she makes, and so on? How does she balance and negotiate these expectations within her star image?[16]

Finally chapters seven and eight are concerned with the reception of the female director's films. They explore critical reactions to the films (Blue Steel (1990), Strange Days (1995), and Clueless (1995)) of two directors, Kathryn Bigelow and Amy Heckerling. In other words they primarily consider the interpretation of each film as, to use Janet Staiger's term, an "event", rather than offering an opinion as to what they *really* mean (whether from a feminist point of view or any other). In this way reception studies is able to widen the terms of debate by allowing the film critic to move beyond the frustrating and ultimately futile search for definitive textual meaning, and into a consideration of what an individual text means or has meant to other audiences and why. Unlike the previous chapters on Jodie Foster and Penny Marshall these chapters are not intended to work as a direct comparison to one another: for one thing the Clueless chapter takes on a very different structure than the one which discusses Bigelow's films because, by concentrating on a single film, it is far more narrowly focused. Rather they should be viewed as complementary studies which identify and account for the range of possible readings of a woman director's film and, more particularly, to suggest ways in which those readings might overlap with considerations pertinent to feminist film theory, such as gender and genre, and the image of *woman* and *women* in Hollywood, both on and off-screen. The analysis of a film's reception is particularly apt for this thesis since it illustrates that the film critic must, as Janet Staiger argues, study "available responses to a particular film" which "requires attention, not only to the film itself, but as much or more so to concurrent texts (both internal and external to the genre), as well as to interpretive strategies." This is a method of contextual analysis which my research illustrates should not only be used to study the films of the female director working in contemporary Hollywood but

[16] Richard Dyer, Stars (London: BFI, 1984) 183.

also to better understand the existence of and the meanings attached to that simultaneously *real* and *imagined* figure herself.[17]

Having outlined my research I must now acknowledge and justify a few theoretical problems and/or paradoxes that might potentially undermine this study. Judith Mayne has written that the term "woman's director" when applied to Dorothy Arzner had multiple meanings. It could simply refer to her gender, or be used as an explanation for the successes or failures of her films, for her treatment of male characters or the way in which she directed actresses. It "defined her simultaneously as a woman's director because she was a woman, and as a woman's director because she was like other woman's directors". Similarly my own research is concerned with the different connotations of the term "woman director" beyond indicating the director who is biologically female: such as she who makes or should make a certain kind of film because of her gender, she who is not a *natural* director because she is not male, or she who is marginal in the Hollywood film industry; and the ways in which these connotations can harden into stereotypes that work to pigeonhole her and impede her progress through the industry. These are the stereotypes which women directors are constantly forced to confront and negotiate as they attempt to carve out a career for themselves within Hollywood.[18]

Mayne has also argued that the term "woman's cinema" elides difference since it "alludes to" but also "represses the importance of contrasts and connections between women, by implying that all women are the same." In other words, and to risk stating the obvious, women are not only defined (and do not only define themselves) by their gender, but also by their race, ethnicity, sexuality, class and so on. In terms of the "woman director" it is crucial to point out that in Hollywood this nearly always means white woman director. Almost no women of colour have directed films which have had the backing of a major studio, and few films which have enjoyed studio (or indeed widespread theatrical) distribution.[19]

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[17] Janet Staiger, Interpreting Films: Studies in the Historical Reception of American Cinema (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1992) 9, 138.
[18] Judith Mayne, Directed By Dorothy Arzner (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1994) 63.
[19] Judith Mayne 65-66.

According to Bronwen Hruska and Graham Rayman, as of 1993 Euzhan Palcy was the only Black woman director to have made a film which was produced and distributed by a major studio: A Dry White Season (1989) which was financed by MGM.[20] Moreover Jesse Algeron Rhimes states that of the four hundred and fifty pictures released by studios and major independents in 1991, twelve were directed by black men and none by black women.[21] To compare this to white women's position, Hruska and Rayman note that in that year about twelve films were released by white female directors. In addition to Palcy one can also add the names of Darnell Martin, Kasi Lemmons, and the Indian born director Mira Nair. Martin directed I Like It Like That (1994) for Columbia Pictures; Lemmons' second film as director, Caveman's Valentine (2000), was partially produced and distributed by Universal; and Nair made The Perez Family (1995) for the Samuel Goldwyn Company, who also acted as co-distributers for Mississipi Masala (1991). Miramax also distributed Maya Angelou's Down In The Delta (1998), and Leslie Harris' Just Another Girl on the IRT (1992). Since its acquisition by Disney in 1993 Miramax would qualify as, to use Justin Wyatt's term, a "major independent" which means it is certainly possible to view Angelou's 1998 film as straddling the divide between independent and mainstream cinema.[22]

My own research, however, set out to focus primarily on those female directors who are closest to the very heart of Hollywood. That is, those women who have had the most box office success in that industry; made several studio produced, distributed, and marketed films; and have had a significant amount of material written about them in the popular media which I could utilise to discover how they are perceived in the marketplace. Given the fact that the Hollywood industry is itself a white male institution, and that many of the supplementary discourses which surround it (such as mainstream entertainment and film magazines) share the value system of this institution, it is not surprising that non-white, female directors should

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[20] Bronwen Hruska and Graham Rayman, "List Growing, but Black Women Filmmakers Rare in Hollywood," San Diego Union-Tribune 7 Mar.1993: E8. San Diego Union-Tribune Online Archives, 12 Sep. 2000 <http://pqasb.pqarchiver.com/sandiego/index.html>.
[21] Jesse Algeron Rhimes 88.
[22] Justin Wyatt 74-90.

not only be almost entirely absent within that industry, but also that this absence should go unremarked upon in the popular press. Indeed chapter two tackles this issue by providing statistical evidence to illustrate the way Hollywood functions to exclude, or at least impede the progress of, the "other": he or she who is either not white, not male, or both. My thesis is in no way intended to be taken as an apology for the way Hollywood marginalises not just women, but all so-called "minority" groups, or as a claim that only white women have been directors. It recognises that white women directors working in Hollywood are a specific group who cannot speak for the experience of all women directors, and understands that their experiences can only ever serve as a partial explanation for the rampant inequality which exists within the industry. Yet is also contends that the study of this specific group of directors is vital if feminist film theory is to move forward theoretically and begin to identify the wealth of hitherto neglected areas which would benefit from further, or even nascent analysis. It is the nature of research to throw up other topics for consideration. The study of, for example, the absence of non-white female directors in the film industry, and their progression in the independent as opposed to the mainstream sector, especially vis-à-vis the position of the non-white "other" in the media generally, is one such topic which would require a thesis by itself. Christina Lane's excellent chapter on Darnell Martin in Feminist Hollywood demonstrates one of the ways in which such a study might proceed. Lane explores the way Martin fits into a tradition of black independent filmmaking, and focuses on the way racial and gender stereotypes have impacted on her career as first an independent and then a studio director. She demonstrates how the female director's identity is not only constructed in terms of gender but also in terms of race.[23]

Of course in choosing to focus on the specific kind of woman director working in the very heart of the system (or as near as a female director can get to it) I am aware that I can be accused of maintaining an artificial distinction between the "mainstream" and the "independent", the validity of which I myself am compelled to interrogate at certain points in

[23] See Christina Lane 149-175.

the thesis. As I have already suggested the boundaries between these categories are not clearly defined but incredibly blurred. To counter this accusation I will emphasise two related points. Firstly, that despite this blurring the distinction between the two categories apparently continues to exist in many feminist film critics' minds, otherwise they would not privilege the examination of the "independent" female director over other directors working within Hollywood, making this kind of study if not redundant then less pressing. Secondly, that since my intention is to address an only partially filled gap in feminist film theory (the examination of those women directors who work within the studio system) it is necessary to maintain this somewhat contrived distinction for the sake of clarity, while simultaneously recognising that such a distinction will always be problematic.

Finally this thesis raises two more potential problems associated with the study of women directors as a group. I might be accused of overemphasising the director at the expense of those women who have worked in different professions in the industry such as producers, screenwriters, actors, costume designers. To this I would say that this thesis neither claims to be exhaustive nor views directing as the only or best means of theorising authorship in the cinema (which is, after all, a collaborative art form). My interrogation of auteur theory, as well as my consideration of the figure of the "star-as-director" or Hollywood "hyphenate", prove that I am fully aware that the female director is not the only woman in Hollywood - she is merely the focal point of my research.

It might also be argued that my claim that I am not writing a gynocritics of the cinema is potentially paradoxical given that I have chosen to group directors together by gender for the purpose of this study. Moreover, many female directors have fought to disassociate themselves from any such tagging by, for instance, avoiding making obviously "feminine" or "feminist" films, or denying that gender has had any influence on their career, since they believe that such labels increase the possibility of cinematic marginalisation. However at the risk of repeating myself I would say that at no point in my work do I argue that the films of women directors share some common female, feminine, or feminist theme which mere

biology, or their existence as one link in a historical chain of women artists. has brought into being. Rather I am interrogating the processes by which women directors are saddled with gendered labels in order to destabilise these labels, and to illustrate that they are a cultural rather than a natural phenomenon. In short I problematise the term "woman director", which works to pigeonhole and confine female filmmakers in a myriad of ways, even while I use it myself. I do not use it without reservations, but understand that it serves an important purpose as an organisational category for research, especially when the theoretical and historical "silence" of a number of cinema's female artists might be the alternative to not using it. A study which takes the female director as it's starting point is justified so long as it is self-conscious: it must question how it defines its terminology as it goes along, and demonstrate an awareness that such terms do not have one meaning but many, and are not fixed but constantly shifting.

I have chosen Lillian Gish's comment, which is quoted at the beginning of this introduction, as the title of this thesis because it has considerable relevance to many of the themes of my work. The "was" in "directing was no job for a lady" suggests that the profession used to be closed to women but is no longer. My research, particularly chapter two which paints a bleak statistical picture of women's status in Hollywood, illustrates that many of those who hold power in the industry remain to be convinced of this fact. "No job" also indicates the scarcity of opportunities for women directors in Hollywood, as well as drawing our attention to the fact that the activity of directing has commonly been viewed as unsuitable or *unnatural* for women: an issue which is tackled at length in chapter one, but which also informs the entire thesis. "Lady" is significant because it introduces the issue of gender into the mix, and with it the endlessly circulating and frequently conflicting debates about feminism and femininity with which my research engages. The word evokes the idea that directing is somehow "unfeminine" and this feeds into the idea that women must somehow negotiate the inherent "masculinity" of the job if they are to be accepted as filmmakers. It also speaks to the fact that for many observers (both inside and outside the industry) the woman

director's gender cannot be viewed as separate from her profession: she is a *woman* director rather than simply a director. Her gender impinges on her career to the extent that it affects the ways in which she and her films are theorised, marketed, and read. Simply put, this thesis seeks to account for the many ways in which directing is understood to be "no job for a lady", in order to identify and make obvious the subtle and not so subtle gender-based prejudices which affect the female director who works in Hollywood.

Chapter One

"[T]hese are the audacities of *hommes de cinéma*": Towards a Feminist Examination of Auteur Theory[1]

Annette Kuhn has written that "the concept of authorship...had already had a chequered history within film theory well before feminism came on the scene."[2] It follows that notions of authorship are more likely to complicate rather than clarify the already complex and frequently contradictory field of feminist film theory. Despite this a thesis which seeks to study the female director would be foolish to bypass considerations of authorship entirely. Indeed they are unavoidable since the spectre of auteurism, which locates the director as cinema's author, looms large over any attempt to theorise that figure. This chapter is a reassessment of auteur theory for feminist film criticism. It begins with an exploration of auteur theory as a gendered concept, and then moves on to a discussion of the way in which auteurist critics sought to distance film from the arena of "feminine" mass culture, thus ensuring its status as "Art". It also acts as a rebuttal to an auteurist view of cinematic history by calling for a rehistoricisation of the female director; and then, finally, asks what, if anything, auteur theory has to offer the feminist film critic.

The term "auteur theory" is actually a misnomer, and I use it here for no other reason than convenience. It was never offered as a unified theory by its French originators, but rather became one in the hands of its later disciples, such as the American critic Andrew Sarris. As such this "theory" is open for the feminist critic to rip apart and expose its shortcomings: to recognise the questions and difficulties it raises, and use them as theoretical gateways from which to write the woman director back into film history.

Although the inadequacies of auteur theory prove that there will always be a tension in film theory between our conception of the director as author and maker of *meaning*, and

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[1] François Truffaut, "Une Certaine Tendance du Cinéma Français," Theories of Authorship, ed. John Caughie (London: Routledge, 1981) 40.
[2] Annette Kuhn, Women's Pictures: Feminism And Cinema, 2nd ed. (London: Verso, 1994) 203.

our understanding of the processes by which the reader (critic, audience) determines *meanings*, this does not make a close study of the theory redundant. Such an examination actually forces us to emphasise this and other tensions within auteurism. It also teaches us that any theory which works to define cinema by the actions of one individual participant (the white male director) is ultimately an unsatisfactory one. Hence we are able to take the woman director as a focal point for study, while simultaneously taking care not to depict her as a subject who exists outside of history and ideology.

The Masculine Bias of Auteur Theory

The most obvious aspect of auteur theory with which feminist film criticism must take issue is its gender biased use of language. This is hardly surprising given Nina Baym's argument that "the verb 'to author'" has undergone a "facile translation...into the verb 'to father,' with the profound gender restrictions of that translation unacknowledged."[3] Edward Buscombe writes that the "romantic conception of the director as the 'only begetter' of a film" was one which dominated Cahiers du Cinéma. The use of the word "begetter" is significant since it refers to the masculine part in procreation: just as the man "begets" a child of the woman, and thus undermines her importance in the act of procreation, so the male director is formulated as he who "begets" a film, thus erasing the possibility that women also have a role to play in the creation of film.[4]

Viewed in this way auteurist criticism has much in common with earlier literary theory's conception of the figure of the artist. Edward Buscombe has commented on the similarities between Romantic literary theory's depiction of this figure as someone whose work "rises spontaneously from the vital root of genius; it grows, it is not made;" and that of the auteurist preoccupation with the distinction between the *auteur* who makes a film "truly his own", and the *metteur en scène* who is unable "to disguise the fact that the origin of his

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[3] Nina Baym, "Melodramas of Beset Manhood. How Theories of American Fiction Excluded Women Authors," The New Feminist Criticism. Essays on Women, Literature, and Theory, ed. Elaine Showalter (London: Virago, 1986) 78.

[4] Edward Buscombe, "Ideas of Authorship," Theories of Authorship, ed. John Caughie, 24.

film lies somewhere else."[5] Such a romantic definition of the director means that a collaborative understanding of film is sacrificed in favour of a model of autonomous creativity. Andrew Sarris, for instance, shows his commitment to such a model when he refers to the director as being analogous to a king.[6]

For Sarris cinematic authority rests in a patriarchal figure, and that figure is conceived of as analogous not only to a king, but also to a God: in The American Cinema: Directors and Directions 1929-1968 he refers to those directors he believes to be the most talented as "Pantheon Directors". In Sarris' thinking there is no room for queens or goddesses: like so many male literary theorists before him, the canon he created was exclusively male and white. While this bias is partially explicable as wilful prejudice on Sarris' part since he is clearly aware that potential female candidates for inclusion exist (he devotes one page to a list of female directors), it is also the logical conclusion of a deeply flawed theory in which the standards denoting artistic excellence are such that they are only achievable by men.

Writing on the subject of female artists, Rozsika Parker and Griselda Pollack state that the male establishment which governs the art world has not only been instrumental in determining "the criteria of greatness" within that field, but also in controlling who has "access to the means to achieve it." For example, women artists were denied the opportunity to study the nude which was fundamental to the dominant art forms between the Renaissance and the mid nineteenth century.[7] For female directors (and indeed most non-white directors) access is an even greater problem since comparatively few women have worked in that capacity as opposed to female writers or artists. This is partially due to the relative youth of cinema as an art form. Women and other marginal groups have had less time to establish themselves, and established patriarchal and/or racist attitudes have had a shorter period in which to undergo change: a situation which is compounded by the difficulty of developing

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[5] Buscombe, "Ideas of Authorship" 24-5.
[6] Andrew Sarris, "Towards a Theory of Film History," Movies and Methods Volume One, ed. Bill Nichols (Berkeley: The University of California Press, 1976) 246.
[7] Rozsika Parker and Griselda Pollock, Old Mistresses: Women, Art and Ideology (London: Routledge, 1981) 115.

and exercising directorial skills on a purely amateur basis (unlike the tools of writing, for example, the tools of filmmaking are prohibitively expensive). In addition limited access to traditionally white male enclaves such as film school, and behind the camera on a film set, have made theoretical as well as practical, on-the-job training more difficult for women and other "minority" groups. In the case of those women directors working in the mainstream, Hollywood's status as an industry which is financially high-risk and thus predominantly commercially-motivated might also help explain their absence: women, who are not thought to be financially astute by *nature*, and who are likely to have little or no experience of working on big-budget films to offer as a calling-card, find themselves left out in the professional cold.[8]

The problem of access is crucial since some auteurists have insisted that in order to be an "auteur" one must have completed a substantial body of work across a wide variety of cinematic genres, whilst making reference to the same key themes and concerns from film to film in order to give the work personality and coherence. As Peter Wollen writes of Howard Hawks: "Hawks is a director who has worked for years within the Hollywood system...Hawks has worked in almost every genre...Yet all of these films exhibit the same thematic preoccupations, the same recurring motifs and incidents".[9] By these criteria quantity comes in part to stand for quality. Consider the words of Andrew Sarris when he argues that, "[c]omprehension becomes a function of comprehensiveness. As more movies are seen, more cross-references are assembled. Fractional responsibilities are more precisely defined; personal signatures are more clearly discerned.[10] In Sarris' eyes the critic is able to better understand the auteur's thematic concerns by seeing a number of films directed by him. Since it is only by discerning these personal patterns or "signatures" that the true auteur is discovered, it follows that only those who have made a significant number of films will be judged as significant in auteurist terms. This poses a problem for the woman director who

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[8] For further discussion of the issues surrounding the female director's access to Hollywood see chapter two of this thesis.
[9] Peter Wollen, Signs and Meaning in the Cinema (London: Secker and Warburg, 1972) 81.
[10] Sarris, "Towards a Theory" 238.

frequently struggles to get one or two films made, and is seldom fortunate enough to be in a position to pick and choose between the widest range of generic possibilities and the available stars and scripts (especially when certain genres such as Romance or Comedy are believed to be more suited to her "feminine" abilities than others). Historically she has had less opportunity to fill the role of director and has made fewer films, leaving her forever trying to catch up with her male equivalent. Thanks to their ahistorical and selective methods of interpreting cinema it is crucial facts such as these which auteurist critics have chosen to omit.

Auteur theory does not simply refuse to consider female directors but more accurately conceives of directing as a male pursuit, and consequently genders the director as male. Take, for example, the words of Truffaut referred to in my title: auteurs are "men of the cinema" and nothing else. Similarly Andrew Sarris argues that even though Simone De Beauvoir would dispute Lillian Gish's comment that directing was no job for a lady, "relatively few women have put the matter to the test." He declares this as if it was purely a lack of interest on the woman's part which explained an imbalance in the ratio of male to female directors.[11]

This refusal to conceptualise the director as anything other than (a white) male does not begin and end with the rise and relative fall (thanks to the critical challenges which have revealed its flaws) of auteur theory. On the contrary it is a notion which persists today, aided not only by the fact that many of the vestiges of auteurist thinking are still to be found circulating both inside and outside the film industry, but also by the continuing scarcity of female directors within that industry. For example the director's name is often used in the promotion of a film in much the same way as that of a star: Schindler's List (1993) is "A film by Steven Spielberg", and Titanic (1997) is "A James Cameron film". Similarly film critics continue to write about directors and their films in auteurist terms: Angie Errigo writes in a review of Eyes Wide Shut (1999) that the film is "definitely Kubrickian" and "imbued with

[11]Andrew Sarris, The American Cinema: Directors and Directions 1929-1968 (New York: Dutton, 1968) 216.

Kubrick's uncomfortable personal vision".[12] I have chosen to put the words "a white" in brackets when mentioning the standard way of conceptualising the director since although I am discussing the issue of gender in this instance, these bracketed words emphasise that the image of the "typical director" not only elides the absence of women in the profession, but also of blacks, Latinos, Asians and other minorities of both sexes.

According to Jim Hillier the language employed to discuss directors and directing consistently finds its metaphors in typically "masculine" spheres such as sport, war and the Old West. Those in Hollywood, often refer to successful films as "home runs", and directors as "guns for hire".[13] In a chapter in Naked Hollywood which describes the position of the director in contemporary Hollywood Nicholas Kent compares production on a film to "a military campaign", and quotes from director/screenwriter David Mamet who maintains that the director is "deferred to by the crew because of the legitimate *chain of command* in this sort of enterprise".[14] So pervasive is this terminology that female directors have been known to employ it themselves. For instance Martha Coolidge tells Ms. that the director is "the ultimate power on the set[,]...the *captain of the ship*, where the buck stops."[15] It is crucial to note how much ideological overlap there is between these male cultural/historical spheres. Roger Horrocks describes the way in which young men's participation in sports in nineteenth century Britain was held to promote those Victorian values (resourcefulness, team-work, fair play, physical superiority to "others", patriotism) deemed essential for the continuance of the British Empire, thus articulating an important link between sport and the military (as conquerors of other nations). He also argues that the cult of male athleticism which became prominent in this era functioned as "a sublimation of sexuality that kept white Englishmen 'pure' and away from women."[16] This is an idea which is echoed in the mythology of the Old West. As Shelley Armitage states, this mythology casts woman in the role of "civilizer", and

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[12] Angie Errigo, rev. of Eyes Wide Shut, Empire Oct. 1999: 13.
[13] Jim Hillier, The New Hollywood (London: Studio Vista, 1992) 129.
[14] Nicolas Kent, Naked Hollywood (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1991) 62-3. Italics mine.
[15] Ellin Stein, "Careers In Movieland," Ms. July 1984: 96. Italics mine.
[16] Roger Horrocks, Male Myths and Icons. Masculinity and Popular Culture (London: Macmillan, 1995) 149, 150.

man as lover of the wilderness and eager escapee from civilisation (from the "feminine", from marriage).[17]

Horrocks maintains that hand in hand with the bureaucratisation of sport in the nineteenth century came further justification for the "elevation of men over women". Women, who were perceived to be "frail creatures", were restricted to the domestic sphere, while men were encouraged to seek fulfilment outside the home in "industry, business...the Empire" and, allied with these areas, on the playing field. Faced with breaking into a sphere so firmly designated as male, women have either excelled in those sports deemed suitable for women, or struggled to gain access to "male" sports. Such a struggle has been required because sport (as a showcase for superior male strength, energy, aggression) has not traditionally been deemed a *natural* pursuit for women, and in this it has much in common with directing.[18]

In Hollywood, as one executive quoted in Mark Litwak's Reel Power points out, women are commonly seen as "developers" rather than "facilitators". In fact there is even an industry term which reflects this. The tag "D-girls" (development girls) was given to young female executives who were on their way up the career ladder. These women had enough power to turn down potential projects but not enough to give them the green light: that honour went to their male bosses. This split between facilitator (male) and developer (female) is merely a variation on the old masculine/feminine dichotomy represented by other supposedly "natural" (but in reality constructed) oppositions such as active/passive, aggressive/submissive, leader/follower.[19]

Martha Coolidge proves that she is all too aware of the woman director's "unnatural" position when she adds an incisive coda to her "captain of the ship" statement quoted above: "Women don't fit the role as that kind of authority figure." Undoubtedly Coolidge has had

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[17] Shelley Armitage, "Rawhide Heroines: The Evolution of the Cowgirl and the Myth of America," The American Self. Myth, Ideology, and Popular Culture, ed. Sam B. Girgus (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1981) 166.
[18] Horrocks 151.
[19] Mark Litwak, Reel Power: the Struggle for Influence and Success in the New Hollywood (Los Angeles: Silman-James Press, 1986) 151. For a discussion of "D-girls" see Rachel Ambramowitz, Is That a Gun in Your Pocket? Women's Experience of Power in Hollywood (New York: Random House, 2000) 134.

first hand experience of the difficulties this perception raises for female directors. She has said that a male teacher who interviewed her for a place to study film at New York University in the late sixties told her, "You can't be a director, you're a woman."[20] The teacher's words reveal a belief that "woman" and "director" are mutually exclusive, as if directing were quite simply a gender-based skill that required a "masculine" way of thinking. They also mask not only a past history of women's contribution to the field, but also the reasons for their inequality within it. Although it would be foolish to claim that attitudes have not shifted in subsequent decades allowing more women to train and work as directors, it would also be premature, given the still pitifully small number of women making films in Hollywood and the snail-like pace of their progress, to argue that a belief in men's superior aptitude for the role has entirely disappeared, even if it is perhaps now less obviously expressed.

Since the female director is, for some, "unnatural", the language used to describe her either attempts to render her *natural* or to confirm her *strangeness* in that position. In what might be seen as one such naturalisation strategy Kathryn Bigelow is often discussed as a woman who is very "masculine" in her approach to directing. Moreover both she, and to a lesser extent, Jodie Foster have been referred to as fulfilling auteurist criteria which has the effect of easing their assimilation into the all-male auteur's club. As evidence of another strategy one can point to the tendency to overemphasise the gender of the director and the accompanying "femininity" and/or "feminism" of her films, with the result that she is effectively consigned to the sidelines of the industry as "other" (not a director but a *woman* director). Sometimes, as Christina Lane reveals in her study of the director Darnell Martin, this strategy can also overlap with issues of race and lead to a situation where a female director is not just "other" as *woman*, but "other" as *woman of colour*. Lane argues that in Martin's case it was not only her "femaleness" which was manipulated by Columbia's publicity machine to sell her first studio film, I Like It Like That (1994), but also her racial identity, which meant that she was doubly side-lined. She was forced into two narrowly

[20] Abramowitz, Is That a Gun 101.

defined niches - the tradition of black (male) filmmaking (since Columbia's publicity department failed to acknowledge the existence of other Black female filmmakers) and of women's filmmaking - instead of one. As a result of such marginalising practices there is no need for the industry to account for the *alien* female in amongst the men, or the token black in amongst the whites, since she can be assessed as part of a parallel (but implicitly inferior) feminine or other "minority" tradition.[21] Sarris employs this strategy when he deals with the existence of female directors by labelling them "a ladies auxiliary" and relegating them to a footnote in cinematic history: "A special footnote must also be devoted to the widow of Alexander Dovjenko" (which refers to her merely as somebody's wife, rather than by her full name) and a "longer, more controversial footnote" to Leni Riefenstahl. If an attempt is made to accent rather than reconcile the woman's aberrance as director, on the other hand, it is often the case that this attempt takes the form of an attack.[22]

In a speech from the 1992 Women In Film Crystal Awards Lunch Barbra Streisand recognises this fact when she notes that language is used very differently in talking about women as opposed to men within the industry. Male qualities which are expressed in positive terms are frequently transformed by language into negatives when they are displayed by women. For example she notes that a man might be called "forceful" whereas a woman is "pushy"; a man is "uncompromising" and a woman is a "ball breaker"; a man is "assertive" and a woman is "aggressive"; a man shows "leadership" and a woman is "controlling" and so on.[23] In this way a woman who dares to demonstrate the necessary strengths to succeed in a competitive business and asserts her right to take up a leadership role (the latter being particularly relevant for the director since she or he is still commonly perceived to fill that position during the making of a film) risks censure when she ventures into "male" territory. This censure articulates the "essential" differences between men and women, and reprimands women who choose to ignore these *differences* for acting against their "nature", for acting

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[21] Christina Lane, Feminist Hollywood. From Born In Flames to Point Break (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2000) 150.
[22] Sarris, The American Cinema 216.
[23] Reprinted in "We Are The Girlz in the Hood," Premiere Women In Hollywood Special 1993: 27.

like men. In short, to borrow a phrase of Linda Grant's, women who display the "foot-stamping and general unpleasantness" that are supposedly typical of the director are turned "into *sexless* harridans in the eyes of the world." [24]

To see evidence of this strategy at work one only has to consider comments which have been made about Streisand. David Thomson has said that Yentl (1983) is a "piece of magic" because the story by Isaac Bashevis Singer on which it is based is "strong enough to contain her [Streisand's] narcissism".[25] Thus credit for the film's quality is given not to its director-producer-star but to the author who inspired it, effectively making the *author* into the *auteur* since the obvious candidate for auteur-status (Streisand) is judged to be unsuitable because she is too self-involved. This is particularly ironic given that great auteurs are usually celebrated for their ability to stamp their personality on a film. The Premiere "Power Lists" have referred to Streisand in a similar fashion, calling her a "Diva Director" and a "Multitalented Narcissist". Both are titles which work to undermine her position of strength as director and the talents she possesses by qualifying them with negatives: her directing is supposedly compromised by her temperament, and her various abilities devalued by immodesty.[26]

In accordance with what Linda Grant refers to as "the model of the artistic genius as social misfit", the *great* male director can be, and indeed is almost expected to be, a difficult character since in auteurist terms a certain amount of social isolation (which is closely connected with aesthetic originality) is one of the criteria for greatness.[27] According to this logic a cinematic "genius" (such as the oft-cited Orson Welles) who sets out to question the status quo will almost inevitably be something of a loner since he is swimming against rather than with the culture's ideological tide, and it is out of this struggle that "real art" is created. By contrast a woman's achievements (as we have seen with Streisand) are not supposed to come at the expense of social niceties, and as a result the "artist-as-rebel" myth has

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[24] Linda Grant, "Boys Only in the Big Picture," Guardian 21 Apr. 1998, CD-ROM: 8. Italics mine.
[25] David Thomson, "Women Call the Shots," Guardian 17 Apr. 1998: 9.
[26] "The Power List," Premiere May 1996: 76-90; "The Power List," Premiere May 1997: 85-99.
[27] Grant, "Boys Only" 8.

traditionally been less open to them. When confronted by female directors who do not appear to be as accommodating as stereotypes of femininity have led them to expect, some critics resolve this discrepancy not by questioning the validity of those stereotypes but by interrogating the "femaleness" of the directors.

In her article "Steel Magnolia" Elissa Van Poznak depicts Kathryn Bigelow as a hard, cold, uncompromising woman who is completely focused on her career. She uses words and phrases such as "command", "control-freak", "remote", "controlled", "humourless" and "so business-like I almost froze". Then, as if attempting to rationalise such *unnatural* (unfeminine) behaviour, she quotes Oliver Stone as once having referred to Bigelow's "relentlessness" as "masculine". Even Bigelow's living room does not escape the interviewer's critical eye. Its Minimalist style is not interpreted as a design choice but read as symbolic of the director's "spare, uncompromising, almost impersonal" character. It is worth noting that Van Poznak also falls back on the kind of masculine imagery surrounding directing that I have already discussed, although in this instance it is used to reprimand the director rather than to praise her. Playing with military language, the article's sub heading informs us that Van Poznak "finds no chinks in her [Bigelow's] armour." Within the piece itself this phrase is reiterated with a slight alteration when she states that "Bigelow reveals nothing about herself. There are no chinks in her denim." Earlier in the article Van Poznak notes that the director is dressed in shirt, jeans and cowboy boots: a quasi western outfit which in the interviewer's mind acts as a modern day coat of armour worn by the "tough girl" of American cinema who is determined to live up to the standards of all those "tough guys". Whereas this armour imagery might have been employed to paint a picture of the brave auteur who suits-up to protect her artistic vision against the encroaching enemy that is the Hollywood system, or to establish the director as the film world's equivalent to a military leader, Van Poznak uses it to symbolise Bigelow's supposed emotional inaccessibility. When

this female director wears "armour" it is not as a means of protection or a sign of power but as a distancing device (from the feminine) and a mask of assimilation.[28]

One term which is often used in conjunction with the "artist-as-rebel" myth is "maverick". Leslie Felperin traces the origin of the word to a Texas cattleman named Sam Maverick who refused to brand his steers. She notes that it "entered the vernacular through countless westerns" and when applied to directors such as Sam Fuller or Robert Altman it retains that "manly whiff of tobacco, whisky and the dusty road...Much like the term 'indie', there's something very boy's club about the notion." Not surprisingly, argues Felperin, the term is seldom applied to female directors, although there are rare exceptions such as Kathryn Bigelow whose films have been deemed challenging, edgy and stylish enough to earn her maverick (and auteur) status.[29] In other words Bigelow's work avoids the "feminine" and as a result fits comfortably within the agreed parameters of male-determined cinematic significance.

One of the reasons that "maverick" sits so uncomfortably with women (unless they are masculinised or at least de-feminised like Bigelow) can be discerned from a statement made by Felperin:

> The maverick lone rider must quarrel with and leave Belle back at the ranch so that he can roam free...Women feature in the movie-maverick mythology as so many disposable leading ladies, courted and cast aside like the maternal, engulfing arms of the studio system itself.

Just as the "maverick" figure of the Old West must run away from civilisation (which, as already stated, is symbolised by "feminine" things such as wife, family, home, domesticity) in order to be assured of that epithet, so the maverick-auteur must symbolically reject the dreaded "feminine" by sidelining his female stars and distancing himself from a commercially-driven studio system: a system which seeks to tame or domesticate him, and

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[28] Elissa Van Poznak, "Steel Magnolia," Elle Dec. 1990, U.K. ed.: 71-75.
[29] Leslie Felperin, "The Mavericks: Not Just a Boy's Game," Observer 14 Feb. 1994, Cinema sec.: 4.

subsume his individual talents. Here Hollywood cinema is conceived of as a form of threatening mass culture, and the concept of the mass is one which has often been feminised.

In "Mass Culture as Woman" Andreas Huyssen charts the growth in the nineteenth century of the notion that mass culture was "somehow associated with women while real, authentic culture" remained "the prerogative of men." He notes that there was an obsessive tendency within the various artistic, political and psychological discourses of the period to gender both mass culture and the masses as feminine, and cites Flaubert's Madame Bovary in which the heroine, Emma Bovary, is obsessed with "Trivialliteratur" as one example of this. He argues that one of the corollaries to this "feminine" mass culture was "the emergence of a male mystique in modernism". In Huyssen's opinion modernism is riddled with patriarchal bias and misogynistic thinking. He goes on to list the typical features of the *ideal* modernist art work, which have much in common with those qualities which are often seen as indicative of the films of a *true* auteur. He writes that the *great* modernist work is "autonomous", that is to say distinct from the spheres of "mass culture and every day life". It is also "self-referential" and "self-conscious", and it springs from the mind of an individual rather than from a group of people. Similarly the *great* auteurist work is praised for its ability to stand apart thematically, structurally, ideologically and morally, from mass culture (or at least to critique it from within); to use the building blocks of cinematic narrative such as genre in a new, frequently irreverent, and always highly studied manner; and above all to be recuperable as the cinematic expression of one author (the director) whose personality is stamped all over it.[30]

Auteurism can be viewed as the logical culmination of a long running theoretical quest to legitimise cinema for, as Richard Maltby points out, the desire to elevate films to the level of "Art" was one which preoccupied even the earliest film theorists.[31] In order to make films into "Art" one inevitably had to observe the standards by which *real* art was measured

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[30] Andreas Huyssen, "Mass Culture As Woman. Modernism's Other," Studies In Entertainment: Critical Approaches to Mass Culture, ed. Tania Modleski (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986) 191, 188-189, 194, 197.
[31] Richard Maltby and Ian Craven, Hollywood Cinema: An Introduction (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995) 416.

in other fields such as painting or literature, and these standards were far from gender neutral. Among the guardians of high art the consensus was that truly great works stood apart from (and indeed repudiated) mass culture, and this was perhaps the greatest barrier to cinema's entry into the aesthetic canon since its status as popular entertainment would seemingly put it on the "mass" rather than the "high" side of the culture divide. The answer, according to auteurists, was in Lapsley's words to "distinguish authors from the anonymous mass of directors", thus proving that artistic genius can transcend even a system (the Hollywood film industry) which stifles creativity.[32]

In Andrew Sarris' writing we see both the urge to establish auteurs as individuals whose films surpass those typically produced by Hollywood, and also the tendency to gender the masses as feminine. For example in "Towards a Theory of Film History" he argues that there are "weak and strong directors" just as there are "weak and strong kings", the implication being that only the strong are able to escape the constrictions of the studio system and take charge of their own work (in Sarris' words they are the individuals who "rule" rather than merely "reign").[33] The director-as-king metaphor calls to mind the idea of one man who rules absolutely over his people, over the *masses*, which in terms of the director translates to one man whose films are hierarchically superior to the other undifferentiated forms of mass culture which surround them. In addition "weak" and "strong" bring with them gendered connotations of "feminine" and "masculine" which, combined with the fact that the director is a king not a queen, illustrate that the woman's place in cinematic history is as producer, object and more frequently consumer of those mediocre works which endorse rather than challenge Hollywood conventions.

In the same article Sarris uses the word "forest" to describe Hollywood because it "connotes conformity rather than diversity, repetition rather than variation." In this equation directors are "trees" and the best directors, or auteurs, are the "topmost trees": that is the ones

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[32] Robert Lapsley and Michael Westlake. Film Theory: An Introduction (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988) 127.
[33] Sarris, "Towards a Theory" 246.

which stand out from the mass. Following on from this Sarris chastises those he calls "forest critics" for dismissing all Hollywood filmmakers rather than recognising that there are a select few who have managed to produced "great" art despite the constraints of the system. The "forest critic", he argues, finds it impossible to "admit even to himself that he is beguiled by *the same vulgarity his mother enjoys in the Bronx*...[B]ut he continues to seek into movie houses *like a man of substance visiting a painted woman*."[34] Although Sarris is critical of those who publicly damn Hollywood films while enjoying them in secret, he is clearly not prepared to champion these films unequivocally since he resorts to a feminisation of mass culture. It is working class mothers who get pleasure from the unrefined product that Hollywood typically churns out; and the furtive viewing of these inferior films is akin to the kind of thrill a rich man gets from sleeping with a prostitute: both of them supposedly being financial transactions which are emotionally and, in terms of the film viewing, aesthetically empty.

When it comes to the difficulties faced by those who would create "Art", women are more likely to be seen as part of the problem rather than the solution. She, or more accurately the taint of femininity, is what *great* male artists must traditionally evade, or at the very least (in the case of, say, a work inspired by a woman) prove they have complete control over: they are master rather than muse, subject rather than object. For instance Nina Baym argues that many critics of American literature have conceived of women's writing (particularly "bestsellers") as a barrier to Art, as that against which "the best fictionalists" (in other words, men) have to struggle.[35] With this in mind one might simplify auteurism as a horror of, and a reaction against, the three C's: consumption, corruption and co-option. All of which, as Andreas Huyssen has illustrated, are intimately bound up with a rejection of mass culture that is also a rejection of *woman*, of femininity. For example, Huyssen quotes Nietzche as saying that

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[34] Sarris, "Towards a Theory" 241. Italics mine.
[35] Baym 69.

> The dangers for artists, for geniuses...is *woman*: adoring women confront them with corruption. Hardly any of them have character enough not to be corrupted - or 'redeemed'- when they find themselves treated like gods: soon they condescend to the level of the woman.[36]

For Nietzche women exist in the artistic process merely as troublesome fans and ravenous consumers of the male genius' work ("adoring women"). They are sirens who are driven to corrupt him and commodify his art by a process of feminine redemption and domestication. They weaken him with flattery and pampering (treat him like a god) until both he and everything he creates have been brought down to their "womanly" level.

At the heart of auteurist thinking lies a paranoid fear of, to borrow Huyssen's phrase, "being devoured by mass culture" in the way that Nietzche describes. Hence auteurs are identified as those who refuse to replicate generic conventions, to make commercial considerations a number one priority, or to produce films which are merely entertaining and popular. Instead they are directors who set out to question and to challenge, to explore the rules and structures of cinematic style and narrative and to overturn them, to upset the status quo rather than accept it. In short to do anything in their power which will ensure they are viewed as strong creators and not passive consumers. The genuine auteur will never surrender to the "lure of mass culture" which causes him to lose himself "in dreams and delusions of merely consuming rather than producing."[37] Instead he will fight this compulsion like a general or a cowboy (or any of the other macho stereotypes that language can provide), and in the process create films onto which his strength of character and determination are projected. If he is strong enough he can even transform cinema's untouchable genres (melodrama, romance) into more than merely products for "weeping women" by utilising them to question the hold such mass cultural forms have over the people that enjoy them without reservation. For example, Barbara Klinger has described the way Douglas Sirk was canonised as a "progressive auteur" because he was held to have made films which appear to

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[36] Huyssen 194. Italics Mine.
[37] Huyssen 199.

take the form of the melodrama or "weepie", but which are *really* interested in exposing and undermining the values of the consumer-obsessed and emotionally bankrupt society in which they are set. The auteur's role is thus to build a fortress with his "Art" which will keep out mass culture/the feminine. Or, if he must come into contact with it (as in Sirk's case) he is able to distance himself by claiming that his purpose is to provide a masculine rationalisation and condemnation of it.[38]

Due to its use of such patriarchally biased language and terminology auteur theory denies women both a theoretical and an actual place in film history: the one is the logical result of the other. Its intent is not to paint an accurate and objective picture of cinematic history, nor to consider the circumstances in which a film is produced and received. Instead specific values of the critic are put forward as universal. For example, personal opinions and biases about directors and their films are not recognised as such by the auteurist critic but offered as correct and objective facts, as though they have been proven by scientific experimentation. In the case of Sarris it is through these personal biases that an exclusive rather than an inclusive cinematic canon is constructed.

As Helen Stoddart points out, entrance to Sarris's Pantheon of directors was based on "criteria...which remained entirely personal to Sarris."[39] He offered no real explanation as to why certain directors were deemed to be cinematic gods, and others were not, above and beyond the fact that he had determined this should be the case. Indeed there was no explanation other than that these were the directors he liked best. Not that Sarris saw flimsy reasoning as an impediment to his desire to shape film history in his own image. Displaying a typically arrogant belief in his own opinions, and confidently side-stepping the issue of partiality, he once asked "[W]hy rank directors at all?" and answered himself with "One reason is to establish a list of priorities for the film student."[40]

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[38] See Barbara Klinger, Melodrama and Meaning: History, Culture, and the Films of Douglas Sirk (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1994) 1-35.
[39] Helen Stoddart, "Auteurism and Film Authorship Theory," Approaches to Popular Film, eds. Joanne Hollows and Mark Jancovich (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1995) 43.
[40] Sarris, "Towards a Theory" 244.

When Sarris writes phrases such as "The most interesting films of the forties...", or "This particular study will start...with the movies credited to the most important directors..."[41], the feminist film critic is compelled to ask: 'Interesting for whom?'; 'Important to whom?' Having posed these questions her reassessment of auteurist thinking can begin: a theoretical journey whose end point will be a recognition that in criticism such as Sarris' a white, bourgeois, male view of the cinema masquerades as an unbiased, unmediated picture of cinema throughout history. For auteur theory's greatest crime is surely its refusal to view directors in their historical context. As Janet Staiger has argued, the auteur's work is held to be universal rather than specific, to "transcend time and place and indicate a coherent personal vision." Consequently the ideological factors which inform filmmaking remain unexplored; questions of gender, race, class, politics and sexuality go unaddressed; the facts of production and reception stay hidden; and textual contradictions are smoothed over rather than laid bare. Auteur theory reveals only a single piece of a much larger puzzle, but wants us to believe that that piece will tell us all we need to know.[42]

Auterism's Forgotten Women

The recognition that auteur theory is not neutral but gender specific is only the first stage in a feminist reassessment of it. The next step requires us to write the female director, as well as other forgotten or neglected women (screenwriters, editors, audiences and so on) back into cinematic history. This is an ongoing process, and one of the central aims of feminist film criticism since the seventies. Obviously there is neither time nor space in this chapter (or indeed in this thesis) to fully explore all the issues pertaining to this rehistoricisation, so I will confine myself to a brief defence of those female directors who have been overlooked by auteurist critics, and an equally brief consideration of the way in which an auteurist reading of film sidelines women whose contribution to cinema has been in professions other than that of director.

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[41] Sarris, "Towards a Theory" 242.
[42] Janet Staiger, "The Politics of Film Canons," Cinema Journal 24.3 (Spring 1985): 13.

Auteurists like Sarris would have us believe that no female director meets the necessary requirements for entry into the cinematic pantheon. However there is little evidence (save Sarris' one paragraph list of women directors discussed above) that these women's films were given anything approaching proper consideration. It appears that not even the proponents of auteur theory were able to rely on the ability of that theory to identify who the *great* artists were. Despite their conviction that one must view and write about as many films as possible in order to discover who truly deserve to be hailed as auteurs, these critics obviously felt they could make an exception when it came to films made by women, or indeed by any other so-called "minority" groups.

At the time of Sarris's writing it was certainly possible to point to women directors, particularly during the Silent Era, whose films would fulfil auteurist criteria. The documentary The Silent Feminists mentions two such women.[43] Alice Guy-Blanche had a career as a director (both in France and the United States) which lasted twenty four years (1896-1920). She made hundreds of films, and a quick glance at their titles reveals that they were as generically diverse as an auteur's *should* be: La Vie du Christ (1906); The Pit and the Pendulum (1913); The Heart of a Painted Woman (1915); The Vampire (1915).[44] Similarly Lois Weber was one of the most famous and well-respected directors working at Universal: she even gave John Ford a job as props man at the beginning of his career. She too made a number of films on a range of subjects and, as The Silent Feminists points out, it is possible to identify recurrent religious and moral themes at work in those films, thus satisfying the auteurist demand that the films of an auteur present consistent thematic patterns.[45] Later candidates for inclusion might have included Dorothey Arzner or Ida Lupino, whose oeuvres were also extensive enough to permit this search for patterns to take place. Although it is possible that some auteurists may have been unaware of the existence of these women - it is

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[43] The Silent Feminists, documentary video by Anthony Slide and Jeffrey Goodman, Connoisseur Academy Video 1992.

[44] Information taken from Ephraim Katz's The Macmillan International Film Encyclopaedia (London: Pan Macmillan, 1994).

[45] For example, according to The Macmillan International Film Encyclopaedia she made films like The Female of the Species (1913), The Merchant of Venice (1914), The People vs John Doe (1916), and The Flirt (1916).

after all the rise of feminist film criticism that has been instrumental in recognising their work - the very fact of their existence is another nail in the coffin of a theory which seeks to tell the story of cinema through the actions of a handful of white men.

By proclaiming the director to be the creative centre of a film auteur theory is guilty of a failure to account for film's status as a collaborative art. This failure can be traced back to the origins of auteurist criticism in French film criticism of the 1950s published in Cahiers du Cinéma. As John Caughie points out, François Truffaut's article "La politique des auteurs" set out to denounce the "tradition de la qualité" which was predominant in French cinema at that time.[46] This tradition recognised the writer, or scenarist, as artistically superior to the director, whose job it was simply to bring the writer's words to the screen. To counter this literary view of cinema Truffaut championed the director, or more accurately a specific kind of director termed the "auteur". As mentioned briefly above, to be an auteur one had to offer more than merely a straight interpretation of someone else's ideas. Rather, one's personality had to shine through on screen. Hence the distinction between the director who was an *auteur* and the director who was merely a *metteur-en-scène* . As Robert Lapsley and Michael Westlake explain, the *auteur*, unlike the *metteur-en-scène*, did not permit his individuality to be "effaced in remaining faithful to a film's literary precursor."[47]

With this division lying at the heart of auteur theory it is hardly surprising that it had little time for screenwriters, or indeed anyone else in the film industry. The director's artistic contribution to a film was considered to be the only one of any real value - all other contributors faded unrecognised into the background. To use Sarris' words the cry of the auteurist critic became, "That was a good movie...Who directed it?"[48] By refusing the literal translation of auteur as author, because it implied a literary bias, critics like Sarris immediately consigned the screenwriter to the margins of film history:

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[46] Caughie 35.
[47] Lapsley and Westlake 106.
[48] Sarris, "Towards a Theory" 250.

> Strictly speaking "auteur" means "author," and should be translated when the reference is to literary personalities...It is another matter entirely when Truffaut describes Hitchcock and Hawks as "auteurs." "Author" is neither adequate nor accurate...mainly because of the inherent literary bias of the Anglo-American cultural establishment. [49]

On the rare occasions Sarris does mention screenwriters he inevitably genders them as male: they are referred to, for example, as "the fancy dude writers from the East..."[50] In Script Girls Lizzie Francke argues that this gendering of the screenwriter as male is something which has persisted throughout Hollywood's history, despite the fact that screenwriting has been one cinematic profession in which women have excelled. Francke's comprehensive re-examination of role of the female screenwriter in Hollywood serves as one contribution to the feminist process of re-historicisation that I mention above. Not only is her work instrumental in rescuing the reputation of many female artists from relative or total obscurity, it also acts as a challenge to the idea that only directors can be auteurs. For example, she tells us about Salka Viertel who wrote several film scripts for her friend Greta Garbo, and often found herself in conflict with executives who either could not see the worth of these scripts or else demanded that she alter them. Viertel's struggle is analogous to the way in which auteurs are usually depicted as being in conflict with a system (Hollywood) designed to inhibit their creativity. Similarly Francke contends that it is possible to find thematic consistencies or patterns in five scripts written by Leigh Brackett for director Howard Hawks. These facts problematise auteur theory's privileging of the director as the source of thematic unity over a series of films since we are compelled to ask whose concerns we are seeing on screen, the director's or the screenwriter's?[51]

Research such as Francke's is a vital part of the feminist corrective to auteurist or, in contemporary terms, neo-auteurist views which continue to overvalue the director. For if

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[49] Sarris, "Towards a Theory" 244.
[50] Sarris, "Towards a Theory" 247. The word "dude" is translated in The Oxford Encyclopedic English Dictionary (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991) as meaning "a fastidious aesthetic person, usu. male", and "a fellow; a guy".
[51] Lizzie Francke, Script Girls: Women Screenwriters in Hollywood (London: BFI, 1994) 35-37 and 80-84.

individuals other than directors are able to fulfil auteurist criteria then a privileging of the director as the film's sole maker of meaning is rendered obsolete. This decentring of the director clears the way for a feminist re-evaluation of women's contribution to cinema in all areas. Stars like Greta Garbo, whose success Sarris attributes not to her acting ability but to the skills of the male directors who fixed her image on celluloid, can be reassessed as having an active role in creating their own "images".[52] Women who have worked closely with recognised male auteurs can be viewed as having played an important part in the creation of their films. For instance Francke explores one-time secretary turned screenwriter Joan Harrison's collaborations with Alfred Hitchcock, and I suggest we could also consider more recent creative partnerships such as those between editor Thelma Schoonmaker and director Martin Scorsese, or producer Denise Di Novi and director Tim Burton.[53] This wider study of women's contribution to Hollywood would also prove invaluable in raising awareness of the roles women of colour, who have been almost entirely absent as "mainstream" directors, have played in the industry. For example, Oprah Winfrey and Debbie Allen can count film producer among their numerous job titles. Winfrey's production company Harpo Films co-produced Beloved (1998) and Allen co-produced Amistad (1997).

As C.A. Griffith, herself a black female AC (Assistant Camera*man*) turned DP (Director of Photography), has argued, film scholars should learn not to overlook what she calls the "below the line" contributors to film. That is, those who are not the director, producers, or actors, but "the filmmakers that we call the crew, who compose 98 percent of the film production unit, the forgotten, invisible names that roll by in the credits long after the audience have left their seats." Griffith's narration of the ways in which race, gender, class and sexuality have impinged on her career "below the line" illustrates not only that professionals other than directors are affected by sexual and racial inequality within the

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[52] Sarris, "Towards a Theory" 251. Sarris blames Garbo's popularity for taking attention away from the directorial abilities of Rouben Mamoulian on Queen Christina (1933) in Hollywood Voices: Interviews with Film Directors (London: Secker and Warburg, 1971) 17. Once again the auteurist critic views a feminine mass culture (here represented by Garbo's popular appeal) as a barrier to valid (male) artistic expression.
[53] Francke, Script Girls 55-60.

industry, but also that the study of these other professionals means the discovery of more of cinema's hidden contributors. The existence of these contributors shows that the traditional all-male, all-white story of Hollywood is a fabrication.[54]

In short, there are numerous female executives and behind-the-scenes workers whose place in cinematic history has yet to be fully explored and understood. This is not to imply that I am advocating a simple inversion of the basic premise of auteur theory: namely exchanging a belief in the director as the film's true author for the screenwriter, producer, star and so on. My intention is simply to ensure we are mindful of the fact that a film has not *one* but *many* possible authors. This recognition is crucial for feminist film theorists since it enables us to open up the field of study to encompass women who have occupied various positions in the film industry rather than being limited to discussing the relatively small number of women who have worked as directors.

Equally we should not let the fear of side-lining other contributors act as a barrier to undertaking research which concentrates solely on female directors. This need not happen if we are careful to make the historicisation of the director and her films the priority of our discussion. We must examine the various ideological, cultural and industrial structures which surround her and have bearing on the way she and her films are read, rather than simply attributing textual meaning to her as the film's author/auteur. The issue is not what she makes her films *mean*, but what she and her films *mean* to other people. As long as it is done self-consciously and with an awareness of the potential theoretical pitfalls involved (as typified by auteurist thinking), a study which takes the figure of the female director as its subject need not be guilty of perpetuating rather than contesting flawed male conceptual models.

Auteurism, Feminism and the Future

Having successfully picked auteurist thinking apart at the theoretical seams two important questions remain: does auteur theory retain any use-value for feminist film criticism? And

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[54] C.A. Griffith, "Below The Line: Recalibrating the Filmic Gaze," Black Women Film and Video Artists, ed. Jacqueline Bobo (New York and London: Routledge, 1998) 156.

more particularly, what sort of problems does it raise for my thesis? It would be a mistake to simply consign auteurist thinking to the critical dustbin rather than taking the opportunity to assess the impact it has had on film history, as well as theoretical spaces in which its influence continues to live on. Nor is it necessarily always a negative influence. For instance, auteur theory is crucial to my research on one level since it facilitated the serious examination of popular film. In the words of Robert Lapsley, auteurism displaced dominant thinking about film with its assertion "that a creative artist could work within the constraints of Hollywood" and "also that run-of-the-mill commercial products could in fact be works of art."[55] As I have already demonstrated in my discussion of the auteurist approach to mass culture, this does not mean that auteur theory has a totally unproblematic relationship with the popular. Andrew Sarris may have chastised "forest critics" for their indiscriminate dismissal of Hollywood films and filmmakers, but at the same time his own distaste for the majority of Hollywood's output was glaringly obvious in his hierarchical approach to cinematic classification. Nevertheless auteur theory helped to alter the way critics viewed film in general, and Hollywood film in particular: "In retrospect, the auteurist phase can be applauded for having opened up popular culture to serious study...although it did so in order to elevate one small section of it to the status of high art."[56] It is indicative of the perverse nature of auteurism that, despite its patriarchal bias, the legacy it has left has benefited this examination of women directors working in the "mainstream" film industry by kick-starting a breakdown of the barriers between popular film (mass culture) and avant-garde cinema (high art), although not removing them completely.

When the feminist film critic opts to throw out auteurism without first considering the ways in which it might have influenced her research or shaped some of her assumptions about cinema, or undertaking a sustained analysis of the obstacles it has thrown up which have hindered attempts to theorise the woman's role in film history, she deprives herself of

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[55] Lapsley and Westlake 106.
[56] Lapsley and Westlake 107.

the chance for critical invention. It is not useful to simply discard a part of theoretical film history because its values are so opposed to our own.

As Nancy K. Miller states, "If women's studies is to effect institutional change through critical interventions, we cannot afford to proceed by a wholesale dismissal of 'male' models."[57] To do so risks playing straight into auteurist hands. Pam Cook argues that advocates of women's counter-cinema (whether based on avant-garde or Hollywood models) such as E. Ann Kaplan or Claire Johnson, "ran the risk of confirming the marginal place allotted to women in society."[58] By promoting a cinema distinct from that of men they could be interpreted as confirming the auteurist prejudice that women were either unwilling or unfit to make the directorial ranks of traditional cinema, and unintentionally justifying their own exclusion from the cinematic canon. That is, their demands might be read as an admission that women were not suited to the traditional Hollywood cinema, and consequently needed to invent something entirely new, distinct, feminist and/or feminine in character.

As an example of this tendency to abet one's own separation we can point to Barbra Streisand's Crystal Awards speech discussed earlier. Streisand ends her attack on Hollywood's double standards by declaring that women "contain the power of the feminine" and have "an obligation to reflect that in [their] work." They should use their "collective female energy to make films which reflect [their] nurturing instincts". In this way her attack on Hollywood's gender bias inadvertently concludes by supporting it: she may abhor the way language decrees that a woman is "aggressive" and never "assertive" but equally her own logic dictates that a man is tough whereas a woman is tender. Streisand is guilty here of fixing "woman" as a unified category rather than acknowledging her historical diversity.

An eagerness to reject "male" models can result in the construction of alternative but equally limited "female" models in order to fill the critical vacuum. For instance feminist film criticism can take on distinctly auteurist undertones when it privileges the "indie" or

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[57] Nancy K. Miller, "Changing the Subject: Authorship, Writing and the Reader," Authorship: From Plato to the Postmodern, ed. Sean Burke (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1995) 206.
[58] Pam Cook, The Cinema Book (London: BFI, 1985) 197.

"avant-garde" woman director over the "mainstream" one because her work is believed to have a more authentic "feminist" voice. This opinion is often lent extra weight if the "indie" director has penned the film script herself, giving her work a more easily discernible autobiographical stamp. A scaled-down emphasis on commercial considerations might also allow the female filmmaker more artistic freedom, and thus potentially the scope to tackle more blatantly feminist or female themes, making her a far more attractive prospect for feminist analysis.

There is something of a tendency amongst feminist film critics to heap praise on those female directors they perceive as having rescued generic material for the "feminist" cause, and to give a more lukewarm reception to those whose work they see as merely replicating popular conventions. To take just one example, Needeya Islam echoes the comments of many feminist critics when she argues that Bigelow's generically sophisticated work "indicates a critical project, and something beyond a mere clever homage to the Hollywood tradition."[59] However it is only when *all* female directors are afforded serious consideration, regardless of the type of films they make or the production context within which they make them, that feminist film criticism can claim to have left the prejudices of auteur theory behind. If not the auteurist canon might find itself replaced by a feminist canon which is just as exclusive as the canon it seeks to replace. A new feminist pantheon based on the same kind of personal prejudices as Sarris', and which organises female directors hierarchically depending on their ability or inability to create "real" feminist art in the midst of a male-dominated industry, is no more welcome than the original. As Annette Kuhn argues, the very idea of the feminist canon which is raised every time feminist criticism seeks to reassess a neglected female artist forces us to ask "Whose work is to qualify for entry, and on what grounds?"[60] To quote from Barbara Klinger, the formation of "political canons" may have had a vital role to play in "displacing the power base of the more traditional, minority-

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[59] Needeya Islam, " 'I Wanted to Shoot People': Genre, Gender and Action in the Films of Kathryn Bigelow," Kiss Me Deadly. Feminism and Cinema for the Moment, ed. Laleen Jayaman (Sydney: Power, 1995) 94.
[60] Annette Kuhn, "Introduction: Intestinal fortitude," Queen Of The 'B's. Ida Lupino Behind the Camera, ed. Annette Kuhn (Wiltshire: Flicks Books, 1995) 9.

blind canon", but this does not mean those canons themselves have not "operated in a classical canonical way to lock the text in question away from history and the 'untutored' spectator." This is not to imply that the creation of alternative female or feminist models is a mistake per se, on the contrary they are a vital part of celebrating the achievements of women, but to ensure we are aware that they bring their own pitfalls. or perhaps even the same ones, as those they are reacting against.[61]

Despite the many dangers of auteurism it would be a disaster for feminist film criticism to jettison the concept of authorship entirely. The "death of the author" may mean the "birth of the reader", and thus increased possibilities for the voices of marginal groups (women, non-whites, gays etc.) to be heard. However it also results in the neglect of "minority" authorship and a failure to identify the historical interventions of these groups' artists (as writers, filmmakers, musicians and so on) into the dominant culture. Some critics have even suggested that the decline in author-centred theory at this time was no coincidence, but rather a direct result of the growth of feminist theory: "I am not alone in pointing out that it is hardly surprising that the auteur ceased to be a central issue in film theory just at the moment of the burgeoning of feminist literary criticism in the 1970s."[62] While it would be naïve to cry "conspiracy theory" it does seem rather convenient that a major shift in critical theory occurred at a time when the concerns of "minority" groups were just beginning to be theoretically expressed.

It is all very well for feminist critics to denounce the idea of the author as indicative of essentialism, but the alternative is surely a theory in which women (rather than the theoretical "woman") have no place. If a feminist film criticism is to respond to auteur theory simply by declaring that the author is dead, then the problem remains of what to do with the very real women whose filmic achievements remain undervalued or unrecognised: surely such a declaration will mean that they will continue to be so? A move to de-centre the auteur is beneficial up to a point, as long as it does not lead us to ignore the figure of the director

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[61] Klinger 33. 34.
[62] Maggie Humm. Feminism and Film (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press. 1997) 97.

completely. Despite the wane of auteur theory the director remains one of the most visible *characters* (and that word is used deliberately because it suggests an individual who is as much a fictional construct as they are real) in cinema. One might even say that thanks to the rise of the director-as-star (and star-as-director) they have become even more visible since the seventies. By forcing the woman to disappear before she has had time to fully reappear we risk losing her entirely. In short the articulation of female authorship is not a luxury but, to borrow Judith Mayne's words, a "political necessity".[63]

As this chapter has illustrated this does not mean that we can accept author-centred theories such as auteurism without reservation. In the context of my research I have to acknowledge that auteur theory presents something of a paradox. Obviously by writing a thesis which concentrates on women directors I am, at least on a surface level, agreeing with the auteurist premise that the grouping of films by director is in some way useful and enlightening. Yet at the same time one of the aims of my research is to interrogate the way patriarchally biased film theory has *read* cinema, to expose the flaws in its reasoning, and ensure that excluded or marginalised women are afforded the critical attention they deserve.

The problems experienced by the feminist film critic who might feel duty-bound to reject auteur theory, and at the same time is unsure about where this leaves her attempt to theorise the female director, are hinted at in Feminist Hollywood by Christine Lane. Lane grapples with the many flaws in auteurist thinking (its failure to contextualise the work of the director and address ideological issues, its construction around personal bias, its ignorance that subjectivity is fragmented rather than stable, its patriarchal view of cinema) and states that it is her intention to move "beyond the lone individual in the directors chair."[64] At the same time she sometimes employs the tools of auteurist criticism in her reading of female-directed films. She notes that the directors whose work she examines would fall under the category of "progressive" authors because their films fit Cahiers du Cinema's "E"

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[63] Judith Mayne, The Woman At The Keyhole: Feminism and Women's Cinema (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1990) 97.
[64] Lane, Feminist Hollywood 40-45, 43.

categorisation; she recuperates the notion of the "metteur-en-scène" in order to validate the talents of those women who would not be considered to be auteurs; and also identifies recurring female or feminist themes in the work of some of these directors. For example. Martha Coolidge's oeuvre is said to be concerned with the issue of "female friendship".[65] I mention this not to criticise Lane's methods or reveal some hidden weakness in her arguments, but rather to illustrate the difficulties a project such as Lane's, and of course my own, entails. How do we make use of some of the elements of established and frequently gender-biased film theory without simply repeating its mistakes? What form should our own theoretical path through an extremely complex field take?

Lane's solution is to simultaneously address auteur theory (borrowing from it as necessary) and also move far beyond it, proving that it in itself cannot "explain" the director. Her research involves consideration of other factors such as marketing, reception, biographical details, star image, the context of production, which paint a more balanced and accurate picture of the ways in which the director functions as both real woman and cultural construct inside and outside the film industry. In other words she recognises that some aspects of auteur theory can have positive uses for the feminist film critic, while refusing an auteurist position that demands we look to the director in order to ascertain a film's *true* meaning. While Lane offers her personal opinion about the thematic concerns which preoccupy individual female directors, at no time does she claim that this is the *only* or *correct* way to interpret their films. As she says, "the textual analysis sections [of the book] are not meant to provide authoritative conclusions about how these films are, or should be, read."[66]

As I hope this examination has proved, the feminist critic can never afford to take auteur theory at face value. She must recognise its propensity for, to use Buscombe's words, "smuggling in...one thing under the guise of another": personal bias for objective fact; historical figures shaped by the ideological systems within which they exist for timeless

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[65] Lane, Feminist Hollywood 42, 45-46, 67.
[66] Lane, Feminist Hollywood 18.

directors of genius; and most importantly for feminist film theory, the attempt to disguise the patriarchal prejudices of the white, male, bourgeois critic as anything but.[67]

By focusing on women directors in Hollywood it is clear that I am not ready to give up the idea of authorship. In my opinion a feminist criticism which chooses to do so risks the devaluation of the woman's voice, her autonomy, consigning it to circulate anonymously amongst all the other textual voices rather than affording it privileged attention. For if we scrap the notion of the author entirely, what is there to put in its place? How will the female director's contribution to cinema then be theorised? Auteur theory may not provide the definitive answer, but it can certainly serve as a useful place to start. As Christina Lane illustrates, women directors face the problem of whether there are any practical alternatives to being labelled an auteur on a daily basis. They may resent being saddled with a notion that has such patriarchal undertones, but also realise that a failure to assert their right to this label might weaken their position as directors even further. To use Lane's words these women "both internalize and struggle against the tenets of auteurism at the same time."

Whether or not women refuse to wear the tag "auteur" it is almost certain that the "great" male directors will happily continue to do so. Thus such a refusal would likely lead to a deepening rather than a narrowing of the split between male and female directors, and a situation where women are in effect complicit in their own cinematic marginalisation. Women directors seem to be aware that only if the film industry rendered the term "auteur" obsolete could they ever afford to reject it, and that shows no signs of happening. As it is there are valid commercial reasons for continuing to invest in the notion of the auteur since it "enables Hollywood participants" (as well as those making films outside the so-called "mainstream") "to assign credit to particular contributors and commodify film products with ease". Consequently women's acceptance of auteur-status should be seen in the context of its importance not only for their artistic reputation but also for their chance at box-office

[67] Buscombe, "Ideas of Authorship" 29.

success. Moreover by simply demanding their right to the auteur tag women directors are instrumental in helping to debunk auteur theory rather than becoming its dupes.[68]

This chapter does not pretend to offer a solution to all the problems raised by the encounter between feminist film criticism and auteur theory. Indeed if auteurism teaches us anything it is surely to recognise that no means of interpreting cinema exists as a neat theoretical package which can never be opened: eventually if enough dissatisfied critics pull at the wrapping, the contents will spill out for everyone (including feminist film theorists) to examine.

The woman director's name (actual and theoretical) must be invoked in order to ensure that she is permitted to take her rightful place within cinematic history. This does not mean that we should forego the vital task of questioning the assumptions we make when we use her name. While she may exist critically, historically, biographically, her existence should never be an excuse for making theoretical short cuts. My work may not choose to give up the authorial figure, but it remembers to displace her from the centre of the work from time to time.

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[68] Lane, Feminist Hollywood 219, 218.

Chapter Two

"I spent twenty years getting to where I am, which is at the beginning of my career." (Martha Coolidge): Women Directors Breaking in, Hanging On and Dropping Out of Hollywood[1]

Director Martha Coolidge's words are the catalyst for the following examination of the female director's entrance into, and frequent exit out of, the mainstream film industry. My purpose here is to demonstrate that Coolidge's statement applies not only to her own situation but also to the careers of many other female directors who often spend years proving themselves in different fields within the industry (as actors, writers, editors, television directors, independent filmmakers and so on) before they are finally permitted to tackle a studio feature. It is also my intention to discuss an issue Coolidge leaves unsaid: once women have made that first feature a sustained career in the mainstream is far from assured, even if they happen to make a film which strikes gold at the box office. In fact the woman director's entrance into the industry is fittingly illustrated by a cartoon in the 1993 Premiere Women in Hollywood Special which highlights the differences between male and female roads to Hollywood success (see appendix A, fig. 1). While the male path is depicted as a road, the woman's is a complicated maze.[2] The metaphor of the maze is certainly a useful one, indicating as it does the twists, turns, and dead ends that most female directors face as they seek to become feature film directors. It also suggests that they will need to demonstrate a fair amount of problem solving ability along the way.

My argument starts from the premise that Hollywood has always been, and remains today, a male-dominated industry, or to refer to the frequently used phrases, an "old-boys network" or "boy's club" in which men hold nearly all the power as well as the ability to say

[1] Ally Acker, Reel Women: Pioneers of the Cinema (London: Batsford, 1991) 37.
[2] Caroline Kirk Cordero, "The Numbers Never Lie. Tracking the Progress of Women in the Industry," Premiere Women In Hollywood Special 1993: 36.

who gains membership to the "club".[3] Moreover entrance to this "club" (in terms of employment opportunities) is most commonly earned by networking with the "right" people, who, following the logic of the "boy's club", are usually male. This is not to say that women have no power in Hollywood. Female executives (including some who have reached the prestigious position of studio head) are more numerous than ever before, and some female stars are credited with the ability to open movies and are rewarded accordingly with large salaries, production deals and so on. I am not making any claims for a male-authored conspiracy in which *all* men in the industry spend their days plotting new ways to keep women out. It is important to point out that achieving success in Hollywood is difficult for everyone, man or woman, and as a result to acknowledge that some of the problems experienced by women directors are more universal than specific. Yet it is also crucial to draw attention to the subtle (and sometimes not so subtle) ways in which inequality permeates the industry, so that we are left with a framework within which to examine the location of women directors in Hollywood.[4]

As a final point of introduction it is essential to provide a working definition of the term "mentor" which I shall refer to repeatedly in this chapter. The Oxford Encyclopedic English Dictionary defines "mentor" as someone who is "an experienced and trusted adviser", and explains that it comes from the mythic Greek character Mentõr who acted as adviser to Odysseus' son Telemachus.[5] It is fitting that the word should refer to a quasi-paternal relationship between a man and a boy since this piece sets out to explore the role of the mentor relationship as a common means of getting one's foot in the door of the Hollywood film industry, and draws attention to the way women have negotiated a space for themselves within that traditionally male on male relationship. As the flip side to this it will

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[3] For examples of various women within Hollywood referring to the industry in these terms see Linda Seger, When Women Call the Shots (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1996) 52; Jim Hillier, The New Hollywood (London: Studio Vista, 1992) 127; John Andrew Gallagher, Film Directors on Directing (Greenwood Press: 1989) 228; and Janis Cole and Holly Dale, Calling the Shots: Profiles of Women Filmmakers (Ontario: The Quarry Press, 1993) 28.

[4] Mark Litwak quotes an executive who estimates the success rate in Hollywood to be around one percent in Reel Power: The Struggle for Influence and Success in the New Hollywood (Los Angeles: Silman-James Press, 1986) 118.

[5] The Oxford Encyclopedic English Dictionary (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991).

also look for instances where an alternative hierarchical model (mother to daughter rather than father to son) based on the relationships forged between women (what some have called the "old girls" network) is celebrated as a viable option in the struggle for equality. I will be using "mentor" to refer specifically to situations in which powerful men within the industry have helped women directors gain career opportunities, and more generally to indicate a business culture which, regardless of one's gender, revolves around social relationships, contacts, and networking in order to move up the career ladder. I will also demonstrate that the notion of the mentor is a problematic one for feminist criticism since it both sustains the belief that women can only succeed with the approval of a man, and is also commonly read in terms of a woman's sexuality: she is presumed either to have a romantic relationship with the mentor, or seen to be like her mentor (that is, male). In this way I intend to put the concept of the mentor under scrutiny while simultaneously drawing attention to its importance.

Women Directors in the Industry: Building a Statistical Picture

To set the scene for this discussion of the female director's position within the industry it is useful to consider some statistics. Between 1949 and 1979 the number of films directed by women was fourteen out of a total of seven thousand three hundred and thirty two; and between 1983 and 1992 it was eighty one out of one thousand seven hundred and ninety four.[6] Bearing in mind that these figures include both films made independently and by major studios, I should also point to a report which considered only films made by nine major studios between 1988 and 1997: women directed ninety four out of one thousand three hundred and eighty four films, or six point eight per cent of the total.[7] Such inequality is also evident when we consider the percentage of women members within the DGA (Director's Guild of America), or of days worked by women directors out of the total number of days

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[6] Statistics taken from Christina Lane, Feminist Hollywood. From Born in Flames to Point Break (Wayne State University Press: Detroit, 2000) 37; and Rachel Abramowitz, Is That a Gun in Your Pocket? Women's Experience of Power in Hollywood (New York: Random House, 2000) 141.

[7] David Robb, "Minority Directors: Inaction!" Hollywood Reporter 19-21 June 1998, Hollywood Reporter Online Archives 30 Dec. 1998 <http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/search.asp>.

worked for all directors. For the years 1992 to 1993 women made up twenty per cent of DGA members. This number had fallen to just over twelve per cent in 1997, and reached twenty two per cent in 1998. Between 1983 and 1999 the number of days worked never exceeded eleven per cent, and in fact 1997 actually saw the lowest percentage (seven per cent) since 1983 (two per cent), with the figure creeping back up to ten point two per cent in 1999.[8]

It is vital to point out that it is not only white female directors who fare badly in the Hollywood equality stakes but also so-called "minority" groups such as black, Hispanic and Asian filmmakers. For instance in 1998 minorities made up seven per cent of DGA members, and in the report examining films from nine top studios between 1988 and 1997 that I refer to above minorities directed seven and a half per cent of the total. With regards to black women directors, one report states that in 1997 only one hundred and ten black women belonged to the DGA, and of them only twenty one were directors.[9] An awareness of such figures is vital since it avoids giving the impression that it is *only* women who find it difficult to make headway in Hollywood, or that *all* women are alike in that they are discriminated against purely on grounds of gender. If white female directors are a rare species in the mainstream film industry, then black women are even rarer. In fact their virtual invisibility is exemplified by the statistics I have just quoted because they give no indication of whether black women are counted as part of the "minority" group, within the female group, or in both.

By concentrating so heavily on the position of women directors within the Hollywood film industry I am acutely aware that I might be deemed guilty of overemphasising the director at the expense of other women within the industry such as screenwriters, actors, editors and so on. This is a possibility which has concerned other critics such as Christina Lane. Lane is aware of the dangers of privileging the director and ignoring film's status as collaborative art, while simultaneously recognising the historical and

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[8] Statistics compiled from Caroline Kirk Cordero, "The Numbers Never Lie," Premiere Women in Hollywood Special 1993: 34; Christine Spines, "Behind Bars," Premiere Women in Hollywood Special 2000: 45; Robert W. Welkos, "Behind the Lens Men Still Rule," Los Angeles Times 17 July 1998, Calendar sec.: F-2, Los Angeles Times Online Archives 11 Oct. 1999 <http://www.latimes.com>; Abramowitz, Is That a Gun 416; and Duncan Campbell, "Why Hollywood Still Hates Women," Guardian 30 June 2000: 3.

[9] David Robb, "DGA Fetes Black Women Helmers," Hollywood Reporter 20 Nov. 1997, Hollywood Reporter Online Archives 30 Dec. 1998 <http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/search.asp>.

theoretical importance of that individual.[10] In relation to this potential criticism I refer to Pam Cook's article "No Fixed Address: The Women's Picture from Outrage to Blue Steel" in which she advocates that we shift our critical focus from the women director to women who pursue other cinematic careers, who have other roles to play in the film industry. Cook writes

> It is possible to argue that the focus on marginalization and exclusion that has preoccupied feminist criticism for more than twenty years needs to be rethought, and the historical contribution of women to cinema across the board recognized. This involves a shift in perception - away from counting the relatively small numbers of female directors towards a more historical and contextual analysis of different points of entry into the industry by women, in what is, after all, a collaborative medium.[11]

Although, as I argue in chapter one, feminist film theory must surely benefit from a wider study of women's contributions to the film industry, it would be dangerous and premature to scale down our studies of the woman director's place in film theory and cinematic history before she has even managed to gain a reassuringly solid foothold (particularly in Hollywood). To write off a century of struggle by women directors to gain equality in the film industry with the suggestion that there are "other fields to conquer...World politics for example", as Linda Grant does in the Guardian, risks making these women invisible, and implies a tacit acceptance of the traditional assumption that this thesis sets out to counter: that they are just not meant for the job. It also risks playing into the hands of a system which thrives on gender inequality since silence might be read by some as an indication that women directors have achieved all their career goals and are well-established in the industry because they are no longer being written about in terms of these issues.[12]

Cook's argument is problematic because it seems to overlook the fact that gender inequality (or in her terms "marginalization and exclusion" within the Hollywood film industry) does not simply occur in certain careers, but rather should be viewed as an industry

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[10] Lane, Feminist Hollywood 27, 46-7.
[11] Pam Cook, "No Fixed Address: The Women's Picture from Outrage to Blue Steel," Contemporary Hollywood Cinema, eds. Steve Neale and Murray Smith (London: Routledge, 1998) 244.
[12] Linda Grant, "Boys Only in the Big Picture," Guardian 21 Apr. 1998, CD-ROM ed.: 8.

wide trend.[13] Which is not to say that there are no exceptions, or that some careers have not seen women make more sustained inroads than others. For instance there is evidence to suggest that women are making progress as executives with a steadily growing number of them, such as Sherry Lansing, Amy Pascal, Lucy Fisher and Paula Weinstein, filling important studio posts. Similarly some actresses, like Julia Roberts who according to Premiere received twenty million dollars to star in Erin Brockovich (2000), are beginning to earn comparable salaries to their male colleagues. However, as the statistical picture of Hollywood I am building will demonstrate, it is crucial to note that the majority of these women are still most likely to be white, emphasising the fact that gender is not the only basis on which the industry discriminates. For instance, it is difficult to think of many black actresses who command the same kind of power, and have similar access to A-list roles, as a Julia Roberts or a Jodie Foster.[14]

Women have enjoyed considerable success as make-up artists, costume designers, script supervisors and editors: the kind of jobs which fall within what Mark Litwak has referred to as the "pink ghetto". That is, those careers which are not usually positions of significant authority, thus suggesting why they have been more open to women. Of course in labelling these roles in this way Litwak could be criticised for disregarding the importance of such professions in the collaborative process of filmmaking, and once again favouring the director, the producer and so on, above all others.[15] However it is worth asking ourselves why women have been more readily accepted in some areas of the film industry (that is, in careers which are, or at least are perceived to be, more collaborative in nature) and not in others (such as director or studio head) where *real* power is seen to reside. Along with this one must ask why there are so few women working in technical professions such as grip, lighting technician or cinematographer. The statistics are revealing. The Premiere Women In

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[13] Cook (243-4) does state that her intent is not to diminish the problems faced by women directors working in Hollywood, as well as commenting that there is an absence of statistical information about the standing of women in industry careers. This absence is something I hope this chapter will begin to address.
[14] "The Power List." Premiere May 2000: 80.
[15] Litwak 151.

Hollywood Special 1993 provides figures for the number of female members of various unions between 1992 and 1993. Whereas women made up sixty per cent of the Costume Designers Guild, sixty five per cent of the Make-up Artists and Hairstylists union, and eighty six per cent of the Script Supervisors union, they made up only fifteen per cent of the Cinematographers union, three per cent of the Grips union and four per cent of the Lighting Technicians union.[16]

To support my claims that sexual inequality is an industry-wide phenomenon I will point to another source which proves that this is indeed the case. In Hollywood's America Stephen Powers, David J. Rothman, and Stanley Rothman studied a random sample of the writers, producers and directors of the top grossing films between 1965 and 1982 (a cross section of what they refer to as the "Hollywood elite"). Using the questionnaires that these individuals completed they gave the demographics of the group as nearly ninety nine per cent white males. Obviously there are problems with taking such statistics at face value, and to do so would be to ignore two important points. Firstly a sample of a group is just that - a sample - and as such can only ever give us an impression of reality; and secondly these figures consider a Hollywood elite active during a period before most female directors, or indeed women in general, had yet to gain a preliminary foothold in the industry: virtually all the women directors I reference in my thesis did not make a "mainstream" film before the early eighties.[17]

So what is the value of these statistics? In relation to the first point the snapshot these figures give of a white, male Hollywood is supported by the statistics I refer to earlier in this chapter. They also assist us in establishing a contextual background against which to assess the difficulties women directors (or in fact any other "minority" groups) have had breaking into the industry. They show us just how rare women filmmakers were in Hollywood, and help us to realise, somewhat paradoxically, that any increase in their numbers (however

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[16] Kirk Cordero 34.
[17] Stephen Powers, David J. Rothman and Stanley Rothman, Hollywood's America: Social and Political Themes in Motion Pictures (Colarado: Westview Press, 1996) 5-13, 53.

small) could be considered a triumph. Yet they also indicate that the small numbers of female entrants into the industry are likely to have a hard time making an immediate and sustained impact on a white, male-dominated arena.

The Premiere "Power Lists": a Case Study

In addition to compiling a rudimentary statistical overview of women's place in the industry I also wanted to carry out a case study which would strengthen my depiction of Hollywood as a predominantly white male power centre.[18] To do this I examined a decade's worth of the Premiere "Power Lists" which annually record the hundred most powerful people in Hollywood. While it is vital to acknowledge that these lists are subjective because they are based on the magazine's perceptions of who is powerful rather than who necessarily is, this does not mean that they cease to have value for such a study. As a film magazine which tends towards a serious or "film buff's" take on cinema (devoting time to in depth interviews and articles, state of the industry pieces and so on) rather than a light-hearted or "popular" one, Premiere's power judgements are lent some credibility. Even if some of the judgements made are subjective rather than objective, the idea of who is *perceived* as powerful still has meaning: in a business which thrives on images the *perception* of who you are and what you signify is arguably as important as the *reality*.

When considering the power lists I chose to focus on certain key areas. I wanted to establish how many female directors were listed each year and what their power rankings were in relation to the number of men; to find out which women (director, actress, or other) were the highest ranked each year and which of these groups were the most numerous; and finally to record the number of women out of the hundred who appeared on the list each year. I should point out that I have included within the category "director" those women who are more accurately star-directors or "hyphenates", a fact which is in itself revealing since if I

[18] In saying this I acknowledge that statistical information on the status of women in the industry is perhaps not as readily available nor as complete as we might wish. Moreover such information is subject to change from year to year, but it is only if statistics continue to be gathered, quoted, and assessed on a regular basis that we will be able to formulate an overall picture of women's progress (or lack of it) in Hollywood over time.

had chosen to list them in the actress category the figures would have been even lower or non-existent.[19]

In 1990 Barbra Streisand was the only woman who made my directors list, and she was ranked at number eighty nine. In contrast there were fourteen male directors on the list. The "other" category was the most numerous and contained the woman who ranked the highest in the list at number forty two. In total ten women appeared on the list.

In 1991 Streisand was again the highest ranked director at number seventy seven, but was also joined this year by Penny Marshall at ninety three. Male directors took eighteen spots in the list. This time an actress was the highest ranked, and they were the most numerous group. Once again ten women made the list.

Moving on to 1992 three women directors were ranked (Streisand at forty three, Jodie Foster at fifty two and Penny Marshall at seventy two), and twenty male directors. An actress was ranked the highest at number thirty two, but women directors were the most numerous. In all women took six out of the hundred spots on the list.

1993 saw an equal number of male directors and the same three women directors on the list as the previous year, with Marshall ranked highest at thirty three, Foster at thirty four, and Streisand at forty four. An actress again ranked highest at thirty two, and they were the most numerous group. Women held nine list places.

In 1994 Nora Ephron (ranked eighty four) was added to the previous three directors on the list. Marshall was ranked forty five, Streisand fifty three, and Foster was highest at thirty eight. A total of twenty one male directors were ranked. A woman from the "other" category ranked highest at number seven, and actresses held the most places. Eleven women in total made the rankings.

In 1995 Jodie Foster was the only female director to make the list and was ranked at number forty seven. By contrast twenty two male directors made the list. The highest ranked

[19] I use "other" to stand for women who are mainly in executive positions, producers, agents etc.

woman (at nine) was once again from the "other" category, and they were also the most numerous. As with the previous year eleven women were ranked in total.

In 1996 Barbra Streisand (ranked eighty five) reappeared to join Foster (ranked fifty five) on the list once more. Male directors numbered nineteen. For the third time in a row a woman from the "other" category was ranked highest at fifteen, and actresses were the biggest group. Twelve women in total made the list.

Once again 1997 saw only Streisand and Foster make the list, being ranked at ninety three and fifty seven respectively. Nineteen male directors appeared on the power list. Yet again the highest female ranking went to an "other" (thirteen), and they were also the most numerous group. Thirteen women were ranked this year.

Two female directors, Foster (ranked forty) and Ephron (ranked ninety) appeared on the 1998 list. They shared the list with nineteen male directors. An "other" gained the highest ranking at twelve, and this group were equal in number to the actresses (six rankings each). In total fourteen women appeared on the list.

In a repeat of the previous year Foster and Ephron were the only directors to make it onto the list in 1999, and they were ranked at forty three and eighty nine in that order. Fourteen male directors were listed, an "other" again ranked highest at seven, and actresses were the biggest group. This year thirteen women gained a place in the rankings.

Finally in the power list from 2000 Foster and Ephron were once again on their own (at numbers forty nine and ninety three) with fourteen male directors for company. The highest female ranking stood the same and actresses were again most numerous. The number of women ranked overall had this year crept up to fifteen.

What are the conclusions to be drawn from these power lists? Firstly, that the overall power of women in Hollywood (based on the total of women ranked on a year-on-year basis) has increased between 1990 and 2000, but neither dramatically nor without an occasional dip in numbers. Secondly, that "others" and actresses always rank higher on the power scale than women directors, and are nearly always more numerous. Thirdly, that the number of women

directors making the list has shown no substantial increase, and has actually decreased so that the figures for the last five years (1996-2000) are the same as for 1991. Fourthly, male directors are always at least five times more numerous than their female colleagues. It must also be noted that many of the women in the "other" group are listed in partnership with a man.[20] When the producers Kathleen Kennedy, Lili Zanuck or Laura Schuler Donner appear on the list it is usually in conjunction with their husbands (Frank Marshall, Richard Zanuck and Richard Donner).[21] This phenomenon could be interpreted in two ways: as an indication that women are more successful in, and more acceptable to, Hollywood if they are in positions of power shared with men, and/or as a sign that Premiere sees no problem with listing them in this way rather than as individually ranked figures in their own right. Whatever the case James Horn reveals that Laura Schuler Donner is certainly annoyed when her husband, the director Richard Donner, gets some of the credit for the films she produces. Horn notes that not only is the parking pass at Warner Bros. (where the production company she and Richard Donner share is based) under her husband's name, but he also received congratulatory notes for her film Dave (1993) even though she hadn't collaborated with him on a project since Radio Flyer (1992). While on one level it may make sense for Premiere to list the Donners together in the "Power Lists" since they share a production company, it also helps create the false impression that they always develop films together, and that he (as evidenced by the parking pass) is the powerful half of the partnership who really wields influence within the industry.[22]

To make one final point about the "Power Lists" it is important to recognise that women of colour are virtually absent from the rankings, and "minority" men do not fare much better either. In terms of actors and directors, only a handful of black male stars, a few non-white male directors, and a couple of black female stars make it onto these lists: Eddie

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[20] Out of one thousand and one hundred rankings there were forty nine women in the "other" category, and of these twenty four were listed alongside a man or men.

[21] Lili Zanuck might have also made it into my director category since she directed the film Rush (1991). However since this is the only feature she has made, and since her power is centred around her position as a producer who has directed rather than as a star/director or "hyphenate" like Streisand or Foster, I chose to label her as "other" in this instance.

[22] James Horn, "Lauren Shuler Donner," Premiere Nov. 2000: 89.

Murphy is ranked ten times (every year except for 1996): Denzel Washington four times (1995, 1996, 1997, 2000); Will Smith four times (1997, 1998, 1999, 2000); Wesley Snipes once (1993); Spike Lee three times (1990, 1991, 1993); John Singleton once (1992); John Woo three times (1998, 1999, 2000); M. Night Shyamalan once (2000); Whoopi Goldberg twice (1993, 1994); and Whitney Houston once (1996). Significantly no non-white female directors are listed at all. As a whole these figures support my claim that Hollywood is not only an arena dominated by men, but white men as well. It also illustrates the difficult double bind of racial and sexual discrimination in which black, Latino, Asian or other female directors hoping to break into Hollywood so often find themselves.

If this case study has proved anything it is that the time has not yet come to stop discussion of either women's unequal position with the film industry or that of any other marginalised groups. While white women have made if not great strides then medium ones in some areas, in others (directing) there has been less a steady rise in numbers and more of a stagnation. There is no affirmative action legislation in operation in Hollywood, and the DGA's decision in the early eighties to file charges with the Federal Equal Opportunities Commission against studios such as Warner Bros. amounted to nothing when the suits were quickly dismissed and never re-filed.[23] Of course such an action would inevitably raise its own problems such as, for instance, critics being able to claim that those women who gain opportunities through such legislation are there purely because of the legislation, and not because of their talent. This creates the potential for a situation where women filmmakers once again find themselves marginalised within the industry. Yet there is evidence that affirmative action policies can have positive results for women working in the film industry. Linda Seger states that Canada has introduced these policies and as a result has one of the best records for employing women in the film industry.[24]

Christine Spines has pointed out that unlike female directors in Australia, American women have not benefited from a comparable situation to the one in which the "Australian

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[23] See Abramowitz, Is That a Gun 141-2.
[24] Linda Seger, When Women Call the Shots (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1996) 92.

government's initiative in the '70s to start a national film industry" led to women being given equal access to available filmmaking funds from the very beginning. As Australian director Gillian Armstrong explains, this means that women have been working solidly in that country and have "set an example to backers [here] that women's films can make money."[25] Following the logic of Armstrong's comment one might speculate that the long and established history of cinema in America is actually one of the female director's biggest obstacles. That is, leaving aside the success of a few women directors in the Silent Era, male directors have been in a dominant position since the industry became just that - an industry - whereas women directors have repeatedly been denied career-making opportunities. The Australian film industry, on the other hand, was established in the seventies, and its history was consequently synonymous with that of second-wave feminism and the Women's Movement, which presumably meant that patriarchal attitudes were not able to take root in the same way as they had done elsewhere. According to Armstrong, two decades worth of sustained cinematic output from women directors (rather than the fits and starts that typify the career of the female director in Hollywood) have allowed Australian women to establish themselves, and to prove that gender is no bar to being a good filmmaker.

Having established a statistical picture of the relative position of women within the industry I will firstly turn to matters of a more specific (reference to the careers of women directors), and secondly a more theoretical (the *mentor* and issues of mentorship) nature.

Behind the Statistics: A Case Study of Women Directors' Career Paths

For this section I examined the careers of twenty six female directors in order to get an impression of the different routes female directors have taken into the Hollywood film industry. Obviously this is not an exhaustive list but rather a sample based on the biographical information available to me, as well as considerations of a time-based nature. The sample is not confined to women who have only made films for "mainstream" studios -

[25] Spines 48.

many of them have worked in the "independent" sector as well - but it does require them to have made at least one film which was either produced or distributed by one of the "major" studios. In differentiating between the problematic terms "mainstream" and "independent" in this way I am indebted to Christina Lane who recognises that the boundaries between the two grow increasingly blurred, and makes the decision to define an "independent" film as one which is "not distributed by the major studios or their related subsidiaries." As a working description of a term which is extremely difficult (and probably even impossible) to pin down I feel this is as good as any, which is not to say that I do not also recognise that my distinction between the two is still somewhat contrived. However it is women directors *in*, rather than at the edge of, Hollywood that this thesis explores and so I maintain that my distinction is justified. I should also point out that the statistics I quote here which are designed to illustrate the various backgrounds of this sample of women directors do not assign one type of background per director. That is, a woman might have made both documentaries and music videos, for instance, and thus is counted in both categories.[26]

Jim Hillier has commented that career paths into directing for both men and women are very similar.[27] This is a fact which my own research into the career backgrounds of a number of female directors seems to support (see appendix A, Table 1). For example, seven out of the twenty six women directors I looked at had attended film school. Prior to directing their first features eight had experience of directing for television; four had made documentaries; four had directed music videos; two had backgrounds in exploitation film working for New World; one had an art school background; one had worked as a journalist and novelist, and so on. Thus even this briefest of glimpses into these women's backgrounds supports Mark Litwak's contention that there are numerous possible routes into directing.[28] Yet it is also intriguing that ten of the twenty six women I studied had acting experience prior to directing, and six of them would certainly fulfil the criteria of either big name film star

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[26] Lane, Feminist Hollywood 21, 27-8, 33-4.
[27] Hillier 134.
[28] Litwak (131-5) lists such possibilities as writing a screenplay, directing a short, working in exploitation film, directing theatre, and making an independent film.

(Jodie Foster, Barbra Streisand, and Diane Keaton), well-known television star (Penny Marshall and Betty Thomas), or well-known film actress (Sondra Locke). Once again this tempts us to conclude that a background in acting is one of the surest ways for women to break into directing. This is possibly because, as I discuss in later chapters on Jodie Foster and Penny Marshall, the actress, if she is famous enough, can capitalise on the power of her name to create career opportunities, or at least make use of the industry connections she has formed. On the other hand I would suggest that a similar sample of male directors (although there are of course male actors who have turned to directing) would not reveal such a high proportion to have had acting experience.

Although the female director's entrance into Hollywood is similar to her male colleagues, her progress once, and if, she gets there is frequently quite different. Some commentators on the subject have stated that a woman director's career progress is generally much slower than a man's, arguing that it takes her much longer to establish the kind of cinematic track record that helps secure attractive directing jobs.[29] As Coolidge's comment within the title of this chapter demonstrates, this belief has also been voiced by women directors themselves. In addition to Coolidge, Penelope Spheeris has been quoted as saying, "I would have already peaked in my career and be on a downslide by now like most of my male cohorts in school if I hadn't been a woman. I've had to fight harder. I've had to work harder."[30] Beverly Gray has argued that this slower career progress inevitably puts women in a Catch 22 situation: to get financing for film projects and to be offered attractive directing jobs a director usually needs a proven track record, but it is impossible to get this track record if no one will hire you in the first place.[31]

An examination of the time frame of Coolidge's career supports her claim that her progress through the industry has been on the slow side. She began her filmmaking career in

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[29] See Seger, 86; Sharon Bernstein, "A Change in Direction?" Los Angeles Times 12 March 1991, Calendar sec.: F-1, Los Angeles Times Online Archives 10 Nov. 2000 <http://pqasb.pqarchiver.com/latimes>.
[30] Cole and Dale 223.
[31] Beverly Gray, "The Women's Boom," Hollywood Reporter, 19 June 1998: S-9, Hollywood Reporter Online Archives 30 Dec. 1998 <www.hollywoodreporter.com/search.asp>.

the late sixties, but it was not until 1983 (having already made three documentary shorts and a documentary feature) that her first two independent features (City Girl and Valley Girl) were released. The following year finally saw her first studio feature (The Joy of Sex for Paramount) make it to the screen. However this was not the beginning of a sustained career in feature directing for Coolidge. There have been fairly long gaps between features (nothing released between 1985 and 1988, 1988 and 1991, and nothing since 1997) which she has filled primarily with jobs directing for television. This is not to claim that no male directors experience problems finding work directing features, for in a business which is as competitive as Hollywood such a claim would be absurd. A statistical study which sought to prove definitively (which I believe it would do) that women directors have a tougher time getting on in the industry than their white male colleagues is still to be undertaken, and is beyond the time available to me here. Women throughout the industry continue to comment that they feel discriminated against when looking for work, and available statistics suggest that this is indeed the case. Thus the problems faced by women directors clearly cannot, and should not, be evaded with the argument that breaking into directing is equally difficult for everyone making the issues of gender and racial discrimination irrelevant.

Christina Lane has identified a flaw in Hollywood's argument that women directors tend to miss out on opportunities to direct big budget projects because they lack experience in that kind of filmmaking. As she points out, male first-time directors David Fincher and Michael Bay were both music video directors who made their feature debuts with the big budget science fiction/horror and action films Alien[3] (1992) and Bad Boys (1995) respectively.[32] Christine Spines also draws our attention to the fact that unlike their male equivalents (such as Quentin Tarantino or Spike Lee) many women directors who make an initial splash on the cinematic scene with films that win rave reviews and generate a media buzz at film festivals, such as Cannes or Sundance, subsequently seem to disappear for a few years, or else sink without a trace. She gives the example of Katt Shea who won excellent

[32] Lane, Feminist Hollywood 179.

reviews for her film Poison Ivy at the 1992 Sundance Film Festival, where Quentin Tarantino's Reservoir Dogs also received a huge amount of attention. Unlike Tarantino, Shea's only reward was a screening of the film along with earlier ones she had made for Roger Corman at MOMA in New York, followed by six years of unemployment. Spines goes on to list a number of directors who, like Shea, made a promising debut only to find it difficult to translate this into a sustained career: Martha Coolidge, Joan Micklin Silver, Darnell Martin, Tamra Davis, Susan Seidelmanan, and so on.[33]

During the course of my research I discovered that a large proportion of female directors either have careers which show long gaps between directing films (even if their previous one had been extremely successful) or evidence of having disappeared from directing "mainstream" (and sometimes also "independent") films altogether.[34] Frequently these women who have "disappeared" are to be found working as directors of television. For instance Mira Nair has been directing for television since the release of Kama Sutra (1996); Martha Coolidge has directed and produced for television since making her last feature, Out To Sea (1997); and others like Euzhane Palcy, Joan Micklin Silver, Susan Seidelman, and Darnell Martin have been directing independent features and television programmes since making their last "mainstream" films.

The crucial question to ask in relation to this move into directing for television is how far is it by choice, and how far by necessity? Zina Klapper has argued that television producers are more likely to give untested directors a chance since "[i]f you don't know what you're doing, the producer is protected, because he finds out in three hours, not three weeks. That makes him more willing to bank on a new director - and that's an advantage for

[33] Spines 45. As an example of this positive critical response to Poison Ivy consider that the New York Times referred to it as a "commercial art film." Quoted in a review by Peter Travers, Rolling Stone 28 May 1992. They Went That Away: Redefining File Genres, ed. Richard T. Jameson (San Francisco: Mercury House, 1994) 304.
[34] For example, Penny Marshall made The Preacher's Wife in 1996 and her next film, Riding In Cars With Boys, has not yet been released as of September 2001. Similarly Amy Heckerling's Clueless was released in 1995 and her latest film Loser was released in 2000; and Jodie Foster directed her second feature Home For The Holidays in 1995 and, as of 2000 is directing her third, Flora Plum. As examples of women who have seemingly turned their back on directing one can point to Elaine May, director of the disastrous Ishtar (1987) who has returned to writing and acting, and Amy Holden Jones who has been working as a scriptwriter since 1996.

women."[35] In this scenario female directors make the decision to direct for television primarily because they are allowed to rather than it necessarily being their first choice. As the one time independent filmmaker turned television director Karen Arthur says, she prefers working for television because "I don't have to wait eight long years to do it...I'm a director, and a director *directs*."[36]

In The New Hollywood Jim Hillier suggests that directing for television is viewed as inferior to directing features (a poor second choice as it were). Hillier argues that it is seen by many as purely a career stepping stone, or something to fall back on if other directing opportunities dry up.[37] In this case women directors' relative success in the field of television directing could be read negatively as evidence of their being forever consigned to second-rate directing careers: a reading which would be overly simplistic. To view female directors as trapped in television hell against their will is not only erroneous but potentially very insulting.

As Hillier himself suggests, the boundaries between television and film are gradually breaking down. More directors are willing to work in this supposedly "lesser" medium, and realise the advantages of, for example, directing movies for cable, such as the opportunity to tackle more controversial subject matter.[38] I would add that since Hillier's book was published (1992) the dividing line has become even more blurred. One only has to consider the fact that The X-Files television series crossed over onto the big screen as X-Files. Fight The Future (1998); that James Cameron produced the television series Dark Angel (2000-present); or that many actors who have made a name for themselves in hit television shows such as Friends, The X-Files, Mad About You, and Buffy The Vampire Slayer have begun to cross over into film acting, to see evidence of this blurring at work. Although it should be

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[35] Zina Klapper, "Movie Directors: Four Women Who Get to Call the Shots in Hollywood," Ms., November 1985: 105.
[36] Acker 35.
[37] Hillier 99-109.
[38] Hillier 118-119. Hillier's point is echoed in Ted Elrick's recent article, "Movies for Television: A Director's Medium," DGA Magazine Sep. 1999: 46. The director John Frankenheimer is quoted as saying that he feels the advent of new technology is breaking down the demarcation line between each medium all the time, and states that the four cable movies he has directed could never have been made as commercial features because they deal with subject matter that major studios would find far too controversial.

noted that the stigma of television has not completely disappeared since, to give one example. the media consistently criticises television actors they believe are incapable of taking on *real* acting roles on the big screen.

Women directors have spoken of working in television in positive terms as an arena which provides welcome opportunities and creative pleasures rather than just functioning as a consolation prize. Referring to her direction of several episodes of HBO's Sex and the City Susan Seidelman has said, "Cable is an excellent alternative to film especially when commercial film seems so geared toward teenage boys." Similarly Martha Coolidge has stated that making the film Introducing Dorothy Dandridge (1999) for HBO was "one of the most creative experiences I've ever had. There was total creative trust from HBO. They really gave me the freedom...to accomplish my vision." [39]

Leaving these comments to one side it is possible to put forward the argument that women directors' careers have more of a tendency to become if not exactly *trapped* in television (a word which is problematic since it implies victim status), then stalled there. Christina Lane does make an excellent point when she envisages the career of Susan Seidelman in terms of the director's ability to make use of ever expanding job opportunities outside commercial Hollywood, such as a return to independent filmmaking or the "expanding 'niche' possibilities of television", but I would argue that she is seeing only part of the picture. The careers of the women I studied demonstrated less a sense of being able to move back and forth between the two mediums in a comfortable and easy movement and more a sense of working there as a viable alternative to directing features. Susan Seidelman has directed only one independent short film (The Dutchmaster (1994)) and one independent feature (A Gaudi Afternoon (2000)) since making Cookie in 1989. Even taking into account Seidelman's aforementioned reservations about working for Hollywood it is probably safe to assume that a record of having directed only one full length feature in eleven years would not have been her first choice, and is indicative of the difficulties so many independent

[39] Lane, Feminist Hollywood 64; Darrell L. Hope, "Introducing Martha Coolidge," DGA Magazine Sep. 1999: 38.

filmmakers have in raising finance for their projects. Similarly in an interview with Darnell Martin Christina Lane asks the director whether she would prefer to pursue "mainstream or counter cinema venues" in the future. Martin answers that she is "inclined to go with whoever gives me money...and a certain amount of freedom." Yet Martin has directed only one feature, Prison Song (2000) for New Line, since her debut film I Like It Like That in 1994, finding work directing episodes of the television series Oz (1997) in between. This is hardly a prolific output by anybody's standards, and one which must certainly be considered in the context of the percentage of days worked for women and "minorities" that I refer to earlier in this piece.[40]

In short, while Lane's celebration of the new opportunities for women directors created by the ever narrowing gap between "independent" and "mainstream" cinema, between film and television, are important they must not be allowed to overshadow the fact that women directors are still less likely to gain from these opportunities than their (white) male colleagues. For instance Linda Seger notes that although about fifty per cent of prime-time television series have at least one female producer, and about twenty five per cent are written by women, female directors still account for only around fifteen per cent of all television directors.[41]

It has been widely acknowledged that Hollywood is first and foremost an industry which, regardless of gender or race, revolves around the ability to network and the cultivation of personal and business contacts (which are inextricably intertwined). As Mark Litwak has written, work within the industry is frequently obtained thanks to *who* you know rather than *what* you know, and job opportunities are rarely advertised. Within this atmosphere (as Litwak illustrates) women and other minorities inevitably suffer because they have not been established long enough in Hollywood to make the kind of important contacts that are necessary for success there.[42] Consequently groups such as the WIF (Women In Film) and the

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[40] Lane, Feminist Hollywood 175.
[41] Seger 98.
[42] Litwak 120, 148.

DGA, as well as organisations which represent the interests of other minority groups (such as the Black Filmmakers Foundation and The Los Angeles Latino International Film Festival), have made it a priority to organise networking events where new filmmakers can meet people within the industry and establish contacts.[43] As Harriet Silverman the executive director of WIF has said, the major goal of that organisation is to bring about better mentoring for women trying to break into the industry. One of the primary aims of these organisations is thus to fight back against what Linda Seger sees as the tendency of male executives who have been mentored by white men themselves to continue the established pattern and mentor other white men, leaving marginal groups in an isolated position.[44]

Hence the importance of the mentor relationship for women directors and indeed all women trying to forge a career within Hollywood. In my study of twenty six women directors I found evidence that a large number of them (sixteen) had benefited from the help of men at crucial stages in their careers.[45] This figure is not surprising given that such relationships are crucial for anyone, man or women, attempting to break into the film industry. Yet it is noteworthy that so many of these women found their entrance point into the business and had doors opened for them by men, sustaining as it does my earlier claim that men are still the predominant power brokers in Hollywood. In the following section I intend to give some specific examples of these mentor relationships at work, noting once again that I am using "mentor" to indicate any individual who has practically assisted a woman director's progress rather than in its strictest sense as indicative of a more intellectual or spiritual advisory relationship between two people.

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[43] For further information about the BFF, which is a non-profit organisation designed to support emerging Black filmmakers by setting up information sharing and networking opportunities, see Surfview 13 Jan. 2001 <http:// www.surfview.com/ seresbff.htm.>. For information about the Latino film festival LALIFF which gives new Hispanic directors the opportunity to show their films and attend workshops, panels and so on, see Los Angeles Latino International Film Festival 13 Jan. 2001 <http:// www.latinofilm.org.>.

[44] Harriet Silverman, quoted in Kirk Honeycutt, "Int'l Center Objective for WIF's Second 20 Years," Hollywood Reporter, 12 Dec. 1995, Hollywood Reporter Online Archives 30 Dec. 1998 <http:// www.hollywoodreporter.com/search.asp>; Seger 54.

[45] This is not to say that the others were not involved in similar mentor relationships which I failed to find evidence of, and thus have not acknowledged.

Two of the women directors out of the fifteen I refer to above have garnered opportunities to direct thanks in part to the intervention of their husbands or partners. According to Ally Acker, Joan Micklin Silver was aided by her husband in financing her directorial debut Hester Street (1975) after her other attempts to break into directing were unsuccessful. Acker writes, "Silver readily admits that she might never have become a film director if it weren't for her husband."[46] Similarly the actress Sondra Locke has stated that her involvement with Clint Eastwood allowed her access to Eastwood's production company Malpaso, and Locke's first feature, Ratboy (1986), was produced by that company in association with its parent studio Warner.[47]

Two other directors, Penny Marshall and Sophia Coppola, were helped by family connections. Coppola's first feature-length film, The Virgin Suicides (1999), was produced by her father's company Zoetrope, and thanks to her family name she received the kind of media attention that most neophyte directors could only dream about. On Saturday the fifteenth of April there was a cover feature about her entitled "Sophia Coppola: It Runs In The Family" in the Guardian, and also one in the Sunday Times Style section that same weekend.[48] Marshall gained her first opportunity to direct on the television series Laverne and Shirley which was produced by her brother Garry Marshall, and in which she also starred. In this we might compare her to the director Betty Thomas who was ushered into television directing thanks to a helping hand from the producer Steven Boccho.[49] Marshall has also been given career opportunities by other powerful figures within the industry such as her friend the producer Larry Gordon who asked her to step in as director on Jumping Jack Flash (1986), and another friend, James L. Brooks, who asked her to direct Big (1988) for his company Gracie Films at Twentieth Century Fox.[50] Brooks' decision to offer her the career-making Big might be compared to the way Lorne Michaels (the creator of Saturday Night

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[46] Acker 34.
[47] Interviewed in Hillier 129.
[48] Suzie MacKenzie, "Sophia Coppola: It Runs in the Family," Guardian 15 Apr. 2000, Weekend sec.: 6-12; Sarah Bailey, "Sofia's Choice," Sunday Times 16 April 2000, Style sec.: 6.
[49] See Danny Leigh, "There's Something About Betty," Guardian 16 June 2000, Review sec.: 12.
[50] See Lawrence Crown, Penny Marshall: An Unauthorized Biography of the Director and Comedienne (Los Angeles: Renaissance Books, 1999) 92; and Abramowitz, Is That a Gun? 295.

Live) offered his one-time colleague Penelope Spheeris a job directing her first mainstream studio feature, Wayne's World (1992).[51]

Finally it should be said that the careers of the women directors I looked at contained several incidences of established male directors who acted in a mentor capacity, and often these names occur more than once. Christina Lane reports that Spike Lee helped Darnell Martin get accepted at New York University to study film after she had been rejected twice. Having met her when she worked as Assistant Director of Photography on Do The Right Thing (1989) he made a telephone call to N.Y.U on her behalf.[52] The director of Tank Girl (1995) Rachel Talalay began her career as the producer of several of John Waters' films, which eventually led to production work on the Nightmare On Elm Street series and the opportunity to direct Freddy's Dead (1991) for New Line. Martha Coolidge was put on the payroll at Zoetrope after Francis Ford Coppola saw her documentary Not A Pretty Picture (1975), and she also found that director Renny Harlin's help was crucial in getting her sixth feature Rambling Rose (1991) made: his then girlfriend Laura Dern was attached to the project and Harlin managed to convince the production company Carolco to bring it to the screen.[53] In addition Kathryn Bigelow found the assistance of Oliver Stone, who she had met when she made The Loveless (1982), to be important in helping her raise financing for Blue Steel (1990), on which he was also a producer.[54]

With regards to the same male director's names appearing more than once we can point to Martin Scorsese and especially Steven Spielberg. Scorsese has been mentioned as someone who had an impact on the careers of Amy Holden Jones and Allison Anders. Jim Hillier writes that Scorsese was a judge at a film festival where a documentary made by Jones won first prize. She later wrote to him and was taken on as an assistant on Taxi Driver (1976).[55] In the case of Allison Anders the production notes of Grace Of My Heart (1996)

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[51] Spheeris had previously worked as a producer for Michaels. See Cole and Dale, 217-218.
[52] Lane, Feminist Hollywood 155.
[53] See Ambramowitz, Is That a Gun 146; Lane, Feminist Hollywood 69.
[54] See "Walk on the Wild Side," Monthly Film Bulletin Nov. 1990: 312-3.
[55] Hillier 50-51.

inform us that he collaborated with her closely on that film in his role as executive producer. These notes also reveal that after attending film school Anders wrote several letters to the director Wim Wenders who eventually came to Los Angeles to see her first super 8 film, and subsequently gave her work on Paris, Texas (1984).

It has been acknowledged that Steven Spielberg has career-making power, and on the evidence of his involvement in the backgrounds of two of the women directors I studied this certainly seems to be the case.[56] Rachel Abramowitz reports that it was Spielberg who advised Penny Marshall that she would make a good director, having seen her ability to interact with all the creative types who gathered at the house she shared with her then husband, Rob Reiner. He told Marshall's agent Mike Ovitz that she should consider moving into directing.[57] Spielberg provided director Mimi Leder with her first opportunity to direct features, offering her the big budget action movies The Peacemaker (1997) and Deep Impact (1998) for his studio DreamWorks. He knew Leder through her work as director on ER, the television series which he had been involved in producing.[58] Finally Spielberg's name also appeared at a relevant point in the career of Martha Coolidge when, as Rachel Abramowitz states, he helped get her film Crossing Delancey (1988), in which his girlfriend Amy Irving was to star, off the ground.[59]

This catalogue of examples illustrates three main facts: firstly that success in the industry rests partially on one's ability to network, to translate personal and business connections into job opportunities; secondly that most female directors find themselves mentored by powerful men rather than women (although the last section of this piece will suggest that this may be changing); and thirdly that it is principally white men who are the power-brokers and career-makers in the film industry, and that in some instances the strength of their word can open doors faster than simple evidence of one's talent ever could. It is this

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[56] For example Mick Garris, one of his team on the TV series Amazing Stories, has said "When Steven Spielberg hires you, all the people who wouldn't even read your scripts find them brilliant." Quoted in John Baxter, Steven Spielberg: The Unauthorised Biography (London: HarperCollins, 1997) 283.
[57] Abramowitz, Is That a Gun 295.
[58] See Peter Bart, The Gross: The Hits, the Flops - The Summer that Ate Hollywood (New York: St Martin's Griffin, 2000) 84.
[59] Abramowitz, Is That a Gun 139.

last fact which begins to identify the potentially problematic nature of the mentor relationship for women in Hollywood. Mentoring is essential because it allows an individual access to those who have the power to say "yes" to projects, but it also continues to represent a hierarchical structure in which the *mentor* (nearly always male and white) is perceived to hold all the power, and the women being *mentored* to be largely powerless.

Which is not to say that women directors have not spoken positively about their experiences of mentorship. Indeed it would be unlikely that they had not since these relationships have in many instances helped shape their careers. Kathryn Bigelow has stated that without Oliver Stone's support Blue Steel might never have been made.[60] Martha Coolidge has been quoted as saying that meeting and being helped by Coppola was an "incredible, pivotal, significant event, because to an East Coast independent filmmaker, Hollywood seems extremely far away. Particularly to a woman. I had no relatives in the business or [any] reason to think I would have an easy access."[61] Finally, Allison Anders has been eager to publicly acknowledge the assistance she has received from her mentors Scorsese and Wenders.

In the Premiere Women In Hollywood Special 1996 she refers to the extensive notes that Scorsese provided during the making of the film, joking that she calls them "the Lord's List of Favored Takes", and that she and her editor often refer to him as "Our Father Who Art in Manhattan."[62] The production notes for Grace Of My Heart declare that "Anders without hesitation, gratefully acknowledges the men in her life who have been supportive of her career and while grounding her fictional characters in reality, related on a very personal level to the central relationship in the movie." Anders then goes on to describe one of her film's characters, Joel Millner who is the female protagonist's manager, as a kind of mentor figure: "For every Denise Waverly there was a Joel Millner, and I wanted to portray his role in her life for being supportive and encouraging. I wanted her to have one guy she could count on

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[60] "Walk on the Wild Side" 313.
[61] Abramowitz, Is That a Gun 146.
[62] Josh Rottenberg, "The Big Picture," Premiere Women In Hollywood Special 1996: 70-71.

and it wasn't about sex." Thus the help Anders has received from men within the industry is not only publicised by her, but becomes part of the marketing strategy in the selling of one of her films.

However in a Sight and Sound article published a year before Grace Of My Heart was released Anders expressed some regret at speaking publicly about the way she had sent letter after letter to Wim Wenders before she secured her first directing job since she was now receiving the same treatment from "a slew of wannabe boy directors". In this article Anders insists

> I didn't do it because I thought Wim would help me make movies or make me famous or anything. I just loved his movies. I was an obsessed fan...These kids seem to have an agenda in mind, to become famous or get their films produced, but I never did...I guess I wasn't very ambitious.[63]

On one level Anders' words can be understood as a statement from a woman who is tired of receiving correspondence from would-be filmmakers who are desperate for her help. On another it might be interpreted as suggestive of a few underlying tensions in the mentorship issue - as indeed might her earlier quip which refers to Scorsese as a God-like and hence traditionally patriarchal figure, and implies a relationship where he is held in great admiration and respect but in which his considerable authority is also acknowledged. Perhaps Anders does not want to be viewed as someone who aggressively pursued her career (like those "wannabe boy directors" who keep writing to her). Or perhaps she realises that others might be encouraged to see her as someone else's *creation*, rather than considering her and her films on their own terms.

Before I move on to a fuller consideration of the reasons why the concept of mentorship is problematic for women directors it should be noted that the relationship between two individuals (one with power, one without) is potentially as beneficial to the mentor as it is to the one being mentored. One might suggest that for individuals like

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[63] B. Ruby Rich, "Slugging It Out For Survival," Sight and Sound Apr. 1995): 16.

Spielberg or Scorsese to be seen to be helping women directors (or indeed anyone else of either gender for that matter) get on in the industry can only be good for their own public image. This statement is not meant to be read as a completely cynical view of the actions of such individuals, nor to imply that their actions have not had extremely positive effects on the careers of individual female directors, and potentially on those of all female directors. By showing confidence in Leder's ability to direct big budget action films Spielberg sends a message to the rest of the industry which might encourage them to act in the same way. Yet it is meant to indicate that self-interest as well as altruism might have some place in these actions. For example Peter Bart relates that Leder was chosen to direct Deep Impact after Spielberg decided to pull out of directing duties. Bart writes, "No one can duck out of a project faster than Spielberg...if something goes awry; in this case, when he learned of Armageddon (1998). The director had no intention of finding himself in a competitive situation, even if he had a clear head start."[64] As a result Spielberg's choice of Leder had considerations beyond the desire to help her career, and was presumably aided by his knowledge that she was not only talented but available, relatively inexpensive, and able to bring a film in on time and on budget, as she had done with The Peacemaker. Similarly John Baxter argues that Spielberg has been known to depict himself as a benevolent father figure who likes to guide his "children" (new filmmakers) into the industry under his tutelage. Hence the fact, claims Baxter, that the Amblin' building has been referred to as "The Vatican" with Spielberg as its Hollywood pope.[65] The example of Spielberg is intended to prove that one must refrain from making quick judgements about the dynamics at work in these mentor relationships since they are inevitably more complex than they might first appear.[66]

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[64] Bart 84.
[65] Baxter, 267, 283.
[66] I might also have used the example of Roger Corman to illustrate this point. In his autobiography How I Made a Hundred Films in Hollywood and Never Lost a Dime, (New York: Da Capo Press, 1998) Corman likes to represent himself as a great mentor and champion of young filmmakers. He states (216) that "The Corman school had an unusually high 'enrolment' of promising women...I always felt inclined to give women an equal shot, even though not many women were keen to work in exploitation in those days." While it is certainly true that Corman helped young filmmakers, including several women, get their first break, this fact must not simply be taken at face value but also considered in the context of the knowledge that Corman himself (as he freely admits) benefited from

Christina Lane raises a similar point in a discussion of Kathryn Bigelow. She writes that one of the director's most well known collaborations is with her now ex-husband James Cameron, and goes on to argue as follows:

> That Bigelow was married to him raises the uneasy issue for feminists about how to approach the work of women who seek production opportunities and financial success by making use of their male connections...Rather than attempt to gloss over these relationships, which are inevitable in a male-dominated industry, by positing a binary opposition in which a female author either exists alone or not at all, we need to acknowledge this kind of partnership as a valuable and fruitful avenue for women's access into mainstream film and as a pragmatic necessity.

However Lane also goes on to challenge the assumptions we make when we simply assume that Cameron was the member of the partnership with the most power - the one who was always able to get projects pushed through. Lane states that in an interview with Bigelow she learned that it was she who suggested that Cameron be brought in as executive producer on Point Break (1991), and thus she was creating career opportunities for him in this instance rather than the other way round. As Bigelow says, "[W]henever analysts...study the career of men and women in the entertainment business, they assume that any collaborative effort between a man and a woman, somehow is more beneficial to the woman than the man."[67]

Lane's subsequent conclusion is a valuable one: that feminist film theorists must never cease to interrogate "the nature of male/female collaborations within mainstream production."[68] It is also what this chapter attempts, although with the realisation that this is a potentially huge area for study which is still to be fully explored. As a similar example to that proposed by Lane I would mention the way in which Jon Peters is often said to have helped give his then girlfriend Barbra Streisand the confidence to try directing. For example the

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only having to pay his employees a meagre salary, and (in the case of women) the reality that Corman's "feminist" sympathies were far from consistent. For instance he reveals (181-2) that the Private Duty Nurses Association complained that the New World film The Student Nurses (directed by Stephanie Rothman) portrayed nurses in a sexual manner that was offensive and inaccurate. He says that this complaint led to his decision to name the sequel Private Duty Nurses.

[67] Lane, Feminist Hollywood 102.

[68] Lane, Feminist Hollywood 103.

producer Polly Platt has been quoted as saying, "I do believe that if hadn't been for Jon, she wouldn't have directed ever. He pushed her." Yet Peters began his career as Streisand's hairdresser, and subsequently made a name for himself in the industry after becoming involved in a relationship with the star and appointing himself as her manager. In this context Streisand is clearly the powerful one of the couple with the ability to make careers. Lane's comments force us to question the validity of the assumptions we make about the power relations within a seemingly clear cut mentor and mentored construction. Although it is still the case (as the statistical evidence strongly suggests) that white men hold the most power in Hollywood, one must also recognise that their power is also upheld by the *perception* that men are inevitably more powerful than women. As a result there is a real danger that some women who want to work in Hollywood will allow this perception to undermine their attempts to work in that arena.[69]

There are Never Any Easy Answers: the Problematic Nature of Mentorship

Why then might the idea of mentorship pose so many potential problems for women? It is worth looking to a theory of poetic history advanced by Harold Bloom in The Anxiety Of Influence to begin answering this question. Bloom's contention is that strong poets make history by misreading one another and clearing imaginative space for themselves. He envisages poetry as an Oedipal struggle between a metaphorical father and son, with each new poet having to confront the poetic legacy of his father before emerging as an artist in his own right. In Bloom's model women are consigned to the position of muse: they are there to inspire male creativity but not to be creative in their own right. I mention Bloom here because it is possible to find similar theoretical tendencies at work in the construction of film history. As I comment in chapter one the conception of the director as auteur primarily attributes the

[69] Polly Platt is quoted in Abramowitz, Is That a Gun 98. Jon Peters produced films such as A Star Is Born (1976) and, along with Peter Guber, Flashdance (1983). He is also credited by Justin Wyatt in High Concept Movies and Marketing in Hollywoood (Austin: The University of Texas Press, 1994) as a key player in the birth of the "High Concept" film (134-9).

creative force behind a film to a strong male director, while women (as actresses, screenwriters, etc.) are frequently consigned to a secondary, muse-like role.[70]

If we consider a work such as Gerald Mast and Bruce F. Kawin's A Short History of the Movies it is possible to draw comparisons between the way it structures film history and Bloom's poetic model. Mast and Kawin evoke the sense that there is a masculine lineage which runs through cinematic history, with young directors stepping in where their directorial ancestors left off and using these ancestors generic legacy as the creative base for their own films. For instance they write that the directors "Ince, Ford and Hart would later pass on these legacies - the power of movement within vast western vistas and the dignity of the good-bad men who inhabit these spaces - to their successors: Ford's younger brother, John, as well as Howard Hawks, Sam Peckinpah, and many others." As additional examples the "new American *auteurs*" of New Hollywood are referred to as being "film authors in the fullest sense of a Griffith...Ford, Hitchcock, Godard, Fellini, Bergman, or Kurosawa...": and Woody Allen is compared to Harold Lloyd, Buster Keaton, Groucho Marx and Charlie Chaplin.[71]

When women directors are mentioned by Mast and Kawin they are either reeled off in a rapid list (as in the case of a page which documents merely the names and films directed by some American women since the seventies), or spoken about as if they are creatively connected by their own *female* or *feminine* lineage (as in the case of French directors like Germaine Dulac, Marie Epstein, Agnes Varda and Nelly Kaplan who are said to have "given France the claim to the longest of female centred cinematic narrative traditions"). Mast and Kawin's book also reveals the tendency to consign women to the role of muse when they write that Giulietta Masina "is the soul of [Federico] Fellini, his wife offscreen and the central figure of many of his films."[72]

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[70] Harold Bloom, The Anxiety of Influence (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973) 5-14.
[71] Gerald Mast and Bruce F. Kawin, A Short History of the Movies (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company,1992) 107, 443, 444.
[72] Mast and Kawin 371, 538, 326.

In this way constructions of literary and film history which rely on identifying the connections between "great men" over time are inevitably unworkable when it comes to recognising and identifying the place of women artists in the equation. As Judith Mayne has said of Dorothy Arzner, the existing myths and structures of cinematic history (based on the lives of men) made for a problematic fit when applied to the story of Arzner's career in Hollywood. It was not enough simply to substitute woman for man when telling that tale since such models were founded on male rather than female experience. As a more current example of this we might point to John Baxter's biography of Steven Spielberg. Baxter refers to an anecdote which has become part of the Spielberg legend. Namely that as a young man trying to break into the industry he simply walked onto the Universal lot one day and acted as if he worked there. As a result he developed contacts such as studio executive Sidney Jay Sheinberg who, fittingly for the aforementioned concept that Hollywood's history is the story of metaphorical father and son relationships, is said to have regarded Spielberg as a "surrogate son". While this anecdote is based on truth it also fulfils a role as part of the "Spielberg myth", depicting as it does a man who was so determined to succeed as a director that he took his fate into his own hands. As Baxter says, Spielberg himself has been vague about the amount of time he spent hanging around at Universal, often altering dates to fit in with another aspect of the Spielberg myth: that he had his first directing job before he was twenty-one. It is doubtful that such mythic elements would work for a female director since a women walking onto a studio lot in the way Spielberg is said to have done would not only be more noticeable, but also unlikely to be mistaken for the nephew of the studio chairman (another incidence of the patriarchal model at work) in the way that Spielberg is said to have been.[73]

Mayne argues that Arzner's success as a director was explained by some commentators in relation to her connections with men. That is, the biographical fact that she was the daughter of a Hollywood restaurateur, as well as the erroneous assumption that the

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[73] Baxter 50-4.

director James Cruze helped Arzner to get her first director's contract, became the reasons why she achieved what she did: because she was a woman director the perception was there had to be a *reason* for her achievements because her success was so unusual. Thus we have identified one of the potential dangers of mentorship for women directors. The male mentor is apt to be interpreted as the reason for her success rather than a nurturer of her talent. For example one only has to consider the way critics of Penny Marshall's work have maintained that she owes her career to nepotism rather than ability.[74]

Another danger is that this relationship can be read in sexual terms. Christina Lane has argued that any discussion of mentorship requires that we "critically circumvent the long history of the ideology of 'sexual favours'... through which women's hard work and professional authority are undermined by sexual innuendo."[75] Any history of women in Hollywood certainly could not fail to recognise that such beliefs are well-established (think of the idea of the "casting couch" for instance), with the result that women's talents are reducible to their appearance, to their bodies, rather than being conceived of in intellectual terms. In this way men's power to control their progress in the industry is reaffirmed. As an example of a woman director being referred to in these terms we might point to comments made to Producer Lawrence Kasanoff about Kathryn Bigelow. Kasanoff reports that after he hired Bigelow to direct Blue Steel several people asked if he was interested in her romantically.[76] Nor is it only female directors who receive such treatment. Rachel Abramowitz notes that the studio head Sherry Lansing, who has had had several powerful male mentors throughout her career, has been accused of sleeping with every man she has ever worked with. Lansing, as Ambramowitz reveals, has been relentlessly sexualised throughout her career. Her appointment to her first major studio job in 1979 was even

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[74] Judith Mayne, Directed By Dorothy Arzner (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1994) 151-2.
[75] Lane, Feminist Hollywood 102.
[76] See Bernstein, "A Change in Direction?"

reported in the New York Times with the headline "Sherry Lansing, Former Model, Named Head Of Fox Productions".[77]

Bearing in mind the dangers of the mentorship model for women one would expect feminist critics to treat it with some reservation. It is possible to tease out such reservations in a comment made by Hilary DeVries about Jodie Foster. De Vries praises Foster as a female star who is unique because she has achieved success as a director on her own rather than being assisted by a powerful man. The implication here is that the female director who stands alone, or at least creates the impression that she does, is more credible and perhaps even more *feminist* than the women who looks to men within the industry for help. This celebration of the female loner might also be identified in the way Kathryn Bigelow has been written about, although in Bigelow's case I would argue that she has been criticised by some for being quasi-masculine (a privileged member of the male action director's club) even while others have celebrated what they see as her exceptional strength within a male-dominated industry. DeVries statement also reveals the shortcomings of making assumptions about the power relationships between men and women out of context. She writes that Barbara Streisand was aided by her "powerful producer boyfriend" Jon Peters without identifying Streisand's role in making Peters powerful in the first place. She also fails to situate her comment against the backdrop of an industry where the careers of both men and women are forged from personal and business connections.[78]

Reservations about women's role in the mentorship equation, and more generally as participants in an industry which is structured on the hierarchical relationships between (usually white) men, might usefully be considered in the context of feminist antipathy towards male forms and structures in general. Incidentally I put the words "usually white" in brackets deliberately because as Jesse Algeron Rhines notes, successful black male producers and directors (and presumably other non-white male executives) have sometimes forged

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[77] Abramowitz, Is That a Gun? 155-6.
[78] Hilary De Vries, "Command Performance," Los Angeles Times 11 Dec. 1994: 16, Los Angeles Times Online Archives 27 Jan. 1999 < http://pqasb.pqarchiver.com/latimes>.

bonds with one another that have worked to exclude women of colour.[79] In Camera Politica Ryan and Kellner write that early feminists saw feminism not only as a critique of the "content of patriarchal society" but also of "its organizational forms" which were "antithetical to feminist ideals of equality, democracy and participation." They go on to describe how the late seventies and early eighties saw the feminist movement split between *mainstream* factions who saw acceptance into the male business world as indicative of sexual equality and more *radical* factions who believed that the success of the movement rested on remaining apart from that world.

To illustrate this split the book reproduces two covers of the magazine Ms., one from 1976 and the other from 1986. The earlier one depicts a battered woman with a black eye, and the later one shows an archetypal eighties career woman dressed in a power suit and holding a pen. The message that such a juxtaposition carries is clear. Women's priorities have shifted from raising awareness of their oppression at the hands of men, to aping the male structures that underpin that oppression. Consequently the entrance of women directors and others into the mainstream film industry (another arena which is perceived to be organised along patriarchal lines) can be interpreted as one of the possible instigators of these very tensions. Tensions which might also serve as background to the split in feminist film theory between those who have argued that the female filmmaker's best chance for autonomous expression lies firmly outside the Hollywood film industry (in documentary making, feminist counter-cinema and so on), and those who believe integration is not only possible but desirable.[80]

If the dominance of male mentors and industry networks predicated on the hierarchical relationships between men pose problems for women, is there a viable alternative to either of these things? Mark Litwak has identified the efforts of organisations like the WIF, as well as organisations created to cater to the interests of black filmmakers, Latino

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[79] Jesse Algeron Rhines, Black Film/White Money (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1996) 99.

[80] Michael Ryan and Douglas Kellner, Camera Politica: The Politics and Ideology of Contemporary Hollywood Film (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1990) 30, 136-7.

filmmakers and so on, to set up events where these groups can meet up and help one another as "something of a counterpoint to the old boys network."[81] Elsewhere Irene Lacher charts the growth of new female-centred networks in Hollywood which have formed around the steadily increasing number of women gaining powerful executive positions in Hollywood. Lacher writes that these groups have their own bonding rituals based around what is often referred to as the "power shower" (baby showers, wedding showers, birthday showers, job showers) which act as a counterpoint to those enjoyed by Hollywood men (playing sports together, Jeffrey Katzenberg's legendary all-male rafting trips etc.). She also quotes Columbia Tristar Vice Chairwoman Lynda Obst as saying that this new type of network is like "a tree of girls - enormously dense branches and strong interrelations, and a very high quality of both mentoring and alliances." In this new formulation women on the rise set out to mentor other women trying to get a foothold on the career ladder in the same way that men have always done.[82]

Lacher also offers evidence that these new networks have begun to have positive effects for women in the industry. For instance she reveals that Nora Ephron mentored Lynda Obst when they were both working as magazine journalists in New York in the seventies. Years later Obst was able to return the favour by recruiting Ephron to make her directing debut (This Is My Life (1992)). One might also point to situations where female stars have helped other women win job opportunities. Geena Davis chose Martha Coolidge, whom she knew through her then husband Renny Harlin, to direct Angie (1994) in preference to Jonathan Kaplan; and Meryl Streep helped persuade ABC films to hire Nora Ephron to write Silkwood (1983).[83] Female directors have also sought to help their female colleagues. Christina Lane reports that Martha Coolidge, who has been consistently outspoken in Hollywood on feminist issues relating to film, wrote two articles for American Film in the seventies with the intention of providing addresses of festivals and showcase opportunities

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[81] Litwak 149.
[82] Irene Lacher. "A New Kind of Networking." Los Angeles Times 2 Mar. 1997. Home ed. Calendar sec.: 8. Los Angeles Times Online Archives 20 Nov. 1999 <http://pqasb.pqarchiver.com/latimes>.
[83] See Lane Feminist Hollywood 86; Abramowitz. Is That a Gun? 230-1.

which might benefit other independent directors.[84] She is also quoted in Lacher's article as saying that she tries to work with other women whenever possible. In addition B. Ruby Rich notes that Allison Anders and Kathryn Bigelow have both been active in the Independent Feature Project mentoring program which seeks to encourage young female filmmakers.[85]

Despite the undeniably positive side of the construction and promotion of "alternative" networks one must nevertheless approach them theoretically with the same caution afforded the original structures (the "old boys network") which they seek to replace. Just as I turned earlier to Bloom's theory of poetic influence as a theoretical backdrop to issues of mentoring, I intend to use the work of Elaine Showalter, who has answered theories such as Bloom's with her own alternative conceptualisation of literary history, in this instance.

In "Feminist Criticism in the Wilderness" Showalter advocates that feminist critics refrain from using male critical theory since "So long as we look to andocentric models for our most basic principles - even if we revise them by adding the feminist frame of reference - we are learning nothing new." Instead she calls for "a feminist criticism that is genuinely women centred, independent, and intellectually coherent", although she adds somewhat paradoxically that she does "not mean to endorse the separatist fantasies of radical feminist visionaries".[86] I say paradoxically since it is hard to imagine how a rejection of male theory and the embrace of a *true* feminist criticism (if in fact that is not an impossibility in itself) could be classified as anything other than separatist or marginal. In another essay Showalter suggests that one of the organising principles of this new feminine/feminist theory of literary history should be the relationship between mother and daughter rather than father and son: "As the death of the father has always been an archetypal rite of passage for the Western hero, now the death of the mother as witnessed and transcended by the daughter has become

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[84] Lane, Feminist Hollywood 68.
[85] Rich, "Slugging It Out" 16.
[86] Elaine Showalter, "Feminist Criticism in the Wilderness," The New Feminist Criticism: Essays on Women, Literature, and Theory, ed. Elaine Showalter (London: Virago, 1993.) 247.

one of the most profound occasions of female literature."[87] This alternative conception of literature as a kind of artistic relay race between mother and daughter finds parallels in film history. For instance in the preface to Cole and Dale's book of interviews with women directors they include a photograph of Ida Lupino beside her director's chair which is emblazoned with the phrase "The Mother Of all Of Us". The caption to this photo twists this phrase round to read "Ida Lupino: The Mother Of Us All".[88] In this way the authors use evidence of Lupino's preference for referring to herself as "mother", which according to Louise Heck-Rabi she actually felt expressed the "feminine" and nurturing way she handled her crew, as a means of representing a symbolic mother figure from which a succession of women can trace their directorial heritage.[89]

As another example we can refer to Quentin Curtis' article on Gillian Armstrong in which he states that the director is "a pioneer and a role model", and that other Australian women directors view her as "the *mother* of modern women's film."[90] Or Jodie Foster's interview with Ingrid Sischy in Interview magazine (discussed at length in chapter five) in which she is photographed looking like Dorothy Arzner, and thus utilises the image of a pioneering female director which would be widely recognised by feminist film theorists to inform her own debut as a film director. In other words the *daughter* draws on the *mother* director whose work she wishes to emulate and perhaps even surpass.

However this alternative model brings with it its own problems. For one thing it relies on a simple reversal of the old male structures with the result that some of the underlying flaws within those structures may remain unchanged. The old hierarchies which privilege powerful white males as the power-brokers and career-makers of Hollywood could simply be transformed into new ones which move towards greater equality by admitting white women in this capacity, and yet fail to consider whether these structures could be made

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[87] Elaine Showalter, "Toward a Feminist Poetics," The New Feminist Criticism, 135.
[88] Cole and Dale 13.
[89] Louise Heck-Rabi, Women Filmmakers: A Critical Reception (New Jersey and London: The Scarecrow Press, 1984) 241-2.
[90] Quentin Curtis, "The Mother of Modern Movies," Independent On Sunday, 19 Mar. 1995, CD-ROM ed.: 30. Italics Mine.

fairer by making more fundamental changes or overhauling them completely. Or to put it another way, the idea of "The Mother of Us All" does not do enough to acknowledge the differences between women which are based on things other than gender. As a white, female director Ida Lupino may not be so easily embraced as a symbolic "mother" figure by female filmmakers of colour who wish to stress the contribution of non-white women directors to film history. In addition the celebration of an "old girls" network based on what are perceived as common interests between women rather than men (Irene Lacher notes that some female studio executives see motherhood as the "glue" which holds them together) is in grave danger of becoming locked in essentialist thought patterns by failing to acknowledge the differences which divide women, and which may have a bearing on their career within the industry, as well as the things they have in common.

The tendency of this alternative structure to search for female role models and pioneers to celebrate also has the effect of putting pressure on women in Hollywood. Although it is true that visible role models are important if women are to be encouraged in thinking that there is a place for them within the industry, the other side of the coin is that any woman who is held up in this way ceases to be simply a director and becomes instead a symbol of something deeper, such as the triumph of female tenacity in a patriarchal arena. The potential result is a situation where *every* decision she makes is subject to intense feminist scrutiny and possibly censure, and every personal success or failure also becomes the success or failure of women as a whole. Gillian Armstrong has said that having directed her first film (My Brilliant Career (1979)) she felt that she "was actually carrying all women in Australia on my shoulders."[91] Similarly Mimi Leder has expressed concern about the way several women held her up as a "poster child" for female directors because she had directed the big budget action film The Peacemaker: Leder's job opportunity became a symbol of hope that the industry was gradually becoming more female director-friendly, and the director

[91] Seger 89.

felt this laid an enormous amount of responsibility at her door.[92] Both male and female directors are subject to the same career finishing box office flops (Elaine May's Ishtar (1987) and Michael Cimino's Heaven's Gate (1980) for example), but it is only women for whom personal failure can be extrapolated into a representation of women's tendency to fail as a whole. As Todd McCarthy argues, Elaine May probably "set back the cause of women directors in Hollywood by ten years...[E]very negative notion that any male executive might want to have about how difficult it might be to work with a woman director was confirmed by her."[93] It is hardly surprising then that some women directors should balk at being labelled as feminist icons in this way.

To summarise this last section it is clear that there is no simple solution to the problems inherent in the idea of Hollywood as either an "old boys" network or an "old girls" one. Instead one has to recognise the possibilities offered to women by these alternative *female* structures while realising that they will not automatically solve all the problems faced by marginal groups within Hollywood. There is a danger, as recognised by Christina Lane, that we as feminist critics become caught up in an ahistorical romanticisation of the connections and bonds between women filmmakers rather than making a clear-headed examination of the facts. Lane states she is aware of this, yet she also writes that the emerging female counterpoint to the "old boys" network is one which "emphasizes collaboration and connection over competition and isolation".[94] This statement implies that a female or feminist network is more caring and sharing and less cut-throat than its male equivalent: an argument which not only buys into the idea of women's essential difference from men, but which must also be examined in light of the fact that women in power do not necessarily act in vastly dissimilar ways to their male colleagues. Martha Coolidge has argued that at least in the early days of women's attempts to break into Hollywood the lack of career opportunities meant that it was every woman for herself. As a result of this our

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[92] See Susan Karlin, "Rank and File," Hollywood Reporter 9 Dec. 1997: 4, Hollywood Reporter Online Archives 31 Dec. <http:// www.hollywoodreporter.com/ serach.asp>.
[93] Abramowitz, Is That a Gun? 68.
[94] Lane, Feminist Hollywood 227.

celebration of the new avenues to success which are opening up for some women in Hollywood should not preclude an examination of how those avenues themselves are structured.[95]

To conclude, this chapter has set out to demonstrate that mentorship is not only a necessity for female directors but for anyone trying to break into the film industry. To advocate that women reject it because it represents an inherently "masculine" way of doing things is a mistake since the result would be to marginalise women even further. Yet as I have argued it is also a problematic concept, both for feminist film theory and for real women working in Hollywood.

Much of this piece has been concerned with historicising and contextualising the ways women directors have entered into the industry. In doing so I am addressing a need identified by Rosalind Coward, although in relation to film rather than literature. She writes that "we need to know about the institutions which make a piece of writing available". Only by examining how the industry itself is structured, and learning about the cinematic institutions that make film available is it possible to understand women's position within that industry.[96]

It is possible that some feminist critics may interpret this research with its concentration on the unequal position of women in Hollywood as regressive, since they desire that we move away from the expression of "female victimhood" towards a more celebratory examination of the achievements women have made. Certainly there are risks involved in viewing Hollywood simply as a "boy's club" or a "closed shop" since such metaphors can give women the impression that there is no point even trying to gain access to such a male-dominated arena. Nevertheless such risks must not discourage us from our attempts to provide an overview of the unequal situation of the female director, and by extension all marginal groups, in Hollywood as it stands. As long as we acknowledge that there are some positive tales to tell, and that all women within the industry do not experience

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[95] Abramowitz, Is That a Gun? 147.
[96] Rosalind Coward, "Are Women's Novels Feminist Novels?" The New Feminist Criticism, 226.

exactly the same problems (nor necessarily gender-based problems), such an overview has much to contribute to feminist film theory.

Christina Lane has argued that we should rethink the idea that power flows only top to bottom in the film industry and view it as also flowing out into local power centres, meaning that everyone potentially has power and thus women and other minorities are inside rather than marginal to that industry. She locates this potential power in the ability of people to embody both dominant and resistant discourses at the same time, and in the fact that neither a film nor its director can embody a single unifying theme to the exclusion of all others. While I agree that women and minorities need to be considered as insiders, and their contributions to the mainstream film industry embraced rather than rejected or hidden, I would add an important point that Lane apparently overlooks in her statement, and which this chapter has tried to address. In simple terms of numbers within Hollywood women in positions of power are vastly outnumbered by men, and this also applies in the ratios of non-white women to non- white men in the industry. Few women possess the power to greenlight films, and there are few or no women sitting on the boards of companies who control the finances of major studios. As a result women's lack of power at the top seems to filter down to the rest of the industry, creating a situation where women directors, producers, cinematographers, grips, and so on are still less likely to be employed than their male counterparts. To ignore this fact for fear of being judged too negative is to ignore something vitally important. Not only to this particular study of women directors but to feminist film studies in general.[97]

[97] Lane, Feminist Hollywood 28.

Chapter Three

"It's Like Painting Toys Blue and Pink": Marketing and the Female-Directed Hollywood Film[1]

While it may remain a distasteful fact for those film critics and filmgoers who equate an ever more commercially motivated Hollywood with evidence of artistic bankruptcy, in an industry where production costs are always on the increase and consequently higher returns must be guaranteed, film marketing (whether it be merchandising, tie-ins, press ads, trailers, or anything else) is phenomenally important.[2] However, the relationship between women directors and the marketing of their films has always been difficult. As women directors are still comparatively rare, their gender is frequently used as a marketing tool in the selling of their films. This chapter is designed as a preliminary examination of the way in which female-directed films are marketed. Section one will offer some brief observations on the subject, and section two will provide a case study of the way in which Mimi Leder's "action" films have been marketed.

Female Directors and Film Marketing

It is my contention that women directors working in Hollywood have not traditionally received the same opportunities as their male counterparts when it comes to the marketing of their films. One reason for this stems from the fact that they have consistently been given smaller budgets to work with, which automatically means that the funds available for marketing their films are lower as well. For example, the Premiere Women in Hollywood Special 1993 states that the average cost of a male-directed film in 1992 was twenty eight million dollars, whereas the average cost of a female-directed film was eighteen point five

[1] This was a comment made by the film director Martha Coolidge in Jamie Diamond's "Get Real," Premiere Women in Hollywood Special 1996: 118. She was commenting on the way marketing often ghettoises the woman director's work.

[2] In "On The Grill," Hollywood Reporter 26 May 1998, Hollywood Reporter Online Archives 3 Jan. 1999 <http://www.hollywoodreporter.com> T.L Stanley states that film making costs have risen by one hundred and sixty six percent in the last decade.

million.[3] Nor do things seem to have improved greatly since then. Mimi Leder is the only women to have worked with budgets of fifty million and above, and it is interesting to note that in 1997, the year that she directed The Peacemaker for fifty million dollars, the average cost of a studio film was still slightly higher at fifty three point four million dollars.[4]

The kind of films most commonly made by women directors working in Hollywood (dramas, romances, and especially comedies) are also the kinds of films which usually have budgets at the lower end of the scale, rather than the kind of special-effects filled blockbusters which demand all the financial muscle that a studio can muster. Moreover, it is the latter of these two kinds of film which are more likely to secure the kind of promotional deals (both with other divisions within the studio's parent corporation and with outside corporations) that can augment a film's marketing budget, and improve its chances of turning a healthy profit.

As Janet Wasko has argued in Hollywood in the Information Age, corporate America tends to be conservative in the kinds of films it chooses for cross-promotional deals, believing the safest financial bet to be the kind of film which has already proven financially successful, and does not take unnecessary risks, such as a hard to sell ("feminine") genre or an untried (female) director.[5] Consequently, we are unlikely to find a female-directed film which has lucrative deals with corporate giants, such as a fast food company or a toy manufacturer, attached. This is not to say that women directors' films are never promoted by major corporations. For example, America Online were linked with Nora Ephron's You've Got Mail (1998), although the fact that this film starred Tom Hanks and Meg Ryan, who had previously appeared in Ephron's hugely successful film Sleepless In Seattle (1993), meant that it was risk-free for promoters in a way that an "unknown" romantic comedy could never be.

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[3] Caroline Kirk Cordero, "The Numbers Never Lie: Tracking the Progress of Women in the Industry," Premiere Women In Hollywood Special 1993: 33.
[4] Stanley.
[5] Janet Wasko, Hollywood in the Information Age: Beyond the Silver Screen (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1994) 216.

In relation to this there is a tendency in some feminist film criticism (particularly that written more than a decade ago) to view women directors who embrace or merely accept the commercial practices of Hollywood filmmaking as less worthy in feminist terms than those who remain outside the mainstream. For instance, Barbara Koenig Quart writes that Susan Seidelman's

> Desperately Seeking Susan is in danger toward the end of turning into just the complacent kid movie for the teens in the malls that Seidelman scorned, as the two couples lean back cozily and laugh...Seidelman, having left Wren pitifully adrift at the end of Smithereens...chose with the ending for this...film to stay much closer to old patriarchal formulas, and to resolve everything through the couple.[6]

By comparing Seidelman's first mainstream film with one of her earlier independent works, and finding the former lacking, Quart strongly implies that the director has sold out to Hollywood. The problem with such thinking is that it denies women directors the desire to participate fully in all aspects of commercial filmmaking, when in fact there are cases where women directors working in the mainstream have pushed for more marketing opportunities for their films. For example, Amy Heckerling has said that she tried to persuade Paramount to set up a deal with a toy manufacturer to make tie-in dolls for her film Clueless (1995), but was not successful until the film was made into a television series by ABC.[7]

The bottom line is that (in most cases) the more marketing opportunities a film has, the greater its potential for commercial success. Promotional deals can and frequently do bring in immense financial rewards for the studios involved. For example, Chuck Crisafulli reports that Steven Spielberg's Jurassic Park (1993) made more than a billion dollars from the sale of related merchandise. This figure actually exceeds the film's worldwide box office gross which the Internet Movie Database gives as nearly nine hundred and twenty million dollars.[8]

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[6] Barbara Koening Quart, Women Directors: The Emergence of a New Cinema (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger, 1988) 64-5.
[7] Chuck Crisafulli, "Screen Gems," Los Angeles Times 14 July 1996, Home ed., Calendar sec.: 8, Los Angeles Times Online Archives 20 Nov. 2000 <http://pqasb.pqarchiver.com latimes>.
[8] Crisafulli; See The Internet Movie Database <http://www.imdb.com>.

Perhaps one possible reason for the troubled relationship between women directors and the marketing of their films is the perception that, for women, artistic considerations are more important than commercial ones. The "woman's film" or "chick flick" has traditionally been viewed as less commercially viable than those genres which are judged to appeal to the entire audience (and especially men). Instead they are frequently tagged as what Elaine Dutka calls "class acts": little arty gems of movies which add a bit of variety and prestige to the studio's slate of bigger budget fare.[9] While I am not suggesting that a "woman's film" has to be directed by a female director, I would argue that the female director and what is considered to be "female" or "feminine" subject matter can become blurred to the extent that they are conceptualised as having a symbiotic relationship. That is, the fact that a film is directed by a woman often results in its being read as a "woman's film" as well as a film by a woman. Even when the female director in question is not working with stereotypically "feminine" material (as with Kathryn Bigelow for instance) there is often a temptation to search for female and/or feminist meanings within the text and ascribe them to the director's gender.

Although there is some evidence to suggest that industry perceptions about the "chick flick" are in the process of changing as studios realise the commercial benefits of targeting female audiences, there are still cases in which such tagging has proved unhelpful.[10] Gillian Armstrong has said that studio executives originally failed to see the commercial possibilities of her film Little Women (1994) since they considered it to be a film which would only appeal to little girls, but on seeing it tried to get it wider support.[11] Yet the film's poster is quite obviously aimed at a female audience, depicting the March sisters side by side in front of their beloved home, and including a small photo of Marmee within the graphics of the title (which are in turn rendered in old fashioned script to give a period feel). The film's male characters are excluded from the picture. While it might have proved a difficult challenge to

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[9] Elaine Dutka, "Dressed for Success: For Hollywood's Long-suffering Leading Actresses, there's a New Optimism About their Ability to Open and Carry a Movie," Los Angeles Times 17 Dec. 1995, Home ed., Calendar sec.: 4, Los Angeles Times Online Archives 10 Nov. 1999 <http:/ pqasb.pqarchiver.com/latimes>.

[10] In "Growing Up In The Dark," Premiere Women In Hollywood Special 1999: 86-97 Jill Bernstein writes about Hollywood's attempts (especially post-Titanic) to make films which appeal to teenage girls.

[11] Karen Cusolito, "Expanding Ranks," Hollywood Reporter 12 Dec. 1995, Hollywood Reporter Online Archives 29 Dec. 1998 <http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/search.asp>.

market the film to a mixed audience it should also be noted, as marketing executive Paula Silver has said, that if a film "looks really sappy, women go with their girlfriends" while the men usually stay at home.[12] In spite of Armstrong's defence of the way the studio sold her film, the general perception remained that Little Women was an indisputable "chick flick". As David Hunter remarks, it is a film whose "market" is "seemingly limited to women big and little."[13]

Ironically the idea that for women art and commerce are a poor mix finds a parallel in feminist thinking, with that which is popular and commercial viewed as upholding rather than interrogating patriarchal ideology, and therefore treated with suspicion. Joanne Hollows writes, "it was common for feminists to claim that a whole range of popular forms and practices - from romance-reading to dressing up - locked women into feminine identities which made them blind to, and collude in, their own oppression."[14] A variation on this belief can also be found in some feminist film criticism which posits that the female filmmaker stay away from making big budget Hollywood films for the masses, since her more "natural" expression is the small-scale, low-budget but high-quality film in which her own distinctive "feminine" and/or "feminist" voice can be heard. Thus, independent cinema becomes the female director's only chance for positive feminist expression, since it is the only way she can be sure to avoid the replication of those cinematic codes, structures and practices which "dominant cinema" uses to oppress women. E. Ann Kaplan has written that "in Hollywood films...women are ultimately refused a voice, a discourse." Whereas, "independent women's films," on the other hand, "attempt to discover for women a voice and a subjectivity."[15] Even though Kaplan made this statement nearly two decades ago, mainstream women directors are still to some extent being overlooked by feminist film criticism, possibly because their work does not deliver a clear feminist message. While I am obviously aware that feminist dialogue

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[12] Dutka 4.
[13] David Hunter, Rev. of Little Women, Hollywood Reporter, 14 Dec. 1994, Hollywood Reporter Online Archives 2 Jan. 1999 <http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/search.asp>.
[14] Joanne Hollows, Feminism, Femininity and Popular Culture (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000) 20.
[15] E. Ann Kaplan, Women and Film: Both Sides of the Camera (London: Routledge, 1983) 7.

can be used to discuss non-feminist texts and vice versa, I would also argue that many of these female directors are not being talked about *in any terms* by feminist film criticism. For instance, in Multiple Voices In Feminist Film Criticism Diane Carson proposes an outline for a course on "Women Filmmakers". Incredibly, the only Hollywood directors she proposes to study are Dorothy Arzner, Ida Lupino (both directing features before the seventies) and Euzhan Palcy (who made A Dry White Season for MGM in 1989). Her reasoning becomes clearer when we discover the basis on which she praises the numerous avant-garde, independent filmmakers she includes in the course. For example, she writes of Chantal Akerman's Jeanne Dielman, 23 Quai du Commerce 1080 Bruxelles (1975). "By refusing to sensationalize the subject matter or to titillate the viewer, Ackerman's understated approach reveals much about mainstream cinema's voyeuristic exploitation of women."[16]

As Hollows' use of the words "it was common" makes clear, such beliefs are no longer as widespread in feminist theory in general, and feminist film theory in particular, as they once were. Popular feminism has ceased to be a dirty word for many feminists, who have started to look non-judgementally at the forms and genres that many women have and do enjoy, either as consumers or producers. For instance a great deal of work has been done within the field of cultural studies which sets out to give so-called popular "feminine" genres (such as soap operas, women's magazines, and romance novels) serious feminist attention. Similarly film theorists have turned their attention to other previously devalued genres like the "woman's film", "shopping films", and female friendship movies.[17]

Despite this undeniable shift in feminist thinking, my own research on women directors working in the mainstream film industry reveals that there is still a dearth of attention paid to certain figures, such as Penny Marshall and Nora Ephron, whose films are often structured around the themes of love, romance, and relationships. That is, women

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[16] Diane Carson, Linda Dittmar and Janice R. Welsch, eds., Multiple Voices In Feminist Film Criticism (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994) 456-7.
[17] For a discussion of "shopping films" see Charlotte Brunsdon, Screen Tastes (London: Routledge, 1997) 81-102; and for female friendship movies see Yvonne Tasker, Working Girls: Gender and Sexuality in Popular Cinema (London: Routledge, 1998) 139-160.

whose work deals overtly in the currency of the so-called "feminine", in emotions rather than actions. Of those female directors who are discussed by feminist film critics the same names crop up with a persistent regularity: Arzner, Lupino and, in contemporary Hollywood, Kathryn Bigelow, to give just three examples. Obviously I am aware that this is partially explained by the fact that the potential candidates for examination are limited since only a few women have directed films within Hollywood. Nevertheless a director like Bigelow may prove more attractive to feminist film criticism because she has well-publicised roots in the field of avant-garde art/filmmaking, as well as being someone whose work (with its play on so-called "male" genres like the western, the horror movie and the crime movie) studiously rejects, or at least is perceived to reject, any hint of the "feminine". While it might be time, according to critics like Pam Cook, to turn our back on the old feminist thinking which concentrates on Hollywood's marginalisation and exclusion of women, and look towards a recognition of the contribution of women to cinema in all its forms, this does not mean that we should continue to write about *only* those women whose careers make the most attractive feminist reading.[18]

The belief that certain kinds of films are best suited to women directors helps to maintain the status quo in the male-dominated Hollywood film industry. It makes it harder for female directors to secure the same kind of big-budget projects and A-list stars as their male counterparts. Martha Coolidge, for example, has complained that she has been denied the opportunity to direct action films:

> "About 90% of what comes my way are 10 different kinds of breast cancer stories, 10 different kinds of divorce stories...I do those. I care about them deeply. But one does want to do more." For years, Coolidge sought to do an action film based on Michael Crichton's...book...'Eaters of the Dead'. The movie got made...[b]ut it was directed by John McTiernan of 'Die Hard' fame.[19]

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[18] Pam Cook, "No Fixed Address: The Women's Picture from Outrage to Blue Steel," Contemporary Hollywood Cinema, eds. Steve Neale and Murray Smith (London: Routledge, 1998) 229-246.
[19] Amy Wallace, "Shooting for a Role in a Male Film Genre," Los Angeles Times 25 Sep. 1997: A1, Los Angeles Times Online 10 Nov. 1999 <http://pqasb.pqarchiver.com/latimes>.

Women directors have been known to echo this perception themselves. In the press kit for Grace Of My Heart (1996) Allison Anders is keen to stress that her film is first and foremost a "woman's film": "It's a journey of a woman, literally and metaphorically, searching for her voice and finding it...In that sense the film resonates for me on a very personal level". In fact Anders has said elsewhere that she really only feels the need to consider her "chick audience" when making a film: "[A]fter a while I thought, But I have a female audience, and although I want men to come to the movies why do I need them?"[20] It is interesting that the press kit seeks to downplay its mainstream cinematic connections (it was made by Universal Pictures) by emphasising aspects such as the fact that it was produced by Martin Scorsese, who has a history of working with "independent filmmakers". It is as though by aligning itself with the independent sector the film's treatment of a woman's story will automatically be perceived of as more serious, more credible. This suspicion of the commercial is particularly ironic since the press kit actually emphasises that the film's main selling point is its music, which can be bought on the soundtrack.

The danger of viewing women's cinematic production as best suited to a separate, independent "female" sphere, whether it comes from studios, critics, or women directors themselves, is that it can result in marginalisation. In marketing terms this can result in a situation where the female director's film is marketed as having exclusive appeal to women, often given a limited release, and consequently earns less than it could at the box office. For example, the film How To Make An American Quilt (1995) was sold in Britain as a woman's alternative to watching the Euro 96 football tournament.[21]

Mimi Leder: a New Concept in the High Concept Film

The press kits issued by DreamWorks/Paramount for Mimi Leder's second feature film Deep Impact (1998) can be used to provide a case study of the strategies employed in the selling of a "mainstream" woman director's film. I will also make reference to the press kit for her first

[20] Quoted in "Rebel Yells." Premiere Oct. 1998: 90.
[21] Angie Errigo, Rev. of How To Make An American Quilt, Empire July 1996: 30.

film, The Peacemaker (1997), in order to provide an earlier example of these marketing strategies at work.

I am not trying to argue that the way in which these films were marketed is somehow emblematic of the way all female-directed films are positioned in the marketplace, or indeed to suggest that every film made by a woman filmmaker is automatically sold to the public with reference to her gender. Having said that, this remains a strong tendency in the marketing of women director's films. The press kit for Martha Coolidge's Angie (1994) quotes one of the actresses in the film as saying that with Coolidge "at the helm there is an automatic understanding of some of the intricate details that are unique to women." Similarly in an interview with Empire designed to publicise the release of Little Women Winona Ryder remarks that there is "an unspoken understanding" when you are working with a female director rather than a man, and female directors, unlike men, are more able to "talk about sexuality and sensuality."[22] In another article about Little Women (where Ryder again talks about the film as a female-bonding experience) director Gillian Armstrong challenges Ryder's views when she strongly denies that her gender had any bearing on the way the film was made. She states that she is merely a "film director and an artist", and stresses the film's entertainment factor rather than any feminist message.[23] This suggests that tensions can exist between the way a film is marketed and the way the film's director might wish it had been marketed: that is, without such stereotypical references to gender. In Mimi Leder's case such tensions are evident in her willingness to talk about her desire to bring changes to the action movie, but her refusal to state that such changes are directly motivated by her gender, even if the press kits for her films strongly imply it. Thus she tells Amy Wallace, "What differentiates this movie [The Peacemaker]from others in the genre is that we put a human face on the terrorist. Is that because of my femaleness? I don't know."[24]

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[22] Jeff Dawson, "Little Miss Perfect," Empire Mar. 1995: 79.
[23] Larissa MacFarquhar, "Sweet 'N' Jo," Premiere Jan. 1995: 76-7.
[24] Wallace A1.

It is my contention that Mimi Leder was used to provide meaning differentiation in what has typically been classified as a generically "male" commodity: the big-budget action movie. To this end, I will also be referring to equivalent publicity materials for Armageddon (1998), whose producer Jerry Bruckheimer's name has become a by-word for this kind of commodity, since this and Deep Impact are similarly themed films which fought strongly to differentiate themselves in the marketplace in order to ensure success in the summer blockbuster season.

Before embarking on a discussion of gender-based differentiation in the marketing of Deep Impact, it is necessary to demonstrate the ways in which the film simultaneously and paradoxically positions itself as conforming to the type of films from which it also seeks to distinguish itself. By this I mean it does not completely reject all recognisable aspects of a big budget action-disaster film, but rather seeks to demonstrate that it has used them in a different way.

To illustrate the ways in which the film demonstrates a conventional marketing strategy, it is useful to refer to Justin Wyatt's book High Concept. Although Wyatt argues that high concept theory does not apply to all Hollywood films, only those which possess a very specific set of traits, (for example, he says the true high concept film is distinct from other Hollywood films because it demonstrates a stylistic excess, resulting in a situation where the viewer appreciates the surface of the film, its formal construction, over and above its depiction of character and narrative) much of what he says can be applied to post-classical film in general. In fact this is one of the central weaknesses of his theory. However since much of what he says does apply to Deep Impact, I am using it to give a sense of the typical marketing tactics employed to sell many big budget Hollywood films in order to illustrate how Deep Impact both uses and transcends them.

Wyatt argues that high concept is "perhaps *the* central development...within post-classical cinema, a style of filmmaking molded by economic and institutional forces."[25] He

[25] Justin Wyatt, High Concept: Movies and Marketing in Hollywood (Austin: The University of Texas Press, 1994) 8.

defines the high concept film as one which has a very strong sense of style, which is generic and which relies on recognisable character types. Most importantly, it is also one which possesses strongly marketable elements or "marketing hooks" such as being based on a pre-sold property (such as a bestselling novel, or a previously successful film), having stars and an appealing soundtrack. In short, it is a film whose central narrative idea can be encapsulated in a "one-line concept", and a simple but striking visual image and/or logo which finds its way onto the film's posters and other publicity material. One recent example of this strategy at work can be seen in the poster designed to advertise the film Lake Placid (2000). This poster deliberately references the poster design for Steven Spielberg's Jaws (1975), depicting the huge open jaw of a crocodile coming out of the water, and a woman floating just in front of it. It also has a tag line ("Part Mystery. Part Thriller. Parts Missing") which manages to sum up the film's generic content in a single line: that is, a Thriller-cum-Mystery-cum-Comedy Horror movie.

In several ways Deep Impact fits Wyatt's model of a high concept film. It is generically based, or more accurately it is a generic hybrid, incorporating elements of the disaster film, space film, love story, family melodrama, action film and so on. It makes use of stock characters like the old hero (here an astronaut) brought back from retirement for one last battle, and the ambitious young reporter trying to make a name for herself. It might also be considered to be based on some pre-sold elements since it capitalises on a topical subject (pre-millennial angst), and also on the reputation of Steven Spielberg as one of the three men behind the studio, DreamWorks, which put the film into production.

If we turn to the film's marketing campaign, the various press advertisements used to sell Deep Impact also fit Wyatt's argument. The name of the film is written in bold, graphic type and serves as an "identifiable logo" that acts to "identify the film visually". In fact two of these ads merely consist of the film's logo, and the logos of the three studios involved in its production, on a dark background, effectively cutting out any unnecessary and distracting visual clutter, and turning the film's title into a kind of brand name. The image chosen to

represent the film is also visually striking, "instantly recognizable" and able to "define the film's theme" in a way that might identify it as high concept in nature.[26] It superimposes a shot of a couple embracing over a scene of a huge comet-induced tidal wave about to engulf New York. This image, along with a tag line which sums up the narrative in six words ("Oceans Rise. Cities Fall. Hope Survives") works to distil the film's contents into a neatly packaged cinematic commodity which provides the audience with knowledge of what to expect before they even enter the cinema: a disaster movie, human drama, special effects, action, excitement, and so on (see appendix B, fig. 1).

The image which appears on Deep Impact's poster is also reminiscent of the one which was used to sell the film Titanic (1997). Both images depict a young couple embracing in the top half of the frame, while below them a disastrous scene (in the case of Deep Impact's tidal wave) or the signifier of an impending disaster (in the case of Titanic's illustration of the bow of the ship) is depicted. This is not surprising when we consider that Paramount was involved in the making of both films, and obviously saw the phenomenal success of Titanic as a means of improving Deep Impact's chances at the box office. In order to achieve this the studio chose an aspect of Deep Impact (the love between a teenage couple set against a background of impending disaster) which is only a part of the narrative to function as the film's key selling point, and forge a connection with another film, Titanic, in which the love affair between two teenagers is at the centre of the narrative (see appendix B, fig. 2 and 3). The studio also tied the films together by using the same musician (James Horner) to write both soundtracks, and including a trailer for Deep Impact in screenings of Titanic.[27] In addition the executive who presided over Paramount's marketing campaign for Titanic (Arthur Cohen) was, according to Peter Bart, Paramount's advertising chief during the marketing of Deep Impact.[28] As T.L. Stanley reveals, Cohen also used to work for the cosmetics company

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[26] Wyatt, High Concept 4, 122.
[27] Rod Dreher, "For 'Impact' Studios, The Earth Moved," New York Post 12 May 1998, New York Post Online 10 Jan. 2001 <http://promotions.nypost.com/051298/1731.htm>.
[28] Peter Bart, The Gross: The Hits, the Flops - The Summer that Ate Hollywood (New York: St Martin's Griffin, 2000) 171.

Revlon which suggests that he came to the film industry with extensive experience of marketing to women which could then be exploited in the campaigns for films like Titanic and Deep Impact.[29]

Writing on Titanic, Peter Kramer has argued that the film was sold primarily as a "woman's film", emphasising as it did a strong female protagonist, as well as the tragic love story at its centre. He goes on to argue that it was by appealing to this female audience, which Hollywood is usually guilty of neglecting, that the makers of the film ensured its financial success. Kramer's assumption that women have "preferred genres" such as the "Love Story" is potentially dangerous in its essentialism (not every woman who saw the film necessarily saw it because the romance of the story appealed to her), but it is fair to assume that elements such as romance, emotion, human relationships and so on are *perceived* as being attractive to woman by those in Hollywood (usually men) who set out to establish a female audience for their films.[30]

As I have mentioned above, one way in which this is achieved is by using a semi-romantic image on the film's poster in order to create certain audience expectations. Another way is also similar to a strategy used by the makers of Titanic whereby they ensured that the advertising for the film "clearly indicated that there would be more to Titanic than the spectacle of disaster", that it was a "different kind of blockbuster": one which would appeal to women.[31] The publicity material surrounding Deep Impact is intent on stressing that this is not just another action/disaster film, but one which cares about the characters it depicts, and wants the audience to care about them too. The press kit for the film tells us that, "[A]n audience will be very surprised by this picture...They may go in thinking it's a big spectacular kind of picture. And while it's epic in size, they'll be surprised to find themselves carried away by the personal stories." There was also a lobby card for the film which depicted the female journalist played by Téa Leoni superimposed over a picture of the comet

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[29] Stanley.
[30] Peter Kramer, "Women First: 'Titanic' (1997), Action-adventure Films and Hollywood's Female Audience," The Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television 18.4 (1998): 599-619.
[31] Kramer: 606, 610.

hitting earth (see appendix B, fig. 4). In this way the marketing indicated that a woman was central to the film's narrative: a factor which Lizzie Francke has identified as a key feature of the "woman's film".[32]

The selling of Deep Impact as, in part at least, a "woman's picture" in the mould of Titanic is not the only way in which gender crept into its marketing. The film's publicity also creates a situation where a woman director becomes a useful tool in selling the film as something different (and implicitly more "feminine") than its generic markers might lead audiences to expect. It can even be argued that Mimi Leder as female director becomes a new concept in the high concept film. Moreover, by examining the press kit for The Peacemaker we can see that this began with the first feature film she directed.

The creators of The Peacemaker are eager to point out that their film is not just another "traditional action movie", but one which approaches its material "in a fresh way that...set[s] it apart from the genre." To begin with the production notes for the film attempt to establish the serious nature of the project by informing us that it evolved from an article by a pair of veteran investigative journalists about nuclear weapons smuggling in the former Soviet Union, which was turned into a well-researched and plausible narrative scenario by the screenwriter (Michael Schiffer). Added to this, they explain, the plot is different from that of the "traditional action movie" because it provides a complex motivation for its terrorist villain rather than relying on racial/national stereotyping, and also takes into account the human events which drive the larger narrative. As Leder herself is quoted as saying: "I didn't approach this as an action movie, but instead as a dramatic human story. It does encompass a vast, large scope, but at the core is one man's personal tragedy which drives the action."

The implication that such a novel approach comes courtesy of a woman director is more clearly spelled out when we are told that, "[a]lso setting "The Peacemaker" apart was the choice of a woman to direct the film. Making her feature film directorial debut, Mimi Leder became one of only a handful of woman directors to break into the action arena." With

[32] Lizzie Francke. "Girls On The Side." Premiere. U.K. ed., June 1995: 33.

this statement the women director becomes the one who can breathe new life into an old genre, who can utilise her supposed "femininity" (as indicated by the fact that her gender is deliberately drawn attention to) in order to cut through the traditionally "masculine" stereotypes of the action film. Her gender, and the different slant on things that this is seen to give her, are used to differentiate the film in the marketplace.

When it comes to the press kit for Deep Impact, we do not find any statements which are quite as obvious in their intent as the one above. Direct references to the director's gender are bypassed in favour of a more subtle approach which draws attention to the content and feel of the film as a marker of gendered difference. Unlike Armageddon, the press kit for Deep Impact concentrates on the humanity of the situation over and above its potential for extravagant special effects. Thus we get statements such as, "For all its epic sweep and stunning images, it is above all a human story, as each individual struggles in the face of extinction to find what matters most to him or her." As well as, "Inevitably special effects are going to come into play, because you can't tell a story of this scope without them. Here they'll enhance the human drama and provide a background for the whole story to come alive."

The film is pitched as one which is character-driven, emotional, concerned with the philosophical questions raised by confrontation with an apocalyptic event, such as "How would you live today, tomorrow, next week, if you knew the world might end in a year?" In fact it could be argued that Deep Impact is on one level being marketed as an issue-based drama, and as such is lent extra significance by Leder's association with the television series ER, which might also be categorised in this way. As is indicated in the press kit for The Peacemaker, it was Leder's work on that programme which led DreamWorks to approach her to direct the film:

> She had originally come to the attention of the producers for her award-winning work on the series ER...The producers recognized that her ability to blend fast-paced action

and human emotion- which are the hallmarks of the series- made her the perfect choice to direct this film.

Deep Impact's press kit is similarly keen to inform us that Leder is best-known for her work on ER when they write that the "threads of this immense human drama are brought together by director Mimi Leder. A two-time Emmy winner for her work on television's ER." In this way ER becomes a point of reference so that to some degree the audience knows what to expect: character-driven yet action-packed drama, which treats the issues it raises in a serious, intelligent way. These expectations are further underlined when we are reassured that this film is not just there to entertain, but also to get audiences thinking and asking themselves questions. As Leder herself is quoted as saying:

> This movie is not just about special effects and disasters...It is about the people- about us- about what we would do were a comet to hit the earth. There's a multitude of choices in the character's lives...and hopefully one [sic] will walk out of this movie re-evaluating their lives and the choices they've made.

Leder's description of her intent here comes close to implying that she is offering a message with her film. That is, we should think about what we have done with our lives, and what we still have left to do, before it's too late. This is noteworthy because, as Linda Seger has argued, many women filmmakers are careful to avoid espousing anything close to a message in their work for fear of being typecast as "feminine" or "feminist", and thus being marginalised. Seger writes,

> Issues make good drama... [But] these topics are not easily sold. Putting the positive into one's work is not always seen as dramatic, high concept, or commercial...Most mainstream women filmmakers shy away from any desire to do message drama...In fact, most understand the dangers of dealing with issue-oriented material.[33]

If we want to see evidence of such marginalisation at work in terms of Deep Impact we can point to a review of the film on video in Empire magazine. Ian Nathan comments that with

[33] Linda Seger. When Women Call The Shots: The Developing Power and Influence of Women in Television and Film (New York: Henry Holt, 1996) 240-2.

this film "Mimi Leder elects to play soap with a bunch of really dumb characters", and that it is "so laughably a TV movie, it makes Armageddon look like rocket science."[34] By comparing Deep Impact with both a TV movie and a Soap opera, Nathan picks out two genres which are frequently associated with both issue-based drama and a "feminine" sensibility. By calling the film a TV movie he refers to an area of filmmaking where many women directors have had considerable success, often using it as a career stepping stone to greater things, but uses it in this case as a derogatory term. His comment could also be interpreted as a veiled criticism of Leder since, as I have previously remarked, she began her directing career in television with series like LA Law, China Beach and ER, as well as directing several TV films.[35]

Words like "personal", "poetic", "emotions", "emotional", and "intimate" which are used in the publicity for Deep Impact could be said to have feminine connotations. They are words which evoke a sense of that which is passive and interior (popularly stereotyped as feminine) rather than active and exterior (popularly stereotyped as masculine). By the constant repetition of such words the makers of the film seem to want to make the epic into the everyday, and by doing so to catch an audience who might be put off by a more typical action-disaster film (and in the minds of Hollywood executives such people are usually thought to be women). Such an approach is particularly intriguing when compared with that taken by the almost identically themed film Armageddon which was released a few months later.

Since it was produced by Jerry Bruckheimer, who is well-known for massively successful action blockbusters like The Rock (1996) and Con Air (1997), it is not surprising that Armageddon opted for a more traditional marketing strategy for a blockbuster, selling itself primarily on the sheer size of the spectacle it had to offer the audience. On the official Armageddon web site Bruckheimer is quoted as saying "I love stories that are bigger than

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[34] Ian Nathan, Rev. of Deep Impact, Empire Dec. 1998: 138.

[35] For example Randa Haines, who went on to direct the Academy Award winning film Children of a Lesser God (1986), began her career in this way. Moreover, many women film directors have worked in television before making feature films, including Martha Coolidge, Mimi Leder, Penny Marshall and Betty Thomas.

life". The director Michael Bay says that they "wanted to make an epic film", and a special effects man comments that it was "the biggest film I've done". Unlike Deep Impact the makers of Armageddon do not try to downplay the role of the special effects in their film: the web site devotes a great deal of time to explaining how the effects were achieved, to the extent of telling us the quantities of materials used to construct the film's asteroid.[36]

Whereas Deep Impact depicts itself as a gentler, more woman-friendly blockbuster, Armageddon revels in the macho nature of its narrative and protagonists. The web site tells us that the film is about the "simplicity of real flesh-and-blood men up against the chaos of this asteroid"; that the main character (Harry Stamper, played by Bruce Willis) is "a hard-nosed guy...[who] comes from a long line of independent men"; and, just in case we've missed the point, Bruckheimer throws in a handy comparison by telling us the film is like "the Dirty Dozen in outer space." Yet it should also be noted that despite their eagerness to emphasise the film's testosterone level, the makers of Armageddon apparently also wanted to make sure there was something for the women in the audience. According to Rod Dreher, they sought to repeat Deep Impact's success with women filmgoers and make their film known to a female audience by re-cutting the film's trailer to be less "hardware-oriented" and more "people-oriented".[37] They also ran trailers on Ally McBeal which emphasised the romance between one of the characters (played by Ben Affleck) and his girlfriend (played by Liv Tyler).[38]

Some of the marketing techniques used to sell Armageddon differ vastly from those used to sell Deep Impact. Both films employed the kind of high concept advertising discussed earlier in this chapter, but only Armageddon had product tie-ins such as a deal with Nestlé, who made chocolate asteroids and "Nuclear chocolate" for the occasion, and a book about the making of the film. This is unsurprising since Armageddon was made by Touchstone who are

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[36] Originally available via a link on The Internet Movie Database 6 Mar. 1999 <http://www.uk.imdb.com>. No longer available on the web.
[37] Rod Dreher, "The Hitch On Trailers," New York Post 28 June 1998, New York Post Online 28 Mar. 2000 <http://www.nypost.com>.
[38] Richard Corliss, "Aieee! It's Summer!!" Time, 11 May 1998, 151.18, Time Online Archives 2 Sept. 2001 <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/archives>.

owned by Disney, a corporation who capitalise on related merchandise with every film they release. What is surprising is that Deep Impact, which was made by a studio jointly owned by one of the moguls of merchandising, Steven Spielberg, did not have any such tie-ins or promotions. One explanation for this could be that the film was rushed into production so that it could be released prior to Armageddon, leaving an insufficient time to organise such deals. However, it might also be that Deep Impact chose to stay away from such activities as another way of marking its difference from previous summer blockbusters: to show that it was more serious and more worthy because it was not as blatantly commercial as the others.

Armageddon's marketing strategy can be seen to trade purely on its adherence to the norms of the big-budget action film. On the other hand Deep Impact sells itself as a film which uses these norms as a framework yet seeks to go beyond them. This is something which I have argued occurs primarily through its positioning of the film as both a *female* (in terms of its director) and a *feminine* (in terms of narrative content) text. In saying this I am aware that I could be accused of implying that Deep Impact's marketing strategy was narrower than it actually was. As Peter Bart reveals in The Gross, Paramount felt that it could not afford to be too subtle in its marketing campaign for the film and, despite the objections of some of its creative team, they ran television ads and trailers which concentrated on the destructive power of the comet.[39] It is not my intention to imply that the positioning of Deep Impact as "female" and "feminine" was the only strategy used to sell the film, but that it was certainly one of the key strategies. In the wake of Titanic's success with female moviegoers (a Newsweek article states that the films' audience was sixty per cent female) the makers of Deep Impact obviously felt that they too could capitalise on the industry's latest rediscovery of the female audience, and included elements in the marketing of their film (romance, relationships, emotions) which they perceived would appeal to that demographic.[40] Yet, as with the marketing of Titanic which also played on its status as the latest film from the

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[39] Bart 171-2.
[40] David Ansen, "Our Titanic Love Affair," Newsweek, International ed., 23 Feb. 1998: 47.

acclaimed action director James Cameron, this did not preclude Deep Impact from also reaching out to a wider demographic.

To conclude, it is not surprising that the makers of Deep Impact, and also The Peacemaker, used Leder as one way of differentiating their films in the marketplace, since choosing a woman to direct such films was the kind of unique event that helps to create interest and publicity. In fact it would have been more unusual if they had not done so. With a woman director at the helm of a *different* kind of action film, both Deep Impact and The Peacemaker had something to make them stand out and be noticed, and judging by several articles and reviews which mention Leder's name in this context it was a tactic which served them well. To take three examples, at the time of The Peacemaker's American release Amy Wallace commented that "women action directors might bring something different to the screen" (In Leder's words a "'smart' action movie"), and argued that Leder was a director who was "not afraid to be a woman at work."[41] Similarly Michael Willington states that The Peacemaker proved that DreamWorks were "trying to give us a progressive variation on the usual high-tech clichés. The director and one of the good guys are both women".[42] Leila Segal also wrote a piece on Leder in the Guardian prior to Deep Impact's British release in which she argued that the director had managed to breathe new life into a traditionally masculine genre.[43] By stressing the "femininity" of Deep Impact and The Peacemaker (and Leder's role in developing that) the filmmakers were seemingly intent on detracting from the more conventional elements of these films in order to make them appear more novel, and as a result more attractive, to audiences.

It is vital to point out, however, that using a woman director to sell a film in this way is problematic in that it equates a director's gender (female) with certain thematic concerns (feminine), and consequently reinforces rather than overturns traditional stereotypes. A female director's gender might serve as an interesting topic for discussion in the media,

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[41] Wallace A1.
[42] Michael Wilmington, "Peace Offering," Chicago Tribune 26 Sept. 1997, CN ed.: A. Chicago Tribune Online Archives 26 May 2001 <http://pqasb.pqarchiver.com/chicagotribune>.
[43] Leila Segal, "A Piece of the Action," Guardian 19 May 1998, CD-ROM ed.: 7.

bringing her much needed recognition, but it can also quickly result in a situation where that is all that is discussed. As a result many women directors (especially those working in Hollywood) demand to be referred to simply as directors since, as they point out, male directors are never gendered. It is significant that many of Deep Impact's critics made a link between the fact that the film chose to concentrate on people rather than explosions and the fact that it was directed by a woman. For example, Janet Maslin writes that Leder "directs with a distinct womanly touch. Within the end-of-the-world action genre, it's rare to find attention paid to rescuing art, antiques, elephants and flamingos."[44] Similarly, in a People Online review of the film we are told that,

> director Mimi Leder brings - how to say this without sounding patronising? - a woman's touch to the disaster genre. Although she includes several obligatory, let's blow stuff-up special effects sequences, Impact's midsection is devoted to touchy-feely scenes of characters who...strive to get their relationships in order before the comet hits.[45]

Like Titanic before it, Deep Impact is a film which can be viewed as turning many of the traditional ideas about blockbusters and their audiences on their head. Warren Buckland has stated that the blockbuster is "aimed at an undifferentiated popular audience rather than at any particular sector of the viewing population."[46] However both Deep Impact and Titanic clearly sought to target a female audience within the structure of a much wider campaign addressed to a mass audience. In other words the female demographic were viewed as a niche market who could be lured into the cinema on the promise of seeing a new, more female-friendly blockbuster (one with less emphasis on special effects and more on characters).

The danger of such a strategy is that it is still predicated on the assumption that there are "men's" and "women's" movies which have almost exclusive appeal to the corresponding

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[44] Janet Maslin, Rev. of Deep Impact, New York Times 8 May 1998, New York Times Online Archives 2 Sept. 2001 <http://search.nytimes.com/search>.
[45] Leah Rozen, Rev. of Deep Impact, People 25 May 1998, People Online Movie Database 10 July 1998 <http://www.people.aol.com/people/movie_reviews/98/deep.html>.
[46] Warren Buckland, "A Close Encounter with Raiders of the Lost Ark: Notes on Narrative Aspects of the New Hollywood Blockbuster," eds. Steve Neale and Murray Smith Contemporary Hollywood Cinema (London: Routledge, 1998) 166-7.

gender. To argue, as Peter Kramer has done, that Titanic was able to secure a mixed audience because it had enough action to interest "Hollywood's main target audience of young males" is an inadequate explanation for either that film or Deep Impact since it makes stereotypical assumptions about what attracts women or men to see a film (love and romance for the women, and high-tech action for the men), without taking into account that the many different women who viewed these films would not all have had the same reasons for seeing them.[47] In addition, when a female director is factored into the equation (as Leder was in the marketing of The Peacemaker and Deep Impact) the temptation is to suggest that her gender is inextricably tied up with the elements of the film which are gendered as female in a cause and effect model. As a result of this her contribution to the action side of the equation is downplayed, and the possibility of naturalising a woman in the role of action director is only partially fulfilled.

On a more positive note Deep Impact's success can be seen to have a potentially beneficial effect for other women directors. Unlike some female-directed, female-themed films, Deep Impact managed to create a situation where the mention of those things which society typically deems womanly (relationships, emotions) did not minimise the potential audience. In addition the makers of the film may have actively sought to appeal to a female audience but they did not assume that it would *only* appeal to a female audience, thus ensuring that the film had a high-budget marketing campaign, and a high-profile Summer release, opening in over three thousand locations.

This case study of the marketing of Leder's films highlights some of the many ambiguities inherent in being a woman director working in Hollywood. On the one hand by revealing that one's gender can be packaged and exploited (often without one's agreement) as a marketing tool it demonstrates how difficult it is for female filmmakers to escape the "woman" part of the phrase "woman director". On the other hand it proves that women can be taken seriously as the directors of highly commercial, mass-marketed and mass-distributed

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[47] Kramer 600.

films, which is extremely important in an industry like Hollywood which prefers to off-set financial risks by using filmmakers who bring with them a track record of financial success. Mimi Leder may have only had experience of directing for television when she was given the job of helming The Peacemaker, but this was unimportant since Steven Spielberg's involvement as one of the owners of DreamWorks was enough of a guarantee in itself. After all, only by tackling the widest possible variety of films will women directors ever break out of that Catch 22 situation which dictates that a woman director cannot be trusted with genre X because she has no experience of working in genre X, but she can only get that experience if the opportunity of working in genre X is open to her. However it remains to be seen whether other women directors will be able to capitalise on Leder's entrance into action blockbuster territory, or if they will remain simply a marketable novelty in that generic arena.

Chapter Four

A Woman in Man's Clothing: The Androgynous Nature of the Female Director as "Star"

The premise of this chapter is that material which has been written by film theorists under the banner of star studies is also useful in examining the place of the director in the film industry. Like stars, many directors present a certain image to the public: an image which is, in Richard Dyer's words, created from "media texts that can be grouped together as *promotion, publicity, films* and *commentaries/criticism*."[1] According to Dyer, these "star images" are inherently polysemic and as such are shifting and complex rather than fixed and transparent. To this I would add that the female director's star image (if she has one) is more complex and contradictory than most, since a negotiation of the stereotypical director (male and white) is a prerequisite for its construction.

I begin my discussion with a brief apologia for the relevance of star theory to the study of the director, and then move on to an examination of the way appearance functions in the creation of the female director's star image. I have chosen to concentrate on the "look" of the woman director because it is the role that physical appearance plays in the development and sustenance of a star image that is potentially the biggest obstacle to accepting that directors can be read as stars. That is, one of the defining qualities of a star is the way they look: it is one of the things that makes them attractive to us, as well as one of the elements their publicity machine can focus on to encourage us to become attracted. Yet by demonstrating that appearance also plays an important role in the development of a director's image I intend to overcome such reservations, and narrow the theoretical gap between director and star. I argue that appearance is especially important to a discussion of the female director as "star" since women are traditionally read by and constructed through the way they look far more often than men. Moreover because women are not viewed as *natural* directors,

[1] Richard Dyer, Stars (BFI: London, 1979) 68.

because they are not male, their presence in that role must somehow be explained and negotiated. One method of doing this is to project a "masculine" image by wearing what could be perceived as male dress, which leads me into a discussion of cross-dressing and androgyny. The way a director looks is an important part of the way they are perceived. Unfortunately for women, the archetypal director "looks" male, leaving them in a position where they too may have to "look" like this in order to be taken seriously. For example Kathryn Bigelow picks up on this when she states that since she "can't have a deep, bellowing voice on set, at least I have size." In other words, she may not sound like a man, but at least she has his physical presence. However appearing to be too "masculine" can also be a problem for women directors, resulting in a situation where commentators are compelled to search for evidence of their "femininity".

Star Studies and the Director

It is essential to begin by contextualising the relevance of star studies to a consideration of the director. There are precedents for such an undertaking in, for instance, the work of Charles Maland on Charlie Chaplin (as both star actor and star director) and Robert E. Kapsis on Alfred Hitchcock. Broadly speaking both works explore the way in which these directors' star images were constructed, sustained, and frequently altered or undermined by the film industry within which they worked; the social and historical context in which they lived; and by the men themselves. Following on from more conventional studies of star actors Maland and Kapsis examine the "media texts" surrounding the star in order to identify the "complex and shifting set of meanings, attitudes, and mental pictures" associated with Chaplin and Hitchcock.[2] Both studies demonstrate that the public images of directors, like those of film stars, are complicated constructs which tell us as much about the beliefs and value systems of the world in which those individuals exist as they do about the stars themselves. Although there is not a huge amount of theoretical material in existence

[2] Charles Maland, Chaplin and American Culture: The Evolution of a Star Image (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989) xiv.

which reads the director as star, the phenomenon of the celebrity director, as well as the utilisation of the director's name as a marketing tool in selling films, is not exactly new. Kapsis writes that the use of the director's name to promote films can be traced back to European film culture in the twenties. For instance, in 1925 Hitchcock informed a group at the British Film Society that "it was important that the public learn to associate the name of the director with a quality product."[3]

Despite the fact that, according to Paul McDonald, star studies "emerged in part as a reaction against auteurism", the advent of auteur theory has further enabled the formulation of the director as "star" by casting him or her as a figure whose *personality* is the organisational force behind a series of films. In this way, as Paul Smith points out, auteur theory enables "a body of work" to be "discursively attached to a particular name and popularly understood to 'belong' to that name." [4] This is a process which has become especially crucial in the contemporary Hollywood film industry. This statement is supported by an article in the San Diego Union-Tribune in which two directors, Bryan Singer and Joel Schumacher, describe how being a director in Hollywood in the nineties is very much like being a star. Singer explains that you are built up in the press as soon as you have a couple of box-office hits, and "[I]t's almost like being a movie star." Consequently, he continues, you are also "on the line, just like a star" (you have to attract the audiences with your product) and so are allowed fewer opportunities to make a mistake than directors used to be. Similarly Joel Schummacher comments that in today's Hollywood "directors get gobbled up like celebrities. If you're hot, it's great...If there's no heat on you, you don't exist." In other words you have to have that certain something (for instance, a history of box-office success, or endorsement as "the next big thing") in order to succeed, and the image you project can play a big part in helping you show the rest of the world that you have "It". As Jim Shelley has written, "In Hollywood ...reputation is everything. You are what you are perceived to be

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[3] Robert E. Kapsis, Hitchcock: The Making of a Reputation (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992) 16.
[4] Paul McDonald, "Star Studies," Approaches to Popular Film, eds. Joanne Hollows and Mark Jancovich (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1995) 80; Paul Smith, Clint Eastwood: A Cultural Production (London: UCI Press, 1993) xiv.

by the media, the public and the studios. You are your image.[5] The pursuit of success in an ever more commercially competitive film industry has meant that directors, like stars, have increasingly come to be packaged as a set of character traits and personal beliefs which shape, and are shaped by, the films they make. The packaged director becomes a useful tool in the promotion of his or her films in the marketplace. For example directors frequently travel all over the world to give interviews and appear at film festivals, using their personality to sell their work. The emphasis placed on image within the industry also helps explain why studios are so eager to hand over the directorial reins to actors who already have well-established and well-known star images which can be built upon in order to market them as directors.

The director's name is frequently transformed into a kind of aesthetic "brand name" which identifies what the audience (or consumers) can expect from the film (or product). The best example of the "director-as-brand-name" in contemporary Hollywood is undoubtedly Steven Spielberg. As John Baxter has commented: "Historically, Steven Spielberg and his films were inevitable. The McDonald's movie, the Coca-Cola cinema, mass-marketed to a waiting world".[6] Directors like Spielberg who have a name which is immediately recognisable to the film going public, find themselves in a much more powerful position than their peers. As the Hollywood Reporter's "Director Power" Survey 1998 states, they are able to "attract audiences, attention, financing and...other talent in front of and behind the camera", by virtue of "their last names alone". Not surprisingly the directors who the Director Power survey tells us possess this ability are exclusively male.[7]

This is not to imply that all male directors are predestined to rise to the rank of superstars, while all women directors will remain uncelebrated on the cinematic margins. As studio executive Russell Schwartz has noted, the "director's name as a personage is limited to

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[5] Bernard Weinraub, "Film Directors are Hollywood's New Stars," San Diego Union-Tribune 13 June 1997: E6, San Diego Union-Tribune Online Archives 20 Oct. 2000 <http://pqasb. pqarchiver. com sandiego/index.html>. Jim Shelley, "LA is Burning," Guardian 23 Dec. 1995, Weekend sec., CD-ROM: 12.
[6] John Baxter, Steven Spielberg: The Unauthorised Biography (London: Harper Collins, 1996) 408.
[7] John Burman, "Director Power," Hollywood Reporter 20 Oct. 1998, Hollywood Reporter Online Archives 30 Dec. 1998 <http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/search.asp>.

just a very few."[8] However it must be said that male directors are far more likely to find themselves to be one of those "very few" than their female equivalents. If nothing else the statistical imbalance between men and women working in the profession ensures that this will be the case. Leaving this to one side, Schwartz's quote has the potential to undermine the theoretical basis of this chapter: if only a handful of directors ever achieve *true* star status then how can those outside this group, and especially women directors, be in possession of *star* images? In response I would argue that the director's ultimate success or failure in becoming a recognisable public figure is separable from the creation of his or her star image. The texts which surround a particular director and the films he or she makes (such as interviews, articles, press releases, biographies, film reviews and so on) come together to form a discernible (star) image for that director, regardless of whether that image becomes recognisable enough to pass into the public consciousness and truly make that director a "star".

Stepping Out From Behind the Camera: the "Look" of the Woman Director

I will now turn to a consideration of the role of appearance in the construction of a director's star image. By appearance I am referring to the ways in which the physical appearance of a star, his or her "look", is not only visible on screen, but also how it is presented and represented in words and photographs within the numerous media texts surrounding that star. Obviously considerations of appearance are not going to have quite the same resonance for directors as they do for stars, whose bodies are effectively raw material to be worked and reworked in establishing their image, and whose "look" on and off-screen (clothes, hair, gestures, body shape etc.) is always a key selling point for both them and their films. Most directors, on the other hand, are not written about or photographed frequently enough to make this the case. Yet a focus on appearance certainly has been, and still is, part of the process of fabricating a recognisable image for an individual director. For instance,

[8] Burman.

Kapsis writes that Alfred Hitchcock developed a simple line drawing of his face which was subsequently used in publicity for his films.[9]

Appearance seems to figure very differently in the star image of a woman director than it does in that of a man. Whereas writings on male directors tend to drop in details about appearance in a rather incidental and infrequent manner, noting perhaps that an individual has a beard or grey hair, those on women directors frequently overemphasise physical details, commenting at great length on the clothes she wears, or her perceived attractiveness. If an article draws attention to a male director's appearance, or presents us with a photograph of him, these representations sometimes use physical details as shorthand to evoke the sense of power, wealth, ability, strength, intellect and so on, connected with that individual. In an article on Steven Spielberg Richard Corliss writes that the director has a "cute bald spot" on "an otherwise fertile scalp that sheathes his even more fertile brain."[10] The accompanying photographs also help support the impression of intelligence. One depicts Spielberg smiling kindly and dressed in a casual sweater, but with the suggestion of wealth evident in his expensive-looking glasses (which give him an intellectual air) and his well groomed appearance. Behind him is the head of the Tyrannosaurus Rex from Jurassic Park (1993) and The Lost World (1997), its jaws opened menacingly as if about to attack. The caption reads "Paterfamilias: Living the role at home and at work." The fact that Spielberg looks unperturbed by the monster behind him gives the sense that he is someone who is completely in control, who metaphorically shares or even exceeds its power. By calling him a "paterfamilias" both in his private (as represented in the photo by the wedding ring clearly visible on his hand) and professional life (as represented by his mastery over the T. Rex), the article depicts him as a benevolent patriarch who is not only the head of his real family, but of his Hollywood family as well (see appendix C, fig. 1).

In the case of women directors an emphasis on physical appearance is far more likely to be tied to perceptions about sexuality and/or femininity. It is as though her atypical

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[9] Kapsis 20.
[10] Richard Corliss, "Peter Pan Grows Up. But Can He Still Fly?" Time 16 June 1997, International ed.: 101.

position as a woman who directs can only be *naturalised* by making reference to either the physical markers of her "womanliness", or her lack of it. This is not to say that a woman director's physical characteristics are never presented or interpreted as markers of power, or intelligence (as the case of Jodie Foster will demonstrate), but that they are very rarely presented as denoting *only* these qualities.

Why does this disparity between representations of appearance in male and female directors' star images exist? As Judith Mayne suggests when she states how difficult it has been to view women as anything other than "objects of the cinematic gaze", this might be due to the fact that one of the commonest, if not *the* commonest, and literally most visible places for women in the film industry has been as an image on screen rather than as the director of those images. As a result emphasis has inevitably been placed on how a woman working in Hollywood *looks*, more often than on what she *does*. Consequently Judith Mayne writes of Dorothy Arzner: "[A]s a woman in Hollywood, she had to have looks."[11] The director Martha Coolidge also recounts an anecdote which illustrates this point well:

> I wanted to be a director, but this one commercial producer who...kept hiring me as an assistant editor...said..."When you apply for these jobs"- these were on-set jobs - "get your nails done and make sure you wear eyelashes. Make sure you look like a secretary, even though you're schlepping equipment."[12]

Evidently the woman who directs is a figure so alien that she necessitates a struggle to reconcile popular perceptions about what a director is (male, authoritative, a creator of images) with what a woman in Hollywood has been (decorative, passive, image). Whilst these perceptions are problematic because for one thing directing is a more collaborative and co-operative process than such a stereotype would lead us to believe, and for another women throughout Hollywood's history have actually overturned these narrow definitions, they remain prevalent.

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[11] Judith Mayne, Directed By Dorothy Arzner (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1994) 172, 153.
[12] Quoted in Rachel Abramowitz, "The Company Of Women," Premiere Women In Hollywood Special 1993: 110.

A noticeable by-product of the need to represent women who work in Hollywood in terms of the way they look is the way in which material about women directors often conflates the film-star with the director, as though the woman behind the screen can only be rationalised by the woman on it. Martha Coolidge has been described by one writer as having a "throaty voice" which "rises to the warbling musicality of Jean Arthur, and she projects something of the Arthur magic".[13] Similarly Nora Ephron has been compared to the character played by Meg Ryan in Sleepless In Seattle.[14] However perhaps the most striking example of this tendency is, as Christina Lane has also suggested, to be found in representations of Kathryn Bigelow.[15]

In common with the star images of numerous actresses, Bigelow's star image is highly sexualised. One article about her in the Los Angeles Times is entitled "Black Leather Director in a Business World"; and Clarke Taylor writes that "swathed in black leather and endowed with an icy, daunting beauty, she looked like the world's highest priced dominatrix."[16] Sarah Gristwood has even observed that the "[t]all, elegant, dressed in black" Bigelow gave interviews about Strange Days (1995) at the Venice Film Festival "in front of a poster which read: "You want it really." While this phrase is actually the tag line for Strange Days, Gristwood's mention of it in conjunction with Bigelow's appearance gives the impression that the director is something of a sexually-charged and sexually provocative figure herself. Over and over again the media texts surrounding Bigelow reveal themselves to be obsessed with her appearance. Virtually every article written about her is compelled to

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[13] Paul Attanasio, "The Road To Hollywood," Washington Post 7 Aug. 1985: C2. Jean Arthur played a large number of mainly comic roles in films between the twenties and the fifties, such as Mr Deeds Goes To Town (1936) and The More The Merrier (1943).
[14] Randy Sue Coburn, "An Affair To Inspire," Premiere July 1993: 58.
[15] Christina Lane, Feminist Hollywood: From Born in Flames to Point Break (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2000) 103-4.
[16] Clarke Taylor, "Black Leather Director in a Business World," Los Angeles Times 9 Oct. 1988, Home ed., Calendar sec.: 28, Kathryn Bigelow Website 12 Nov. 1999 <www.kathrynbigelow.com/articles/latimes.html>; "The Director Wore Black," Vogue Oct. 1995, U.S. ed., Kathryn Bigelow Website 12 Dec. 1999 <http://www.kathrynbigelow.com/articles/vogue.html>. No author's name supplied.

comment on her style, her poise, her striking beauty. So much so in fact that many writers sound like fashion journalists waxing lyrical about the latest supermodel.[17]

Jamie Diamond has described Bigelow as looking like an old-fashioned movie star: "Even though she's wearing jeans, cowboy boots, and a T-shirt full of holes, she conveys the sort of glamour that movie stars used to."[18] Angie Errigo describes her as "Tall and slim as a model...dressed in clothes just too well cut to be American. giving off an overall poise as cool as any great glacial screen goddess."[19] Nor are Diamond and Errigo alone in their opinions. Bigelow is frequently discussed and photographed as though she were a visible presence on celluloid. Jim Shelley comments that hiding her "striking good looks behind dark glasses", and answering few questions about herself, her image is that of the "enigma". [20] This is a statement which brings to mind the stereotypical heroines of film noir (those attractive, mysterious women with a dangerous edge), and film noir also happens to be a genre which Bigelow has cited as an influence on her own work.[21] By association Bigelow finds herself cast as one of those feminine riddles: a contradictory and unreadable woman whose generically complex films complicate her image rather than clarify it. This impression of Bigelow is further enhanced by the photograph which accompanies Jim Shelley's article: the shot is of her upper body, and her hands are laced and held out in front of her. Her face is partially hidden by her hair, giving her a veiled, mysterious look (see appendix C, fig. 2). The way in which the photograph is lit is reminiscent of the kind of lighting techniques which are often said to be typical of film noir: David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson write that "low-key lighting has usually been applied to somber and mysterious scenes." This gives the effect of "*chiaroscuro*, or extremely dark and light regions within the image."[22]

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[17] Sarah Gristwood, "The Unflinching Woman," Evening Standard 26 Oct. 1995, Kathryn Bigelow Website 12 Nov. 1999 <http://www.kathrynbigelow.com/articles/grist.html>.
[18] Jamie Diamond, "Kathryn Bigelow Pushes the Potentiality Envelope," New York Times 22 Oct. 1995, Kathryn Bigelow Website 12 Nov. 1999 <http://www.kathrynbigelow.com/articles/nytime.html>.
[19] Angie Errigo, "Action!" Empire Dec. 1991: 76.
[20] Shelley.
[21] For example, in "Walk on the Wild Side," Monthly Film Bulletin Nov. 1990: 313, she states "I'm a huge fan of *film noir*, but I'm less interested in updating it than in reinventing it[.]"
[22] David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson, Film Art: An Introduction, 4th ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1993) 156.

In order to provide further ammunition for the argument that Kathryn Bigelow is a figure who blurs the boundaries between star and director, we can point to a comment made by Jamie Lee Curtis, the star of Bigelow's Blue Steel (1990). Curtis says that she felt like a "fat dwarf" compared to the director, and adds that "you don't want to be on the same set with her on the other side of the camera".[23] By physically comparing herself to her director, and judging herself to be less attractive, Curtis is effectively undermining her status as Blue Steel's star (in the sense of the word "star" being used to indicate an actor whose value is partially measured by physical appearance), and placing Bigelow in that role instead. With just a few well-chosen words a woman like Bigelow can be transformed into both the *director* and the *directed*.

This conflation between film star and director can be viewed as indicative of a desire to conflate the differences between women and formulate a stable category: "woman". By this I mean that the potential threat posed by the woman who acts as a maker of images is negated by merging her with the woman-as-image, and consequently returning her to a more acceptably "feminine" place. This statement must be qualified, however, by stressing that the conflation between female director and female star in a given star image might, on some level, be actively encouraged by the director herself. As Yvonne Tasker has argued:

> Laid back publicity shots enhance her image: Bigelow in shades, tailored suede, jeans, leather, with a moody expression, looking like an extra from one of her own movies. She may distance herself from performance art in interviews, but the crafting of her persona is a performance in itself[.][24]

Tasker's words suggest that Bigelow is involved in the creation of her star image; that she uses the way she looks as a means of attracting publicity for her films; and that her "look" is as much a performance as it is natural. The use of the word "performance" here is particularly significant since it is a word used by Richard Dyer in his writing on stars. He states that "performance is what the performer does in addition to the actions/functions she or

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[23] Quoted in Elissa Van Poznak, "Steel Magnolia," Elle Dec. 1990, U.K. ed.: 73.
[24] Yvonne Tasker, "Bigger Than Life," Sight and Sound May 1999: 13.

he performs in the plot and the lines she or he is given to say". He also identifies some of the signs of performance as facial expression, voice, gestures and body posture. Although Bigelow is not an actress, her repetition of certain expressions and poses across various publicity photos (her "tough girl" stance, her serious almost sneering expression) suggests that star performances are not limited to the on-screen behaviour of actors.[25]

I am not trying to suggest that male directors have never been compared with the characters in their films. A key part of Spielberg's star image, for example, is that he shares with his characters, such as Peter Pan or ET, a kind of childlike, other worldly innocence.[26] Yet with women directors this comparison is often formulated with a different end in mind. That is, as a way of reconciling the tension between the woman on-screen and the woman in charge behind it. Conflation becomes a way of *naturalising* the woman in the unexpected role of director, and giving us once again a stable and unified category called "woman".

Women directors often have a "look" which draws upon the stereotypical appearance of the contemporary male director. This look is depicted in a Premiere article which includes photos of what they believe typical Hollywood types, such as directors and producers, look like. The "director" is pictured as a middle aged, white male, wearing a baseball cap, sunglasses, headphones, and a lens around his neck. His clothes are casual and sporty (waterproof jacket, shirt, jeans) and the magazine describes him as "[n]ot dressed for school exactly, and not dressed for work." (see appendix C, fig. 3).[27] Empire identifies this look as having originated with Steven Spielberg claiming that, "His influence on mainstream Hollywood is incaluable...even setting the stereotype - jeans, sneakers, baseball cap - for a directorial dress code."[28]

These established codes of appearance are sometimes adopted by women directors. It is possible to point to countless pictures of women directors looking like a female version of

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[25] Dyer 151.
[26] The previously cited article by Richard Corliss on Spielberg is called "Peter Pan Grows Up", and one of the chapters in Baxter's biography is called "The Man Who Fell to Earth".
[27] Premiere Sept. 1990, U.S. ed.: 95.
[28] Ian Freer, "The Feat of Steven," Empire Mar. 1998: 98.

the aforementioned Premiere "director". Take two articles from DGA Magazine (the magazine of The Director's Guild of America, and so presumably a crucial forum in which to present a strong image which will appeal to the rest of the industry) about Jodie Foster and Mimi Leder. In the Jodie Foster article one photo shows her directing Little Man Tate (1991) dressed in a sweatshirt, wearing a baseball cap and headphones. and peering through a camera lens. Another shows her on the set of Home For The Holidays (1995) wearing a checked shirt, waterproof jacket and another baseball cap. The Mimi Leder article pictures the director on the set of The Peacemaker (1997) dressed in the ubiquitous baseball cap, anorak and shades (see appendix C, fig. 4 and 5).[29] Christina Lane has commented that Jodie Foster is often

> posed wearing markers of "butch" lesbianism, such as denim, leather, or men's clothing. This is particularly true in photos that came out around the release of The Accused...It is also true in photos that depict her as a film director, a conventionally masculine role. In the late 1980s, Elle magazine labelled Foster's fashion choices as "lumberjack chic".[30]

Viewed in this way Foster both literally and metaphorically wears the male director's clothes as a means of blending into, rather than standing out in, what Lane calls "a conventionally masculine role." Leder and Foster are not alone in their symbolic transvestism. There are other photographs of women directors wearing clothes that, combined with additional aspects of their star image, have the effect of making them seem more stereotypically "masculine" than "feminine". One of the ways in which Kathryn Bigelow's "tough girl" persona is either expressed by the director (if you subscribe to the opinion that it is a deliberate strategy on her part) or simply referred to by those who wish to make her fit certain gendered categorisations (such as "this is what a female director of action movies should look like"), is through her

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[29] Jon Stevens, "Jodie Foster Goes 'Home' for her Second Feature," DGA Magazine Jan.-Feb. 1996, DGA Magazine Online Archives 2 Sept. 2001 <http://www.dga.org/index2.php3>; Patricia Troy, "Mimi Leder Helms DreamWorks First Feature," DGA Magazine Sept.-Oct. 1997, DGA Magazine Online Archives 2 Sept. 2001 <http://www.dga.org/index2.php3>.

[30] Christina Lane, "The Liminal Iconography of Jodie Foster," Journal of Popular Film and Television Jan. 1995, The Author's Jodie Foster Website 4 Nov. 1999 <http://www.geocities.com/Hollywood/set/2417/liminal-icon.html>.

choice of clothes. In a photograph which accompanies an Elle article about the director called "Steel Magnolia" Bigelow is dressed in jeans and a Marlon Brando-esque (circa the 1953 film The Wild One) leather biker jacket. She adopts a pose which echoes that of the stereotypical fifties rebel, as played by Brando or James Dean: her hands are in her pockets and she wears a confident, "don't mess with me" look to go with her leathers (see appendix C, fig. 6). This association between fifties rebel and maverick director is further endorsed by the fact that the first feature film Bigelow directed, The Loveless (1982), was a study of a fifties motorcycle gang, and Brando's character in The Wild One was actually a biker named Johnny.[31]

Continuing the androgynous theme one might point out that Nora Ephron often poses for photographs dressed in mannishly cut suits reminiscent of the kind worn by classic Hollywood actresses such as Marlene Dietrich, Greta Garbo and Katherine Hepburn. These give her the kind of businesslike, no-nonsense look that goes well with the assertive and capable image she likes to project.[32] In a Guardian article Ephron is pictured wearing a classic cream three piece suit; and in a piece on Sleepless In Seattle for Premiere she poses in front of the Empire State building, dressed again in a lightly coloured three piece suit, her hands casually in her pockets. This choice of shot also has a significance beyond the fact that the final scene of Sleepless takes place atop The Empire State Building: it juxtaposes Ephron with New York in a similar way to some publicity shots of Woody Allen (see appendix C, fig. 7, 8 and 9). Moreover the article itself actually encourages the reader to make a comparison between Ephron and Allen by revealing that Ephron brings an "urban edge" to the romantic comedy; that she is "an intellectual Jewish woman from New York" whose famous novel (Heartburn, 1983) and directorial debut (This Is My Life, 1992) were both about "Jewish women from New York"; and most importantly that she knows Allen because she had a cameo role in Crimes and Misdemeanors (1989), and is working with one of his

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[31] Van Poznak 71.

[32] For instance, in Peter Biskind, "The World According to Nora," Premiere Mar. 1992 (23-6) various people who know Nora, such as her sister Delia, the actress Carrie Fisher, and the producer Lynda Obst, remark that Ephron is a very self-assured and un-neurotic women, who is completely decisive when it comes to directing.

cinematographers (Sven Nykvist) on Sleepless. In an earlier interview Ephron has even said that there are scenes in This Is My Life which are reminiscent of "the kind of thing that Woody does." In this way Ephron not only demands to be seen as a "serious" director because she looks like one, but because she works like one as well.[33]

Obviously it should be noted that such clothes are worn by directors for reasons other than symbolic: considerations of fashion and personal style must also be taken into account. The kind of casual clothes male directors wear on set are chosen because they are practical for the job they do (no-one would expect to see a director on set dressed in evening wear), and so it follows that female directors will be similarly attired. Yet it is important to remember that in some cases the director (or her stylist or publicist) will have chosen clothes with a particular photo shoot in mind, which raises the possibility that her look may on some level be fabricated with a certain end in mind: such as the desire to appear tough or businesslike. An article of clothing like the director's baseball cap has a meaning above and beyond its literal one. As the above comment about Spielberg from Empire demonstrates, it has come to symbolise the typical contemporary Hollywood director, who is nearly always male. The baseball cap is also more likely to be identified as a male article of clothing rather than a unisex one thanks to the associations it has with sport (an activity which is traditionally deemed masculine). Sport has also been used as a metaphor for filmmaking. As Linda Seger explains, the "traditional definition of *power* depends on competition where someone is on top, others below, some winning, others losing. Traditionally the world of business has been defined by the male metaphor of sports and competition. The film industry is no different." To support her claims she gives the example of one television executive who notes that the extensive use of sports metaphors in industry conversations are probably due to the fact that both sport and cinema are historically male-dominated fields. He says, "It's all

[33] Xan Brooks, "The Mother Confessor," Guardian 19 Feb. 1999: 3; Coburn 54-8; Biskind 23.

about playing the game, keeping your eye on the ball, going to bat for the script, and winning".[34]

These connections between sport, sports clothes, and filmmaking are particularly relevant to a cover shot of Penny Marshall which accompanies an article in New York Times Magazine. Marshall is pictured standing in front of a sign which reads "Columbia Studios", and wearing a baseball catcher's uniform. The Headline on the cover reads "Director Penny Marshall: Making It in the Majors" (see appendix C, fig. 10). The most obvious reason for Marshall posing in this manner is because the interview discusses her new film (A League of Their Own (1992)) which is about baseball. However on a deeper level the picture links the subject matter of the film (women who find success in the male-dominated arena of sport) with Marshall's experiences as a woman director in Hollywood (a woman who has found success in the male-dominated arena of directing). Marshall is dressed in a catcher's uniform which echoes the position League's heroine Dottie plays in the film: thus equating the director with one of her characters. The title "Making It in the Majors" (a linguistic play on Major League baseball) makes reference not only to the way in which League's characters prove that women can compete just as well as men in the gruelling world of baseball, but also to the way Marshall has proved that a woman director in Hollywood can "hit it big" at the box-office (the Columbia sign is the visual reference to the Major League in which Penny is competing).To lend credence to this interpretation of the photo the article's author, Peggy Orenstein, also makes the comment that "Like the heroines of 'League'...Marshall...has succeeded *in a man's game*." In this shot Marshall goes one step further than her baseball-cap wearing peers by donning full baseball attire in order to publicise her film, and perhaps also to take on a little of the strength that this image projects thanks to its connections with the "masculine".

Admittedly we do not know whether the choice of pose was Marshall's, her publicists, or the magazine's; but this is less important than the fact that the content of the

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[34]Linda Seger, When Women Call The Shots: The Developing Power and Influence of Women in Television and Film (New York: Henry Holt, 1996) 59.

picture and the words which accompany it are proof of the popular cultural association between what is categorised as male attire (sports clothes) and the outward display of one's power. In spite of this Orenstein's article, as I demonstrate in chapter six, is paradoxically concerned with undermining Marshall's apparently powerful image by commenting on her tendency to display stereotypically "feminine" behaviours on set. She also reveals that League does not fulfil the criteria for a "feminist" film because it is far too cinematically and politically conventional. For example she comments on Marshall's decision to shoot a scene so that Geena Davis does not appear too much taller than Tom Hanks. Evidently for Orenstein simply adopting the symbols of male authority does not an acceptably "feminist" woman director make. Yet perhaps this is also one reason why Marshall and/or her publicists are compelled to create a visual image of the director which is determinedly non "feminine": one which stresses the Sports movie side of League rather then the emotional, "women's film" elements that Orenstein also picks up on.[35]

The director Penelope Spheeris has said, "I do believe that if I was a man with a beard and a baseball hat like you're supposed to be if you're a director, they would probably listen to me."[36] Perhaps, then, the adoption of masculine dress as part of a female director's image is motivated by the desire to be listened to and taken more seriously, and to promote an image (particularly in industry publications such as DGA Magazine) that says you mean business. Nor is this anything new for the female director in Hollywood. In Directed By Dorothy Arzner Judith Mayne undertakes a detailed examination of Arzner's image, pointing out that the director "adopted a persona that can best be described as butch: she wore tailored, "masculine" clothing; her short hair was slicked back; she wore no make up; and she struck poses of confidence and authority." While Arzner's "butch" image begs to be interpreted in the context of her status as a lesbian director (and indeed is by Mayne) it is also revealing in the wider context of her existence as a female director in Hollywood. The

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[35] Peggy Orenstein, "Making It In The Majors," New York Times 24 May 1992: 18, 24.
[36] Quoted in Janis Cole and Holly Dale, Calling the Shots: Profiles of Women Filmmakers (Ontario: Quarry Press, 1993) 224.

woman director's adoption of a "masculine" persona through the medium of dress may or may not only be interpreted as a signifier of lesbianism, but can also be read as a means of presenting an image of oneself as competent, businesslike, an industry insider and a member of the male director's club, with the baseball cap serving as your badge of membership.[37]

The idea that a baseball cap might function as a badge of membership, or to put it another way as an accessory of power, can also be extended to other inanimate objects or props that sometime appear in publicity shots of women directors. Countless numbers of them are pictured either next to a film camera (or other technical equipment) or looking into a lens, as if (to distil the image to its simplest form) to make the statement that, "Yes, women know how to work technology" (see appendix C, fig. 11-14). Of course, as Judith Mayne suggests in her work on Arzner, such images work in far more nuanced ways than this. As Mayne says, the juxtaposition in a visual image between woman and camera "foregrounds one of the major preoccupations of feminist film theory - the difficult relationship between women and the apparatus of the cinema".[38] Indeed I believe that the simple visual statement mentioned above can actually be read as a rather unsubtle means of negotiating this difficult relationship, and asserting the right of the woman to enter the "masculine" sphere of filmmaking: a sphere filled with the kind of technical equipment that women are not *naturally* supposed to understand. Of course by depicting the woman director on her own, either using a film camera or with one somewhere in the frame, this kind of image also glosses over the contribution of others, such as the cinematographer, to the process of shooting a film. David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson have remarked, "For a director to orchestrate the labor of shooting and assembly does not mean that he or she is expert at every job...Within the studio mode of production, the director can delegate tasks to trusted and competent personnel; hence the tendency of directors to work habitually with certain actors, cinematographers, composers, and so on."[39] Clearly an image of a director with his or her

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[37] Mayne, Directed By Dorothy Arzner 2.
[38] Mayne, Directed By Dorothy Arzner 170.
[39] Bordwell and Thompson 30.

camera is not so much about reflecting what she or he does (it is the cinematographer and not the director who is responsible for the technical aspects of photography, lighting and camerawork); but more about presenting an image of authority which, if it is important for a male director, is even more crucial for a female one.

Another less high-tech prop which has been used to convey this impression is the megaphone. Both Arzner and Jodie Foster have been pictured using one in publicity images, and in a recent article about Betty Thomas there is a picture of the director using her megaphone and an individual picture of it which accompanies the text. In the picture of the megaphone we can make out that the words "This belongs to B Thomas" are written on it, and the picture's caption reads "Even while silent, Thomas's megaphone somehow manages to deliver a blaring message." (See appendix C, fig. 15 and 16). On one level this comment refers to the author's description of Thomas as a woman with a loud voice who doesn't mince her words. Hence Bernstein writes that while directing a scene Thomas "grabs a microphone, something she really doesn't need"; and tells us about her penchant for swearing. Yet it also functions as a symbol of Thomas' control over the filmmaking process. Control which is emphasised by the fact that she has labelled this visual signifier of authority with her own name, and in the process symbolically asserted the right for her voice (as projected by the megaphone) to be heard and, more importantly, to be listened to and respected.[40]

In this way the megaphone, along with the baseball cap, the film camera, and articles of masculine clothing, can be said to fulfil a metonymic or synecdochic function. In How To Read A Film James Monoco defines "metonymy" as a connection of "associated details with ideas" and synecdoche as "comparisons of the part with the whole." He argues that a shot of somebody looking at their reflection in a broken mirror can be used to signify schizophrenia, and the depiction of industrial machinery can stand for the whole of urban society. Although he also acknowledges that these terms are hard to define precisely because there is a significant amount of overlap between them. Using Monoco's definitions we can argue that

[40] Jill Bernstein, "The Wedding Planner," Premiere Women In Hollywood Special 2000: 60, 62, 63.

the megaphone is synecdochic because it represents the director as a whole: and metonymic because it stands for the idea of the loud, forceful, traditionally masculine voice as representative of power and control. The cinema camera can be seen to fulfil a similar function as an object which represents both the director and the industry as a whole: but which is also associated with the idea of someone who has authority over the mechanics of representation (the way in which an image appears on-screen). This explains its effectiveness as a symbol of belonging in publicity shots of female directors.[41]

A Woman In Man's Clothing: Strategic Androgyny

Inevitably this discussion of the woman director who adopts "masculine" styles of dress raises the related issues of cross-dressing and androgyny. The female directors I discuss are not cross-dressers in the literal sense of the term; they are not trying to "pass" as men, so I am using the phrase broadly to refer to the act of merely appropriating elements of male dress and/or "masculine" accessories. Writing on the subject of transvestism in film Chris Straayer claims that the motivation which drives most cross-dressing characters is usually related to "getting a job, or escape": in other words it is related to the "problems of access". Viewed in this way the woman is driven to put on male clothes because they enable her to gain entrance to forbidden or restricted male spheres, which explains Straayer's later statement that most female celluloid cross-dressers are at first reluctant to give up their transvestism when the narrative demands it because of the "freedom" it permits them. For Straayer the act of cross-dressing clearly has the potential to be a radical act. That is, while she acknowledges the way in which it depends on the conventional "system of codes commonly used to signify gender" in order to have meaning (such as a dress, make-up and high heels meaning "woman" for example), she also argues that it may simultaneously deconstruct those very codes.[42]

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[41] James Monaco, How To Read a Film: The Art, Technology, Language, History, and Theory of Film and Media (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981) 135-40.
[42] Chris Straayer, Deviant Eyes, Deviant Bodies (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996) 44, 49, 53.

Stella Bruzzi appears to argue along similar lines when she states that a "questioning and blurring of gender identities...occurs when characters do not wear the clothes deemed socially appropriate to their sex." Unlike Straayer, however, she makes a distinction between cross-dressing and androgyny. She sees the former, which side-steps the issue of sexuality and adopts the clothes of the "other" for primarily comic ends, as less subversive than the latter, which is charged with eroticism and puts questions of sexual ambiguity in the foreground. According to this definition a woman director who simply puts on male clothes, rather than being an androgynous figure, would fall into the less subversive category of cross-dresser, and most likely be held to reinforce rather than question the status quo. Like Penny Marshall as represented in Orenstein's article, she would be wearing the uniform of power but troubling nobody's preconceptions about gender. Jodie Foster, on the other hand, might arguably be seen to belong to the latter category since on occasions her image appears to blur the boundaries of both gender and sexuality, making herself (to use Bruzzi's phrase which refers to Marlene Dietrich in Morocco) "the point of multiple erotic identification."[43]

If we consider the photos of Foster which accompany an Interview article by Ingrid Sischy we see that the director adopts a variety of poses, some of which are reminiscent of female stars from the thirties and forties such as Greta Garbo or Lauren Bacall, and others which ape publicity shots of the director Dorothy Arzner.[44] Yet, as I also argue in my chapter on Foster, there is definite blurring between both kinds of pose so that it is difficult to know where the star ends and the director begins. In some shots her glamorously made-up face, perfectly coiffured hair and bold costume jewellery is somewhat at odds with her severely-tailored clothes and casual beret. In another picture she wears a very casual, almost preppy outfit, while simultaneously making a gesture towards a more traditional pin-up pose by wearing nothing under the jacket. In this way Foster comes close to Bruzzi's androgynous figure because she does not, unlike the cross-dresser, split the transvestite figure into two:

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[43] Stella Bruzzi, Undressing Cinema: Clothing and Identity in the Movies (London: Routledge, 1997) 147, 173, 175, 176.
[44] Ingrid Sischy, "Jodie Foster: The One and Only," Interview Oct. 1991: 79-85.

that is, man and woman, male and female, and in the case of a star/director like Foster the "masculine" Hollywood business woman/director and the "feminine" sex symbol star. Rather she can be seen to play with the ambiguities that the "androgynous body" brings into focus, to blur the strict definitions between "male and female, straight and gay, real and imagined."[45] One might argue that by using Arzner's image which, as Judith Mayne explains, in recent times at least has become "a straight-forward image of lesbian identity", Foster is not only borrowing the "look" of a critically established female-auteur, but also toying with the lesbian undertones which others have identified as present in both her on-screen roles and her off-screen reality. However this quasi-butch identity is tempered by those elements of the poses which conform to the traditional "pin-up" image (Hollywood glamour and the sexual display of the female body). In short this complex and contradictory image (or set of images) mixes eroticism with homoeroticism, the stereotypically "masculine" with the stereotypically "feminine", and the woman in front of the camera with the woman behind it, leaving us asking, "Will the *real* Foster please stand up?"[46]

Bruzzi is also more sceptical than Straayer that a desire for greater access to the male world is the primary motivation behind a woman's desire to put on masculine clothes. She argues that the idea that a woman who wears male dress does so purely as a "political" act or for reasons of expediency, such as greater power and status, is extremely reductive. Not only does it assume that such an act contains "no pleasure...for the woman" but it also implies that "men's clothes carry significant symbolic status that women's do not." Although I agree with Bruzzi that the motives behind cross-dressing are far more complicated than such a simple explanation suggests (the images of Foster in the Ingrid Sischy article being a case in point), I do not think we should allow this argument to prevent us from continuing to view the woman's adoption of "masculine" dress as a potentially political or practical act. It is a way

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[45] Bruzzi 176.

[46] Mayne, Directed By Dorothy Arzner 177. It is also worth noting that Mayne admits that she is suspicious of the term "androgyny" because, although it is not a homophobic term, it might be used as a coded way of saying "not necessarily lesbian" (175). Mayne also makes reference to the shots of Foster in Interview, although she doesn't interpret them as successfully blurring star and director in the same way, and accuses Foster of carrying out a "kind of 'de-dyking' of the Arzner persona" (174). For a further discussion of Mayne's thoughts about these photos and my response see chapter six of my thesis.

of saying "I belong here", "I fit in", rather than one which is primarily motivated by desire or fantasy. Moreover this adoption of male attire still has symbolic meaning even if we are unable to prove that the director in question (and not a stylist, publicist, the journalist, photographer or marketing person) has chosen it herself, or intended it to make a statement (political or otherwise).

In spite of Bruzzi's words to the contrary, it is my belief that men's clothing or masculine styles of dress do possess (or perhaps more accurately are believed to possess) a symbolic power that women's do not. For example, if male dress does not carry a sense of credibility which is lacking in typical "feminine" dress then why did the late seventies and early eighties witness the growth of men's tailoring for women (as pioneered especially by Giorgio Armani) which then became the uniform of career women everywhere. Eighties "power dressing" may have been partially about glamorous "feminine" excess (heavy perfume and make-up, flamboyant costume jewellery) but it was also surely about the adoption of severely-cut suits which (thanks to the aid of shoulder pads) made the wearer seem even bigger, even more "masculine" in the workplace. Consider the way Diane Keaton is depicted at the beginning of Baby Boom (1987) as an ambitious career woman dressed in a Yuppie-style white shirt and pinstripe suit; and ends the film as a happy adoptive-mother who wears a selection of sweaters and flowing, floral skirts. If we accept that Hollywood is both an image-based and image-obsessed society then one might reasonably argue that a politics of dress exists which affects not only a handful of actors or actresses, but numerous others who are associated with the industry, whether in front of the camera or behind it. Indeed, the existence of the American magazine In Style which, via interviews with and photo spreads of the people it writes about, is dedicated to telling its readers where the *really* stylish individuals who work in Hollywood get their hair done, buy their clothes, and so on is highly suggestive of this very fact. Clearly for those associated with the industry how you look, and what that says about you, is of vital importance. It is certainly possible, then, that women

directors (or the people that help construct their images) should use clothes not just practically but as visual signifiers of their ability to do the job of making films.[47]

In a brief discussion of Barbara Streisand's "transvestite" role playing a young Jewish boy in Yentl (1983) Yvonne Tasker refers to Marjorie Garber's argument that Streisand's role as director of that film (a traditionally "masculine" role), and the fact that in it she plays a woman who is trying to "pass" as a boy, are somehow logically connected: "Garber emphasises the image, the significance of Streisand as director and as director of this particular film, emblem of her 'manliness.' Does producing and directing make a woman 'manly', even to the extent that she might dress as a boy?" This observation leads Tasker to point out that representations of Streisand in the popular media commonly construct her as both a "manly, aggressive...'ball-breaker'" and as a woman whose narcissism indicates that she is also "feminine" (perhaps it is implied too "feminine").[48] In fact in her biography of Streisand, Anne Edwards actually sees a connection between Streisand's allegedly aggressive and uncompromising behaviour as a director, and her concern with her own appearance. She reports that during the filming of The Mirror Has Two Faces (1996) Streisand fired a member of the camera crew because she was unhappy with the way she looked on screen.

I refer to Tasker's discussion here because it is possible to argue that the way in which Streisand is constructed as both "masculine" and "feminine" by the popular media is duplicated in media representations of other female directors, and what's more that this duality is frequently achieved by reference to their appearance.[49] For instance, the potential "masculinity" of the woman who directs is often "softened" by drawing attention to one or more of her "feminine" physical attributes (both linguistically and/or visually). In Xan Brook's article on Nora Ephron he tries to reconcile the "tart, abrasive...tough cookie" of a director with her "sweet, sentimental movies": as if (and this is supposing one agrees with Brooks that her work can be so easily categorised) the elements of romance and witty

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[47] Bruzzi 179.
[48] Yvonne Tasker, Working Girls: Gender and Sexuality in the Cinema (London and New York: Routledge, 1998) 203-4.
[49] Anne Edward, Streisand (London: Orion, 1996) 511.

cynicism are mutually exclusive (a number of Woody Allen films would suggest otherwise). He acknowledges that Ephron's reputation as a "Dorothy Parkeresque-wit" and a "merciless scourge of ex-husbands" precedes her, but also provides small details about her which seem designed to soften the spikiness of her persona. He says that she has a "soft hairdo" and a "slight-frame"; that at one point during the interview she "holds up one bird-boned hand"; and patronisingly calls her sarcastic reaction to his accusation that You've Got Mail (1998) is "shockingly conservative", a "strop" which is "so transparent it's charming." It is hard to imagine a situation in which a male director responding to criticism would be called "charming". Similarly writing on Martha Coolidge Paul Attanasio claims that with her lovely Jean Arthur style voice, the director has "the soul of a cutie-pie and the mind of an iron competent hardhead." This, he claims, might well be the "ideal combination" for a woman director in Hollywood, given that they have not been in the business for long. A statement which is revealing not only in its historical inaccuracy (its not that women haven't been there for long - there were women directors in the Silent Era - but that they have been few in number and have lacked visibility) but also in its claims that the best way forward for women is to ensure that they do not allow their (masculine) abilities (their intellect and determination) to rob them of their essential "femininity" (their sweet nature and gentle spirit).[50]

In Kathryn Bigelow's case the physical attributes which are remarked upon are the markers of her "feminine" attractiveness, such as her pretty face, model-like poise and, as Yvonne Tasker says, also her "long hair".[51] In addition two journalists have made the following comments about Bigelow: Dan Yakir writes that "While soft-spoken in person, Bigelow makes tough and gritty movies"; and Jay Carr comments that during an interview: "She has never raised her voice during the entire conversation, and she doesn't raise it now". On the evidence of Judith Mayne's research, these remarks are strikingly similar to the kind of things which were written about Dorothy Arzner: "[T]here is a need to remark upon

[50] Brooks 2, 3.; Attanasio C2.
[51] Tasker, Working Girls 203.

Arzner's masculine clothing, and then immediately to search for some feminine attribute: her *soft voice* and small figure are conveniently present to temper the butch persona...The *voice*, then, provides a way of remarking on a feminine trait in the sea of supposed masculinity signified by Arzner's clothing, hair, and face."[52] Although in Carr's article Bigelow's "masculinity" is not signified by her looks, it is nevertheless implied in comments about her adventurous nature ("[she is] a woman who had herself strapped into a plane with a parachute on so she could photograph sky-diving bandit Patrick Swayze jumping in 'Point Break'"); her tough demeanour ("[she is] a woman who says she doesn't encounter much resistance"); and the violent content of her current film, Strange Days ("Suddenly, at a theater near you, it's flak jacket time again...The film...is going to make waves...[Y]ou see rapes and killings, you see them from the rapist's or killer's point of view. This ratchets film's usual voyeurism into new territory.") Happily for Carr, however, he can console himself with the fact that Bigelow "doesn't look like Hollywood's only high-impact woman director", but rather like an art-world intellectual who should be attending "a seminar...at the Whitney Museum." It is a fact which has also proved consolation for other critics such as Betsey Sharkey who notes that Bigelow "seems the antithesis of what one might expect the director of a visceral, chillingly bloody thriller to be. She has a Rececca-of-Sunybrook-Farm look and a quiet, cultured voice. A mane of chestnut brown hair...[frames] a nearly model-perfect face."[53]

On the strength of this evidence it is tempting to conclude that in some cases the woman in power, or in what is thought of as a powerful position (such as director), only becomes acceptable or at least understandable if any signs of masculinity (which it appears are often perceived to be an inevitable result of doing a so-called "man's job") are balanced by opposing signs of femininity. The most obvious way to achieve this is apparently by

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[52] Mayne, Directed by Dorothy Arzner 157. Italics mine.

[53] Dan Yakir, "Making a Futuristic Chiller with a Warm Heart: Director Bigelow says Hope sets 'Strange Days' Apart," San Francisco Chronicle 7 Oct. 1995, San Francisco Chronicle Online Archives 16 Sept. 2000 <http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?file=/chronicle/archive/1995/10/07/ DD52524.DTL>; Jay Carr, "Like, It's 1999: Kathryn Bigelow Makes a 'Wake-Up Call' about the Coming of the Millennium," Boston Globe 8 Oct. 1995: B28, Boston Globe Online Archives 12 Oct. 2000 <http://www.boston.com/globe search/>; Betsey Sharkey, "Kathryn Bigelow Practices the Art of the Kill," New York Times 11 Mar. 1990, Kathryn Bigelow Website 12 Nov. 1999 <http://www.kathrynbigelow.com/articles/nytimes.html>.

drawing attention to the woman's physicality, her appearance: possibly because this is the attribute upon which women in general, and women working in Hollywood in particular, have so often been judged; and by which they have frequently been understood.

Thanks to her perceived "alienness" in a traditionally masculine profession, the woman director is frequently viewed as a woman first, and a director second. As one possible means of negotiating this problem the woman who directs may project a more masculine appearance (and an appearance which screams "director" at that) in order to upset this established way of seeing her. Richard Dyer has argued that a star's image is "characterised by attempts to negotiate, reconcile or mask the difference between the elements, or else simply hold them in tension." Thus it is possible to understand the director's dress as this tension and negotiation made visible upon her body. The adoption of "male" dress can act as a mask with which to conceal her essential difference from the directorial norm. It might function as a way of reconciling her with that norm by bringing her closer to the archetypal director (male), and simultaneously preserving her essential femininity. It might also be said to solve nothing, merely acting as a sartorial signifier of the blurred space within the industry that women directors are widely held to inhabit (neither man nor woman, *true* director or quasi-director, but somewhere in between.)[54]

Women directors are constantly in the process of negotiating their alien status, and the visual nature of their star image (dress, pose, etc.) might be utilised, either by them or by others, as a means of blurring the boundaries between masculine and feminine in order to make their gender (which is nearly always referred to when they are discussed as directors) far less visible. However the fact that some articles are eager to ensure that this gender visibility is maintained by managing the potential masculinity of their image implies that this blurring technique is not completely successful. As the comments made about Dorothy Arzner reveal, the techniques involved in this management of masculinity have not altered radically over a period of more than half a century. It seems almost unbelievable that the

[54] Dyer 72.

woman who directs is still so potentially threatening that journalists should need to assert her femininity in details about the softness of her voice or the colour of her hair. It is also revealing that women should apparently need to take refuge in androgyny or cross-dressing in order to appear more competent as filmmakers: why do you have to *look* like a director (that is, a male director) in order to be taken seriously as a director? A question which in relation to the following chapters on Jodie Foster and Penny Marshall should be rephrased as "Why do you have to *act* like a director in order to be respected? Of course one must be careful not to negate the power women directors may have in shaping their own images, otherwise we risk painting a picture of the woman director as someone who is coerced into projecting a masculine image just to get a job. As my chapters on Foster and Marshall demonstrate, female filmmakers are not simply assigned their star images by outside agencies, they also have a vital role (thanks to the persona they project in interviews, or the things they reveal about their "real" lives) in creating them. This chapter began as a justification for the use of star studies in examining the role of the director, and sought to prove its relevance by examining one of the major stumbling blocks to its use: the fact that directors, unlike stars, do not usually appear on celluloid, and therefore can not possess images which revolve around the way they look. Having argued to the contrary, it ends by showing how fraught with tensions and contradictions the image of the woman director is (or to refer to my title, how androgynous). This is an observation which the following chapters will illustrate further.

Chapter Five

A Tale of Two Star Images Part One: A Case Study of Jodie Foster, Hollywood's New Dorothy Arzner

> **[T]he construction of the 'director' as fiction is part of what 'we' read. Film critics and theorists have been interested for some time in the nuances that the work of the star image and the work of particular performers can bring to popular cinema. The framing of women as film-makers seems equally intriguing[.]**[1]

Whereas the previous chapter dealt with the star image of the director in the abstract, the following linked chapters offer a detailed examination of the star images of two women directors, Jodie Foster and Penny Marshall, or to use the terminology of Tasker's statement above, a "reading" of Foster and Marshall as "fictional" constructs.

Although the choice of these two directors may appear arbitrary, they actually make for an invaluable comparison since they illustrate two diverse representations of the female director in Hollywood: the competent, artistic, "powerhouse" who is widely heralded as a feminist, or at least female, icon (Foster), and the unprofessional, insecure, Hollywood "sell-out" whose "femininity", or at least lack of an obvious "feminism", is a cause of embarrassment (Marshall). Hence the reasoning behind the title of both chapters which refer to Foster as the "new" Arzner (a director who has received sustained and positive attention from feminist critics), and Marshall as the "new" Lupino (a director who, generally speaking, has not). Whereas Dorothy Arzner and her films have been written about at length by critics such as Claire Johnston, Pam Cook, and Judith Mayne, Ida Lupino and her work have, as Annette Kuhn points out, been treated with more reservation.[2] Kuhn notes that to the extent that Lupino and her work are "known" they

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[1] Yvonne Tasker, Working Girls: Gender and Sexuality in Popular Cinema (London: Routledge, 1998) 204.
[2] See Claire Johnston, ed., The Work of Dorothy Arzner: Towards a Feminist Cinema (London: British Film Institute, 1975); Pam Cook, "Approaching the Work of Dorothy Arzner," Feminism and Film Theory, ed.

> are considered somewhat problematic as far as feminism is concerned. The films...have been characterised as "conventional, even sexist"...[Studies of Lupino's work were] never developed into a detailed treatment of the order of that accorded to Lupino's Hollywood predecessor, Dorothy Arzner.[3]

The kind of criticisms levelled by feminists against Lupino have much in common with those made against Penny Marshall, as does the fact that little feminist analysis has been written about either director. As I will illustrate when I discuss the way in which Marshall is criticised for addressing "women's issues" in a dubious way, she too has been effectively accused of "treating 'feminist issues from an anti-feminist perspective.'" Marshall, like Lupino, has to use Kuhn's words again, proved "difficult to claim for feminism."[4] Foster, on the other hand, has presented no such difficulties. Feminist critics have written about her extensively, judging her work (as actress and director) and also the nature of her star-image (as a strong female/feminist icon) to be more satisfying in feminist terms than Marshall's. As each of the following chapters demonstrates, the star-images of Foster and Marshall have significant points of overlap with those of Arzner and Lupino. By posing for photos in which she is dressed to resemble Arzner, Foster actively pursues the comparison with the intention of transforming herself from star-actress into star-auteur. By contrast, Marshall does not use Lupino's image to enhance her own, and given the way most feminist film theorists have viewed Lupino this may not have been viable anyway. Rather, she makes comments and demonstrates behaviours which are reminiscent of her predecessor's, with the result that she receives a similarly frosty reaction from feminist critics. Of course the star images of both women are more complex and contradictory than these descriptions suggest, but they serve as a useful starting point.

In these chapters I discuss the influence which Foster and Marshall's pre-established star images as actors had on their new images as directors. That is, the image of a "star-

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Constance Penley (London and New York: Routledge/BFI, 1988) 46-56; Judith Mayne, Directed By Dorothy Arzner (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1994).

[3] Annette Kuhn, ed., Queen of The 'B's: Ida Lupino Behind the Camera (Wiltshire: Flicks Books, 1995) 4.

[4] Kuhn, ed., Queen of The 'B's 4, 5.

director" or "hyphenate" in Foster's case, and a star turned director in Marshall's. I draw upon a variety of media texts, falling within categories defined by Richard Dyer as promotion, publicity, films (or in Marshall's case, television) and commentaries/criticism, in order to track and evaluate the development of each woman's star image over time.[5] My intention is not only to illustrate the way in which Foster and Marshall's images are constructed by the texts which surround them, but also to point to the ways in which their images are self-constructed.

Despite the fact that both women have a high-profile in Hollywood, Foster garnered a great deal more positive publicity when she turned to directing than Marshall. In the course of my research I found nothing written about Penny Marshall to compare with the hyperbolic celebrations of Foster's directorial debut that we find in Richard Corliss's article for Time, and Ingrid Sischy's article for Interview, which I discuss in greater detail in the chapter on Foster. Articles about Marshall have treated her far less seriously, judging her to be, at best, a fairly talented and competent director of standard Hollywood fare and, at worst, an incompetent hack whose films are irritating and overly sentimental. The purpose of these linked chapters is to find out why it is Foster and not Marshall who receives such favourable attention in the press and academia. Why has the former and not the latter been held up as the more acceptable face of the woman director in Hollywood, both for feminist and non-feminist critics alike? The answer to these questions lies in the very different but equally contradictory natures of their star-images.

"It seemed only a natural progression for Jodie Foster to evolve into a first-rate director". Jodie Foster: Female Role Model and Feminist Icon[6]

Without a doubt Jodie Foster the "image" means many things to many people, but one of the most popular ways of reading her is as a female and/or feminist icon. The roles

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[5] Richard Dyer, Stars (London: BFI, 1979) 68-72.
[6] Jon Stevens, "Jodie Foster Goes 'Home' for her Second Feature," DGA Magazine Jan.-Feb.1996. DGA Magazine Online Archives 2 Sept. 2001 <http://www.dga.org/index2.php3>.

Foster has played on-screen, and her "real" life off-screen (a reality which is always questionable since, as Allen and Gomery have pointed out, it is only known to us through a process of mediation) are seized upon by numerous interviewers, biographers, academics, critics and fans to build a portrait of Foster as one of, if not *the* most, credible women in Hollywood.[7] The characters she played as a child in films like Alice Doesn't Live Here Anymore (1974) and The Little Girl Who Lives Down The Lane (1977) are collectively understood as being tough and precocious tomboys, rather than decorative little girls, which has led to Foster being cast as a new kind of female born out of second-wave feminism: a young girl in whom the new possibilities for women made available by the growth of the Women's Movement were made flesh. As B. Ruby Rich states, "Foster...quickly came to represent a different kind of woman." A point which is lent additional emphasis by a comment from Evelyn Foster (Jodie's mother): "Jodie was never a traditional-looking girl...It was just at the beginning of women's liberation, and she kind of personified that in a child. She had a strength and uncoquettishness[.]"[8] Joanne Hollows has remarked that "femininity was constituted as a "problem" in second-wave feminism" with many feminists interpreting "feminine values and behaviour" as "a major cause of women's oppression." Rich's statement makes reference to this belief, arguing that Foster's appeal was based on the fact that she did not play out typical feminine behaviours.[9]

Even Foster's oft-remarked-upon tendency to play out female victimisation on screen, most famously in The Accused (1988), is widely interpreted as positive in feminist terms, since it is frequently viewed as a stage the actress had to pass through in order to establish herself as the quintessential female/feminist hero (Clarice Starling) who uses brains instead of machismo to defeat the bad guy.[10] For example, James Kaplan reads The Silence of

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[7] In Film History: Theory and Practice (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1993) Robert C. Allen and Douglas Gomery write that the public cannot know a star's off-screen personality directly but "only certain representations of that star mediated through variety of sources: the films themselves and their attendant publicity materials, gossip columns, interviews, newspaper articles, and so on." (172-3).

[8] B. Ruby Rich, "Never a Victim: Jodie Foster, a New Kind of Female Hero," Women and Film: A Sight and Sound Reader, eds. Pam Cook and Philip Dodd (London: Scarlet Press, 1993) 50-1.

[9] Joanne Hollows, Feminism, Femininity and Popular Culture (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000) 2.

[10] I am not suggesting that Foster's portrayal of characters like Sarah Tobias in The Accused have been stamped with some "feminist" seal of approval. Since what constitutes feminism and "feminist art" is constantly being

The Lambs (1991) as "an artistic and perhaps psychic turning point for the actress, who has gone from playing victims to playing a determined, if thoroughly human pursuer." Foster, he maintains, is thoroughly at home playing the female hero, despite Hollywood's poor track record at representing this figure on celluloid.[11]

As is the case with all film stars, Foster's on-screen roles have become entangled with her existence as an individual off-screen. Her "real-life" is frequently utilised as a means to confirm her status as female/feminist icon. The media makes much of the fact that she has always been a tomboy: able to scrub up and look glamorous for photo shoots and awards ceremonies, and when a role requires it, but really happiest without make-up and wearing casual clothes. In addition the information that from an early age she was able to support her family financially through her acting, successfully replacing her absent father as the breadwinner, becomes another key component of this "heroic female" image.

On several occasions Foster has related a real-life anecdote which actively encourages us to read her as female/feminist icon. In Jodie Foster: A Life on Screen Philippa Kennedy quotes her as follows,

> Jodie recalls: 'I remember sitting under a lemon tree outside my house when I was five or six when my mom came out and said: "You know, you are just so lucky to be a woman now because you can do anything you want to do." The *message*, I realized even then, was that she couldn't and that I was going to be different.[12]

By using these words Foster situates herself as someone who grew up during a period of great and positive change for women, and who subsequently took advantage of all the opportunities this provided (as expressed by the words "I was going to be different.") The anecdote has a

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contested, there has inevitably been criticism of the roles Foster has played. Yet many of those critics who do express reservations about the way The Accused deals with women's and/or feminist issues have still praised Foster for her ability to bring female strength to a weak role. For example, in Popcorn and Sexual Politics. (California: The Crossing Press, 1991) the self-titled feminist critic Kathi Maio writes, "There are plenty of aspects to The Accused that are handled badly...But there are, on balance, even more to recommend it. Chief among these is Jodie Foster's stirring performance as Sarah...You feel her pain. And you feel her anger, which springs from inner-strength and self-respect. She is, at all times, a survivor." (119-20).

[11] James Kaplan, "Dark Victory: No Longer Playing the Victim, Jodie Foster is Calling The Shots in 'Silence Of The Lambs' and as the Director of 'Little Man Tate'," Entertainment Weekly 1 Mar. 1991, Entertainment Weekly Online Archives 1 Mar. 2000 <http://www.ew.com/ew/archive/0,1798,1|3324|0|Dark%2bVictory,00.html>.

[12] Philippa Kennedy, Jodie Foster: A Life on Screen (New York: Birch Lane Press, 1996) 10. Italics mine.

mythic quality about it. Foster states that she was only five or six years old when her mother talked to her, but also claims that she realised at the time what the implications of the conversation were. Even taking into account Foster's well-documented intelligence, such a profound understanding seems unlikely. Instead the account takes on an allegorical significance with the intention of illustrating the purity and profundity of Foster's feminist credentials.

A variation on this anecdote appears in an interview Foster gave to Interview magazine to coincide with the American release of Little Man Tate (1991). Foster says, "My mom told me every day of my life, 'Oh aren't you lucky to be a woman, because you can be anything that you want.' Well, that's not true. But I'm glad I was raised that way. My mother wasn't."[13] Although this statement reveals Foster to be more cautious about the possibilities open to women, it once again shows her to be the product of a feminist upbringing and by implication a believer ("I'm glad I was raised that way") in one of its fundamental principles: equality between men and women. One might speculate that Foster was keen to revive the anecdote here since the purpose of this interview was to legitimise her as a female director, or more precisely a female "auteur". This is an issue I will return to when I consider how this legitimisation as auteur was achieved.

As befits a female/feminist icon Foster is frequently viewed as an exceptional woman: one who is set apart from and, it is often implied, superior to other women. For instance, the aforementioned article in Interview is entitled "Jodie Foster: The One And Only." Similarly Hilary DeVries writes that Foster is

> On her own - that is to say without benefit of a powerful director husband (like Geena Davis and Renny Harlin) or a powerful producer boyfriend (like Barbra Streisand and her ex, Jon Peters) or a powerful director-producer brother like Penny

[13] Ingrid Sischy, "Jodie Foster: The One and Only," Interview Oct. 1991: 84.

and Garry Marshall)- Foster is attempting what few...Hollywood actresses have ever accomplished: to become a major player in the film business...on her own terms [.][14]

This concentration on her difference could be interpreted as evidence of a common tendency to view stars as individuals who are set apart from others by virtue of their talent, looks, lifestyle and so on: those who Richard Dyer refers to as "superlatives". Yet it is also indicative of a desire to make her stand as an example of what a woman in general, and a female star in particular, can and/or should be.[15]

Foster is often seen as an actress who avoids the "usual" pitfalls faced by women working in Hollywood. That is, those which revolve principally around the exploitation (whether through choice or coercion) of one's sexuality, both on and off-screen. As Suzanna Andrews remarks, she has "avoided the female-star trap by using strategies employed by the most respected male stars. Forget posing nude for magazine covers...Foster has focused on power issues".[16] Without actually naming names, Andrews places Foster in opposition to female stars such as Sharon Stone who is well-known for having posed for Playboy. The implication being, of course, that she is superior to these other actresses because she has never purchased power using sex as her currency. Rather, power has become her currency. For Andrews Foster is more than just an actress, she is also a business woman and a Hollywood player. This is further emphasised by the fact that this article appears in Working Woman, which sells itself as a serious business magazine for "high level executives and entrepreneurs", rather than a typical woman's magazine which focuses on topics such as fashion and lifestyle.[17] Foster often casts herself in opposition to other female stars, although not in precisely the same terms as the Working Woman article referenced above. She is quoted in Empire as saying, "I've had my shot at being glamorous. I did the magazine covers

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[14] Hilary De Vries, "Command Performance," Los Angeles Times Magazine, 11 Dec. 1994: 16, Los Angeles Times Online Archives 27 Jan. 1999 <http://pqasb.pqarchiver.com/latimes->.

[15] Dyer 49.

[16] Suzanna Andrews, "Calling The Shots: How Foster Went from Superstar to Super-Executive," Working Woman, Nov. 1995: 35.

[17] The Writer's Guidelines page on the Working Woman website describes the market the magazine is aimed at. Working Woman 12 Feb. 2000 <http://www.workingwoman.com/aboutus/guidelines.html>.

and Maverick. So what? What do I have to prove? That I look like Sharon Stone?"[18] Foster does not mention sexuality here (although by mentioning Stone whose image is synonymous with sex she strongly implies it) but does suggest that she is different from actresses whose careers hinge primarily on their looks. Since she herself admits to having played the glamour game, it is problematic to read this statement as an explicit criticism of these other actresses. However Foster does appear to speak as someone who has left considerations of appearance behind in order to move on to more important matters, such as the consolidation of her position as CEO of her own production company, Egg Pictures. This argument is given additional weight when we consider that the publication of the Empire article coincided with the British release of Nell (an Egg production) in which Foster plays a woman untouched by civilisation, and as a result completely unaware of her physical appearance.

There is a tendency in material about Foster to represent her as someone who, off-screen at least, takes little interest in her physical appearance. James Kaplan writes that she is "perhaps the only person in the building not making a fashion statement"; Michael Shnayerson informs us that her "her face looks delicate but plain without makeup, and...she's shunned Armani for... jeans"; and Jonathan Van Meter states that her appearance is such that "[p]assed on the street she would go unnoticed".[19] These descriptions can be partially explained in terms of the tendency identified by Richard Dyer to view stars as "ordinary people who live more expensively than the rest of us but are not essentially transformed by this."[20] They should also be considered in the context of circulating ideas about lesbian identity which have become attached to Foster's image. That is, the media texts surrounding Foster (although not those endorsed by her or her publicity machine) are obsessed with discussing the *true* nature of Foster's sexuality, and her tomboyish appearance becomes another marker of that sexuality. Descriptions like these also serve as markers of her

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[18] Rachelle Unreich, "The Golden Girl," Empire Apr. 1995: 66

[19] James Kaplan; Michael Shnayerson, "Jodie Rules," Vanity Fair, May 1994, Jodie Foster Website 3 Feb. 2000 <http://www.tcp.com/~mary/vanityfa.htm>; Jonathan Van Meter, "The Boss," Guardian 2 Mar. 1991, Weekend ed.: 4.

[20] Dyer 49.

integrity, both as an actress and as a woman. Her lack of interest in her looks supposedly indicates that she is female star whose fame does not rest on her face or body, but on her talent alone. As B. Ruby Rich states, she is someone who "became resistant to the artifices of glamour and the siren song of artificial femininity. She became her own woman, instead of theirs [Hollywood's]."[21]

Rich's reading is problematic since it fails to acknowledge that Foster's image is also that of the glamorous Hollywood actress who is made-up, coiffured, and dressed-to-kill in a revealing evening gown. Rich does acknowledge that this image revolves around issues of sexuality, but this is held to be completely divorced from the kind of supposedly exploitative, Hollywood "cheesecake" images that I refer to above. An image which focuses on female sexuality (sometimes strong, sometimes weak) is not believed to be the same as one which plays on a star's sexual attractiveness.[22]

Clearly Foster's post-Little Man Tate status as auteur has not led her to jettison the part of her image that is the glamorous and alluring Hollywood star. She appears on the cover of the first issue of Premiere Women In Hollywood Special in 1993, and there is a photo of her on the editorial page. The black and white cover shot features a perfectly made-up Foster with hair teased into old-fashioned movie-star waves. The inside photo depicts her in a Katherine Hepburnesque forties film star pose: she is dressed in a white suit slouching nonchalantly against a wall, her make-up and hair done in the style of that era (see appendix D, fig. 1). Similarly in a Premiere cover shot and photo shoot from 1997 Foster adopts a number of glamorous, sexy poses: on the cover she is naked except for the modesty provided by a scarf and her hands, and inside she wears slinky dresses and a fur coat.[23]

Admittedly the photo inside the Premiere Women In Hollywood Special is more complicated than I have suggested. Foster stands in the left of the picture, and to her right is a floor standing movie light which throws a shadow over her head. The inclusion of this prop

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[21] Rich, "Never a Victim" 51.
[22] Rich, "Never a Victim" 55.
[23] Holly Millea, "The Woman Who Fell to Earth," Premiere Jul. 1997: 53-60.

in the photo can be seen as a reference to the fact that Foster is no longer just an actress, but also someone involved in the business of movie making. The accompanying caption supports this idea: "Woman of the year: Producer-director-actress Jodie Foster, the brains behind Egg Pictures, looks to the future."[24]

This is not the only occasion where photographs of Foster represent her status as a Hollywood "hyphenate". In the Interview article Foster is, as Judith Mayne identifies, pictured as both a Dorothy Arzner-esque director, and in poses which recall a number of legendary Hollywood stars (Lauren Bacall, Katherine Hepburn, Marlene Dietrich and Greta Garbo).[25] Both Christina Lane and Mayne have argued that this article divides Foster's roles as actor and director into separate photographs. Lane writes, "Foster's image often gets polarized in the media, as though she cannot be represented as an actress and a director at the same time."[26] She interprets this polarisation as evidence of the ambiguity of Foster's star image, which is empowering because it allows her to duck reductive classification. Mayne reads the polarisation of roles as an indication that both acting and directing are centred around performance, which ties in with the central idea put forward by these chapters: that directors can be usefully examined using theories put forward by star studies.

However it would be erroneous to suggest that the roles of actor and director are always polarised in representations of Foster. In the Premiere Women In Hollywood photo Foster is depicted as both actress and Hollywood businesswoman. Similarly in the Interview article some of the images actually blur rather than define the boundaries between star and director. On the magazine's cover she looks like a cross between an Arzner-esque director (beret, mannish suit, movie cameras to the side of her) and an old fashioned movie star (pearls, blouse, glamorous hair and make up). In another photo she looks like an off-duty movie star from the forties (hair waved over one eye, dressed in a polo neck), but with a

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[24] Susan Lyne, "Uncommon Women and Others," Premiere Women In Hollywood Special 1993: 10.
[25] Mayne, Directed By Dorothy Arzner 174.
[26] Christina Lane, "The Liminal Iconography of Jodie Foster," Journal of Popular Film and Television Jan. 1995. The Author's Jodie Foster Website 4 Nov. 1999 <http://www.geocities.com/Hollywood/set 2417 liminal-icon.html>.

director's megaphone to her mouth (see appendix D).[27] In these images, which deliberately play on and with the visual signifiers of star and director, Foster proves that she does not have to be either star or director, but wants to be, and more importantly has the power to be, both.[28] The word "power" is used here deliberately to indicate that her input into such image-making is considerable. For example Foster has a long association with Interview, dating back to April 1980 when she and her mother were interviewed for an article by Andy Warhol.[29] She was interviewed for the magazine again in November 1995, this time by Holly Hunter, coinciding with the release of her second film as director, Home For The Holidays (1995). This leads us to assume that Interview is one of Foster's preferred magazines to give interviews to, and not just any interviews but, in the case of those from 1991 and 1995, ones which take place at crucial points in her career as a Hollywood "hyphenate".

From Actress to Auteur: Managing the Star Image.

Having discussed Foster's status as a female icon, I will now examine the methods employed to transform her from star into star-auteur. As B. Ruby Rich notes, Foster's directorial debut Little Man Tate was met with the kind of reaction most first time directors (male or female) can only dream about. Among the enormous amount of press attention Foster received were two cover stories in Time and Interview which not only looked favourably upon her career shift, but spoke of her artistry with something akin to reverence.[30] In Time, as Rich Points out, Richard Corliss encourages us to make a comparison between Foster and Louis Malle when he reveals that Malle is one of her favourite directors. He

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[27] See appendix D, fig. 2-7, which can be compared with the Dorothy Arzner pictures (fig. 8-10), the photos of Greta Garbo (fig. 11 and 12) and Lauren Bacall (fig. 13) in the same appendix.
[28] That she should want to be a Hollywood "hyphenate" is not surprising considering the power such a position can bring. Foster also appears on the cover of the 10th Anniversary issue of Premiere Oct. 1997 along with Mel Gibson and Kevin Costner, under the heading, "The New Visionaries. Actor-directors Gibson, Foster, and Costner on taking control in Hollywood." Perhaps Foster wished to create the impression that, after Costner's Best Director Oscar for Dances With Wolves (1990) and Mel Gibson's Best Director Award for Braveheart (1995), it was only a question of time before she would join them.
[29] See Buddy Foster and Leon Wagener, Foster Child: Jodie Foster, an Intimate Biography (London: Arrow Books, 1998) 129.
[30] Rich, "Never a Victim" 58.

quotes Malle as saying of Tate, "I would be very happy and proud to have made the film that she did."[31]

In the Interview article another director (this time Dorothy Arzner) is mobilised in the quest to establish Foster as a great artist. As Judith Mayne points out, the photos of Foster which accompany this article deliberately allude to Dorothy Arzner's image.[32] In the cover shot and the first two photos, Foster is dressed in a beret and a severely tailored trouser suit reminiscent of the kind of clothing Arzner is usually pictured wearing. These pictures show Foster surrounded by the technical effects of filmmaking (cameras and lenses) as Arzner was in so many of her publicity stills (see appendix D, fig. 2-4, which can be compared against appendix D, fig. 8-10). The overall styling of these images (clothes, hair, make-up, props), and particularly the way in which they are lit (harsh contrast between light and shadow) combine to suggest an earlier period of cinematic history (the thirties to forties) which references the period in which Arzner directed most of her films.[33] The choice of Arzner as reference point is vital in Foster's quest for legitimacy since she is a Hollywood female director who has been given extensive, and mostly celebratory, critical attention by feminist film theorists. By incorporating Arzner's image into her own Foster situates herself as the latest in a long line of pioneering female filmmakers, and casts herself as a new female "auteur" (for this is how Arzner is frequently viewed by feminist film critics). She also manages to side step her connection with mainstream cinema by positioning herself as a female director who, like Arzner, challenges the dominant system from within.

In the aforementioned articles Jodie Foster's decision to move into directing is viewed as a logical step, a natural progression which fits neatly with the trajectory of her career so far. Unlike Penny Marshall, whose career shift to director is frequently met with disbelief and even scorn, Foster has primarily been written about as a woman who was destined to direct: a contrast which the quotations at the beginning of the these studies of

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[31] Richard Corliss, "A Screen Gem Turns Director," Time 14 Oct. 1991. Jodie Foster Website 15 Apr. 2000 <http://www.tcp.com/~mary/oct91.htm>.
[32] Mayne, Directed by Dorothy Arzner 174.
[33] She made twelve of her seventeen films between 1930 and 1943.

Foster and Marshall are designed to illustrate. This "destined-to-direct" theme comes across in Sischy's declaration that Foster is "a born director", and in the title of Corliss' article "A Director is Born", which is an interesting conflation of the phrases "a star is born" and "a born director". The first phrase is transformed by substituting the word "star" for the word "director", emphasising Foster's smooth transition from Hollywood star to star-director. The second transformation indicates that this transition is natural and inevitable, rather than forced: the birth metaphor proving that this is indeed the case. [34]

Foster encourages interviewers to regard her as a "born director" when she informs them that she wanted to direct from a young age. She tells Interview, "I've wanted to direct for as long as I can remember, from maybe when I was eight or nine years old"; and DGA Magazine, "I knew I wanted to be a director when I was six years old."[35] Foster's words here have the same mythic quality as they do when she tells the "feminist realisation" anecdote discussed earlier. It is intriguing that the age at which she realised she wanted to be a director alters from one telling to the next. It is also unlikely that even a child star fully immersed in the world of the film industry could come to such a conclusion at the age of six.

One reason for this easy transition from star to auteur is that Foster, once again unlike Marshall, has always been viewed as an intellectual. Articles about Foster never fail to mention that she was a precociously intelligent child who could speak and read from a very early age; that she attended Yale; and that she can speak fluent French. On the evidence of interviews she has given Foster is clearly keen to promote this side of her image, relating for example how her mother was always taking her "to see foreign movies, and she spent everything she could to get us to go to art things. It wasn't about money. It was about culture."[36]

As I have already indicated, most commentators see Foster as more than a mere actress. She is a role model and artist, rather than just a decorative object and a speaker of

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[34] Sischy 79.
[35] Sischy 79; Stevens.
[36] Sischy 81.

someone else's lines. In this they are encouraged by Foster's on-record opinion of herself. She has put into circulation the idea that acting does not take a great deal of technical skill, and that just being an actress could never be fulfilling enough for her. She tells Vanity Fair that acting is "an unschooled skill...and it doesn't require an ounce of energy on my part to do it." She has also commented, "I never wanted to be an actress, I just always was one, and I have so much more to contribute than just being an actress." Foster's words suggest that she views acting as a non-intellectual craft (one based on instinct rather than one you can learn), and consequently as an "intellectual" woman she chooses to consider it objectively as something at which she excels but which does not provide a sufficient challenge to her abilities.[37]

Frequently the media texts surrounding directors include information designed to provide them with an aura of intellectual legitimacy. For example, Charles Maland describes the efforts made to establish Charlie Chaplin as an intellectual and an artist, rather than a vulgar comedian and superficial film star.[38] Similarly Robert E. Kapsis writes that from the beginning of his career, promotional materials about Brian De Palma "highlighted his elite background and precociousness...His studio biographies...listed his two prestigious educational degrees". Promotional materials for Foster's Little Man Tate and Home For The Holidays employ similar tactics.

In the "About the Filmmakers" section of the production notes of Home For The Holidays we learn that Foster is "multi-lingual", "looped her own dialogue in French" for Claude Chabrol's The Blood Of Others, and "graduated with honors from Yale University". Two of the techniques employed in the marketing of Little Man Tate also underline the director's interest in all things academic. There was a tie-in with "Think Link" which is part of the Library of Congress "Invent America!" programme: a competition designed to encourage school children to reach their full creative potential. The film also had a college screening programme on thirty American university campuses, which once again shares

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[37] Shnayerson; De Vries, "Command Performance".
[38] Charles J. Maland, Chaplin And American Culture: The Evolution of a Star Image (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1989) 18-28.

common ground with tactics used to promote the films of Brian De Palma. Kapsis states that Columbia were keen to capitalise on De Palma's growing reputation among college audiences as one of a group of American "New Wave" directors, and accordingly included an article entitled "Brian De Palma - Big Man on Campus" in an advertising booklet for his film Obsession (1976).[39] Viewed in this light the screenings of Tate on college campuses might be seen to have the following aims: to promote the film as having appeal to young intellectuals; to act as a reminder that Foster herself has an academic background; and perhaps even to promote the idea that Foster (having made a film that wears its French New Wave influences on its sleeve) is the latest director to follow in the tradition of European directors who found recognition with those in search of something offbeat and novel (many of them students) in the sixties.

As well as emphasising her intellectual prowess, interviews with Foster find her eager to speak about her love of French New Wave cinema. In Corliss' article she states that Louis Malle's Murmur of the Heart (1971) is one of her favourite films, as well as being an influence on Little Man Tate, and reveals that she wanted Tate to have "a French film sense." She also tells Interview, "This film [Tate] is very American, but there are things about it that I think are European...because my favorite movies are films like Murmur of the Heart, The 400 Blows, and Breathless."[40]

The directors of the three films Foster references (François Truffaut, Jean-Luc Godard and Louis Malle) are all closely associated with the French New Wave. As The Oxford History Of World Cinema tells us, Truffaut spearheaded the movement along with colleagues from Cahiers du Cinéma (including Jean-Luc Godard). Louis Malle had little association with the Cahiers group, but is still frequently associated with the New Wave.[41] Foster recites these names like a mantra to those writing about her directorial debut, tempting

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[39] Robert E. Kapsis, Hitchcock: The Making of a Reputation (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992) 196.
[40] Corliss; Sischy 79.
[41] Geoffrey Nowell-Smith, ed., The Oxford History Of World Cinema (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996) 577-80.

us to conclude that she is actively seeking to situate herself as the next in a line of acknowledged European auteurs, and not just any auteurs but actually following in the footsteps of those who first conceptualised auteur theory. There is a parallel here with something Robert E. Kapsis has written about Alfred Hitchcock. Kapsis states that Hitchcock asked Salvador Dali to design a dream sequence for Spellbound (1944) because, at that time, Dali was popular amongst high-culture critics. Hitchcock, he argues, must have felt that Dali's reputation would encourage these critics to see the film and help enhance his own reputation.[42] Like Hitchcock Foster draws upon the reputations of others (Truffaut, Godard, Malle, Arzner) in order to demonstrate how she wishes to be "read" as a director. Such name dropping, along with her pre-established reputation as a "serious" actor, is designed to transform her into an instant auteur.

In conjunction with her propensity to talk about New Wave cinema, Foster "the director" also likes to give the impression that she is an artistically rather than commercially motivated, independent filmmaker. She has said, "I'm not a studio director and I don't think I ever will be...My movies have to be personal, and that's not something that's inherently valued in the studio system...I'd just rather live in the independent world."[43] She has also stated that the producer of Tate, Scott Rudin, is "the person that exemplifies everything that is negative and everything that's a cliché about Hollywood. For him it's just about acquiring elements. I'm a filmmaker."[44] That Foster, one of the most famous and bankable female stars in Hollywood, should choose to distance herself from the mainstream in this way is ironic, but not entirely surprising. If she wants to be "read" as a daring young auteur in the manner of her favourite French directors then she cannot be seen to be too accepting of the established system. It may not be entirely inaccurate to view Foster as an "independent" filmmaker (she is head of own production company, and has had the power to greenlight her own films) but it is rather misleading: Little Man Tate was made by Orion, and Egg was set

[42] Kapsis 25.
[43] Andrews 34.
[44] Schnayerson.

up in conjunction with PolyGram.[45] These facts highlight the problems inherent in using terms like "independent" or "mainstream", the boundaries of which are becoming increasingly blurred. When she refers to herself as an "independent" filmmaker Foster glosses over such difficulties and capitalises on the image which the label "independent" gives both her and her films (arty, intellectual, innovative), rather than concerning herself with how valid that term may be.

Aside from establishing an artistic distance between herself and Hollywood, Foster's labelling of her work as "independent" has the advantage of making her into a female director who is ready-made for positive attention from feminist film criticism. Unlike Marshall, whose work is perceived to belong to the cinematic mainstream and who has never tried to argue to the contrary, Foster's cinematic past as a female role model and her new status as auteur encourage critics to see her as a woman who has worked within the dominant system but has not allowed it to work on her: she has exploited it for her own ends rather than being exploited by it.

Of course it is not only the comments Foster makes, and the way she is pictured which promote her as an auteur. As Robert Kapsis identifies in his research on Hitchcock's star image, film festivals, retrospectives, and awards are all potential opportunities to showcase and sanction a director's "greatness", and hopefully to influence the opinions of those critics and commentators who matter.[46]

Foster has received awards such as the American Society of Cinematographers Governor's Award 1996, and the American Cinematheque Award 1999, which have nearly always been won by male directors. These function as a public recognition of her artistry as a filmmaker. The former is a periodic award given to "filmmakers who have made extraordinary contributions to advancing the *art* of filmmaking." Regarding the decision to

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[45] In the press release (21 Oct. 1992) released by PolyGram announcing their three year agreement with Egg Pictures, Foster is quoted as saying, "I see this partnership as a unique and exciting opportunity to combine my experience within the studio system and my commitment to an independent spirit in film-making." Polygram 4 Nov. 1999 <http://www.polygram.com/international/newsinfo/pressreleases/film/1992/102192>. No longer available on the web.
[46] Kapsis 70-114.

give the award to Foster, ASC president Victor Kemper stated that Foster was chosen because she "is a role model and a source of inspiration for every filmmaker with unfulfilled dreams."[47] The latter award is defined by the organisation's website as one which is "presented to an extraordinary *artist* currently making a significant contribution to the *art* of the moving picture." This website also reproduces the text of a press release about TNT's filming of the presentation ceremony for that award. It tells us that American Cinematheque is a "non-profit, viewer-supported film exhibition organization dedicated to the celebration of the moving-picture in all formats."[48] We can surmise from these descriptions that both of the above are prestigious Industry awards which have honoured Foster with recognition from her peers. The Cinematheque award ceremony was attended by a host of Hollywood insiders such as Jonathan Demme and Anthony Hopkins, and one of the industry's bibles, the Hollywood Reporter, produced a special tribute issue to mark the occasion. Both awards are also rather highbrow: on their own admission they are designed to reward what they see as an individual's artistry in the cinematic field. Crucially they are not only given to actors, but also to directors, producers, screenwriters etc., which proves that at this stage in her career Foster is not only being recognised as a star, but also as a filmmaker: something which can only consolidate her quest to be viewed as an auteur. One might speculate that she will probably mention her receipt of these awards in future promotional materials, just as she lists the numerous awards and nominations she has won as an actress in the production notes for Home For The Holidays.

In addition to awards Foster has shown that she is aware of the reputation enhancing possibilities of film festivals. Tate was shown at the Telluride Film Festival in 1991, and Home For The Holidays was shown at Berlin in 1996. Berlin is an internationally respected festival, and Telluride is one of the smallest American film festivals, with a reputation for

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[47] Information about the award, and quotation from Kemper, taken from Carl DiOrio, "Foster Shines in ASC Eyes," Hollywood Reporter, 12 Feb. 1996, Hollywood Reporter Online Archives 30 Dec. 1998 <http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/search.asp>. Italics mine.

[48] American Cinematheque 1 Mar. 2000 <http://www.americancinematheque.com/ball/1999MPBJodieFoster.htm>.

being independently minded. The Telluride website states that the aim of the festival is to celebrate "the art of film" with "a sympathetic gathering of film aficionados", instead of "a series of screenings for the press" or "a film market".[49] Foster is also pictured in the April 2000 edition of Premiere at another festival known for its celebration of independent filmmaking, Sundance: she is there to promote a film she has produced (Waking the Dead).[50] Foster is clearly someone who knows the festival circuit well and, according to Hilary DeVries, she also likes to make people aware that she knows about it too. DeVries writes, "if you're not careful, Foster will segue...into the subject of film festivals and how much she loves them".[51] During the Telluride festival Foster received a career tribute and was on a panel of women directors.[52] In this way Telluride was a perfect opportunity for Foster to receive credit for her career thus far; to showcase the results of her turn to directing: to be viewed and considered alongside other women directors; and to imply, although not state directly, that her work has feminist sympathies. Incidentally, the year Tate was released also saw Foster speak at the New York Women in Film Christmas Luncheon where she praised feminism as "the greatest kind of humanism I know."[53]

The last point I wish to make about the construction of Jodie Foster as auteur revolves around the way in which she has exploited a critical tendency (common in most writing on stars) to conflate the roles the star plays, or in this case the events of the films she directs, with his or her "real" life, to aid her quest for auteur status. B. Ruby Rich argues that Richard Corliss quite clearly confuses Foster "with her characters while a child actor" and "projects this fantasy displacement on to the woman director and her film product."[54] Rich fails to acknowledge that on various occasions Foster actually encourages this kind of confusion. For example Fred Schruers writes, "Even as she begins to deny the film's [Little

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[49] Telluride Film Festival 1 Mar. 2000 <http://www.telluridefilmfestival.com>.
[50] James Horn and Sean M. Smith, "Bound For Glory," Premiere Apr. 2000: 81.
[51] Hilary De Vries, "She's Always Been Out There," Los Angeles Times 6 Oct. 1991, Calendar Sec.: 7, Los Angeles Times Online Archives, 27 Jan. 1999 <http://pqasb.pqarchiver.com/latimes->.
[52] See Chris Willman, "Feminist Slant at Telluride Film Festival," Los Angeles Times 5 Sept. 1991, Calendar Sec.: F1, Los Angeles Times Online Archives 2 Feb. 1999 <http://pqasb.pqarchiver.com/latimes>.
[53] Doris Toumarkine, "Record NYWIF Crowd Hears Foster," Hollywood Reporter 20 Dec. 1991, Hollywood Reporter Online Archives 3 Jan. 1999 <http://www.Hollywoodreporter.com/search.asp>.
[54] Rich, "Never a Victim" 58.

Man Tate's] autobiographical aspect, Foster reconsiders: 'My relationship with my mom definitely plays in how I perceive relationships in general. Single parents have to be everything'[.]"[55] Foster also tells the Guardian that although Tate is not *exactly* "autobiographical", it has to do with the "ten philosophies I've accumulated in the past 25 years." She remarks that Tate has "the single parent theme... And there's the theme that runs through all of work...That is that I tend to deal with mundane heroes." Although Foster denies her work is truly autobiographical she simultaneously hints at that very fact by telling us that it explores themes which are personally significant. The mention of the "single parent theme" is particularly noteworthy since it brings to mind Foster's well-documented experience of growing up in a single parent family.

On another occasion Foster apparently evades the interviewer's suggestion that we might be tempted to make autobiographical connections between her life and the life of the characters portrayed in Tate. Yet on closer examination it becomes clear that she does not actually deny these connections could be drawn, and in fact tempts us to do that very thing. She remarks that "every single character" in Tate is "a side of me", but clarifies this with, "that doesn't mean that this is the story of my life."[56] A little later she draws a comparison between the character she plays in Tate (Dede) and her mother, Brandy:

> I was raised with a tremendous amount of confidence...My mother wasn't. There's a whole legacy and history of women who weren't. There's a whole legacy of Dede Tate's who were probably cast out of their family when they got pregnant...Dede wanted to do a lot of stuff, but she wasn't really good enough. And the one place where she doesn't have to be bitter is with her child. [57]

Foster's mother serves here as one example of a generation of women who, unlike her, were raised without the benefits of feminism. Foster casts Dede as a woman whose life is similarly filled with limited choices and missed opportunities, but who is able to feel a sense of

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[55] Fred Schruers, "A Kind of Redemption," Premiere Mar. 1991: 55.
[56] Sischy 81.
[57] Sischy 84.

achievement through her child: a comment which acts as a tantalising echo of the relationship between Brandy Foster and her gifted and successful daughter.

Finally in an interview with DGA Magazine (the magazine of the Director's Guild of America) Foster strongly suggests that her characters be read autobiographically. She says that she read the script of Tate and knew "I could spend my whole life making this movie. It had a lot to say about the questions I had about myself. *Like that character* I was definitely a different child". It is significant that she makes this revelation in a magazine which is primarily designed to appeal to industry insiders, and more specifically to other directors, rather than to a mass-market since it proves that she wishes her peers to view her as an auteur. Foster demands that we make an explicit connection between her own childhood and that of the child prodigy (Fred Tate) depicted in her film, thus fulfilling one of the essential criteria of an auteurist work: that the director manages to put his or her personal stamp, be it thematically, formally or otherwise, on the film(s) in question.[58]

Robert E. Kapsis argues that auteurist critics traditionally look for values such as "hidden meanings, personal vision...and thematic and stylistic consistency" as the markers of an auteur's work.[59] The way Foster talks about the characters in Tate can usefully be read in light of this comment. She hints at "hidden meanings" when she invites us to compare the lives of the characters in that film with her "real" life outside them. In terms of the "thematic" consistency part of the equation I would point to the way in which Foster has drawn upon her image as a tough, female role model, as played out on-screen as an actress, and off-screen as the product of a feminist upbringing, and used it to inform her secondary career as a director. That is, her new role as director, and the characters she depicts as a filmmaker, are inevitably interpreted in the light of her original "image", helping to provide a sense of continuity between the two stages of her career.

Writing on Hitchcock, Kapsis remarks that in order to ensure a film's success in the marketplace a filmmaker with a well-established reputation must take into account or

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[58] Stevens.
[59] Kapsis 110.

"manage" that reputation every time they make a new film, especially if that film deviates considerably from what audiences have come to expect of them.[60] In Foster's case the move to directing from acting can potentially be interpreted as unexpected and strange. In order to make it logical and familiar Foster draws on her past reputation as a signpost. mapping out the thematic connections between star and director, director and characters, actor and parts played, and celluloid life on screen and "real" life off screen so that we are encouraged to play connect the dots with her career. In the course of this process she invents herself as an auteur before the fact, bypassing the usual requirement for a cinematic body of work in which the auteur's thematic and stylistic preoccupations are revealed. Instead she takes advantage of her status as hyphenate to capitalise on a pre-existing star image in which the "themes" (strength, feminism, female victimhood etc.) of her work, as played out on and off screen, have already been identified.

As Richard Dyer points out, the notion that star and director are able to mutually bring something out in each other informs much auteurist criticism. He quotes from V.F Perkins who argues that a director is able to make "the familiar personality of the actor" fit with his or her cinematic concerns by the judicious exploitation of that star's image.[61] I mention this because it offers another perspective on this study of Foster as Hollywood hyphenate. That is, she is able to exploit herself as star in order to maximise the impact of her role as director. She can use her "familiar personality", which already *means* something to the outside world, to lend substance to her work as an auteur. In the case of Tate she is also able to exercise unprecedented power over her on-screen star image because she actually gets to direct herself. This led her to comment on one occasion that "I'm my favorite director."[62]

Control, Power, and Contradiction

Without a doubt Foster is an actress who has considerable control over her own star image.

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[60] Kapsis 42.
[61] Dyer 177.
[62] De Vries, "Command Performance".

For instance she was able to exploit her star-power in order to gain the opportunity to direct Tate. According to Hilary De Vries, Foster signed on to star in the film only when Orion promised her she could direct it as well.[63] In this way it can be argued of Foster, as Kapsis has done of Hitchcock, that she was able to use her fame as a kind of "capital" which allowed her to buy more fame, or more accurately fame of a different sort.[64] In other words her status as established Hollywood star aided her transition to star-auteur, giving her more autonomy than a female filmmaker who has no "star currency" to her name.

Charles Maland has argued that Chaplin was able to exercise control over his star image because he owned the means of production, and wrote, directed and produced his own work.[65] Rachel Abramowitz notes that Foster's deal with PolyGram gave the star "a state-of-the-art production company, $110 million in financing, and the authority to green-light six pictures over the next three years...PolyGram would have no creative control...[and] Foster had the unheard-of right to chose her own distributor." This deal meant that Foster, like Chaplin, effectively owned the means of production for that delimited period, possessing the freedom to choose her own material, and to act in whatever capacity she so desired (whether as producer, star, director, or writer). This was an unusual position for a Hollywood star since most of them have to make do with what Abramowitz refers to as "vanity deals": the studio offers the star facilities for their production company, such as office space, and in return ensures that they will continue to act in their films. Thus for the duration of the PolyGram deal Foster had gained *real* control over her star image because she had the power to represent herself cinematically (either on-screen or off it) however she saw fit. [66]

This is not to imply that an examination of Foster's control over her image begins and ends with the PolyGram deal. It must also be understood in terms of her awareness that "Jodie Foster the star" exists as a saleable product in the celluloid marketplace. She once told

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[63] De Vries, "She's Always Been Out There".
[64] Kapsis 69.
[65] Maland 279.
[66] Rachel Abramowitz, Is That A Gun In Your Pocket? Women's Experience of Power in Hollywood (New York: Random House, 2000) 361-2.

Vanity Fair, "I'm in the best position I can be in, because I have a talent, a *commodity* I can sell, that I can ram down people's throats." On another occasion she freely admitted that Jodie Foster "the child actress-turned-Ivy-League superachiever with an answer for everything" is an image rather than the *real* her, commenting that it is merely "the side of me that I show journalists."[67] To a great extent Foster determines how and where this "commodity" appears in the media. Veronica Lee states that Foster does little press except interviews with selected magazines and newspapers who give her copy and picture approval.[68] An article in the Sunday Times supports this claim when it reports that one of Hollywood's most powerful publicists, Pat Kingsley, who "not only gets to decide which journalists can interview her stars, but also controls what they can write about", is the woman who represents Foster.[69]

The word "control" constantly appears in interviews with, and articles about Foster. Martha Sherrill writes, "Control. She needs it and she fights it. Acting involves surrender, and Foster hates to surrender." Similarly Mark Harris states that "Foster is the first to admit that much about her grows from a simple concept: she likes control." In terms of her status as filmmaker this concept is expressed in some of the comments she makes about directing, such as telling DGA Magazine that she is "famous for printing one take on everything." Or commenting that she loved directing because it "has to do with the responsibility of being at the controls." Such statements position directing as a natural outlet for her abilities since it allows her to fully exercise that control on set.[70]

The titles of articles about Foster frequently make reference to her status as boss. For example, Mark Harris's "Jodie Foster. Meet The New Boss," Jonathan Van Meter's "The

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[67] Mark Harris, "Jodie Foster: Meet the New Boss," Entertainment Weekly 2 Apr. 1993. Entertainment Weekly Online Archives 1 Mar. 2000 <http://www.ew.com/ew/archive/0,1798,1|9188|0|Jodie%2bFoster%2bMeet%2bThe%2bNew%2bBoss,00.html>; Shnayerson. Italics mine.
[68] Veronica Lee, "Bossy Little Thing," Guardian 6 Dec. 1996: 7.
[69] Christopher Goodwin, "The Fame Game," Sunday Times 30 Apr. 2000, Style sec., Sunday Times Online Archives 17 Dec. 2000 <http://www.sunday-times.co.uk/news/pages/resources/library1.n.html>.
[70] Martha Sherrill, "The Reign of Jodie Foster: Offscreen She's In Charge. On Camera, She's Learned not to Be," Washington Post 25 Dec. 1994: G 1. Washington Post Online Archives 10 Jan. 2001 <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-adv/archives>; Harris; Sischy 84.

Boss," and Veronica Lee's "Bossy Little Thing." Lee's title is actually a nickname of Foster's (often shortened to B.L.T) which she is said to love so much that she had it embroidered on her crew jacket whilst making Tate. Thus it is logical to conclude that Foster is both happy to be seen as "the boss", and willing to admit that being in this position is apt to lead to bossiness.[71] The acknowledgement of Foster as boss is another way of demonstrating her control, while her admission that she might be perceived as bossy simultaneously and paradoxically works to play down that control in a humorous way.[72]

It is often in such contradictions that Foster the "star" is to be found. While she is frequently depicted as an extremely powerful woman, she is nevertheless as keen to play down this power as she is to emphasise it. In "Command Performance" she argues that she did not want to be a director just so more people would "have to listen to me on the telephone", but purely so she could "make a film that I'm proud of." Similarly she is quoted in Empire as saying, "I am not a power hungry person. Power is overrated." The irony of statements such as these is not lost on Suzanna Andrews, who responds to Foster's claim that she has "no ambitions for power at all" with the following statement: "No, Jodie Foster just wants simple things: to green-light movies, to choose distributors, to direct, to star, to have complete creative control and intimidate most people in Hollywood without trying. Please, no power."[73] Perhaps Foster's aim here is to encourage others to concentrate on the aesthetic/intellectual side of her work rather than the economic, and to stress again that she is first and foremost an "independent" filmmaker/actress who has found a way to work within the dominant system, rather than a typical "star" and genuine Hollywood player. In doing so she walks a tight-rope between projecting an image which shows she is a strong woman in control, despite the many possible pitfalls of the industry (the image of an insider who is still something of an outsider), and one which sees that control as having crystallised into the kind

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[71] Harris, Van Meter, and Lee. For the "BLT" anecdote see Kennedy, Jodie Foster 137.
[72] One might also consider Van Meter's comments about a speech made by Jonathan Demme at a retrospective of his films (7). Demme says that while Foster made her official directorial debut with Tate, she had practiced for it during the Silence of the Lambs by giving him advice. The fact that Foster is said to find his words amusing suggests once again that she is not unhappy with being thought of as bossy.
[73] De Vries, "Command Performance"; Unreich 66; Andrews 90.

of power position around which Hollywood is structured (the image of an outsider who has become an insider).

Ironically enough, especially given Marshall's "feminine" star image which I discuss in the next chapter, there is evidence to suggest that Foster's image is starting to lose some of its tomboyish edge and become more "feminine". In an interview with Foster Melina Gerosa states that there are several things we might not know about Jodie Foster: "Her toenails are painted fire-engine red. She goes to the movies to cry. She still writes letters to her first love. And she doesn't always know where she's going." In other words Foster the supposed no-nonsense "tough girl" is, *in reality*, a woman who likes to be glamorous, loves to express her emotions, believes in romance, and has her weaknesses: she doesn't "know where she's going" both literally (as in she gets lost when driving) and, it is implied, figuratively. In support of these claims Foster comments, "Every time I see men and women ballroom dancing, I start weeping uncontrollably. It's romantic".[74] At the time this interview was published Foster's "strong woman and Hollywood player" image had not undergone any significant shift, and was still a major feature of articles about her. Perhaps the image she presents in this article is significantly different than usual because it is designed to appeal to a female and/or "feminine" market: one that is not specifically business-orientated in the way that Working Woman is, but geared towards domestic, fashion and beauty issues. Moreover the interviewer of a "woman's" magazine is arguably more likely to ask Foster questions about these kind of topics than a film-orientated or industry publication, although it is equally important to realise that Foster's usual reluctance to discuss any issues relating to relationships suggests that it is she, rather than the interviewer, who has been instrumental in putting these topics up for discussion here.

In two articles following the birth of her son Foster's image (as a career-orientated woman) undergoes a significant shift. She is quoted as saying, "I need to be less

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[74] Melina Gerosa, "Jodie Loses Her Cool: Hollywood's Pre-eminent Ice Princess Warms Up." Ladies Home Journal Feb. 1995, Northern Light Special Collections Documents 12 Nov. 1999 <http://library.northernlight.com/SL199709220400381 19.html>.

responsible...I was born with the Protestant work ethic. But motherhood has changed my life drastically...Before, part of me felt I had to be deeply ambitious, but I've lost that now"[75]; and "I don't know whether Charlie has made me a better actress, but I have changed my priorities...My focus is on him...I have time for the creative side of my job but not the business side - the image thing - not anymore."[76] As if to emphasise this new maternal Foster the second article by Ivan Waterman includes a picture of the actress in her role as governess in Anna and The King, surrounded by the royal children. The caption reads "Mother Figure". The first article by Andrew Duncan also sees Foster admit that she has weaknesses in the same way as she did in Ladies Home Journal: " 'I now realise a lot of the ambition I felt was pressure from society, not myself.' So behind the cool façade, she's neurotic and dysfunctional? 'Yeah all that,' she laughs... 'We're all neurotics in some way.'"[77] Waterman's article is especially revealing on the subject of the star image, since not only does Foster admit that the "image thing" is the part of her job that she is happy to let slide for the meantime, but she also mounts a direct challenge to the image most people have of her: an image that, as we have seen, she herself helped to create. She denies that she is fit to be a role-model (the defining word "female" is implied but left unsaid), and insists that she is *in reality* neither an unapproachable nor overly serious person. Rather, she says, this is the impression given by her "image" whereas in truth she is actually very different: "I still find it hard to believe that anyone would put me as a role model...It's all about image. People imagine I am this deadly serious person. Well in some respects I am but I like to amuse and be amused...I am a mass of contradictions[.]"

It is intriguing (although not surprising) that Foster apparently knows so much about the nature of the star image, even down to telling us that she is, like every star, a "mass of contradictions". Her words certainly lend credibility to the claim that she is not simply being

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[75] Andrew Duncan, "Motherhood Has Changed My Life Drastically: I Love It and Want More Children," Radio Times, 31 Dec. 1999 - 7 Jan. 2000: 6

[76] Ivan Waterman, "Having a Baby Has Changed My Life: Now It's Just the Two of Us Against the World," Sunday Mirror 12 Dec. 1999: 44, 45.

[77] Duncan 6-8.

created by the media which surrounds Hollywood cinema, but actively taking a critical part in that creation herself. As if to prove this, despite her apparent urge to present a new maternal image, Foster also remembers to stress her credentials as an independent rather than mainstream actress/filmmaker, as well as to reassert her position as a capable, intellectual woman, both on and off-screen: "I always play the intelligent protagonist because that is me. I am not weak...I am not a bimbo or airhead...I wanted to play Anna for that reason....I don't make movies to rip people off and open restaurants."[78]

There could be several possible motivating factors behind Foster's decision to stress the "maternal" in this way, apart from the obvious one that her image must change to accommodate new events in her personal life. It is very probably a means of ensuring that she retains control over the way the birth of her son is represented in the media, and in the process deflects unwelcome speculation and gossip about her private life, such as the identity of the baby's father. It is also perhaps another way to guarantee that she is viewed as a normal, every day woman (as natural and down-to-earth) rather than a Hollywood star. For example, she mentions that she has become a "daytime TV soap addict" since the birth of her baby: a comment which is seemingly intended to prove how ordinary she is, although in this case with a specifically female/feminine twist. However this new aspect of her image could function as a way to avoid being pigeonholed as a certain type of person: a means of keeping both the public and the industry guessing. Viewed in this manner it is simply another of the varying and contradictory elements that make up her star image and which, to paraphrase Richard Dyer, both she as star and we as "spectator" must rationalise and negotiate.[79] However it is also vital to remember that the portrayal of "Foster the mother" in Waterman's article is also exemplary of the way in large sections of the media portray women generally. That is, as individuals who fulfil specific, discrete roles in their lives which do not fit logically or comfortably together. They are mothers or career women, married or single; and if these categorisations do become mixed-up (mothers and career women, or single mothers)

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[78] Waterman 45.
[79] See Dyer's discussion of Jane Fonda, 72-98.

this is often represented as being a problem. Waterman writes that Hollywood was "astonished" when Foster announced she was expecting a baby because "[t]here was nothing in her past that indicated that she was a *natural* parent. Most people assumed she was still dealing with her hang-ups about men". According to Waterman, Foster's image as a driven career-woman (as well as the fact that she is without a husband or boyfriend) means that she it is difficult to view her as a "natural" parent (whatever that is). For those "astonished" onlookers the roles of "unmarried and female Hollywood player" and "mother" do not go together *naturally.* A fact which suggests that although the extent of Foster's control over her image may be considerable and unusual for a woman, it is not total. She may have a powerful publicist and a formidable reputation, but in the final analysis she is unable to completely escape the cultural imperative to delimit and categorise women's lives. Perhaps it is in order to counter such urges that she has fought, and continues to fight so fiercely to hang onto that control wherever she can.[80]

In conclusion, Richard Dyer has argued that star images are contradictory and Foster's is no exception. In Hilary De Vries' words, Foster is "maddeningly contrary".[81] She functions simultaneously as the serious, non frivolous woman who is also a star and sex symbol; the "independent" auteur who is also a Hollywood heavy weight; and the mini mogul who denies that she ever thinks about power. Unlike Penny Marshall, whose image has its own contradictions, the inconsistencies within Foster's image have proved no obvious bar to feminist critical attention and affirmation. The "strong woman" element of the image works to unite these contradictions, resulting in a "Jodie Foster" who is attractive for feminism in a way that "Penny Marshall" is not.

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[80] Waterman 45, 44.
[81] Dyer 72; DeVries, "Command Performance".

Chapter Six

A Tale of Two Star Images Part Two: A Case Study of Penny Marshall, Hollywood's New Ida Lupino

"[W]hy was it 'Laverne,' of all people...who became the first woman, as well as the first actress, to direct a hundred-million-dollar-grossing movie?"[1]

Lawrence Crown has written of Penny Marshall as follows:

> Penny was defined most often by what she was not...[N]ot a secure person, not a happy person...The same held true for her on set - not a forceful person, not particularly a vocal person when it came to her opinions about how a scene should go, not even very informed about the technical processes of filmmaking...In sum she was not a leader on the set in the conventional jodhpurs-and-riding-crop sense.[2]

Crown's statement is crucial for the following examination of Marshall's star image since it suggests that her image is based not on the personal qualities that she exhibits, but on the traits she lacks. That is, it articulates the negatives rather than celebrating the positives. Taken as such, Marshall's image is almost the exact opposite of Jodie Foster's. Whereas Foster's directorial persona is centred around her ability to lead others, her professionalism, and the sheer extent of her cinematic knowledge and experience (as actor, intellectual and cinephile), Marshall is usually represented as a director who is inept, lacking in confidence, unable to cope with the pressures of the job, and who only knows how to make sentimental and simplistic films for the masses.

Marshall is typically viewed as a female director who, thanks primarily to her perceived lack of commitment to women's issues, holds little interest for feminist film criticism. At its most basic level this unwillingness to subject both Marshall and her films to

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[1] Lawrence Crown, Penny Marshall: An Unauthorised Biography of the Director and Comedienne (Los Angeles: Renaissance Books, 1999) xvii.
[2] Crown 134.

rigorous feminist analysis is evidenced in the refusal of almost all feminist film theorists to write about her. So much so in fact that she remains an almost invisible figure.[3] This omission is curious since she is one of the most successful female directors in Hollywood. She has worked with a number of A-list stars (Robert DeNiro, Robin Williams, Tom Hanks, Madonna, Whitney Houston), and made history as the first woman to direct a film which grossed more than a hundred million dollars at the North American box-office (Big (1988)). In this chapter I argue that the nature of her star image is partially responsible for this omission. To a great extent this image is constructed around stereotypes of femininity (passivity, insecurity, sentimentality) which are traditionally anathema to feminist thinking: a fact which might explain why Marshall continues to be passed over for analysis. As a mainstream director who lacks the art-school edginess and background in independent filmmaking of a Bigelow, or the cultural and intellectual "legitimacy" of a Foster, she is perhaps more difficult to situate within a feminist canon of filmmakers. Yet it should also be stressed that the "femininity" of Marshall's image is, paradoxically, encouraged by both those within and outside the industry who believe she is an incompetent and sentimental filmmaker, and by Marshall herself, who admits to playing upon her femininity when it might be beneficial. This is an issue I return to in greater depth later in this chapter.

"No matter how many movies I direct, I'll always be Laverne." Penny Marshall's Early Star Image[4]

To a great extent Marshall's star image is still based upon a character she last played on television almost two decades ago. As James Ryan has said, "Marshall is very conscious of the fact that most people outside of Hollywood still associate her with the dizzy Laverne

[3] In the course of my research for this thesis I found virtually no academic material on either Marshall or her films. While I acknowledge that there is a general scarcity of such material on women directors working in the mainstream film industry (hence the motivation for my work), it is noteworthy that Marshall is hardly ever mentioned in those works which do discuss them.

[4] Quoted in Barry Koltnow, "Even as a Successful Film Director, 'Laverne' Still Shops at K-Mart," San Diego Union-Tribune 13 Dec. 1996: E12. San Diego Union-Tribune Online Archives 3 Sept. 2000 <http://pqasb.pqarchiver.com/sandiego/index.html>.

character in the 'Happy Days' spin-off, 'Laverne and Shirley.'"[5] Barry Koltnow finds it hard to believe that the woman giving the orders on the set of The Preacher's Wife (1996) is really the same woman who once played Laverne De Fazio: "One would not imagine that a dozen grown men would actually listen intently and respectfully to the voice of Laverne...But this is Hollywood, and in Hollywood, even a Laverne can become a big-shot director."[6] Similarly, Peggy Orenstein reports that Madonna christened Marshall's style of filmmaking on A League Of Their Own (1992) as "the Laverne style of directing": a phrase which indicates that the ditzy nature of the Laverne character has been transferred onto Penny Marshall the director, who is persistently referred to as a filmmaker who works in a haphazard rather than an organised manner.[7]

Lawrence Crown claims that despite its public popularity and longevity, Laverne and Shirley was typically dismissed by critics while it was on the air for being too "low-brow", and is still ignored today by its omission from most books which list American situation comedies.[8] Whereas Jodie Foster's acting roles (which are held to depict strong, intelligent women much like Foster herself) have lent credibility to her quest to become a "serious" director, Marshall's one and only star role, in which she played a female clown (and I use the word "clown" to indicate that Laverne and Shirley's brand of comedy is not seen as intellectual), has had a detrimental effect on her credibility as a director and Hollywood player. As the quote which begins this chapter demonstrates (as does Stephen Hunter's question "How on earth did she go from whiny, adenoidal Laverne to the person who gets to yell 'Action'?"; and James Ryan's comment, "Yes, you heard right, 'Laverne' is known in Hollywood as someone with clout") Marshall/Laverne's new position in the industry is so unlikely, so unexpected, that it must be constantly questioned and negotiated.[9]

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[5] James Ryan, "Penny Marshall, Seriously," BPI Entertainment News Wire, Dec. 1990, Northern Light Special Collection Documents 12 July 2000 <http://library.northernlight.com/AG19980701210000832.html>.
[6] Koltnow.
[7] Peggy Orenstein, "Making It In The Majors," New York Times Magazine 24 May 1992: 25.
[8] Crown 50-74.
[9] Stephen Hunter, "Penny Marshall: All She Can Be," Baltimore Sun 3 June 1994, Features sec.: 1D, Baltimore Sun Online Archives 5 Mar. 2000 <http://www.sunspot.net/search>; Ryan.

During the period which Laverne and Shirley was on the air (1976-1983) Marshall received a great deal of attention in the popular American press. For instance an internet fan site for the programme lists articles appearing in such varied publications as Star Magazine, TV Week, People Weekly, TV Guide, and Photoplay.[10] One issue which is raised time and again in this material is the question of Marshall's insecurity. She is quoted as making comments such as, "I'm insecure mostly because of my looks...I'm constantly seeking approval. I hate bad reviews". Her then father-in-law Carl Reiner also remarks, "Rob [Reiner] always told me she was funny and talented, but I never saw it because she's so quiet." This insecurity was obviously a substantial part of Marshall's star image at the time since one TV Favourites article comments that "In the past Penny's insecurity has surfaced in her newspaper publicity interviews."[11]

I draw attention to the issue of Marshall's insecurity here since it is an aspect of her "personality" that articles and interviews have continued to draw attention to throughout her career. In a 1992 article Penny Orenstein writes that "Marshall's insecurity is as legendary as other director's egos, and everyone who works with her comments on it." To back this up she quotes James Brooks (producer of Marshall's second film Big) who reveals that Marshall sent him dailies from the film every day, and kept apologising for letting him down.[12] The issue of insecurity is further complicated by the fact that Marshall actually supports this reading of her character when she presents herself as someone who is a bundle of neuroses: possibly with the intention of using this aspect of her star image as a kind of defence mechanism against criticism. It is also worth suggesting (even though it is impossible to prove) that the continuing perception of Marshall as a personally and professionally insecure figure has a knock-on effect on her standing within the industry. For, as John Izod has stated,

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[10] See the "Laverne and Shirley Magazine Merchandise Page," The Ultimate Laverne and Shirley Fansite on the Net 5 Mar. 2000 <http://www.cindywilliams.dabsol.co.uk/lands/indexnav.htm>.
[11] Burt Prelutsky, "It May be Called 'Laverne and Shirley' but For Penny Marshall It's All in the Family," TV Guide 22 May 1976. The Ultimate Laverne and Shirley Fansite on the Net 5 Mar. 2000 <http:// www. cindywilliams.dabsol.co.uk/lands/archive.htm>; "Focus On Penny 'Laverne' Marshall," TV Favourites circa 1976. no.2. The Ultimate Laverne and Shirley Fansite on the Net 5 Mar. 2000 <http:// www. cindywilliams. dabsol. co.uk/lands/archive.htm>.
[12] Orenstein 25.

"Confidence, or the talent for arousing it in others is a saleable commodity in Hollywood."[13] Arguably Hollywood is an industry which places a tremendous amount of importance on surface impressions, on one's image, and not just in relation to stars. The industry is not so much about who you *are* but more about who people *think* you are. In the words of a trade reporter quoted in Reel Power, "People in this town are very conscious of their image"[14]. Consequently one is tempted to speculate that the personal qualities, such as insecurity, which are widely attributed to Marshall result in a "weak" star-image as opposed to the "strong" one, based on a supposedly tough and gritty personality, enjoyed by Jodie Foster. Moreover, the relative strength of each director's star image could play a vital part in the way her films are received. Richard Corliss states that in "the wrong hands" (that is, not Foster's) Little Man Tate "could get pretty twee and reductive; give the kid a disease, and you have a TV movie of the week." However an endorsement of the film by Louis Malle, and the acknowledgement of Foster's intellectual abilities and prestigious cinematic background (working with "superfine American directors" such as Scorsese for example) are enough to ensure that Corliss views Tate as something far superior. On the other hand it is hard to find a single critic who makes similar kinds of "allowances" for Marshall. Her films are seen to live down to generic expectations rather than transcending them.[15]

Many of the articles about Marshall written at the time of Laverne and Shirley also emphasise her role as Rob Reiner's wife.[16] Most of them are eager to report that the pair are married, and indeed one article actually begins with the words "Penny Marshall, in private life the wife of a popular television star (Rob Reiner)", as if this were the most important fact about her.[17] Another article narrates Marshall's route to marriage: it begins by informing us of Penny's mother's wish that her daughter marry a nice Jewish boy; moves on to her

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[13] John Izod, Hollywood and The Box Office 1895-1986 (London: Macmillan Press, 1988) 172.
[14] Mark Litwak, Reel Power (Los Angeles: Silman-James Press, 1986) 296.
[15] Richard Corliss, "A Screen Gem Turns Director," Time 14 Oct. 1991, Jodie Foster Website 15 Apr. 2000 <http://www.tcp.com/~mary/oct91.htm>.
[16] At the time Reiner, who has also made a career change to directing, was a television celebrity, playing Archie Bunker's son-in-law on All in the Family.
[17] "Focus on Penny 'Laverne' Marshall," TV Favourites no. 2, circa 1976. The Ultimate Laverne and Shirley Fansite on the Net 5 Mar. 2000 <http://www.cindywilliams.dabsol.co.uk/lands/archive.htm>.

marriage to, and subsequent divorce from, a football player she met at college: and ends with her "idyllic" marriage to Rob Reiner. The article (which is imbued with the spirit of romance) informs us that Reiner "saw that Penny was vulnerable, warm, insecure and loving-in short, a beautiful combination of qualities that made for a dynamite person, whom he eventually chose to make his wife."[18] It is worth noting here that just as Marshall's own comments feed her image as an insecure woman, so some of the things she said about her relationship with Reiner suggested that she should be defined as an extension of him. She has been quoted as saying that her insecurity meant that she was constantly "asking Rob if he likes me, if I'm nice, if I'm happy"[19]; and that when he gave her critical advice on her acting she thought "he hates me. The marriage is over. He won't come home tonight." [20]

This aspect of Marshall's early star image which establishes her as someone's wife rather than a star in her own right is symptomatic of a tendency to define her by her relationships to men. If she is not being referred to as Reiner's wife, then she is discussed as Carl Reiner's daughter-in-law, or Garry Marshall's little sister. This suggests that she is a woman who, in stark contrast to Foster, is not self reliant but dependent on the assistance of powerful men within the entertainment industry. Although her star image became untangled from Reiner's when the couple divorced, the fact that she has a famous and influential brother in Garry Marshall has continued to form a central part of that image.[21] A recent article in the Los Angeles Daily News which discusses Marshall's frustration at continually failing to get directing projects off the ground relates that "Penny's brother, Garry, has been trying to get her and her 'Laverne & Shirley' co-star Cindy Williams back before the cameras in a big-screen version of the vintage sitcom." A comment which puts her into the position

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[18] "Penny Marshall's Swinging Past," The Ultimate Laverne and Shirley Fansite on the Net 5 Mar. 2000 <http://www.cindywilliams.dabsol.co.uk/lands/archive.htm>.
[19] Prelutsky.
[20] "Focus on Penny 'Laverne' Marshall".
[21] Incidentally their split was considered newsworthy enough to make the cover of People 28 Apr. 1990. Penny Marshall was pictured alone along with the headline, "Penny Marshall. Laverne fights the lonely life after her split from husband Rob (Meathead) Reiner." This tells us is that not only were both actors best known in the public eye by the names of the characters they played on television (Laverne and Meathead), but that she was so identified with her husband in the public eye that their divorce, and her subsequent struggle to deal with being alone, was considered of sufficient interest to grace the front page of one of America's most well-known and widely-read entertainment magazines.

where her brother is working to move her career forward. The tendency to view Marshall, and indeed during the Laverne and Shirley period for her to seemingly view herself, as "somebody's wife" is an aspect of her star image I will return to later when I consider the possibility that it (along with the fact that Laverne and Shirley was set in the fifties) has had an impact on the way both she and her films are interpreted by critics as products of a pre-feminist era.[22]

Goodbye Laverne, Hello Hollywood: Penny Marshall as Director

At this point I want to move away from my discussion of Marshall's early star image and turn my attention to the nature of her star image since she became a director. One of the most common ways of writing about her is as a figure who is constantly under pressure. Numerous articles draw attention to the fact that she is a chain-smoker, which as an individual detail might seem trivial but when viewed in the light of other comments made about her takes on greater significance. Marshall's smoking is represented less as a simple habit, and more as a crutch: an antidote to a highly stressful profession. Thus Sean Mitchell writes, "She reclines not in grandeur but in collapse...She has got a chain of Marlboros going - she cannot talk on the phone without one - and wonders aloud how she planned to quit smoking with a $29 million movie about to open." Similarly Lawrence Crown describes an incident which occurred when the director was co-hosting Rosie O'Donell's show. O'Donell asked her if she was ever going to give up smoking, and she replied that she was constantly trying but always went back to it when she was making a film.[23] In this way Marshall "the stressed-out smoker" functions as just another symbol of "Marshall the stressed-out director": a woman whose smoking indicates she is not entirely happy or "natural" in that job. Or as Matthew Gilbert puts it, "You don't picture this chainsmoking word-swallower taking the

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[22] Marilyn Beck and Stacy Jenel Smith, "Frustrated Director Marshall Plans a Return to Acting," Los Angeles Daily News 26 Feb. 1999, L.A. Life sec., Northern Light Special Collections Documents 12 Feb. 2000 <http://library. northernlight.com /BM199903040200054599.html>.
[23] Sean Mitchell, "Backpedaling to Fame," Los Angeles Times 16 Dec. 1990, Home ed., Calendar sec.: 5, Los Angeles Times Online Archives 27 Jan. 1999 <http://pqasb.pqarchiver.com/latimes>; Crown 91.

helm of a chaotic movie set". By contrast Jonathan Van Meter assures us that "[e]ven with the nerves and cigarettes directing, being the boss, seems to be a comfortable place for Foster."[24]

Far from being unique to Marshall the image of the "stressed-out movie director" is something of a media staple. One only has to think of the way in which James Cameron has been envisaged as an megaphone-wielding tyrant who dealt with the strain of directing Titanic (1997) by shouting at everyone. Or, in a variation on that image, the way in which Woody Allen is so often presented (and to an extent presents himself) as an anxious, eccentric character who plays out his real life neuroses on-screen.[25] However in Marshall's case this "stressed-out" image is interpreted differently than it is for someone like Allen. She, like Allen, has made the neurotic but loveable loser character a big part of her star image (she is fond of deadpan humour in interviews, enjoys bemoaning her problems and/or ailments, and likes to make jokes at her own expense), but in her case the "loser" image also extends to her perceived incompetence as a director.[26] In other words Allen's "neurotic" nature is not seen to affect his ability to direct (he has been widely acclaimed as a great filmmaker and auteur), whereas it has been implied that Marshall's well-publicised "neuroses" are the raison-d'être behind her supposedly disorganised and irrational directorial style. When Peggy Orenstein dubs Marshall's erratic style of directing "[d]irection by doubt", and Madonna calls it "the Laverne style of directing" they both see a causal link between Penny/Laverne the professional worrier and Marshall the flaky director. Elliott Abbott, the producer of A League of Their Own and executive producer of Awakenings (1990), even invites a more direct comparison between Allen and Marshall when he comments that it was Allen's film

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[24] Matthew Gilbert, "The Awakening of Penny Marshall," Boston Globe 6 Jan. 1991: 36, Boston Globe Online Archives 14 Jan. 2001 <http://www.boston.com/globe/search/>; Jonathan Van Meter, "The Boss," Guardian 2-3 Mar. 1991, Weekend sec.: 6.

[25] For example, James Cameron was represented as exactly this kind of director when he was satirised as James Macaroon by Adrian Edmondson in the BBC's French and Saunders Christmas Special 1998. See French and Saunders 2 Jan. 2001<http://www.frenchandsaunders.com/shows> for more details.

[26] Matthew Gilbert remarks that, "No one makes fun of Penny Marshall as well as Penny Marshall. Her whiny, self-depreciating humor buoys every incomplete sentence she mumbles, whether she's talking about directing her new movie...or musing on her endless dental problems."

crew who worked on Big, and "I'll tell you they were sceptical-it was a little wacky to them. all the takes she did."[27]

If Jodie Foster's image is typically that of the consummate professional, a woman who is always in control, then Penny Marshall is, by contrast, represented as a woman who has a haphazard and even unprofessional approach to directing. Some commentators have even hinted at a degree of laziness on her part. Orenstein argues that the director is "a chronically reluctant dynamo: she seems to stumble accidentally to the heights of success, then retreats into inertia."[28] Likewise Lawrence Crown suggests that the woman who could once have been described as "the slacker as celebrity" (always tired, fond of whining, and the antithesis of the Hollywood workaholic) has subsequently "become the very personification of the slacker as director. Not in subject matter, certainly, but in persona and attitude."[29] Crown acknowledges that Marshall's image as "slacker director" stems not only from the way she is described by others, but also from the way she presents herself publicly, which makes it problematic to suggest that this accusation is simply a result of disrespect on Crown's part. Nevertheless by labelling Marshall in this way he overlooks the reality of directing a big budget Hollywood movie, which typically requires long hours, stamina and hard work. Indeed it is part of the contradictory nature of Marshall's star image that she is viewed simultaneously as a stressed out neurotic and a laissez faire "slacker": the only logical connection between the two aspects being that they are both negative personality traits.

The tone of Crown's biography is mostly sympathetic towards his subject, although some comments are rather more disparaging than celebratory. The "slacker" remark is preceded in the text by the comment that Marshall is not a very prolific director - the implication being that the blame for this must lie squarely with her: "[N]ow that she's become a film director, its apparent that *she hasn't cared to* work all that much, directing on average, a movie only once every few years. (Woody Allen and Steven Spielberg, by

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[27] Orenstein 25; Elliot Abbot, quoted in Orenstein 25.
[28] Orenstein 25.
[29] Crown 133.

contrast, can be reliably expected to direct at least one movie each year...[.])"[30] Crown fails to acknowledge the possibility that Marshall may have wanted to direct on a more regular basis, but was prevented from doing so by circumstances beyond her control. According to the Los Angeles Daily News, which informs us that Penny would love to be directing but has had trouble getting projects off the ground since The Preacher's Wife (1996), this is indeed the case.[31] In fact Marshall made six films between the years 1986 and 1996 (two of which made more than one hundred million dollars at the box office), and has only entered a period of inactivity in the years since then. The unfavourable comparison with Allen and Spielberg is also unfair and misleading. Both directors have considerably more freedom to develop the projects they want to make thanks to the high esteem (based on artistic and/or financial grounds) in which the industry holds them. Spielberg, as one of the owners of DreamWorks SKG, even has the power to greenlight his own movies.

Elsewhere in his biography Crown introduces another recurring theme in the Penny Marshall image: that she really doesn't understand the mechanics of directing or the craftsmanship involved in being a great director - hence her tendency to shoot too much footage and construct the film in the editing process, rather than having it planned out properly beforehand. Crown writes:

> In contrast to classic auteurs like Alfred Hitchcock - who was famous for storyboarding every shot in every movie well in advance...Penny's directing style was the ultimate in slacker filmmaking...She filmed the way she learned in TV, with multiple cameras covering the action from every conceivable angle and assembling massive rough cuts. Awakenings ran five hours in assemblage. At one time Renaissance Man was almost four-and-a-quarter hours long.[32]

It is curious that Crown should attribute Marshall's careless filmmaking style to the experience she gained directing for television (she directed episodes of Laverne and Shirley)

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[30] Crown 77. Italics mine.
[31] Beck and Smith.
[32] Crown 135-6.

since it is often acknowledged that the medium is a useful place for directors to learn their craft because it teaches them how to work within tight budgets and schedules. In fact one might argue that directing for television is the antithesis of "slacker" directing since there is no question of being indecisive and wasting time when there are weekly episodes to be filmed.[33]

Crown's assessment of Marshall is seemingly shared (or at least hinted at) by others within the industry, who range from journalists to producers, stars to studio spokesmen. Tom Hanks is quoted in an article about the making of A League of Their Own as follows: "They'd say, 'Penny, there's two and a half hours of dailies tonight...*They* shot so much footage." While the mysterious "they" might not relate directly to Marshall, the association of the films she helms with an excessive and wasteful technique is evident in Hanks' words. Elliot Abbot has also referred to her tendency to do multiple takes on Big when he remarks that, "Penny doesn't feel she's terribly talented...She will always take a long time to make a movie because she never thinks she's gotten it." During an interview with Marshall, Rosie O'Donnell actually comments, "you never bring a movie in under four hours", and goes on to ask her exactly how many feet of film she shot on A League of Their Own, mentioning that Kodak presented Marshall with a case of champagne during the last week of shooting because she had used so much film.[34]

It is surprising to say the least that Abbott, the producer of two of Marshall's films, would make such an uncomplimentary statement about a colleague he has worked so closely with, although apparently this is not an isolated incident. Jim Hillier notes that a Columbia-TriStar spokesman commented officially on anticipated problems between Madonna and A League of Their Own's then star, Debra Winger, in the following manner:

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[33] See, for example, Steven Spielberg's assessment of the early work he did directing for television, in John Baxter, Steven Spielberg: The Unauthorised Biography (London: HarperCollins, 1997) 65.
[34] Tom Hanks quoted in Nancy Griffin, "Clean Up Women," Premiere July 1992: 82; Elliot Abbott quoted in Orenstein 25; Rosie O'Donnell, "Interview with Penny Marshall," Premiere Women In Hollywood Special 1997, Premiere Online 10 Nov. 1997 <http://www.premieremag.com/featpres/WIH/marshall/marshall 2.html>. Article no longer available on the internet.

> Penny Marshall is *sweet*, but she's a *lightweight*. She never has her picture figured out when she directs. She just figures it all out in post-production. Would you want to put her together with Debra Winger and Madonna? That's how the guys at Columbia saw it-women are *frail* and have to be treated with kid gloves, except the *bitches*. Penny Marshall might survive with one shark in the tank, but with two?[35]

Not only is such a statement unbelievably sexist in the way that it divides women into two groups (nice but ineffectual ladies, and hard-nosed bitches), and questions their ability to control a difficult situation, but it is also (as Hillier goes on to argue) unlikely to be made about a male director, especially by a member of the studio for which he is making a film. Comments such as these, especially since they are made by Hollywood insiders, undoubtedly affect the way Marshall is perceived within the industry. When colleagues of Marshall's go on-the-record with statements that question her capabilities as a filmmaker, her image as a director who is ill-at-ease in her profession immediately becomes more credible. As evidence that this image of Marshall has become well-established with Hollywood one only has to point to the 1994 Premiere "Power List". She is ranked at number forty five, and in the paragraph that accompanies this ranking the magazine reports that her "weaknesses" as a director are that she "[s]hoots tons of coverage and then can't make up her mind in the editing room; [and] long postproductions." Compare this with the paragraph on Foster (ranked at number thirty eight) in the same list: she is described as "Woman of the '90s", and her "weaknesses" are merely that she may be "too earnest" where Hollywood is concerned. This is hardly a biting criticism, and might even be read as a compliment.[36]

Tellingly the perception of a director who shoots a lot of footage and takes a long time in post-production is not always negative. Take Stanley Kubrick's last film Eyes Wide Shut (1999). In Empire Adam Smith reports that the film took two and a half years to shoot (the longest shoot ever bankrolled by a major studio), although Kubrick had originally estimated it would take eighteen weeks. He also writes that the director had a fondness for

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[35] Jim Hillier, The New Hollywood (London: Studio Vista, 1992) 129-30. Italics mine.
[36] "The Power List," Premiere May 1994: 92-109.

repeated takes, sometimes more than fifty at a time. Yet Smith's piece persuades us that such excess is indicative of brilliance rather than incompetence. He refers to Kubrick as "cinema's most meticulous genius"; and quotes the film's producer Jan Harlan as denying Kubrick's methods should be interpreted as wasteful: "[A]s if Warner Brothers *cared* how much film he exposes."[37]

It would be naïve (although tempting) to explain this disparity in the assessment of two director's filmic methods by virtue of the difference in their genders. After all, Kubrick has the status of a cinematic icon (a status which became untouchable when he died soon after the film's completion), and Marshall does not. Kubrick's films are considered by most critics to be cinematic masterpieces, while Marshall's are categorised as standard generic fare. Hollywood's surrounding media thrives on the publicity generated by what are perceived to be problematic shoots, and in this it does not discriminate on the basis of gender. James Cameron's Titanic was grist for the rumour mill for a long period prior to its release (journalists had hours of fun thinking up puns involving sinking), and indeed the fact that Kubrick's film took so long to make did not go unnoticed by the press. Nevertheless it is worth mentioning the vastly different attitudes of individuals both inside and outside Hollywood to each director's filmmaking techniques. It is curious that one producer, and the studio he represents, should seem unconcerned about the escalating cost and duration of Kubrick's film, and the eccentric methods he employs, while another producer should refer to his director's propensity for multiple takes as "wacky", and chide her for taking so long to make a film. Why on the one hand does spending a lot of time equal craftsmanship and attention to detail, and on the other add up to inefficiency? What is the secret formula that gives a director such leeway? Is it the establishment of a body of work, financial success, critical approval, a sustained career? Why have female directors apparently not yet discovered this secret? The criticism of Marshall for being too slow (and with it the implied concerns that she is going over, or will go over budget) is strange given that the films she has

[37] Adam Smith, "The Eyes Have It," Empire Oct. 1999: 90-7.

directed are not the mega-budget films one would expect to be the most common cause of such anxieties (all her films have had a budget of less than fifty million dollars). It is also possible to cite evidence which demonstrates that she is not a "slow" filmmaker at all. In Los Angeles Times Marshall reveals that Disney moved the release of Renaissance Man (1994) up by six weeks, forcing her to work at such a pace that she put herself in the hospital with chest pains.[38]

Aside from being represented as a director who is inefficient and unprofessional, Marshall is sometimes referred to as someone who is naturally passive. Tom Hanks comments that although she could drive him mad with all the takes she did, her "passive personality" on set was a distinct advantage because it "gives a collective feeling...instead of the idea that the director is God."[39] The logical conclusion of this idea of Marshall as passive bystander rather than active creator of her films is a tendency to credit others with the success of those films, although curiously the adverse does not seem to apply when it comes to apportioning blame for what critics perceive as the less positive aspects of those films. As Crown points out, it is possible to discern a trend in reviews of Marshall's movies where the cast are usually complimented and the director (and often the script) disparaged. Crown reveals that Hanks was the individual involved in League who was singled out for some of the most vociferous praise: a level of praise he had also received for an earlier Marshall-directed film, Big. In this way Marshall's role in shaping the performance of her actors is downplayed in favour of the recognition of the star as author of his or her own performance, which is perhaps not entirely surprising given Hanks' status as an Oscar-winning actor, or indeed that of League's female lead, Geena Davis, who is a celebrated actress and Oscar winner herself. However it is easier to overlook the cinematic contribution of a director who has an artistically poor star image.[40] In an interview with Rosie O'Donnell Marshall actually

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[38] Judy Brennan, "Penny Marshall, Heartily," Los Angeles Times 7 Aug. 1994, Home ed., Calendar sec.: 24. Los Angeles Times Online Archives 27 Jan. 1999 <http://pqasb.pqarchiver.com/latimes>.
[39] Orenstein 25.
[40] Crown 97. It is possible to argue that Marshall was instrumental in shaping Hanks' career since Big (1988) is widely considered to be his breakthrough movie.

comments on this issue, implying that she felt the situation was unfair. O'Donell says, "When a movie does incredibly well, like League Of Their Own...", and Marshall chimes in, "And somebody else gets the credit...Tom [Hanks] got the credit."[41]

This transferral of credit should also be considered in relation to persistent suggestions (dating from her acting days) that Marshall has only achieved success thanks to her family connections. For example, at the time of Laverne and Shirley Burt Prelutsky writes

> Penny happens to be the daughter of the show's producer, Tony Marshall, and sister of the executive producer, Garry Marshall...For good measure, Penny is the wife of Rob Reiner...and the daughter-in-law of Carl Reiner...When you look at it that way, she could be taken for one of those princesses of yore who used to be married off to the prince of a neighboring kingdom in order to solidify relationships between two great monarchies.[42]

Crown also comments that some reviewers of Big were keen to note that Marshall was the sister of an established filmmaker.[43] In this way she is not being read as the instigator of her own achievements, but rather as the beneficiary of someone else's: once again she is conceptualised as passive (the receiver, the collaborator, the secondary figure) rather than active (the producer, the author, the principal creator). In Prelutsky's statement Marshall is conceived of as little more than a token of exchange between two patriarchal entertainment dynasties.

"Penny's from a generation where a boy was the key to your life... It's a long haul to say 'No...I'm the key to my life.' Penny has a problem with that."

Penny Marshall, Feminism, and Femininity[44]

Penny Marshall's popular image can be cited as one possible explanation for the way she is treated by critics who are compelled to search for evidence of feminist commitment in

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[41] O'Donnell.
[42] Prelutsky.
[43] Crown 105.
[44] Garry Marshall quoted in Orenstein 32.

her work. On the rare occasions that feminist film critics do turn their attention to Marshall and her films their typical reaction is not a positive one. Often she, and by extension her work, are viewed as the embodiment of a negative and old-fashioned "femininity", which proves deeply uncomfortable for those who desire to find feminist commitment from a female director, and "deeper" personal and political meanings at play in the female-directed film. On observing Marshall at work, Peggy Orenstein remarks that her "whining and wheedling" are "discomfittingly stereotypical in a woman director." She also notes that Marshall becomes irritated when asked whether directing League was "a consciously feminist act", the implication being (as supported by the overall tone of Orenstein's article) that it should have been. Incidentally, it is somewhat ironic that she should address the issue of League's feminism given that in a previous sentence she muses that Marshall looks far less homely now than she did when she was an actress. Marshall's argument that she is not interested in "women's issues" alone, but is trying to present a message which applies to the lives of both men and women (that is, "don't be ashamed of your talent"), is criticised by Orenstein because it fails to acknowledge that the talent of the players in the "All-American Girls Professional Baseball League" did not remain hidden by accident, but was deliberately overlooked as a part of baseball history purely because of the players' gender.[45]

This article also sees Orenstein criticise League for neglecting to speak to "women's alienation and the wrath incurred if they cut loose from traditional roles" in the same way as Thelma and Louise (1991). Marshall is condemned for her failure to depict characters who are angry at being forced to give up playing baseball and go back to domesticity when the men return home at the end of The Second World War. She writes,

> [T]hat wouldn't be Penny Marshall. In her movie the women *will feel better* for the experience, even if in the end, they're forced to trade in their baseball mitts for oven mitts. And the credits will not roll until a final tear and a wistful smile have been jerked from the audience.

[45] Orenstein 24.

Orenstein identifies what she sees as Marshall's lack of feminist commitment, and accuses her of milking her female characters for emotional impact ("the women will feel better", "a final tear...jerked from the audience"). She argues that by depicting these characters as content to give up their sporting dreams Marshall is guilty of betraying them.[46] Yet one could argue that her assessment misses the more complex nature of the film's ending: Dottie Hinson (played by Geena Davis) can be read as a woman who is torn between her desire to return to conventional married life and her love of baseball; and Dottie's sister, Kit, actually carries on playing until the demise of the league several years later. Moreover in using the phrase "until a final tear and a wistful smile have been jerked from the audience", Orenstein demonstrates an antipathy towards sentimentality which is closely connected with her abhorrence of stereotypical femininity. That is, she interprets the emotional denouement of the film as symptomatic of its regressive, pre-feminist approach to women's roles and choices. In doing so she refers to a perceived link between sentimentality and femininity that has been identified by many critics before her. For example, in The Feminization of American Culture Ann Douglas defends a number of nineteenth century male writers who she believed fought a heroic battle against "the effete sentimentalizers of culture - women writers."[47] Orenstein is not alone in accusing Marshall of being an overly sentimental director. Indeed one might say that Marshall's films are as inextricably linked with sentimentality as, say, Kathryn Bigelow's are with testosterone-fuelled violence, or Nora Ephron's are with romantic comedy. Joe Brown has said of League that Marshall "gums it all up in hokey sentiment". Lawrence Crown comments that most critics saw Awakenings biggest fault to be its excessive sentimentality. John Anderson has even coined the phrase "Penny Marshall syndrome" to describe a good director of middle-brow fare who falters when things turn serious: "The music swells. So do the tears...[T]he film goes slack with sentiment." Even though Anderson does not claim that only female directors can "suffer"

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[46] Orenstein 32.
[47] Tania Modleski, Feminism Without Women: Culture and Criticism in a "Postfeminist" Age (London: Routledge, 1991) 24.

from this syndrome, it is significant that he chooses a woman rather than a man to exemplify the "problem" of emotional excess in the cinema: in doing so he manages to lend extra credibility to the *natural* connection between femininity and sentimentality instead of undermining it. In short, most critics simply dismiss Marshall's work as sentimental, rather than examining it in the generic context of the "weepie" or melodrama. The fact that Marshall may have made a conscious choice to direct the kind of material which interests her (she tells Stephen Hunter that "I do a movie if it touches me...I love to cry in the movies") is overlooked or ignored by the majority of critics, probably because it is not the *right* (in aesthetic and/or feminist terms) kind of material to interest them.[48]

Like Orenstein, Linda Lopez McAlister has also criticised League for its feminist failings. She praises Marshall for turning her attention to material which deals with women and women's issues, but her remark that this attention is "long overdue" implies that she believes the director to be guilty of neglecting these feminist themes. McAlister condemns the director for her failure to acknowledge the lesbian players of the AAGPBL, accusing her of a "'bottom line on the balance sheet' mentality and moral cowardice." Marshall comes under fire for her inability to tackle "important" feminist issues with the kind of consistency and depth that a self-proclaimed feminist film critic like McAlister requires. The film's narrative omissions are read as evidence of Marshall's feminist shortcomings, and of her willingness to embrace the box-office driven values of patriarchal Hollywood. There is no attempt on McAlister's part to contextualise these omissions, or to consider that decisions about which material to include or exclude may have been taken at other stages in the film's production, and by other people (writers, studio executives, etc.). Instead the fault is seen to lie with the woman behind the camera since, for McAlister, the mere fact of her gender demands that she be held accountable.[49]

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[48] Joe Brown, "This 'League' Strikes Out," Washington Post 3 July 1992, Weekend sec.: N29. Washington Post Online Archives 23 Feb. 2000<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-adv/archives>; Crown, 111, 109; Hunter, "Penny Marshall" 1D.

[49] Linda Lopez McAlister, Rev. of A League of Their Own," 4 July 1992, The Linda Lopez McAlister Film Review Archives 23 Feb. 2000 <http://www.inform.umd.edu/Eres/Topic/womensStudies/filmReviews/league-of-own-mcalister>. I call Lopez McAlister a "self-proclaimed feminist" because she hosts a feminist radio show on

Unlike Jodie Foster whose image has roots in second wave feminism, Penny Marshall's has strong links with the "pre-feminist", with an era (the fifties) in which women were supposedly defined by their femininity.[50] I use the word supposedly since, as Joannne Hollows points out, feminist critics such as Betty Friedan can be accused of portraying women's experience in that era as monolithic, rather than recognising that the problems of the middle-class, "suburban wife and mother" were not the problems of all women. Nevertheless this image of the fifties woman is one which continues to serve as a popular reference point.[51]

Marshall's connection to this era comes not only from the fact that she was a teenager in the fifties, but also from her portrayal of Laverne De Fazio (a young woman living in fifties Milwaukee) in the seventies. Television programmes such as Happy Days, and its spin-off show Laverne and Shirley have been interpreted as nostalgic recreations of an idealised past designed to appeal to a nation undergoing intense social and political troubles: a nation which, as Lawrence Crown puts it, was "exhausted by current events" such as Vietnam and Watergate, and tired of children who spoke out in protest against their own values and beliefs.[52] As a result Marshall becomes associated with a reactionary aesthetic, which might help explain why she is not a popular target for feminist analysis. Unlike other popular American Television sitcoms starring women, such as I Love Lucy, The Mary Tyler Moore Show, or Roseanne, feminist critics are seemingly as reluctant to write about Laverne and Shirley as they are to devote significant attention to either her of her films.[53] This reluctance seems even stranger given that several elements of Laverne and Shirley cry out for

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WMNF-FM in Tampa, Florida called "The Women's Show. She also compiles an annual list of what she sees as the best feminist feature films of that year.

[50] Foster was born in 1962, and Marshall in 1942.

[51] Joanne Hollows, Feminism, Femininity and Popular Culture (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000) 12.

[52] Crown 49.

[53] It is not possible to provide a full list of publications which undertake a feminist analysis of women in American television because they are simply too numerous to list here. To give just three fairly recent examples, one might look at Bonnie J. Dow, Prime-Time Feminism: Television, Media Culture and the Women's Movement since 1970 (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press 1996); Patricia Mellencamp, High Anxiety: Catastrophe, Scandal, Age and Comedy (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996); or Kathleen Rowe, The Unruly Woman: Gender and the Genres of Laughter (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1995). To find evidence to support my claim that very little has been written about Laverne and Shirley I conducted a brief search on Amazon.com. Although

such an analysis (which is unfortunately beyond the scope of this thesis). The series revolves around two working-class girls who live alone, hold down jobs, pay their own bills, and who have come to rely on each other rather than men. In short, they are women who are the opposite of those middle-class, fifties suburbanites who Betty Friedan argued were defined only in relation to their role as housewives, wives and mothers.

As an example of the way Marshall's image is read through her connection with the so-called "repressive, regressive fifties" I would like to point to something Tania Modleski has said about Big. In Feminism Without Women Modleski criticises a number of eighties comedies such as Three Men and a Baby (1987), and Look Who's Talking (1989) for what she sees as their attempt to redeem fatherhood and usurp the maternal role. Against this background she interprets Josh's eventual return to childhood in Big as a rejection of the commitment that a serious relationship with a woman requires (a literal representation of "Peter Pan" syndrome so to speak). Her judgement of Marshall, whom she refers to as a figure who is "closely linked to America's obsession with its own imagined innocent past, the 1950s", runs as follows: "Thus once again we see a woman presiding over her own marginalization, participating in a nostalgia for a time in which human relationships are felt to have been relatively uncomplicated, although the cost of this simplicity is her own repression."[54] Modleski sees a link between Marshall's role as the "archetypal" fifties woman in Laverne and Shirley, and her making of a film which Modleski believes endorses the same kind of nostalgic, conservative values as that television series: the sanctity of the family, childhood innocence, conformity, morality, female submissiveness, and so on.

Other feminist critics argue along similar lines to Modleski. For example, Susan Faludi criticises what she calls the "man-boy body-swapping films" (18 Again (1988), Like Father Like Son (1987), Big) of the eighties for depicting men who "seek refuge in female-free boyhoods".[55] Similarly Ally Acker says of Big, "one can't help wishing a woman

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numerous titles about I Love Lucy and it's star Lucille Ball were listed, as were several about The Mary Tyler Moore Show and Mary Tyler Moore. I could find no titles about Laverne and Shirley .

[54] Modleski, Feminism Without Women 76-7, 97-9.

[55] Susan Faludi, Backlash: The Undeclared War Against Women (London: Vintage, 1992) 169.

director in such a coveted position as Marshall's had chosen a female-coming-of-age film instead of adding another to an already long line of films about young men."[56] Marshall has clearly suffered due to her association with subject matter which does not put woman at the centre of the narrative, but focuses instead on a boy's experience of growing-up: subject matter which is as a result inconsistent with what some feminist critics believe constitutes *true* feminist filmmaking. Faludi and Acker may have a point since cinematic narratives which concentrate on the lives of girls and young women are far rarer than their masculine equivalents (although the balance has begun to tip the other way in recent years with the release of films like Little Women (1994), Now and Then (1995) and Anywhere But Here (1999)). However to argue as Acker does that female directors should preferably be telling women's stories, making "women's films", is to risk pigeonholing them in a way which, ironically enough, also appeals to those within the film industry who, bearing in mind the pitifully small numbers of certain types of female-directed Hollywood films (such as big-budget action movies and science fiction films), continue to deny women filmmakers their right to generic freedom.

Playing The Fool? Evaluating Marshall's Role in the Construction of her Star Image

Having examined how Penny Marshall's star image is constructed and understood, I now want to move on to a discussion of the ways in which she can be seen to invite that reading of her *self*, as well as to consider evidence which suggests that this image is as much a ruse or ploy as it is based in reality.

As if to encourage those who see her as a nervous and inept filmmaker, Marshall often draws attention to her own neuroses and inadequacies. In a Boston Globe article from 1991 she admits, "I'm a fairly neurotic girl here". She also tells Rosie O'Donnell why she identifies with two of the characters in the films she has directed: Dr Malcom Sayer (played by Robin Williams) in Awakenings because, like her, he was "so neurotic that [he was] afraid

[56] Ally Acker, Reel Women: Pioneers of the Cinema (London: Batsford, 1991) 91.

to do anything"; and Pastor Harry Biggs (Courtney B. Vance) in The Preacher's Wife because "[h]e can't do anything...he's lost confidence in himself. And that's how I feel all the time." Finally, Marshall informs Peggy Orenstein that, although some people have said she works well under pressure, "Well no I don't." [57] The way Marshall describes herself may or may not be true: as I have already suggested when I emphasised the similarities between Marshall's and Woody Allen's star images, there is scope to read it as a continuation of the world-weary but loveable pessimist image (based to a large extent on Laverne) which she likes to project. For instance, in the aforementioned Boston Globe article Matthew Gilbert recognises that she is putting on her "Laverne" act when she tells him how neurotic she is. This act involves talking in "the nasal Bronx accent that defined her 1976-1981 television portrayal of Laverne", discoursing "on her life as though it were a comedy skit", and even drinking Laverne's trademark drink of Pepsi and milk. What really matters, however, is that the description *appears* to be true, and as such makes for a strong contrast with Jodie Foster's portrayal of herself as a fearless, confident woman, completely in control of everything she does in her life, especially directing. Whereas Foster's image is linked with the active (ambition, determination, self-assurance) some of the things Marshall says about herself strongly imply passivity, and by inference conventional "femininity".

To draw a further comparison with Foster, Marshall does not talk about directing as something she was born to do, or as the fulfilment of a life's ambition. Rather, she gives the impression that she fell into it (or perhaps was even pushed into it) by chance. She tells Stephen Hunter, "I wish I could say it [directing] was something I'd worked my whole life to get and that I was really prepared for." She is quoted by Jamie Diamond as saying, "I did not say, 'Please let me direct.' I came to directing as a fluke."; and comments in the Boston Globe that "[d]irecting wasn't a burning desire of mine" but rather "They made me do it!" By saying "They made me do it" she is not only being flippant, but also attempting to use a joke to excuse any directorial shortcomings critics (particularly those who are dubious about the

[57] Gilbert; O'Donnell; Orenstein 25.

abilities of a television actress turned director) might feel she has.[58] When Marshall is asked by Sean Mitchell if she feels like she is role model for women in the film business she has also commented, "I came up in such a whole backwards way that's so different from most of the girls now. I mean, I didn't care, I didn't want it. I wasn't trying to get it. So I don't have the anger. I didn't go beating down any doors saying, 'Accept me for this.' I was just trying to get a date."[59] In this last statement Marshall (again in stark contrast to Foster) situates herself as a female actor/director from the "past", from an era when women were less vociferous in their demands for equality, and in the expression of their anger at Patriarchal oppression. In typical "Laverne" fashion she uses humour ("I was just trying to get a date") to turn aside the possibility that she ever thinks about the impact that gender has had on her career, as well as dissuade others from pinning a "feminist" label on either her or her films. The sentiments Marshall expresses towards directing in these quotations echo a statement made more than two decades earlier by the director Ida Lupino. Lupino says, "I never planned to become a director. The fates and a combination of luck...were responsible."[60] This comparison with Lupino is worth emphasising since both directors have suggested that they play upon their "femininity" during the directing process.

Mary Celeste Kearney and James M. Moran argue that the notion that Lupino used a "feminine" suggestiveness (rather than a "masculine" *direct*ness) as a method of directing was one which often appeared in articles about her. This was, they imply, partially the result of a sexist media, but also a method which Lupino herself admitted to employing. Lupino remarks, "I would never shout orders to anyone. I hate women who order men around-professionally or personally...[On the set] I say, "Darlings...I'd love to do this. Can you do it?" Kearney and Moran go on to say that ten years after she made this comment Lupino, referring to the effectiveness of such a strategy, asked another interviewer, "You'd want to

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[58] Hunter, "Penny Marshall" 1D; Jamie Diamond, "Penny Marshall: 1988 the First Woman Director to Break $100 million at the Box Office," Working Woman Nov. - Dec. 1996: 96-8, Northern Light Special Collection Documents 12 Feb. 2000 <http://library.northernlight.com/PC19970926100003193.html>; Gilbert.
[59] Mitchell 5.
[60] Richard Koszarski, Hollywood Directors 1941-1976 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977) 374.

help me wouldn't you?" They argue that the director's question here "points to lack of awareness that her 'damsel in distress' routine might not be the only alternative to being aggressive on the set."[61] This so-called "damsel in distress" method of directing is one which Marshall is also judged to employ. Consider Orenstein's assertion, quoted earlier in this chapter, that she finds Marshall's tendency to wheedle, whine and elicit sympathy from her male producer on the set of A League of Their Own too stereotypically "feminine" for comfort. Marshall has actually admitted in Lupino-like fashion that she sometimes employs a directorial strategy of "feminine" persuasiveness: "My personality is a whine. It's how I use being female too. I touch a lot to get my way and say...Pleeease do it over here."[62] On other occasions she "feminises" the process of directing. That is, she sees the difficulties for a woman who does a traditionally "male" job, which supposedly requires "masculine" skills, as stemming from her essential "femaleness" or "femininity". Thus she talks about the "pressure" of directing being especially pronounced "during premenstrual days. We'd try to hold up flags that said, 'Cranky Today' or 'Cramp Day'." Or she tells Sean Mitchell that the main problem she sees for a woman directing a film is that "girl's cry."[63]

Annette Kuhn argues that Ida Lupino worked in a male-dominated industry (Hollywood) in an era when to be truly "feminine" meant "never competing (at least openly) with men...In this light her pronouncements that she did not care to order men around ...should perhaps be understood simply as necessary tactics for professional survival."[64] Without question Marshall is working in a Hollywood which has undergone massive structural change since Lupino's day, and seen significant improvements for women in the industry. Nevertheless it is still tempting to apply Kuhn's rationale for Lupino's actions to Marshall. Against such reasoning is obviously the fact that the majority of women directors do not, for reasons of "professional survival", feel the need to demonstrate the "softly softly"

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[61] Mary Celeste Kearney and James M. Moran, "Ida Lupino as Director of Television," Queen of The 'B's: Ida Lupino Behind the Camera, ed. Annette Kuhn (Wiltshire: Flicks Books, 1995) 144.
[62] Orenstein 25.
[63] Acker 90; Mitchell 5.
[64] Kuhn, "Introduction: Intestinal Fortitude," 8.

feminine approach to directing publicised by Marshall. On the other hand, the persistent inequality of female directors in the Hollywood film industry suggests that their survival as a minority in such a difficult field is far from guaranteed, even once they have proved themselves to be financially successful. As a result it is viable to interpret Marshall's approach as one of a number of possible tactics (conscious or unconscious) which might be employed by women directors in order to make themselves more attractive, more palatable to those who could employ them. These tactics can be loosely defined as ones which either play down their "difference" or highlight it. The former tactic would stress that women directors should be seen, first and foremost, simply as "directors". It would require them to shy away from making films which might be termed generically "feminine" and possibly to seek out so-called "masculine" material (as with Kathryn Bigelow). It would also possibly lead them to deny that their gender has any significant influence on their career and/or on the kind of films they make. The latter tactic, on the other hand, might lead to a tendency to pursue "female", "feminine", or "feminist" themes on celluloid; to renounce traditional Hollywood filmmaking as "masculine" and/or sexist; to be seen to talk publicly about the place of women directors in Hollywood and the struggles they face; or (as with the hypothesis stated above) to stress one's femininity in order to obscure the fact that one is pursuing an atypical career for a woman. It is possible to argue that Marshall mixes these tactics since, on the one hand, she has denied that a director's gender has any real effect on his or her career: "I feel pressure that has nothing to do with being a girl. The job is full of pressure. I think a boy, a male, would have the same pressure"; and "I'm a director. I'm a woman. But to classify man-directors, woman-directors - can't we just say director?" Yet on the other hand, she has employed the language of stereotypical femininity when talking about herself. [65]

In terms of evaluating whether Marshall is making strategic use of her "feminine" image in order to ensure that she keeps control on set without appearing too threatening or aggressive, the director's own words are inconclusive. According to Orenstein, Marshall's

[65] O'Donnell; Orenstein 32.

"tendency to kvetch and wheedle her way through a film is part affectation"; and Marshall admits, "I have my own way of functioning. My personality is a whine."[66] On another occasion she apparently negates the idea that her exhibition of "feminine" demurral is simply a ruse: she denies that she ever stopped to evaluate the advice given to her as a teenager by her mother, namely not to appear "better" than boys since they "don't like it if you beat them". Instead she claims that she only ever wanted get their attention, to "bask in their glory. I'm okay in that position."[67] With these words Marshall echoes the opinions of Lupino, whom Annette Kuhn says "quite unapologetically cast herself as a man's woman" (and alienated a host of feminist critics as a result). So much so in fact that one of Marshall's colleagues, Jim Brooks, has actually commented, "She always loved men. She's a groupie at heart. That's her femininity."[68] Of course this subservient guise might also be another weapon in the armoury of a woman director who does not want to appear too powerful or draw too much hostile male attention to herself.

Several commentators have endorsed the image-as-ploy theory in relation to Marshall. Lawrence Crown maintains that her answers to interviewers' questions typically became "self-deprecating and diffident" after she began directing, and he proposes that by the time she first began to appear as herself on the K-Mart television advertisements she "seemed every bit as created a character as Laverne De Fazio."[69] Colleagues who have worked alongside Marshall have offered similar supporting evidence. For example, Robin Williams has said that she is a "brilliant woman, but maybe you don't want to *scare* people, because some people can be afraid of a brilliant woman. It's a great *smoke screen*! That way she *gets things done*, and you don't even know they've been done!"[70] James Brooks remarks that she is a highly "talented" woman with a "steel-trap mind", but that her "disarming manner" makes you forget how clever she really is.[71] While on another occasion he has spoken of the

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[66] Orenstein 25.
[67] Abramowitz, Is That A Gun? 290.
[68] Abramowitz Is That A Gun? 294.
[69] Crown 90, 86.
[70] Abramowitz, Is That A Gun? 294.
[71] Diamond, "Penny Marshall".

misapprehension that working with Marshall is going to allow you complete freedom "to do your act, but she is going to do *her* act. She's a rock. You don't move her."[72] Barry Sonnenfield counters the assumption that she is not confident or decisive enough on set by stating that she is well aware that "you don't make up your mind until you are made to - in postproduction", and "has the self-confidence to keep shooting when everyone is telling her not to."[73] Finally Mike Nichols has referred to the "apparently-but not really-confused way" she comes up with "razor-sharp movies."[74]

The facts of Penny Marshall's career do not sustain the notion that she is an unprofessional, inept, insecure, passive and ultimately malleable director. To begin with she has made two films (Big and A League of Their Own) which have earned more than one hundred million dollars at the box office, proving that regardless of her ability to garner critical success, she is able to direct films which succeed in financial terms. She also demonstrated an acute commercial sense when she made the lucrative decision to sell A League of Their Own merchandise on QVC: a decision which, as Lawrence Crown reports, was a movie marketing first.[75] In the case of League and also Awakenings, there is evidence to suggest that Marshall was a major factor in bringing these films to the screen, which indicates that she is clearly competent enough to identify material which will prove successful (Awakenings garnered Oscar nominations and, as stated, League did very well at the box office). Crown reports that Marshall insisted that Awakenings be picked up by Columbia from Twentieth Century Fox where it was in turnaround, and reveals that it was her decision to buy the rights for League after seeing a PBS documentary on the AAGPBL. She was also the one who pushed for it to be made into a feature film even though Fox wanted to make it as a television movie.[76]

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[72] Abramowitz, Is That A Gun? 302.
[73] Abramowitz, Is That A Gun? 302.
[74] Mitchell 5.
[75] Crown 160.
[76] Crown 114, 120.

Ultimately the ability to prove that Marshall's "feminine" image is more strategy than reality is less important than how it encourages us as (feminist) film critics to react, or more accurately to think about how we react. It forces us to question whether the choices we make about which women artists to study, and which not to study, are influenced by our reactions to the persona they project, the statements they make (or do not make) regarding other women and/or feminism, or the kind of films they choose to direct (or produce, star in, write etc.). It requires us to think beyond a mind-set which sees female directors and their films in purely black and white terms, categorising them as either "feminist" or "non-feminist", positive or negative, worthy of our attention or unworthy. Instead it forces us to recognise that the analysis of many, or indeed most women directors, is destined to uncover the ambiguities and contradictions which are inherent in both their persona (as image and reality) and their work, as often as it will lead us to find evidence to support a "feminist" reading and/or appropriation of either. This recognition should not be taken to be a claim that *all* films made by female filmmakers contain some hidden "feminist" content (whatever that means) which is ultimately recuperable if only the critic searches hard enough. Rather it demands we move beyond simple knee-jerk value-judgements and undertake to give the widest possible number of women directors serious critical attention, even if they do not choose to address "feminist" concerns. Only by doing this will it then be possible to construct a wide rather than a narrow picture of those directors. Such a picture will help us to understand the varied contexts within which these women make films (from small-scale independent production, to big budget studio fare, and anywhere in the grey area in between), and to acknowledge the diversity of the material they bring to the screen.

As I have demonstrated, Penny Marshall's image is as much a fabrication as it is a reflection of reality: it does not unproblematically represent Marshall the *real* person since it is partially composed of fictional fragments. Some are obviously so, as with the character of Laverne, others are less clear-cut, as with the overemphasis on "feminine" behaviours which is not supported by Marshall's career success and achievements. Like Foster her image has

shown signs of a shift in recent years, proving once again that star images are not fixed and stable but constantly open to alteration. In 1998 Marshall hosted the Lifetime Women's Film Festival, the aim of which was to showcase shorts made by first-time female directors on cable television. In her speech for the event she spoke of the rarity of women directors, joking that instead of being one of three, she is now one of five or six. Despite this she also acknowledged that there were more women directing today than there had been in the past, and many more who desperately wanted to do so. One article about the festival quotes her as saying, "*We're* doing better, but we still need encouragement." Marshall's involvement with this event is significant since it situates her as someone who is interested in the position of women filmmakers in the industry, and who is willing to show that interest publicly (to go "on-the-record" as it were). It is also perhaps a little surprising given her earlier denials that being a woman director has any real effect on the films she makes, as well as her assertion that in filmmaking " 'Women's issue' is a turnoff altogether." By hosting this festival Marshall seems eager to underline her status as woman director and, with the word "we're", includes herself as part of this gender-defined group rather than shying away from it.[77]

As two more examples of this shift we can make a comparison between comments made by Marshall in articles from 1992, 1996, 1998. In New York Times Magazine (1992) she remarks that, "As a woman I wouldn't wanna do a big-budget action-movie. It doesn't interest me." In 1996 she is quoted in Working Woman as saying "I don't enjoy blowing things up. It doesn't make me feel creative." Yet in 1998 the Dayton Daily News reported that in her speech for the aforementioned Lifetime festival Marshall, having cited Mimi Leder's The Peacemaker and Deep Impact as examples, remarked that "[a] woman can blow things up and direct special effects just as well as a man. On Jumpin' Jack Flash, I had explosions, I broke glass, I had a car crash."[78] Marshall's position has clearly altered from her original assertion that stereotypically "masculine" generic material is not for her, and is also

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[77] Crown 90; Bob Thomas, "Women Directors Honored," Dayton Daily News 9 June 1998, Lifestyle sec., Northern Light Special Collections Documents 3 Apr. 2000 <http://library.northernlight.com/ BM119 980 611010019883.html>. Italics mine; Orenstein 24.
[78] Orenstein 32.; Diamond, "Penny Marshall" ; Thomas.

by implication inferior (not interesting or creative), into a claim that she has had experience of shooting such material, and a celebration of the female director's right to do so. Perhaps this turnaround indicates that Marshall is desperate to distance herself from the association of herself and her films with the dreaded "feminine", and to prove that she has more range as a director than many people think. If so her actions can be compared to the way Foster apparently desires to soften the edges of her well-established tough-girl image by publicising a more "feminine" side to her character. As Marshall has said, although there may be a lot of Laverne in her character "[t]here's a lot of this director person in me, too." Perhaps it is the necessity of convincing other people (who have viewed her new career with scepticism, cynicism, or disinterest) of this fact that has driven her to play down the "feminine" aspects of her image and speak more openly about her status as a woman director.[79]

Conclusion

Despite the fact that both Jodie Foster and Penny Marshall were already in possession of star images when they turned to directing, Foster's transition from star to director, although it has not been without problems (despite her powerful position in the industry she too has found it difficult to sustain her directing career), has certainly been viewed as more successful by film theorists (feminist and non-feminist alike) and the wider media. Marshall's films have earned more money at the box-office than Foster's, but she has not experienced the kind of rapturous critical reaction that greeted Foster's birth as an "auteur", nor been granted the same (or arguably any) degree of artistic respect.[80] Why, then, does Foster make a more "natural" and acceptable star-director than Marshall?

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[79] Koltnow.

[80] In saying this I am not claiming that Foster's efforts as a director were universally praised by critics and media commentators, or that she has encountered no problems in that role. Indeed it should be noted that despite starting her directing career at the beginning on the nineties she has to date directed only three films (the third being the as yet uncompleted Flora Plum), and has enjoyed only limited success at the box-office with the two films that have been released. Of course her limited productivity as a director must be viewed in light of the fact that she also works as an actress and producer. However it is also worth emphasising the point that even one of the most powerful women in Hollywood has not found the profession of directing to be easy. Nevertheless, it is in part the widespread acknowledgement of this power (played out on and off-screen) which helps Foster to be taken more seriously as a director than Marshall.

Without question it is partly due to the fact that Foster's films fulfil auteurist preoccupations far more easily than Marshall's "mainstream" ones. Unlike Foster, Marshall does not strive to be seen as a great cinematic artist, preferring to label her style and tastes as popular or mass-market in nature. For example, she tells Peggy Orenstein that she likes "corny" material and has no interest in making intellectual films: "I go see movies...[and] I get intimidated by what they're saying and there's all these artsy parts that go right past me." Similarly she answers a critics' comment that her and her brother Garry's films are good at capturing the mood of the American nation with, " It could just be simplicity. Not to put down the nation, but it could just be general feelings that most people share about a subject. I mean my brother and I...are very basic." Not only does this mean that Marshall's work is unlikely to appeal to, or be accepted by, high-brow or auteurist critics, but also that it is less likely to appeal to feminist critics as well. As Andreas Huyssen argues, mass culture has historically been associated with an inferior "femininity" and, as I have shown both here and elsewhere in this thesis, "femininity" continues to be a problematic issue for many feminists.[81]

In addition Foster's original star image has proved itself to be more conducive to re-shaping than Marshall's. Whereas Foster has fairly comfortably evolved into a Hollywood hyphenate (star-director-producer), Marshall's progress has been hampered by the fact that, to use her own words, "[n]o matter how many movies I direct, I'll always be Laverne."[82] In an industry that continues to value (in artistic rather than financial terms) quality drama over comedy, it is not really surprising that a two times Oscar-winning actress who becomes a director is taken more seriously than a television actress who played the clown.[83]

In spite of the fact that Foster and Marshall's work as filmmakers has been received so differently, when it comes to the nature of their star-images they do share things in common. Both women's star-images are, as star theory leads us to expect, contradictory. In

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[81] Orenstein 32.; Carol Caldwell, "The Marshall Plan," Interview Jan. 1991: 18

[82] Koltnow.

[83] I make this claim on the basis that Oscars and Golden Globes for Best Picture (arguably the best gauge of the kind of films many Hollywood insiders consider to have artistic merit) are almost never given to comedy films.

both cases many of these contradictions are at heart made up of oscillations between what can usefully be termed the "feminine" and the "feminist". Foster is presented as a woman who is both pin-up girl and tomboy, glamorous film star and serious filmmaker, career woman and mother figure. Marshall is simultaneously an unprofessional hack and an astute business woman, a neurotic loser and a Hollywood player, a believer that one's gender has no bearing on being a director and a tacit supporter of the female filmmaker's rights. There is enough evidence to suggest that both women have an active role to play in shaping their own images and playing with these contradictions, rather than merely adhering to images that others have shaped for them. In addition they have both hinted that they have feminist sympathies (Foster with her praise of feminism at the WIF Christmas Luncheon, and Marshall in her role as host at the Lifetime Women's Film Festival), but as far as I am aware neither woman has ever publicly referred to either herself or her films as feminist. In fact at various times they have both tried to avoid being seen as feminist directors. Rachel Abramowitz reveals that having formed her production company Egg Pictures Foster stated, "The one thing we are not is a 'woman's movie studio.'" She also notes that Marshall was less than impressed when Geena Davis labelled League a "feminist" film in interviews.[84]

Perhaps the essential difference between Foster and Marshall lies not in the fact that they possess diametrically opposed views of what it is to be a woman director in Hollywood, but rather in the way that they package themselves as women directors. On the subject of how to remain an employed and employable director Tamar Hoffs has said, "You have to package yourself in such a way to be inviting."[85] In Foster's case the strengths of her image relative to Marshall's almost certainly helps make her a more "inviting" prospect as a director. The biographical facts and real-life anecdotes which surround Foster, as well as the numerous well-respected roles she has played as an actress, add up to form the image of an already respected star who can carry that credibility over into the next stage of her Hollywood career. Marshall, on the other hand, is at a distinct disadvantage since the more modest (in industry

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[84]Abramowitz, Is That A Gun? 362, 417.
[85] Litwak 204.

terms) package that is her star image means she has had to work for that credibility almost from scratch. Her image is also less credible and inviting than Foster's in feminist terms. Each woman's image exists at a different location on what I will term the "timeline of feminism". That is, while Foster's image is partially that of a child of Second Wave feminism, growing up to believe she can do anything and then going on to prove it, Marshall's ostensibly has its roots in the pre-feminist era. Consequently whereas Foster and her films are widely perceived to illustrate the ways in which women have moved forward, and are celebrated accordingly, Marshall and her work have been viewed as embarrassing reminders of an earlier, regressive era. Both women's images can also be seen to exist at opposite ends of a feminist scale of women directors which is seemingly designed to award them "marks out of ten" for feminist content and commitment. Or to put it another way, if Foster is contemporary feminist film theory's equivalent of the much praised Dorothy Arzner, then Marshall is surely its version of the much-maligned Ida Lupino.

Chapter Seven

Dealing With Difference: An Examination of Some Critical Responses to Kathryn Bigelow's Blue Steel (1990) and Strange Days (1995), and a Meditation on Bigelow's Response to Criticism

This chapter draws on critical reactions to two films directed by Kathryn Bigelow (Blue Steel and Strange Days) to illustrate a number of different and frequently conflicting strategies that are employed in understanding the woman director and her work. I have chosen to concentrate on Bigelow because her virtually unique status as a woman director making action movies in Hollywood has ensured that critics have found much to say about her. Since she consistently makes films which deal with what many believe to be "unfeminine" material, particularly sex and violence, it is not surprising that reactions to Bigelow's work are usually extreme in either their praise or condemnation.

As the critical responses to Strange Days prove, the pressure to categorise Bigelow is often intense. Comments made by Tom Shone in a review of Strange Days illustrate this anxiety well. He asks "What kind of a director is Bigelow?" And answers "a female one obviously", but qualifies this with "although it's not so obvious from her films". The implication here is undoubtedly that it should be. Shone's problem is that he is faced with a woman director who is not doing the obvious, not fulfilling expectations based on gender. He consequently dismisses her work with the statement that she is making mere testosterone-charged "blockbusters for the boys". In other words he refuses to reconcile the discrepancy between the female director and her unusual (meaning not identifiably "female" and/or not typically "feminine") films, and instead consigns Bigelow to the masculine mainstream.[1]

In the following chapter I have examined the ways in which critics have either endeavoured to make Bigelow's work fit preconceptions about what is artistically and politically correct for the woman director, or decided that her films do not fit such

[1] Tom Shone, "Dazed and Confused," Sunday Times 3 Mar. 1996, CD-ROM ed.

expectations and condemned them for it. The critical strategies used to make sense of Bigelow and her work take one of three approaches: they either celebrate her and her films as "masculine" and assimilate them both into a male cinematic canon: or they reject these films, and by extension Bigelow, as "unfeminine" or anti-feminist because they replicate the narrative structures and ideological values of the system within which they are produced, which may also lead to attempts to re-feminise these films and their director: or conversely they herald one or both of them as feminist because of the way Bigelow's work acts as an intervention into so-called "masculine" genres, and thus overturns the structures of dominant cinema. I conclude by referring to comments Bigelow has made about her films in order to identify the strategies she herself uses to deal with the aforementioned criticism.

I start my examination by pointing to the ways in which both Bigelow and her films are positioned as masculine. Kim Newman and Ian Freer claim that "Kathryn Bigelow's dedication to the boys-own balls-out action genre has been proven...by her movies"; while according to the New York Times, "One thing is certain about the furiously talented Ms. Bigelow. No one will ever say she directs like a girl."[2] Bigelow has also been compared to well-established "auteur" figures such as Brian De Palma and Martin Scorsese, which helps to ease her into place amongst a pre-established pantheon of male directors and, by transforming her into an honorary man, explains away her unusual status as woman director making "men's" movies.[3] It is possible to draw a parallel here with comments in Rozsika and Pollock's book Old Mistresses. The authors quote a nineteenth century art critic who declared that the "woman of genius does not exist but when she does she is a man." As a

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[2] Kim Newman and Ian Freer, "Dream Weavers: Fifty Directors You Need to See," Empire May 1997: 95; Comment from the New York Times quoted in Karla Peterson, "Director Joins Boys' Club - and it Only Costs Her Compassion," San Diego Union-Tribune 19 Oct. 1995: 3, San Diego Union-Tribune Online Archives 3 Sept. 2000 <http://pqasb.pqarchiver.com/sandiego/index.html>.

[3] For example, Edward Pressman (the producer of Blue Steel) is said to have "compared his discovery of Bigelow to that of a young Brian DePalma...and Terence Malick". Quoted in Clarke Taylor, "Black Leather Director in a Business World," Los Angeles Times 9 Oct. 1988, Home ed., Calendar sec.: 28, Kathryn Bigelow website 12 Nov. 1999 <http://www. kathrynbigelow.com/ articles/latimes.html>. Similarly Dave Gardetta comments that "it's as if her camera has burst out of a flaming house where directors like Peckinpah and Scorsese, Sam Raimi and James Cameron...have resided." In "A Mind's Eye for Mayhem: Director Kathryn Bigelow, Pulling the Audience into the Picture," Washington Post 17 Oct. 1995: C1, Washington Post Online Archives 10 Nov. 1999 <http:// www.washingtonpost.com/wp-adv/archives>.

result they note that for many commentators, such as for example Charles Baudelaire, the only way to praise a female artist was to say that "she paints like a man".[4]

Even those critics who are aware of the need to posit Bigelow and her films as masculine cannot always stop themselves from employing similar methods. In an interview with Bigelow Jim Shelley notes that the press "call her Dirty Harriet - a sort of female version of Clint Eastwood's Magnum wielding macho man. But this doesn't tell us much about her - just about how conservative or naïve the media can be." Yet he also falls back on the use of masculine imagery (albeit more subtle) to describe Bigelow, commenting that she "rides into town fielding questions and complaints about violence". This description establishes Bigelow as a tough, cowboy figure who turns up ready to fight for the good name of her films; the type of character who ironically enough Clint Eastwood has played in many westerns.[5]

As I have already indicated few female directors working in Hollywood have worked with the same kind of generic material as Bigelow. For example, if we glance at the sample of directors I used for examination of women's career paths into the industry in chapter two (see Appendix A, Table 1) there are, excluding Bigelow's films, only two out of the eighty-six studio films listed which could be classified as big-budget action pictures (The Peacemaker and Deep Impact), two which contain science fiction and horror elements (The Ghost in the Machine and Tank Girl), and one which could be classified as a crime movie or policier (Impulse).The remaining films fall loosely under the rubric of comedy (such as the films of Amy Heckerling and Penelope Spheeris) and drama, including particularly costume dramas and literary adaptations (for example Little Women and Oscar and Lucinda), and (for want of a better word) "emotional" dramas, such as "love stories" (like Sleepless in Seattle or Children of a Lesser God) and melodramas (such as The Doctor or Angie). On the strength of this evidence Bigelow is generically speaking not a typical female director. Thus it is almost inevitable that critics will compare her against existing masculine role models and/or fall

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[4] Rozsika Parker and Griselda Pollock, Old Mistresses: Women, Art and Ideology (London: Routledge, 1981) 8.
[5] Jim Shelley, "LA is Burning," Guardian 23 Dec. 1995, Weekend sec., CD-ROM ed.

back on masculine terminology to describe her. However this kind of reaction often indicates an eagerness to ensure that her difference is assimilated. Faced with a set of films that are unusual when viewed in light of the fact that a woman directed them, one way of making them less threatening and more understandable is to situate them as continuations of a masculine tradition, thus removing the director's gender from the equation.

It is useful to draw a comparison here with a comment Judith Mayne makes about Dorothy Arzner. She writes that Arzner has been referred to as "one of the boys" and asks, "What does it mean to describe Arzner as "one of the boys"? ... Problematically, it assumes that "one of the boys" is not really a woman, and therefore not treated like a woman in her career."[6] The idea that a woman director can be "one of the boys" is also suggested in the kind of language which is used to describe Bigelow. Consider the titles of the following articles: "Hollywood's *Macho* Woman"; and "Director Joins Boys' Club - and It Only Costs Her Compassion."[7] By making Bigelow, or indeed any female director, into "one of the boys" her difference is explained away, and potentially difficult questions (such as "Why are so few women making big-budget Hollywood films?") are more easily evaded. As the second title suggests, this masculinisation of the female director provides critics who deem Bigelow's artistic choices (for instance the depiction of violence and rape) unsuitable for a woman with an explanation for her behaviour: she is emulating the work of male directors rather than producing "feminine" or "feminist" work of her own. Conversely these titles also reveal a determination to ensure that Bigelow's difference is not entirely elided, that her "masculinity" is somehow feminised (a point I will return to later in this chapter). Hence she is a "macho *woman*" rather than just "macho", and she joins rather than belongs to a "boy's club", illustrating that she is not a natural member of that club, but rather a female outsider whose "masculine" work has allowed her to gain membership.

Some critics do not utilise the perceived masculinity of Bigelow and her films as a means of evading the director's gender, but as evidence of her reluctance to allow gender to

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[6] Judith Mayne, Directed By Dorothy Arzner (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1994) 64.
[7] Mark Salisbury, "Hollywood's Macho Woman," Guardian 21 Nov. 1991: 27. Italics Mine; Peterson 3.

clearly influence her work: something which they apparently feel a woman director must do. Bigelow is criticised for failing to divest her films of what are viewed as traditional (and implicitly patriarchal) Hollywood structures and conventions. Jim Shelley writes that, "Strange Days looks like the work of one of independent cinema's most...challenging talents who believed she was subverting some of Hollywood's most closely-held and well-established conventions, when in fact, all along, it was the other way round. She tried to change the nature of Hollywood...but has in the end simply succumbed to it." Arguing along the same lines, but in this case about Blue Steel, Rita Kempley complains that Bigelow "knows the only way to get an action film made about a woman is to turn her into a man."[8] The female characters in Bigelow's films have also been criticised for either replicating male character types, or being identical to the female stereotypes found in mainstream cinema. Kathi Maio complains that Megan in Blue Steel is modelled "after the male stereotype of the crackpot vigilante with a personal score to settle"; and Geoff Brown argues that Faith in Strange Days is nothing more than a "wanton sexpot".[9] These critics do not interpret Bigelow's engagement with the studio system in general, and traditionally "masculine" genres in particular, as evidence of a director who wants to stretch the boundaries of popular cinema. Instead they view her as a filmmaker whose potential has been diluted by it. They are disappointed that instead of the kind of films they expect a woman to be making (sensitive to women's representation on screen and/or "feminist" in intent) they are left with ones which offer "just another damsel-in-distress" or "just another stalk 'n' slash sex-murder."[10] Despite the fact that Bigelow has received significant attention from feminist film critics for her innovative approach to popular filmmaking (she is widely celebrated as a female director who does not take her genres "straight up" but rather with a classification defying twist), she has also been castigated for producing work which is exploitative rather than innovative, and

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[8] Shelley; Rita Kempley, "Rambo in Pantyhose: 'Blue Steel' Not A Kindler, Gentler Yarn," Washington Post 16 Mar. 1990, Srtyle sec.: B1. Washington Post Online Archives 20 Nov. 1999 <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-adv/archives>.

[9] Kathi Maio, Popcorn and Sexual Politics (California: The Crossing Press, 1991) 105; Geoff Brown, "The Sick Squid We're Owed?" Times 29 Feb. 1996, CD-ROM ed.: 37.

[10] Maio 105; Anne Billson, "With Runny Eggs for Brains," Sunday Telegraph 3 Mar. 1996, Weekend sec., CD-ROM ed., Arts sec.

commercially rather than artistically motivated.[11] Kathi Maio argues that the filming of Jamie Lee Curtis' body in Blue Steel is exploitative, citing the obligatory sex scene between Curtis' character Megan and one of her male colleagues as evidence of this. Similarly Anne Billson compares the rape scene in Strange Days to the kind of thing "one used to see in cheap exploitation films in the time before feminism and political correctness decreed that film directors be more sensitive."[12]

The charge of commercialism is one which has been levelled at Bigelow since the making of Blue Steel. Rita Kempley calls that film "a mean and unsavory celebration of misplaced misogyny milked for dollars"; and Philip Strick argues that with her next film, Point Break, Bigelow "stepped aside from the fascinatingly ambiguous feminism of Blue Steel to deliver a dose of macho claptrap...The painterly Bigelow, whose contemplative lacunae for The Loveless evoked critical references to Edward Hopper, now seems fully wedded to the urgent hustle of executive producer, James Cameron." Likewise Derek Malcom complains that Strange Days

> contains the kind of violence...that one doesn't expect from Bigelow, if only because there seems so little purpose to it beyond the cheap thrills of a dystopian, genre-bending thriller...[O]ne regrets the uses to which Bigelow's skills as a film-maker are now being put. Both The Loveless and Near Dark... [which were] made independently for virtually nothing, were original and imaginative...They didn't just look stunning.[13]

These remarks share a sense of disapproval and regret at what is seen as evidence of a talented woman director who is moving further and further away from the "independent" or "arthouse" films of her early career (which had something of value to say), and nearer to a financially motivated and heavily compromised career in Hollywood. Tellingly Strick and

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[11] For a discussion of Bigelow's approach to genre see Needeya Islam, " 'I Wanted To Shoot People.' Genre, Gender and Action in the Films of Kathryn Bigelow," Kiss Me Deadly: Feminism and Cinema for the Moment, ed. Laleen Jayaman (Sydney: Power, 1995) 91-125; Christina Lane, Feminist Hollywood: From Born in Flames to Point Break (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2000) 99-123; and Yvonne Tasker, Spectacular Bodies: Genre, Genre and the Action Cinema (London: Routledge, 1993) 153-166.

[12] Maio 105-6; Billson, "With Runny Eggs for Brains".

[13] Kempley; Philip Strick, Rev. of Point Break, Sight and Sound August 1991: 48; Derek Malcom, "Thrilled to Bits," Guardian 29 Feb. 1996, CD-ROM ed.: 8.

Malcom apparently view this shift as one which is not entirely of Bigelow's own choosing. By commenting that she is "fully wedded" to the "urgent hustle" of James Cameron Strick slyly references the fact that Bigelow and Cameron were once married, and implies that this aspect of her personal life may have had an effect on her filmmaking. Malcom's choice of phrase "the uses to which Bigelow's skills as a film-maker are now being put" evokes a sense of a director who has no real control over the material she works on, but is rather trapped in a system (Hollywood) which has led her to misuse her talents.

Malcom and Strick's comments also hint at a belief that the woman director should be making "Art" not money: something which can only happen outside of an industry that is conceptualised here as one which produces films which have nothing of value to offer beyond their visually "stunning" surfaces. This is a view which can be found in feminist film theory (particularly, although not exclusively, in older examples) which distrusts the mainstream film industry and posits the "art" or "independent" films as the best vehicle for feminist expression. The realities of working within a commercial system like Hollywood (such as the need to turn a profit and the necessity of artistic compromise) might be understood by these critics, but the system itself is viewed as something which must eventually be transformed to fulfil the quest for a *truly* feminist cinema which is more than pure entertainment. As Ally Acker has written, "The day to look forward to is the one when women directors will be able to focus on how the content of their pieces affects the world, instead of if they'll ever get a chance to direct again."[14]

The link between these criticisms of Bigelow and her work is that they are all negative reactions to a woman director who refuses to live up to gender based expectations. By choosing to work within rather than outside Hollywood; to embrace rather than avoid generic cinema; to work with what is deemed "masculine" rather than "feminine" material; and to side step rather than espouse feminist politics Bigelow does what is unexpected for a woman director. Added to the fact that she is one of only a few women who so obviously and

[14] Ally Acker, Reel Women: Pioneers of the Cinema 1896 to the Present (Batsford 1991) 91.

consistently thwart expectations in this way (she has referred to herself as "atypical" and "an endangered species") she becomes an obvious target for criticism. [15]

This criticism, which is exacerbated by the director's unusual status in Hollywood, arguably reached its peak with the outcry which surrounded the inclusion of a rape scene in Strange Days. Of course given the fact that rape is such an emotive feminist issue (Jacinda Read has called it "perhaps the quintessential feminist issue") one would expect such a scene to evoke some strong reactions. However what may not have been expected was that these reactions would be so widespread, with the film's depiction of rape and violence becoming either *a* key theme in or else *the* focal point of the majority of reviews. Writing on The Accused and Thelma and Louise Jacinda Read argues that the depiction of rape in these films was commented on by the majority of reviewers in ways which did not refer directly to feminist debates about rape, but which drew on them in a kind of "common-sense" fashion nevertheless. In other words on the evidence of the reviews Read studied she concludes that the "feminist" issue of rape has passed out of the sphere of feminist discussion and into the wider media. Moreover, Read claims, in the case of The Accused the discourses surrounding rape have been mobilised to serve the political agendas of the New Right: namely an appeal to "popular morality", and particularly an attack on those "liberal institutions" which put the rights of criminals before those of victims. I mention Read's arguments here because they encourage us to account for the repeated references to rape in reviews of Strange Days in a similar fashion. Strange Days finds itself under attack on so many different critical fronts not only because its subject matter (rape) engenders feminist comment, but also because it disturbs conservative thinking about the female artist's "natural" relation to violent and/or sexual material: that is, the idea that her work should never treat this material explicitly or graphically, especially if it does so within the context of entertainment rather than to make an obvious feminist statement.[16] For many critics Strange Days was one challenge to their

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[15] Shelley.
[16] Jacinda Read, "Popular Film/Popular Feminism: The Critical Reception of the Rape-Revenge Film," Scope 12 Jan. 2001 <http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/ film/journal/articles/popular_feminism.htm>.

expectations too far: a woman director filming scenes of sexual violence against women was so alien, so freakish that it could not be tolerated. To take just two of many possible examples which illustrate the critical revulsion which greeted the film, Ryan Gilbey says that Bigelow "rubs our face in the dirt forcing us to experience rape and murder through the perspective of the perpetrator. It's an ugly film about ugly emotions"; and Alison Mayes comments that it is "a sick scene which is filmed from the exact point of view of the rapist-murderer...No Canadian will be able to watch this in-your-face horror without thinking of the innocent victims of Paul Bernardo. Had I not been required to review Strange Days I would have walked out of the theatre."[17]

The common factor which unites so many of the negative critical reactions to the rape scene is their *overreaction*: one reviewer even compared Strange Days to a "snuff film". Jamie Portman relates that Bigelow was told by one critic that she was irresponsible for making a film which could encourage violence against women. Joan Smith describes how Paul Gambaccini told listeners to his radio programme (Kaleidoscope) that he had refused to interview Bigelow about Strange Days because the rape scene had shocked him to the extent that he would only be capable of insulting the director. Finally Derek Malcom proclaims that the film is "probably the most violent film ever directed in Hollywood by a woman."[18] It is difficult to imagine comments like those made by Gambaccini and Malcom being applied to the work of a male director. After all the statement "the most violent film ever directed in Hollywood by a man" would have little impact since male filmmakers who depict sex and/or violence on celluloid are far too commonplace to single out. Which is not to imply that men who explore these issues aesthetically are never admonished for it. Ongoing debates about violence in the media which (as the aforementioned Alison Mayes quote proves) escalate to

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[17] Ryan Gilbey, "Ryan Gilbey on Film," Independent 27 Oct. 1995, CD-ROM ed.: 23; Alison Mayes quoted in Jamie Portman, "Strange Days for a Female Director Under Attack for her Style," Vancouver Sun 25 Oct. 1995. Kathryn Bigelow website 20 Nov. 1999 <http://www.kathrynbigelow.com/articles/vsun.html>. The man mentioned in this quote, Paul Bernardo, is a Canadian serial rapist and murderer.

[18] Edward Guthmann, "Virtual Reality Run Amok in 'Strange' Thriller," San Francisco Chronicle 13 Oct. 1995, San Francisco Chronicle Online Archives 16 Sept. 2000 <http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?file=/chronicle/ archive/1995/10/13/DD19605.DTL>; Portman; Joan Smith, "Speaking Up for Corpses," Screen Violence, ed. Karl French (London: Bloomsbury, 1997) 196; Derek Malcom, "Festival of Shocks," Guardian 4 Sept. 1995, CD-ROM ed.: 46.

fever pitch whenever a new murder case receives press coverage makes this an impossibility. Yet it appears that men's exploration of these issues is culturally acceptable in a way that women's is not. As Joan Smith points out, Gambaccini's decision not to interview Bigelow was unprecedented, leaving us to assume that he found earlier male-directed films containing scenes of (sexual) violence acceptable enough to at least discuss. Because Bigelow is a woman director an added sense of betrayal comes with this criticism of her work: the implication being that as a woman she should know better than to depict violence against women in such a graphic way. The feeling of betrayal is also shared by Karla Peterson who states that with the rape and murder in Strange Days Bigelow has sacrificed "another women to Hollywood's thrill machine" and that "[a]s a woman" she "shouldn't have pulled the rape card out for one more shocking play." A woman is supposed to "know better", and thus it logically follows that female directors who tackle material of a violent and/or sexual nature are judged more harshly than their male equivalents.[19]

The view that female filmmakers who make violent films are somehow worse than male directors who work with similar material is one which permeates the criticism of Bigelow's films. David Denby has argued that Blue Steel is "worse than any macho folly" because it "turns uniforms, violence and guns into fetish objects." Similarly, Jim Shelley claims that the rape scene in Strange Days is "more brutal and disturbing than other heavily-criticised rape scenes by male directors such as Sergio Leone (Once Upon A Time In The West) or Martin Scorsese (Cape Fear)". Leaving aside whether we agree with Denby's assessment of Blue Steel, it is a comment which could, if one were so inclined, easily be applied to numerous other examples of the crime movie genre (virtually all of them directed by men). Shelley's comment is equally erroneous, placing Strange Days as it does at the extreme end of a kind of sliding-scale of cinematic rape scenes, without either stopping to consider the specifics of such scenes (point of view, context, narrative function etc.) or offering any real argument as to why Bigelow's scene is worse than the others. What we have instead feels like nothing

[19] Peterson.

more than a knee-jerk reaction. Faced with a female director who ventures into what they see as "unfeminine" territory, both these critics respond by overreacting, claiming that Bigelow's films are more disturbing than anything which has gone before because it allows them to view her as an exception, an aberration, rather than being forced to reconcile her depiction of sex and violence with her status as a woman director.[20]

Feminist author Sarah Dunant, on the other hand, does contextualise her condemnation of "Kathryn Bigelow's viciously voyeuristic rape scene" when she argues that her decision to include a graphic rape scene in her novel Transgressions (1997) was motivated by her desire to respond to the way male violence is typically represented in popular culture. However it is telling that the only example she gives of these popular representations is Strange Days: no other text which deals with rape, apart from her own, is mentioned in the article. By singling Strange Days out in this manner Dunant also appears to be saying that Bigelow's rape scene is worse than a man's, as well as ensuring that when considered alongside Strange Days her own work (which she notes has already been condemned as exploitative) does not stir up the same heated controversy as Bigelow's. For further compelling proof that the woman director who depicts rape is judged more harshly than a man one only has to consider that screenwriter James Cameron's part in creating the scene was almost totally overlooked by reviewers. Cameron's screenplay describes the rape scene in exactly the same detail as it is depicted on screen, but he evidently makes a less compelling target for criticism than the transgressive female director.[21]

The violent reaction to the rape scene is more understandable when we remember that films are often referred to as having either male or female appeal (hence the use of phrases like "chick flick" or "guy movie"). As an extension of this belief female directors are assumed to be more suited to making female-themed or "feminine" films (an argument which is supported by the previously cited fact that so few women directors work in traditionally

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[20] David Denby quoted in Elissa Van Poznak, "Steel Magnolia," Elle Dec. 1990, U.K. ed.: 73; Shelley.
[21] Sarah Dunant, "Rape: My Side of the Story," Observer 1 June 1997, Review sec., CD-ROM ed.: 1; James Cameron, Strange Days (London: Penguin, 1995) 94-100.

"male genres" such as action, science fiction or the western), the fatally flawed logic being presumably that they are best at directing the material that Hollywood imagines they themselves would pay to see. How else are we to account for the fact that directors like Bigelow who try to break out of the constraints of such categorisation are constantly asked the question "What's a woman like you doing making a film like this?"[22] Perhaps the sense of uneasiness surrounding women who explore violence in their films might also stem from the fact that women are commonly represented in the cinema as the victims of violence rather than commentators on it or perpetrators of it. The male director who depicts violence (like the male character who demonstrates violence) is nothing out of the ordinary, whereas the woman director who does the same is unusual enough to provoke discussion and usually scandal. Or as the director Penelope Spheeris puts it, "Women are not supposed to deal with violence. We're only supposed to...deal with delicate, motherly, feminine things. I think a lot of people are outraged because I've had violent scenes in my films. That's just because I'm a woman."[23]

By making the choice to explore violence on film the woman director calls into question the stereotyping of material as either "masculine" or "feminine". She moves away from what is expected of her, what has been deemed "natural" for her sex (the emotional, the romantic, the passive), and into a realm which has been designated as "masculine" (the violent, the aggressive, the active). The reaction to Strange Days proves that such a move is often interpreted as an unforgivable transgression, perhaps because it threatens to illustrate that the tagging of films as "masculine" or "feminine" is arbitrary rather than logical, and expose the way in which seemingly innocuous notions about gender and genre can actually work to deny women directors the same artistic freedom as their male counterparts.

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[22] For example, Elissa Van Poznak says that she looked at Bigelow on the set of Blue Steel and wanted to ask what's "a nice girl from northern California...doing in a dirty genre like this."(73) Similarly Jamie Portman notes that having seen Blue Steel a group of university journalists asked Bigelow ,"What was a woman doing making a bloody violent movie like this anyway?"

[23] Quoted in Janis Cole and Holly Dale, Calling The Shots: Profiles of Women Filmmakers (Ontario: Quarry Press, 1993) 225.

Some critics who either cannot accept the supposed "masculinity" of Bigelow's films, or who are at least keen to play it down, have attempted to recuperate them by a process of re-feminisation. They argue that despite the macho elements of her films there is ultimately a "feminine" sensibility at work behind them. Thus Jim Shelley claims that they are "all unbelievably sentimental romances in which love invariably saves the day." Similarly in an article in the Chicago Tribune on Point Break we are told that the director

> has something that her male colleagues in the action field do not - a willingness to *lose control*, to *surrender voluptuously* to the flow of image and sound. Most male action directors remain obsessed with technique - with the perfection of a special effect or the precision of a storyboard composition - as a way of asserting and maintaining their authority over the spectacle. But Bigelow with no macho ego on the line, actively courts chaos, creating a sense of runaway energy...Whereas male directors are still playing with toys...Bigelow has tapped into something primal and strong. She is a *sensualist* of genius in this most *sensual* of mediums.[24]

The type of language used here is revealing: phrases like "lose control", "surrender voluptuously" and "she is a sensualist" create a picture of a director whose style is disordered and chaotic, and who is influenced by the senses and the emotions rather than considerations of an intellectual nature. In spite of the fact that this statement is obviously meant as a compliment rather than a criticism, and that the author does say Bigelow "*actively* courts chaos", the language used here can be interpreted as equating femaleness (the woman director) with *passivity* ("lose control", "surrender", "courts chaos", "runaway"); and maleness (the male director) with *activity* (""obsessed with technique", "perfection", "precision", "asserting and maintaining their authority over the spectacle"). It also brings to mind the kind of language employed to discuss other women working in an the artistic sphere. Parker and Pollack quote from John Jackson Jarves who has said that female sculptors "by *nature* are...prompted in the treatment of sculpture to motives of fancy and

[24] Shelley; Dave Kehr, "'Point Break' Director Turns Pulp Into Art." Chicago Tribune 7 July 1991; C. Kathryn Bigelow website 20 Nov. 1999 <http://www.kathrynbigelow.com/articles/chi3.html>.

sentiment rather than realistic portraiture or absolute creative imagination."[25] Crucially the assertion that Bigelow is an action director less concerned than her fellow males with technical aspects of the filmmaking process, such as special effects and storyboarding, is disproved by Dave Gardetta in the Washington Post. He writes that Bigelow is "still known today as something of a tech-head, disappearing for months down a hole to storyboard a film, sketching out the individual shots."[26]

By painting Bigelow as a passive and emotional figure this piece bestows on her qualities traditionally associated with femininity and marks her out as "different": she is constructed as the exceptional figure in an egocentric, effects-driven, all-male action directors club. This difference is interpreted as something which makes her a better director than her male contemporaries, but it also consigns her to a position of marginality by refusing to see her as just another director making blockbuster action movies in Hollywood. Instead her gender is used to set her apart, ensuring that the gulf between male and female directors is widened rather than closed. Not surprisingly, this is a state of affairs which Bigelow, in common with many other women directors, finds extremely unhelpful.

In addition to critics who employ a strategy of refeminisation in order to make Bigelow's films more palatable, there are also those who aim to position her work within an avant-garde and/or feminist canon. Often this aim is pitched as a recuperation of her films from their status as products of a commercially motivated, formulaic system (Hollywood) into examples of a subversive (feminist) aesthetic at work. Hence the concentration on Bigelow's status as "artist" rather than mere director-for-hire that we find in so much of the material written about her and her films: a status which is aided and abetted by the fact that she studied art at the prestigious Whitney Museum and worked with Art and Language (a British based group of conceptual artists) before becoming a director. Lizzie Francke argues that the she reveals "her art-school background in truly arresting images"; and Ian Nathan comments on her "dazzling artistic vision. In this case *real* art. Prior to shaking down the

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[25] Parker and Pollock 10.
[26] Gardetta C1.

boys in the film game, Bigelow was a painter". In fact, as Jamie Portman points out, "[e]ven Bigelow's harshest critics concede that her fine-arts background has made her a brilliant stylist." Take, for instance, Ryan Gilbey's assessment that Strange Days "stinks - morally, ethically, dramatically. Every way, in fact, except artistically, an area in which it excels beyond imagination."[27]

By emphasising Bigelow's artistic credentials these critics attempt to create a distance between her and the mainstream film industry within which she works. Since Bigelow comes to popular cinema from a "highbrow" or intellectual cultural field this helps to give her an added legitimacy. It also allows commentators with anti-Hollywood tendencies to come to terms with the fact that she is a woman working within the dominant system rather than outside it. They are able to view her as someone who is merely exploiting the conventions of popular cinema to showcase her aesthetic brilliance rather than allowing them to dull her creativity. As one critic said of Point Break, "The material probably isn't what Bigelow would create for herself - it is resolutely male-oriented...[Y]et she is able to bring out some astonishing, highly expressive qualities in it. Her sensibility *turns pulp into art*".[28]

The idea that Bigelow is a director who transcends the popular material with which she works is not only commented upon by critics but encouraged by those who are responsible for marketing her films. In the Strange Days Production Notes all the films she has made are described in ways which makes it clear that they are more than merely genre films - they are also exercises in cinematic artistry. For instance The Loveless (1982) is described as a "thinking man's motorcycle movie" and Blue Steel is a film which created "reverberations far beyond its nerve-racking suspense or symphonic gunplay."[29] The Production Notes also make a point of emphasising both Bigelow's artistic and cinematic credentials by telling us about her career as an artist, as well as dropping in information such as the fact that MOMA (which

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[27] Lizzie Francke, "Virtual Fears," Sight and Sound December 1995: 6; Ian Nathan, "No Retreat, No Surrender," Empire Apr. 1996: 78; Portman; Ryan Gilbey, Rev. of Strange Days," Premiere Mar. 1996, UK. ed.: 17.
[28] Kehr C. Italics mine.
[29] Strange Days production notes taken from Hollywood.com 3 Jan. 2001 <http://www.hollywood.com/videoguide/ movies/strange/text/index.html>. No Longer available on the internet.

Janet Staiger has said is concerned with the promotion of "art cinema") honoured her with a career retrospective after the release of Near Dark (1987).[30] Bigelow, as they put it, is a filmmaker who "combines cinema and art, bringing a signature visual style to her work." These comments suggest that even those individuals who promote "mainstream" films believe that to be a worthy director one must surpass the conventions of popular cinema. Robert E. Kapsis points out that the way in which Brian De Palma's films were marketed proves that even in the late eighties "specializing exclusively in thrillers or other popular genres" was "still not considered a sufficient career path for a director seeking artistic respectability." On the evidence of the Strange Days production notes it seems that this observation still holds true. Viewed in this context critics who are keen to "rescue" Bigelow from the popular so to speak actually have their views endorsed by the director's publicity machine.[31]

Predictably enough for a director who, as I will argue, uses linguistic ambiguity to deflect criticism, Bigelow's own take on her status as filmmaker and artist is far from clear-cut. Yvonne Tasker argues that Bigelow has never presented herself as a director who makes "art", and this mainly appears to be true. For example, Bigelow states that the reason she decided to move out of the art world was because it is "elitist" and "requires information going in", whereas film "requires nothing but time." In an article by Jamie Diamond she is quoted as saying that there is a need for filmmakers to use an "accessible format" if they want to succeed in the marketplace, and also argues that "Movies are meant to *entertain*." However, in an interview with Jamie Diamond in the New York Times Bigelow claims, "the only thing I was determined to do, ever since I was a child, was to make art", leaving us unsure as to whether she extends this desire to her work as a filmmaker or not. Similarly, in an interview with Entertainment Weekly she maintains that "You need to deliver on the level

[30] Janet Staiger, Interpreting Films: Studies in the Historical Reception of American Cinema (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1992) 189.
[31] Robert E. Kapsis, Hitchcock: The Making of a Reputation (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992) 214.

of entertainment while maintaining an integrity. A movie can give you insight, share an observation. It's not just something to eat popcorn by."[32]

One group for whom the "search for art" in Bigelow's work is seemingly so important are feminist film critics. The most rational explanation for this could be that many of these critics still hold on to the idea that the independent or arthouse film is the best place for a woman director's voice to be heard. While it is true that Hollywood may not be perceived as quite the same enemy that it once was, the very lack of critical attention paid to a number of women directors working in the mainstream would suggest that it is still far from becoming a friend. It is interesting, then, that Bigelow (primarily I would argue because of her artistic background and her unusual position vis-à-vis genre) is one female director who has been discussed at some length by feminist critics.

Several critics focus on what they see as the deconstructive nature of Bigelow's films, using this as evidence of a feminist sensibility underpinning the director's work. Cora Kaplan comments that Blue Steel is an "explicitly deconstructivist and analytic project embedded in a mass-market film".[33] Likewise Lizzie Francke argues that Bigelow is a director who chooses "to unstitch (rather than render seamless) cinema's narratives."[34] Bigelow's films are read here as intellectual exercises (rather than entertainment vehicles) which aim to expose the patriarchal bias of dominant cinema. One way in which this is achieved, critics argue, is by picking apart generic conventions. For example Cynthia Fuchs states that Blue Steel "targets masculinist generic conventions with a kind of brilliance."[35] For all these critics Bigelow's work is able to transcend its conditions of production thanks to its self-conscious

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[32] Yvonne Tasker, "Bigger Than Life," Sight and Sound May 1999: 14; Jay Carr, "Like, It's 1999: Kathryn Bigelow Makes a 'Wake-Up Call' about the Coming of the Millenium," Boston Globe 8 Oct. 1995, Arts and Film sec.: B28, Boston Globe Online Archives 12 Oct. 2000 <http://www.boston.com/globe/search>; Jamie Diamond "Get Real," Premiere Women in Hollywood Special 1996: 117, 118; Jamie Diamond, "Kathryn Bigelow Pushes the Potentiality Envelope," New York Times 22 Oct. 1995, Kathryn Bigelow website 12 Nov. 1999 <http://www.kathrynbigelow.com/articles/grist.html>.; Maitland McDonaugh, "Guns and Poses," Entertainment Weekly 16 Mar. 1990, Entertainment Weekly Online Archives 22 Nov. 1999 <http://www.ew.com/ew/archive/0,1798,1| 4055|0|Kathryn%2bBigelow,00.html>.

[33] Quoted in Shelley.

[34] Francke, "Virtual Fears" 6.

[35] Cynthia Fuchs, rev. of Blue Steel, University of Maryland's Women's Studies Film Review Archive 20 June 2000 <http:// www.inform.umd.edu/EdRes/Topic/WomensStudies/ FilmReviews/blue-steel-fuchs>.

and iconoclastic approach to its generic source material. Scenes in Bigelow's films which might be interpreted as highly conventional in a generic sense are viewed instead as "feminist commentary on such conventions."[36] Thus, Lizzie Francke argues that the rape scene in Strange Days is a comment on, and a reaction to, a cinematic history which is littered with the bodies of murdered women:

> [W]e look into Iris' dead eyes and see reflected not just the girl's hooded executor...but the many dead eyes of cinema's victims, from Janet Leigh onwards. By refusing to partake of the playback experience, it is Mace, the woman, who sees more clearly what it is all about, and with whom the moral centre of Strange Days can ultimately be found.[37]

This interpretation of a woman director's film as a deconstructivist project is not confined to Bigelow. In an article on Dorothy Arzner Pam Cook argues that Arzner's films, although "produced within the constraints of a studio system heavily determined by economic and ideological factors", are able to utilise a number of formal strategies to problematise the "dominant ideology of classic Hollywood cinema." Cook lists such strategies as an episodic narrative which interrupts "the smooth forward-flow of a narrative which would give an impression of Reality", and leads to a situation where "each scene demands to be read in itself for the meanings it creates"; as well as the play on the female stereotypes (such as "Vamp" and "Straight Girl") to be found in classical Hollywood cinema: "By demonstrating that the fixed female stereotypes are actually a focus on contradictions for women her films cause reverberations within sexist ideology which disturbs our place within it."[38]

By concentrating on the ways in which the films of women directors (such as Bigelow and Arzner) break down the norms of patriarchal cinema, feminist critics adhere to the belief that these women remain apart from the industry in which they work. They rationalise the fact that there are female filmmakers who choose to make films from within the so-called

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[36] Fuchs, rev. of Blue Steel.
[37] Francke, "Virtual Fears" 8.
[38] Pam Cook, "Approaching the Work of Dorothy Arzner," Feminism and Film Theory, ed. Constance Penley (London and New York: Routledge/BFI, 1988) 46, 50, 54.

"mainstream", and to be influenced by its aesthetic norms and production practices, by suggesting that these women's ultimate aim is the destruction of the system from within. It may be true that directors such as Bigelow have an interest in exposing the patriarchal bias of the dominant cinema, but it should not be cast as their only or "real" aim as directors. Such a view ignores the possibility that women might *prefer* to make films which are pitched at a mass audience; that they might *want* to make films which have a supposedly "masculine" content (namely sex and violence) rather than those which set out to demonstrate why such content is damaging; and that they might not have the goal of presenting the world with a piece of ground breaking feminist art in mind when they go to work in the morning.

Despite attempts to rationalise the role of the woman director in the dominant film industry such as those described above, some critics continue to express concern at the effects that working within that industry might have on female directors. For example Needeya Islam states that Blue Steel "exposes the difficulty of critically challenging generic expectations when to be effective requires the maintenance of some of the genre's most problematic terms."[39] Joan Smith is unable to praise the positive and "feminist" aspects of Strange Days without simultaneously making it clear that the film is not an example of great "Art". She qualifies her reading of Strange Days as a film which challenges "gender stereotypes" by stating that this "is not to argue that [it] is a great movie".[40] Even Christina Lane who acknowledges that Bigelow's work does not have to be "feminist" to make it valuable for feminist study, leaves Strange Days to one side as a problem in her analysis of the director's films. She is uncomfortable with its exploration of "male voyeurism", and states that it "does not engage in generic tensions as obviously as other Bigelow films." That is, the exploitation of "generic tensions" which she has previously stated helps Bigelow to address "discourses of power, specifically gender politics." Clearly for critics who think like this, a wholesale feminist recuperation of the work of a director such as Bigelow is impeded

[39] Islam 113.
[40] Joan Smith 198-9.

by the fact that she must utilise the very cinematic conventions that a *truly* feminist cinema would leave behind.[41]

In order to bring the first section of this chapter to a close and to lead us into the final section it would be useful to consider Bigelow's placing of herself within the feminist debate. Not that her acquiescence is required in labelling either her or her films as feminist. Indeed Needeya Islam argues that while Bigelow's films do not "manifestly and self-consciously" explore "the question of the feminine", and Bigelow does not "posit herself as a feminist filmmaker", her work nevertheless "marks the nexus of female authorship and the workings of cinematic forms in a mainstream context."[42] Yet if we look at Joan Smith's defence of Strange Days it is intriguing to note that Bigelow has utilised an almost identical defence herself. Smith supports the inclusion of the rape scene, and arguably recuperates it into the feminist canon, by insisting that it is "groundbreaking and transgressive" because it "imposes...not just collusion with the rapist but the sensation of female terror on that half of the audience which is used to regarding it from a safe distance. For women, this sense of horrified empathy at the cinema is depressingly routine; for men, it is startlingly unusual." She also praises the film for its subversion of gender stereotypes: "[T]he men are long-haired and dishevelled while the female lead, Angela Bassett...is resourceful and resilient; Bassett grows in stature as the male characters...fall apart."[43] In an interview with Jamie Diamond Bigelow echoes Smith's defence of the rape scene, although without giving it an obvious feminist spin. She says, "When you watch from a distance, there's safety involved. When the distance is eclipsed, you create a huge tension because there's a potential for participation." Similarly, as Yvonne Tasker points out, Bigelow has also "spoken of the contrast between Lenny's strong female cohort Mace and Lenny's own vulnerability in terms of subverting a formula, claiming that this 'would not be something I would pursue if the situation were reversed...it'd be generic.'"[44] Although Bigelow, unlike Joan Smith, does not formulate her

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[41] Lane, "Feminist Hollywood" 122-3.
[42] Islam 101.
[43] Joan Smith 198, 199.
[44] Jamie Diamond, "Kathryn Bigelow Pushes the Potentiality Envelope"; Tasker, "Bigger Than Life" 14.

arguments in feminist terms, it is fascinating that they are so very similar. Perhaps Bigelow wants to open up the possibility of a feminist reading of her work without ever committing herself to being a feminist director, and thus potentially narrowing down her creative options. If she keeps people guessing as to the feminist nature, or otherwise, of her films she can ensure that (to use her own words) her material "can't be easily codified. It's not going to slip into a slot".[45]

Faced with so many differing, as well as conflicting, strategies for understanding her films it is not surprising that Bigelow can be seen to employ various strategies of her own as a response. If we consider her reaction to claims that the violence in Strange Days, and in particular the rape scene, is damaging and gratuitous we can see a number of defensive strategies at work. One of these sees Bigelow using the frequently cited argument that violence on celluloid is merely a reflection of violence in society rather than a cause of it. She tells the Boston Globe that "violence is a fact of our lives, a part of the social context in which we live."; and the Washington Post that " the film has held a mirror up to society. And you can't fault the mirror, it's just a mirror."[46] Elsewhere Bigelow defends Strange Days on purely artistic grounds, arguing that the rape scene demanded an approach which was as powerful as the shower scene in Hitchcock's Psycho: "I don't think there's been something as radically intense as losing your main character ten minutes into the movie in that horrific way - it left an indelible impression. If I was going to be faithful to the script I needed to create something as intense.[47] Meanwhile on another occasion she counters the accusation that her depiction of a woman's rape and murder is potentially voyeuristic by arguing that "Lenny's clients are...men who need to be fed this kind of intense voyeuristic experience. By inference, I'd have to say, aren't we lucky, us women, that these voyeuristic fantasies are not usually fantasies shared by women?"[48] In this statement Bigelow uses what could be termed a

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[45] Patrick Z. McGavin, "One Director's Reality Check: Bigelow Confronts Life's Horrors." Chicago Tribune 15 Oct. 1995: 76. Kathryn Bigelow website 13 Nov. 1999 <http://www.kathrynbigelow.com/articles/chi4.html>.
[46] Carr B28; Gardetta C1.
[47] Nathan, "No Retreat".
[48] Quoted in Jamie Diamond, "Kathryn Bigelow Pushes the Potentiality Envelope": Lenny is the male lead of the film who makes his living from illegally selling 'clips' of other peoples experiences (which have been recorded direct from their cerebral cortex in order let the person who watches feel what they were feeling) to various clients.

feminist justification for her work. She claims that the voyeuristic fantasies explored in Strange Days are those enjoyed by men, and sets herself up as a female observer of, and commentator on, those fantasies. By using the phrase "us women" she makes her gender overt in a way that we might not expect someone who frequently denies that gender has any bearing on her work to do. Her assertion that the fantasies depicted in the film are not shared by women is not actually supported by Strange Days itself: Lenny's ex-girlfriend Faith is shown to be a willing participant in a "clip" which stages her own rape and murder. However it is not surprising that she chooses not to mention this since one can imagine (given the way the rape scene was treated) the additional controversy that such a comment would raise. Despite her unwillingness to be pigeonholed as a "feminist director", the intensity of some of the attacks against her film make it almost inevitable that Bigelow will occasionally fall back on a "feminist" response to deflect criticism. Sometimes such a response is the only one possible.

Considering the seemingly endless desire to force both Bigelow and her films into whichever category is deemed convenient it comes as no great shock to learn that the director's strategies for dealing with existing and potential criticism frequently work to contradict one another. In an interview with Ana Maria Bahiana Bigelow moves between a position which hints that her work (in this case Blue Steel) is underpinned by some kind of "feminist" intent, and one which refuses to acknowledge that gender might have any bearing on the films she, or indeed any woman director, makes. Thus, she states that Blue Steel

> began with the idea of doing a woman action film. Not only has no woman ever done an action thriller, no woman has ever been at the centre of one as the central character. Obviously I was fascinated by that, *because I'm a woman* watching all those action films and there's always a man at the centre.[49]

This assertion cannot easily be taken as a claim that Bigelow is a feminist director making feminist films, but it is certainly suggestive of a female director for whom gender is an

[49]Ana Maria Batuiana, "Interview with Kathryn Bigelow," Cinema Papers Jan. 1992: 33. Italics mine.

important issue. Bigelow's statement reveals a desire to redress a balance in the male-dominated genre of the "action thriller" both by virtue of the fact that she is a woman director making this sort of film, and by placing a female character at the centre of it. By using the words "because I'm a woman" she strongly indicates that her gender does have some bearing on the way she herself views films, and consequently might also contribute to her decision to alter traditional generic structures in her work. The vague nature of Bigelow's words here imply a reluctance or refusal to be categorised. Indeed considering the disparate genres she has worked into her films it could be said that this resistance to classification is something of a theme in her career. Consequently attempts by critics to categorise her work are often met with resistance. In an interview with Bigelow Clarke Taylor states that she "resisted analysis of her work, especially its categorization in the action/violence genre[.]" He then quotes her as saying, "If I'm part of the action genre, then, well, I'm proud of that, and I love good action films. But I don't focus my work in this way."[50] When Bigelow states that the driving force behind the making of Blue Steel was her wish to make a "woman action film" (rather than say "a feminist action film" or "a women's action film") she leaves us unsure of what that is exactly. Does she mean an action film for women? An action film by a woman? An action film about a woman? Such a description could suggest all, any, or none of these things. Perhaps that is precisely the point. By leaving things unclear she is able to avoid a situation where unwanted labels (such as "feminist" or "women's filmmaker") are attached to either herself or the films she makes.

This reluctance to make gender an issue is stated more directly in the interview with Bahiana when Bigelow comments that she doesn't think "there's a feminine way of expressing violence or dealing with it. There's only just the filmmaker's approach. I don't think it's gender specific. Violence is violence. Survival is survival. I don't think there's a feminine eye or a feminine voice." In saying this she confuses rather than clarifies the issue, leaving us unsure of how to read her work. This can be interpreted as a deliberate strategy

[50] Clarke Taylor.

used by Bigelow in order to avoid one of the major pitfalls open to female directors - being pigeonholed as someone who naturally deals with "women's" material. That is, primarily those films which embody female, feminist, or feminine concerns (often putting one or more female characters at the centre of the narrative), and which are marketed to women. As female directors like Bigelow are surely aware, Hollywood has a tendency to typecast female directors, and indeed other "minority" directors as well, by assigning them to the material which "naturally" fits their gendered (for example, soft, emotional films), or racial identity (for example, films about guns, gangs and the ghetto). This tendency is evidenced in a complaint which is frequently made by women directors that having achieved success in an acceptably "feminine" genre, this is then seen as the only material with which they could ever be successful. To quote Amy Heckerling, "Every time you do something people would like to say, 'Oh, you do that, so let's put you in that slot.'" [51]

When we examine some of the things Bigelow has said about her films it becomes clear that she is someone who is constantly contradicting herself. Take for example this quote from Monthly Film Bulletin:

> With Blue Steel I wanted to do a 'woman's action film', putting a woman at the centre of a movie predominantly occupied by men. I was interested in creating a person at the centre of an action film who represents an Everyman that both women and men could identify with. At our initial screening...some men at the press conference commented that they found themselves for the first time in their lives identifying with a woman. I found this very interesting because finally the notion of self-preservation is universal. I wanted to create a strong, capable person who just happened to be a woman[.][52]

The first part of this statement reveals the motivating factor behind Blue Steel to be a wish to put a woman character at the centre of a male dominated genre (the action film), and implies an interest in exploring how a female lead would work to change or problematise the traditional structures of that kind of film. However the subsequent comment that this central

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[51] Batuiana 34.
[52] In "Walk on the Wild Side," Monthly Film Bulletin Nov. 1990: 312-3.

character (Megan) functions not as man or woman but as a kind of "Everyman" works to contradict what has just been said. If Megan's gender is ultimately irrelevant, if she just "happened to be a woman", then her gender can not also be the fulcrum around which the film revolves. Bigelow seems to be arguing that Megan, who is caught in a chain of events which put her life in danger, fights to save herself in a way which transcends gender, making her a character who in the final analysis could be either man or woman. To add to the ambiguity events within Blue Steel actually work to undermine this. For instance, the film is not only keen to stress Megan's "femininity" with visual signposts (as evidenced by a shot which shows her buttoning up her cop's uniform over a lacy bra), but also relies on the fact of her gender to drive the narrative: she becomes the target of a psychopath named Eugene's sexual obsession. It is the incongruity of a woman doing a "man's job", of femininity mixed with masculinity, that Eugene finds so exciting.

This is not to imply that the lack of a clearly defined "femininity" or "feminism" within Kathryn Bigelow's work marks it as an inferior and disappointing example of a woman director's abilities. Rather than interpret the contradictions in both her films and what she says about them as evidence of a director who is unsure of what she is doing, and who is caught in a system (Hollywood) which drowns out her artistic voice with its own more powerful one, I would argue that these contradictions are a strategy in themselves. By this I mean that Bigelow is faced with a situation where the films she makes are consistently examined in the light of her gender, and she is forced either to deny it has any influence on her work and risk censure for letting down the feminist side, or to acknowledge it as a motivating factor and be pigeonholed as a woman director dealing with "women's issues". In order to avoid this situation Bigelow moves between a number of different positions when explaining her work, thus ensuring that she avoids being trapped indefinitely inside any of the descriptive categories laid out for women directors.

In conclusion, I would like to draw a comparison between the way critics view Bigelow and her films and comments Liam Kennedy has made about the career of Susan Sontag

because they are useful in summarising some of the prejudices which inform critical reactions to Bigelow. Kennedy claims that Sontag's association with the New York intellectuals in the sixties was problematic because "this grouping was established and maintained as a 'boy's club'...bar the symbolic position of 'The Dark Lady of American Letters'- a position long held by Mary McCarthy and since allotted to Sontag." The idea that one woman artist in a particular field can be singled out as unusual or special because she is not like other women artists (in Bigelow's case because she makes "masculine" films), and thus granted exclusive membership to a "men-only" club where she is treated as an exotic oddity, is one which underlies some of the comments critics make about Bigelow. As I have argued, this idea is sometimes used in a complimentary fashion when reviewers praise her for daring to be different from other women directors, but paradoxically it also functions to explain away her difference as a woman in a man's world, and to reconcile some of the tensions that are caused by her being there. I would also venture that this conception of Bigelow as an exciting aberration amongst female filmmakers is one of the things which encourages critics to be so outspoken about the rape scene in Strange Days: her atypical status combined with her depiction of taboo subject matter made great copy for reviewers who were eager to make an impact.[53]

Kennedy also argues that throughout Sontag's career "her gender has been spotlighted in ways which obfuscate and diminish her intellectual achievements - a famous example is Jonathan Miller's perverse effort to praise her as 'probably the most intelligent woman in America'." On the evidence of the critical reactions I have discussed in this chapter this statement is equally applicable to Bigelow. The issue of her gender is raised so often in discussions of her work that in some instances it actually overshadows recognition of her abilities as a director, or at least diverts attention away from the content of her work. Intriguingly Miller's comment about Sontag also has parallels with Derek Malcom's "probably the most violent film ever directed in Hollywood by a woman" remark. That is,

[53] Liam Kennedy, Susan Sontag: Mind as Passion (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1995) 15.

both Miller and Malcom judge the women in question by separate criteria than they would men. Thus Sontag is not simply referred to as probably one of the most intelligent people in America but one of the most intelligent *women*, which immediately consigns her to second-class status as an intellectual who is not good enough to be critically evaluated alongside her male peers. Similarly Bigelow's exploration of violence on screen must be judged in the context of other women's work, and ultimately condemned because it is not like it, rather than considered within a non gender specific context of the role of violence in film history.[54]

In light of these kind of critical prejudices it is hardly surprising to discover that Bigelow is loathe to give a direct answer to the question of whether gender has any significant influence on her activities as a director. She may hint that it does, and imply that there may be some kind of "feminist" intent behind her work, but at other times she simply denies it: "Film-making is not gender specific." In my opinion Bigelow's preferred strategy for dealing with the threat of unwelcome categorisation is to meet it with deliberate evasiveness and the promotion of textual ambiguity. Moreover, this is probably one of the most logical strategies for a woman director to employ when faced with critics who cannot look beyond her gender either to praise or condemn her. As Bigelow has said in answer to the question "What's the biggest obstacle you face as a female director?" "Questions about being a female director!"[55]

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[54] Liam Kennedy 13.

[55] Sarah Gristwood, "The Unflinching Woman," Evening Standard 26 Oct. 1995, Kathryn Bigelow website 12 Nov. 1999 <http://www.kathrynbigelow.com/articles/grist.html>; Interview with Kathryn Bigelow, Hollywood Online, Kathryn Bigelow website 12 Nov. 1999 <http://kathrynbigelow.com/articles/hol.html>.

Chapter Eight

Bettys, Bodies, Dumb Blondes...and Jane Austen: Charting the Reception of Clueless (1995)[1]

Tom Shone has asked, "Is Clueless actually about anything?"[2] On the evidence of the varied critical responses to the film it is clearly "about" many things, depending on where one's personal and interpretative biases lie. The reactions it has provoked sometimes exist in harmony with one another and at other times are contradictory, proving Janet Staiger's assertion that neither a text nor the interpretation of it are ever entirely coherent.[3] It is not my intention to "read" Clueless (1995), whether as a "feminist" film, "non-feminist" film or anything else, but to interpret the ways in which others (reviewers, academics, fans and so on) have "read" it. As Staiger has quite rightly pointed out, critics who seek to account for the ways in which films have been interpreted can never avoid becoming a part of the interpretative process themselves.[4] However there is no reason why this method of studying film should not prove extremely fruitful, provided we are careful to avoid a situation where we consider but then disregard all previous readings of a film, and surreptitiously present our own as the "right" one; or where we treat certain readings as being more credible than others (for example, when we only look at "high-brow" writings on cinema). The impossibility of absolute critical objectivity does not invalidate reception studies, but rather offers us another way of looking at film which moves beyond the quest to pin down textual meaning.

Unlike reviews of films such as The Accused (1988), Thelma and Louise (1991), and to an extent Strange Days (1995), reviews of Clueless do not engage explicitly with feminist debates.[5] There is nothing in them which compares to the kind of heated critical discussion

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[1] "Betty", meaning a beautiful woman, is one of the slang words used in Clueless.
[2] Tom Shone, "Spirit of the Age," Sunday Times 22 Oct. 1995, CD-ROM ed.: 7.
[3] Janet Staiger, Interpreting Films: Studies in the Historical Reception of American Cinema (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1992) 28, 48.
[4] Staiger Interpreting Films 9.
[5] For a discussion of the ways in which feminist debates about rape are drawn upon by reviewers of The Accused and Thelma and Louise see Jacinda Read, "Popular Film/Popular Feminism: The Critical Reception of the Rape-Revenge Film," Scope 12 Jan. 2001 <http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/film/journal/articles popular_feminism.htm>. See also Sharon Willis, "Hardware and Hardbodies, What Do Women Want? A Reading of Thelma and Louise,"

which surrounded those other films. One reason for this is probably because Clueless does not explore "flash-point" feminist issues such as rape, making it a less obvious target for sustained feminist analysis. Instead the way it foregrounds supposedly trivial "feminine" concerns, such as romance and fashion, within the frequently devalued genre of teen comedy may have foreclosed the possibility of taking it seriously for some critics, either "feminist" or otherwise. This is not to imply that reviews of, and articles about, Clueless do not raise issues pertinent to feminism. Indeed a number of the recurrent themes seized upon by critics have been shaped in some way by ongoing discussions within feminist and/or feminist film theory, even if this debt goes unacknowledged. Many of the derogatory comments made about the film's central character, Cher, and her "feminine" interests (clothes, makeovers, boys) can be traced to established thinking about the so-called "post-feminist" (young) woman. She is an individual who Charlotte Brunsdon describes as "neither trapped in femininity (pre-feminist), nor rejecting of it (feminist)", but rather someone who draws upon it as she sees fit. The problem is, as Brunsdon explains, that this self-conscious use of femininity appears to some observers to be the same as a return to pre-feminist values, and a wholesale rejection of feminism.[6] Hence comments such as those made by Charlotte Raven in an article about the "new femininity" which she argues goes hand in hand with the "new feminism":

> [N]o amount of poetry and drippy hymns of praise will persuade an intelligent female that it [femininity]isn't, in essence, a prison. The only problem being, that for every one of those you come across, there's a thousand mindless harpies bleating on about their Prada dresses and even, God preserve them, their blowjob techniques. And those are just the feminists.[7]

Some critical material written about the film is also concerned with other issues pertinent to feminism such as those surrounding the media's representation of the female body, or more

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Film Theory Goes To The Movies, eds. Jim Collins, Hilary Radner and Ava Preacher Collins (London: Routledge, 1993) 120-8.

[6] Charlotte Brunsdon, Screen Tastes: Soap Opera to Satellite Dishes (London and New York: Routledge, 1997) 86.

[7] Charlotte Raven, "Boobs, Boys and High Heels," Modern Review Feb. 1998: 16.

particularly the way it focuses on the bodies of teenage girls; as well as the role of fantasy and desire in "women's genres".

Barbara Klinger has argued that textual meanings are not inherent in a text but are "negotiated by external agencies" such as film reviews which are "set within a particular historical landscape." [8] In other words reviewers do not write in a vacuum but are influenced by the dominant cultural, aesthetic and political values of the period (whether it be to accept or challenge those values) in which their writings are conceived. I am obviously unable to chart Clueless' reception over a long period of time in the same way as Janet Staiger does with Birth of A Nation (1915) or Barbara Klinger does with the films of Douglas Sirk, but I still feel that the term "historical landscape" is appropriate in this case. The historical landscape against which reviews of Clueless are set is made up of ongoing debates about feminism and femininity (most commonly expressed as worries about the demise of feminism and the emergence of post-feminism in the eighties and nineties); as well as another manifestation of the high/low culture debate which has dogged Hollywood filmmaking since its inception. In this instance the debate takes two forms: a discussion about the value of the teen movie, or generic filmmaking in general; and the suitability of Clueless (based as it is on Jane Austen's Emma) to wear the Austen mantle.[9]

This chapter identifies the issues surrounding Clueless which were raised as significant by its viewers as well as offering possible explanations as to why these particular topics were singled-out. It also considers what these choices might say about those who make them. To this end I have studied a number of reviews and articles about the film, its star (Alicia Silverstone), and its director (Amy Heckerling). This material was taken from a wide range of British and American sources, ranging from the "popular" to the more "high-brow" end of the media spectrum. In the interest of gaining the most complete picture I looked not only at film books and magazines, but also entertainment and general magazines, newspapers,

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[8] Barbara Klinger, Melodrama and Meaning: History, Culture, and the Films of Douglas Sirk (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1994) xvi.
[9] See Staiger, Interpreting Films 139-153.

and websites. The latter are particularly important since I was anxious to include readings of Clueless which do not come from sanctioned "critics" but from amateurs who are simply film fans. I hope this inclusion will go some way towards addressing the oft-neglected voice of the cinematic audience who employ their own interpretative strategies when viewing films, although it is obviously no substitute for the kind of sustained audience research that I have neither time nor space for here.[10] As I shall demonstrate, these websites also proved invaluable in ascertaining the way some teenage girls (arguably the film's primary target audience) read Clueless.

In an essay on the reception of The Silence of the Lambs (1991) Janet Staiger identifies the way in which debates about the film soon crystallised into a set of proposals which revolved around the use of homosexual stereotypes; the irresponsibility of that usage (given the negative way gays are still perceived) on the part of the filmmakers; and the praiseworthy image of a strong woman that Jodie Foster portrays through the character of Clarice Starling. She then argues that this "event" (that is, the film's reception) can be further understood by identifying the various "reading strategies" critics employ in making sense of the film. I mention this because two of Staiger's "strategies" (the construction of binary oppositions, such as high and low or good and bad, and the extensive use of metaphor and analogy) are in evidence in critical interpretations of Clueless, and thus serve as a useful reference point for the following study.[11]

For ease of reference I have divided the issues thrown up by readings of Clueless into two main areas: debates about whether the film belongs to or transcends its "low" cultural status (and thus edges towards "high" culture); and debates which might loosely be grouped together under the heading of "post-feminism". Within the first category this debate can be further divided into critical arguments about whether Clueless is or is not satire; whether or

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[10] The kind of research carried out, for example, by Jackie Stacey in Star Gazing: Hollywood Cinema and Female Spectatorship (London: Routledge, 1994) and Helen Taylor in Scarlett's Women: Gone With The Wind and Its Female Fans (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1989).
[11] Janet Staiger, "Taboos and Totems: Cultural Meanings of The Silence of the Lambs," Film Theory Goes to the Movies 142-5.

not it deserves its connection with the work of Jane Austen; whether it privileges style over substance; and how far it adheres to its generic structure (the teen movie). The second category involves looking at critical discussions about the film's heroine, Cher such as "Is she a confident, bright young woman or a narcissistic bimbo?"; and about her body and the body of the actress (Silverstone) who plays her: what range of comments are made about her physical appearance, her sexuality, and the way fashion is used in the film? Obviously these are not the only issues which concerned those who wrote about Clueless, but they did occur with enough regularity to make them especially noteworthy.

High or Low Culture? Determining the Aesthetic Location of Clueless

Reviewers on both sides of the Atlantic often use the term "satire" in their discussion of Clueless. In some cases the film is established as modern satire with, for example, Amanda Lipman referring to it as "a satirical moral tale"; and Peter Stack calling it a "delicious satire of ditzy shopping-mall material girls".[12] Other critics remain unconvinced, arguing that the film never reaches such artistic heights. Thus for Anne Billson Clueless is as "social satire...about as biting as a marshmallow;" Tom Shone notes that while the film is "being touted as wounding satire...it attempts nothing so misguided. Taking potshots at airheads is about as fruitless an activity as punching air"; and Geoff Brown maintains that it "settles for frivolity, not satire."[13]

On the evidence of such divergent opinions there is arguably some confusion as to what exactly constitutes "satire". This is probably to be expected given that the term itself is, in the words of the Encyclopaedia Britannica Online, "protean" and "imprecise". Even the Roman poets Horace and Juvenal, whose verse satires are credited with the formal

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[12] See Amanda Lipman, rev. of Clueless, Sight and Sound Oct. 1995: 46; Peter Stack, " 'Clueless' Knows a Lot About Teen Spoof," San Francisco Chronicle 19 July 1995: E1, San Francisco Chronicle Online Archives 16 Jan. 2001 <http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?file=/chronicle/archive/1995/07/19/DD64593.DTL>.
[13] Anne Billson, "In With Babies, Out With Cat," Sunday Telegraph 22 Oct. 1995, Arts sec., CD-Rom ed.; Shone, "Spirit of the Age" 7; Geoff Brown, "Sent Down for Gross Decency," Times 19 Oct. 1995, CD-ROM ed.: 35.

construction of the genre, differed fundamentally in the way they used satire. Broadly speaking, while Horace opted for a comic style which commented empathetically on human foolishness, Juvenal's tragic satire was far more savage in tone.[14] Some reviewers of Clueless appear to be aware of this duality and consequently the need for qualification when employing the term. For instance Hugo Davenport writes that the film is a "light-hearted satire on the perils of adolescence"; Leah Rozen says it is "a frisky, frivolous, funny satire"; and Kenneth Turan calls it a "sweet-natured satire": comments which situate the film as an offshoot of comic rather than tragic satire.[15] On the other hand, those critics who argue that Clueless is *not* satire apparently do so in response to what they perceive as a lack of *real* (as in forceful, bitter and wounding) satire within the film. Perhaps for these reviewers the Juvenalian or tragic form of satire is the measure of serious "Art": something which is quite incompatible with a popular teen comedy/romance like Clueless. Stack judges the film to work successfully as satire because he believes it lampoons the very people (shallow American teenagers) that most examples of its genre treat so reverentially. In other words it is aesthetically viable because it surpasses rather than fulfils our generic expectations.

It is possible that reviewers of Clueless mention satire with such regularity because of the way the film draws upon Jane Austen's Emma as source material. Austen's novels were published at the beginning of the nineteenth century, somewhat after the late seventeenth/early eighteenth-century vogue for the form had faded, but she has still been identified as a satirical writer. For example Basil Willey notes that satire survived after its "relative demise" with writers like Austen.[16] Amanda Lipman clearly shares this view of Austen as satirist when she writes that the film echoes "the lady novelist's refined but

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[14] "Satire," Encyclopaedia Britannica Online 30 Oct. 2000 <http://www.britannica.com>.
[15] See Hugo Davenport, "She's Glad to be Fey," Telegraph 20 Oct. 1995, CD-ROM ed.; Leah Rozen, "Clueless: a Hip High School Romp," People 31 July 1995, People Online Movie Review Database 16 Jan. 2001 <http://people.aol.com/people/movie_reviews/95/clueless.html>; Kenneth Turan, "Smart Times at Beverly Hills High in 'Clueless'," Los Angeles Times 19 July 1995, Calendar sec.: F1, Los Angeles Times Online Archives 16 Jan. 2001 <http://pqasb.pqarchiver.com/latimes>.
[16] Basil Willey, The Eighteenth Century Background (Middlesex: Penguin, 1962) 108.

stringent satire."[17] Thus the subject of satire is a corollary to critics' references to the connection between Heckerling's Clueless and Austen's Emma.

As with the "satire debate" reviewers are primarily split into two opposing camps vis-à-vis their opinions about the film's use of Emma: those who feel that Clueless is worthy of a comparison with its source, and those who believe that such a comparison is at best erroneous, and at worst a travesty. In the first camp Bryan Appleyard argues that the "ritualised and enclosed world" presented in Emma has much in common with the "formality of the teenage world" represented in Clueless; and Tom Shone notes that despite the almost inevitable outcry from Austen aficionados, Clueless' "tone of gentle mockery" is close enough to Emma that "it doesn't feel like sacrilege." Other reviewers, however, remain unconvinced. Richard Corliss maintains that "the touchstone of Clueless is less Emma than Hammacher Schlemmer. The movie is about conspicuous consumption: wanting, having, and wearing, in style." By this I understand Corliss to mean that Heckerling's film is not really an adaptation of Austen's novel (not "Art" as such), but rather acts as a celluloid shop window (hence the Hammacher Schlemmer reference) to showcase products which are consumed by the teenage characters within the film, and hopefully also by the teenage audience at whom the film is targeted. Quentin Curtis is more scathing when he refers to the idea that Clueless is based on Emma as a "scurrilous rumour", claiming that Heckerling's film "plays so fast and loose with its august original as to make the comparison worthless." Clueless, Curtis concludes, "is petty" while Austen is "universal."[18]

The most vociferous objections about Clueless' adaptation of Emma did not come from reviewers but from Austen scholars. The Sunday Telegraph published an article by Catherine Milner which made reference to these experts' dislike of Heckerling's film. Their dissatisfaction was actually part of a wider debate among Austen scholars about the success or

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[17] Lipman.
[18] Bryan Appleyard, "Can You Buy It at the Mall?" Independent 24 Oct. 1995, CD-ROM ed.: 19; Shone, "Spirit of the Age" 7; Richard Corliss, "To Live and Buy in L.A.," Time 31 July 1995, Time Online Archives 2 Sept. 2001 <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/archives>; Quentin Curtis, "Deliver Us from Hollywood Dads," Independent On Sunday 22 Oct. 1995, CD-ROM ed.: 84.

failure of various adaptations of the author's novels which came out of a renewal of interest in her work in the mid nineties. Milner reports that both Clueless and another American film, Emma (1996), have been described as "tawdry" and "appalling" by Austen scholar Deidre Le Faye, and "disowned" by Tom Carpenter, one of the Austen trustees. Carpenter is quoted as saying, "These films *are not* Jane Austen." This comment clearly articulates his desire to police the boundaries between what is and is not a *true* representation of Austen's work, as well as who is and is not entitled to adapt it. On the evidence of this article those who are not entitled is simply another way of saying "Americans". Hence Le Faye's comment that American film producers should stick to writing their own material instead of borrowing from classic novelists. In another article in the Sunday Times Tom Carpenter praises the BBC's adaptation of Pride and Prejudice for its "comedy" and "high drama", which suggests that he is not anti-adaptations per se, but rather approves only of those which stick faithfully to the text and which are carried out by an institution with a well-established tradition of making "quality" costume dramas.[19]

Considering the number of critics who pick up on the connection between Clueless and Emma it is surprising to learn that Paramount did not make this a central part of its advertising campaign. As Matt Wolf says, "While other film adaptations of novels trumpet their literary sources, Austen's 1816 novel is nowhere to be found in the credits for Clueless." Amy Heckerling backs this up when she states that "it was very much not a selling point."[20] The most likely reason for this was probably to avoid alienating sections of a young audience who might be put off seeing a film based on a literary classic. Other promotional strategies employed by Paramount suggest that the studio saw Clueless' target audience as teenagers who would be prompted into seeing the film because it was contemporary, funny, related in some way to their lives, full of good music, had attractive stars, and equally attractive consumer goods. For example the film's poster shows three beautiful, fashionably-dressed

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[19] Le Faye quoted in Catherine Milner, "Americans are Clueless about Jane Austen," Sunday Telegraph 3 Sept. 1995, CD-ROM ed; Roland White, "Austen Maestro: Jane Austen," Sunday Times 15 Oct. 1995, CD-ROM ed., sec. 9: 3.
[20] Matt Wolf, "Jane Austen Goes Shopping," Times 19 Oct. 1995, CD-ROM ed.: 35.

teenage girls holding mobile phones, and has a tag line which reads "Sex. Clothes. Popularity. Whatever." (See appendix E, fig. 1). In addition, as the studio's vice chairman Barry London states in the Hollywood Reporter, one of the film's principle marketing strategies was "done with MTV, which is a sister company of Paramount". The premiere of Clueless was held at the Malibu Beach House for MTV, and was subsequently shown on MTV along with a music video and a series of segments based around Alicia Silverstone's character specially created by Amy Heckerling. In this way the film was linked through its publicity to Californian "glamour", summer fun on the beach, hanging out with your friends, and listening to music.[21]

Yet perhaps this is not the whole marketing story. Ty Burr claims that while Clueless may never have cited its Regency source material in the credits, "the movie's publicists doled the connection out like chum to the "grown-up" media, since they were the only ones who would, like, care."[22] In an interview with Matt Wolf, Heckerling mentions that Emma was her inspiration, and suggests that it was the use of the novel as her "structural tree" which allowed the film to move beyond the usual pitfalls of teen comedy: "You say 'teen comedy' and you think, OK, what should it be: a bunch of sex at parties, or that the girl gets the boy at the end? It has to say something, and Emma lays it all out so wonderfully."[23] The frequency with which reviewers on both sides of the Atlantic identify Clueless' use of Emma does suggest that the studio was intentionally promoting the connection somewhere along the line. Moreover if this was a promotional strategy aimed specifically at film critics it is reasonable to conclude that the makers of Clueless were themselves addressing the high/low culture debate which informs so much of the criticism of popular cinema. By making a distinction in their marketing between what they believe a teenage audience *wants* from a film, and what established film critics consider makes a film *worthy*, the filmmakers reveal doubts as to whether that which is commercial (in this case the frequently derided teen movie) can co-exist easily with that

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[21] "MTV a Beachhead for 'Clueless' Marketing." Hollywood Reporter 26 July 1995. Hollywood Reporter Online Archives 30 Dec. 1998 <http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/search.asp>.
[22] Ty Burr. "Let There Be Lite." Entertainment Weekly 24 July 1998. Entertainment Weekly Online Archives 29 Oct. 2000 <http://www.ew.com/ew/archive/0,1798,1|3522|0| Let%2bThere%2bBe%2bLite,00.html>.
[23] Wolf 35.

which is recognised as artistically valid. Hence the studio's need to negotiate a compromise which, if it cannot entirely bridge the perceived gap between "Art" and Clueless, can at least attempt to attract audiences from both sides of the culture divide.

Having looked at reviews of Clueless in order to ascertain the way critics feel about teen movies, it appears that the filmmaker's doubts which I speculate upon above are not entirely unfounded. When reviewers praise Clueless for being superior to the typical teen movie, or argue that it is not as good as other teen films which have managed to transcend their generic status, they are also making a value judgement about the genre as a whole. Namely that the teen movie is only aesthetically valuable when it appears in a much altered, usually ironic form (as a "Teen Movie" rather than a teen movie), and/or when it has something "serious" to say. Susan Corrigan argues that Clueless is better than most Hollywood teen films because it is "slick, cynical and filled to the rafters with the kind of panethnic plasti-teens who live only in adverts for spot creams"; Neil Chue Hing maintains that it is not "just another dumb teen movie" but "transcends to a higher plane of enlightenment"; and Glenn Kenny writes that since "the teen comedy has always been one of Hollywood's more disreputable genres" it is "ironic...that...Amy Heckerling signals her artistic rebirth with the just-out-on-video Clueless". Meanwhile Hugo Davenport argues that it "lacks the bracing venom of...Heathers"; and Cynthia Fuchs states that "[a]s "teen movies" go, Clueless is obviously, self-consciously, lightweight: there are no suicides, no class or money angst...no racial conflicts".[24]

In some critics' minds the debate about whether Clueless is or is not a typical (that is, worthless) teen movie is closely connected with Amy Heckerling's status as the director of an earlier teen film, Fast Times At Ridgemont High (1982). In the years since its release Fast Times has come to be defined as a cult classic. John Hartl informs us that the film was named

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[24] Susan Corrigan, "Pretty and Vacant," Observer 15 Oct. 1995, CD-ROM ed.: 6; Neil Chue Hing, rev. of Clueless, The Edinburgh University Film Society Website 5 Nov. 2000 <http://www.eusa.ed.ac.uk/societies/filmsoc/films/ clueless.html>; Glenn Kenny, "High School Confident," Entertainment Weekly 8 Dec. 1995, Entertainment Weekly Online Archives 29 Oct. 2000 <http://www.ew.com/ew/archive/0,1798,1|16811|0|High%2bSchool%2bConfident,00.html>; Davenport, "She's

as one of the top hundred comedies in an American Film Institute poll, and it appears in an Empire A to Z of cult films where it is referred to as "[p]ossibly the teen movie of the 80s". It is clear from reviews of Clueless that many critics view Fast Times in a similarly referential way. Kenneth Turan refers to the film as "the hip "Fast Times at Ridgemont High"; Susan Wloszczyna calls it "a docu-sharp youth barometer"; Susan Corrigan argues that it was "the first Hollywood film to effectively lampoon teenagers in their natural habitat" and "was full of classic moments"; and Glenn Kenny says that with Fast Times Heckerling helped redefine the teen movie, making a film which was so "far from the generic ideal" that "it was actually good." [25]

As a result of the high esteem in which many critics hold Fast Times, there is a tendency to use it as a yardstick against which to measure all of Heckerling's other work. One might say it has become the lens through which every other Heckerling film is viewed. Several commentators argue that the film is something approximating a return to the form of Fast Times after her involvement with the Look Who's Talking films (Look Who's Talking (1989), Look Who's Talking Too (1991)) which they believe deserve to be treated with derision. John Lyttle writes that Clueless may "do what was previously considered impossible and actually revive the director Amy Heckerling's career after all those Look Who's Talking sequels. Harking back to her best work- 1982's...cult hit, Fast Times At Ridgemont High - the picture's commercial take-off has put her back in the bankable category." Similarly David Hunter argues that it is "a welcome change of pace for the filmmaker after 'Look Who's Talking'... A return to the controlled chaos of 'Fast Times at Ridgemont High'"; and Derek Malcom expresses surprise at the "deft, dramatic tricks" Heckerling pulls in Clueless given that she "committed the mortal sin of Look Who's Talking, even if Fast Times at Ridgemont

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Glad to be Fey": Cynthia Fuchs, rev. of Clueless, The University of Maryland's Women's Studies Film Review Archive 20 June 2000 <http://www.inform.umd.edu/EdRes/Topic/WomensStudies/FilmReviews/clueless-fuchs>.

[25] Adam Smith, "Altar'd States," Empire Apr. 1998: 95; John Hartl, " 'Loser' Recalls 'The Apartment' Without its Richness," Seattle Times 21 July 2000, Arts and Entertainment sec., Seattle Times Online Archives 16 Sept. 2000 <http://archives.seattletimes.nwsource.com/web/index.html>.

High...was a lot better."[26] Other critics use the "brilliance" of Fast Times as a reason to berate Heckerling for not only the Look Who's Talking films, but Clueless as well. Sean Means complains that there is "no bite, no focus" to Clueless "which is a sad surprise, considering how effectively Heckerling dissected high school life in her debut film, Fast Times at Ridgemont High."; and Marc Savlov sees it as a return "to cloyingly similar territory in what is essentially a mediocre Nineties updating" of "the brilliant, seminal Fast Times at Ridgemont High". For Means and Savlov Heckerling's greatest crime is her perceived failure to live up to her reputation as saviour of the teen movie genre.[27]

In their books on Charlie Chaplin and Alfred Hitchcock, Charles Maland and Robert E. Kapsis refer to the existence of an aesthetic contract between a filmmaker and his or her audience which is subject to renegotiation every time they release a new film. Maland notes that publicity for Chaplin's Modern Times (1936) sought to play down the political elements of the film so as not to alienate audiences who knew Chaplin in his earliest incarnation as "The Little Tramp", and therefore expected his work to provide the usual entertaining blend of comedy and pathos. Similarly Kapsis writes that Hitchcock's Psycho (1960) probably offended reviewers initially because it was such a radical departure from the "predictable blend of suspense, romance, and humour" they had come to expect from a Hitchcock film.[28] On the evidence of critical writings on Clueless Heckerling's aesthetic contract, drawn up when she made Fast Times, established her as a director of "valid" teen movies. That is, those which work on a deeper level than superficial entertainment because they are seen to go beyond the usual "constraints" of the genre, and actually delve into the more serious issues of teenage life (such as underage sex and teen pregnancy). If we consider an article which

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[26] John Lyttle, "The Business," Independent 5 Aug. 1995, CD-ROM: 4; David Hunter, "Clueless," Hollywood Reporter 17 July 1995, Hollywood Reporter Online Archives 30 Dec. 1998 <http://www.hollywoodreporter.com search.asp>; Derek Malcom, "Nine Months? Nein Danke," Guardian 19 Oct. 1995, CD-ROM: 11.
[27] Sean Means, "Satire? As If," Film.com 29 Oct. 2000 <http://www.film.com /film-review/1995/8457/27/default-review.html>; Marc Savlov, rev. of Clueless, Austin Chronicle 21 July 1995, Austin Chronicle Online Archives 29 Oct. 2000 <http://www.auschron.com/film/pages/movies/732.html>.
[28] Charles J. Maland, Chaplin and American Culture: The Evolution of a Star Image (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1989) 148, 149.
Robert E. Kapsis, Hitchcock: The Making of a Reputation (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992) 42, 63.

appeared in the Village Voice (a free New York paper which I would argue treats film as a serious art form rather than popular entertainment) it is safe to assume that she is still thought of in that way: "[A]fter raising the teen movie bar for ensemble body horror in Fast Times at Ridgemont High and for deceptively giddy-girly comedy in Clueless, standard-bearer Amy Heckerling-broad comic humanist...returns with...Loser."[29] Consequently when Heckerling made a string of apparently "straight", rather than ironic, "mainstream" comedies after this critically-acclaimed debut, it seemed to many observers that she had torn up this aesthetic contract and written out a new one without warning.

In this context it is hardly surprising that so many reviewers understood Clueless as an indication that Heckerling had decided to honour the Fast Times contract and do what was expected of her. The general acceptance of Clueless as if not a truly great work of "Art", then an indication that directors can continue to push the boundaries of genre and, by implication, narrow the gap between "popular" and "high" culture, led to a situation where that film became a new benchmark against which Heckerling's next film (Loser) would be judged. In other words, some reviews of Loser (2000) criticise the film on the basis of its divergence from Clueless, which in the intervening five years has started to be acknowledged as something of a cinematic classic. John Hartl refers to Clueless as "the drollest teen comedy of the past decade". Then, having acknowledged that Heckerling has termed Loser "the anti-'Clueless'" (which in itself suggests that Heckerling is aware of the need to renegotiate the aesthetic contract whenever she makes a film), he informs us that we should not "expect a lot of laughs" from her new film. While Loser is "being sold as a teen comedy, it doesn't find all that much humour in the humiliation and relative poverty of its central characters." Mack Bates is similarly complimentary towards Clueless when he calls it a "scathingly hilarious...whiplash-smart parody of those young and unrelentingly hip members of the envied 'in' crowd". He is also just as disappointed with Loser, saying that he can't believe a

[29] Jessica Winter, "Get a Clue," Village Voice 10-16 May 2000, Village Voice Online Archives 21 Oct. 2000 <http://www.villagevoice.com/issues/0019/winter.shtml>.

director with Heckerling's track record "chose to make this muddled mess". He even imagines what the girls from Clueless would say if asked to see Loser: "It sounds like a really bad after-school special." It is significant that he should choose this comparison given that the "after-school special" refers to an issue-based television programme. shown in the afternoon and targeted specifically at young people. As such it is considered to exist at the bottom of the teen genre pile, whereas films like Fast Times and Clueless are held to represent the apex.[30]

The last critical debate I wish to draw attention to in this section is the question of whether Clueless is a film of style or substance. For many commentators it is clearly a film which has little of importance to "say". Reviewers draw attention to what they see as Clueless' lack of plot, referring to it as "plotless and borderline brainless"; "light on plot"; having "a plot as skimpy as one of Silverstone's teeny costumes"; and a plot so small "you could write [it] on the back of a Gucci receipt." It is significant that two of these comments find a metaphor for the insignificance of the plot in the film's use of fashion (referencing the sexy clothes worn by Cher/Silverstone, and the numerous designer outfits showcased on screen), which is itself often viewed as extremely trivial. This metaphor implies that the film may look good and have style (like a pretty girl wearing a designer dress) but has no substance.[31]

Continuing this theme Joe Brown writes that Heckerling's movies are not about the "story" but " all about the details"; and Richard Corliss compares Clueless to "a restaurant where you go for the food and go back for the atmosphere."[32] In other words a place which puts more emphasis on appearance than it does on what it sells. It is significant that he uses the analogy of the restaurant since food-related metaphors are a recurrent motif in these reviews. For Ann Billson the film "slips down like a vanilla milkshake"; James Berardinelli

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[30] Hartl; Mack Bates. "Saving Graces Can't Save 'Loser' from Keeping its Name," Milwaukee Journal Sentinel 21 July 2000. Milwaukee Journal Sentinel Online Archives 29 Oct. 2000 <http://www.jsonline.com/enter/movies/reviews/jul00/m.loser21072000.asp>.

[31] Hunter, rev. of "Clueless"; Hal Hinson, " 'Clueless': High Comedy," Washington Post 19 July 1995. Style sec.: D1. Washington Post Online Archives 26 Oct. 1998 <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-adv/archives>; Joe Brown, "Silverstone's Sassy Clueless," Washington Post 21 July 1995. Weekend sec.: N38. Washington Post Online Archives 26 Oct. 1998 <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-adv/archives>; Shone, "Spirit of the Age" 7.

[32] Brown, "Silverstone's Sassy Clueless" N38; Corliss, "To Live and Buy".

considers it to be "the cinematic equivalent of cotton candy: certainly not unpleasant, but not especially satisfying"; Glenny Kenny defines Silverstone's performance as "soufflé-airy"; and Owen Gleiberman comments that watching the film is like "biting into a tamale and finding it filled with Marshmallow Fluff."[33] It is revealing that these critics choose "junk-food" metaphors to describe Clueless since they give the impression that, like such food, the film is sweet and tempting, but ultimately without substance, and lacking in artistic (instead of nutritional) value.

Once again these debates relate to the idea of the division between high and low culture. Whereas the critics referred to above consign the film to the side of low culture, which is also the "natural" location of junk-food since this is often perceived as being food-for-the-masses, one young female reviewer writes that Clueless is as "delicious" as "a pint of Ben and Jerry's" ice cream: a statement which equates the film with the enjoyable experience of eating her favourite comfort food. She does not require that Clueless provide her with a certain kind of sanctioned intellectual sustenance (as with Berardinelli and Kenny); it's content does not ultimately disappoint her in the way it does Gleiberman, nor does it "slip down" un-tasted (as with Billson). Rather it is there to be savoured. This assessment of the film suggests that (not surprisingly) some spectators (particularly teenage girls) may have little or no interest in where Clueless should be placed along the spectrum of high-low culture, and instead value it by a completely different set of standards: an issue I return to when I consider the role of fashion and the body in critical debates about the film.[34]

For some reviewers, Clueless's generic status as teen movie, and more specifically as a romantic teen comedy, acts as a block to serious analysis. For two critics it even results in the assertion that it is watched and instantly forgotten: Peter Stack argues that it is "silly, throwaway summer entertainment. By the time you skip out of the theater, you've had a great

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[33] Billson, "In With Babies"; James Berardinelli, rev. of Clueless, ReelViews 12 May 2001 <http:/ movie-reviews.colossus.net/movies/c/clueless.html>; Kenny; Owen Gleiberman, "The Kids in the Mall," Entertainment Weekly 28 July 1995, Entertainment Weekly Online Archives 29 Oct. 2000 <http://www.ew.com/ew/archive/0,1798,1|15805|0| Kids%2bIn%2bThe%2bMall,00.html>.
[34] Danielle, rev. of Clueless," Girls On 29 Oct. 2000 <http://www.girlson.com>.

time but can't remember a single reason why." While Tom Shone claims that it is not really about anything "unless you count the question of whether or not its possible to have too many clothes. It's callow and catty, and the moment it's over you've already started to put it behind you." Stack's words reveal that he draws a clear distinction between film as "entertainment" (in this case a "silly" summer film) and film as "Art", believing that the former is simply there for fun ("you skip out the theater"), while the latter is there for our edification. Shone's comment refers once again to the fashion theme of the film, and in the process implies that Clueless' artistic "insignificance" is a result of its concentration on the fripperies of femininity (clothes), as well as its very "feminine" tone (that is, its cattiness). This is a trait nearly always attributed to women rather than men, and I understand it to be a veiled reference by Shone to the film's focus on the "shallow" obsessions of teenage girls (such as the quest for popularity and the need to belong to the right high school clique) which has produced a film he believes is only surface deep. Shone's equation of the "shallow" nature of the film's female protagonists with what he perceives to be the shallowness of the film can also be linked to divided critical opinions as to the extent of Cher's intelligence which, as I argue in the second section, are often directly related to the question of whether the film itself is intelligent or not.[35]

To summarise, all the "Clueless is..." or "Clueless isn't..." (that is, satire, Austen, the typical teen movie, style or substance) constructions that I have discussed are in essence critical debates over the film's cultural and aesthetic value. They reveal an almost obsessive need to categorise texts as either high or low culture, good or bad art. They also articulate what is seemingly a widespread, although by no means universal, cultural bias against the popular Hollywood film in general, and the teen movie in particular. Even some of the reviews which praise the film do so while simultaneously downgrading its generic status: it is worth watching because it is better than most teen movies, which effectively translates as "it's not *really* a teen movie."

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[35] Stack E1; Shone, "Spirit of the Age" 7.

This cultural bias is best illustrated when critics express how surprised they are that the film is quite good. Kenneth Turan writes that Clueless possesses an "unexpected smartness" and "turns out to have more to it than anyone could anticipate"; Peter Stack notes that its jokes are "surprisingly inventive" and its "verbal" nature is a "curious delight"; Tom Shone says a film about "rich, spoiled, American teenagers" has "no right to be one of the funniest American comedies of the year"; and Derek Malcom writes that it is "surprising" that Heckerling is able to pull such "deft, dramatic tricks" in her characterisation given that she "committed the mortal sin of Look Who's Talking". Evidently when those critics who envisage genre films as existing on a sliding scale of value have to view a teen comedy their expectations are already pitched low. Thanks in part to its mainly youth-orientated advertising strategies, Clueless has (for critics predisposed to agree with such a problematic assumption) all the hallmarks of a piece of straight forward, generic Hollywood filmmaking. Moreover Heckerling's reputation (thanks to Fast Times) as an auteur of sorts has, for many critics, been damaged after the release of the Look Who's Talking films, resulting in a situation where their expectations about a "Heckerling film" have shifted dramatically. As Kapsis states , "One factor important in the historical reception of films is the biographical legend or *public reputation* of the artist."[36] Consequently when Heckerling directs Clueless, and revisits the cinematic material which originally granted her iconic status as a director, some reviewers are compelled to mention Fast Times as a point of comparison, and to interpret this new film as evidence that Heckerling's artistic reputation might be reparable.[37]

On the evidence of a considerable number of the reviews and articles studied here, many film critics continue to view the gulf between "art" and "popular" film not as a fine, blurry line but as a deep chasm. For instance Derek Malcom states that "if you don't expect too much" from Clueless (the implication being because it is only a piece of generic Hollywood cinema) "you'll certainly get more than you bargained for"; and Tom Shone's

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[36] Kapsis 11.
[37] See Turan F1; Stack E1; Fuchs, rev. of Clueless.

claims that the film is justified in using Emma as its source material because that is "part of the trade-off between high culture and low that makes up much of the film's comedy." Shone's statement can be interpreted as just another way of saying that Clueless is more acceptable than a "straight" genre film because it makes its references to high and, more importantly, to low culture "knowingly". It tips a post-modern wink at its audience, and in the process earns itself a certain artistic legitimacy. Finally, it is Richard Corliss who articulates this belief in the great divide between "high" and "low" cinema best when he writes that, "No one lately has said a good *movie* must also be a good *film*."[38] Reviewers who make these kind of judgements prove Barbara Klinger's assertion that the critic's primary function is to act as a "public tastemaker" who "[a]mong other things...distinguishes legitimate from illegitimate art and proper from improper modes of aesthetic appropriation." In this way Heckerling's work (like Kathryn Bigelow's) can frequently only be acknowledged as legitimate or semi-legitimate "Art" by stressing the way in which she self-consciously uses the conventions of generic film in order to reveal their creative limitations, thus convincing critics that although she is making films from inside the dominant system she remains aesthetically apart from it as well.[39]

Just What Kind Of Girl Are You? Clueless and the "New Femininity"

In Material Girls Suzanna Danuta Walters describes the "new" or post-feminist woman of the late eighties/early nineties as follows: "[A] woman whose essence is neatly encapsulated by reference to fashion (feminine clothing), body parts (breasts), and reproductive institutions (motherhood)." For Walter's this media-invented and completely non-threatening ideal of womanhood is divisive in feminist terms because she stands out in sharp contrast to *real* women whose lives began to change for the better under feminism. Or to put it another way, this "new woman", who willingly embraces the stereotypical trappings of "femininity", is the

[38] Corliss, "To Live and Buy". Italics mine.
[39] Klinger 70.

inevitable by-product of an antifeminist backlash which seeks to push women back into their "proper" place as well-groomed wives and mothers rather than liberated career women.[40] I do not refer to Walter's arguments with the intention of instigating a debate on the rights and wrongs of post-feminism and the "backlash theory". Rather I wish to draw attention to the possibility that many of the critics writing about Clueless (feminist and non-feminist alike) are aware of ongoing debates about post-feminism, and thus reference them (whether consciously or subconsciously, directly or indirectly) in their articles. The fact that Susan Faludi's Backlash became an international best-seller proves that the issues surrounding post-feminism became extremely topical in the early nineties.[41] Moreover some of the publicity for Clueless could be interpreted as setting a "post-feminist" agenda. Both the image and the tag line on the film's poster (which I have already discussed above) are suggestive of two of the themes which Walters argues inform the stereotype of the post-feminist women: fashion and the display of the female body. The rituals of (teenage) "femininity" are also strongly referenced in the film's promotional material. For example Cher's Guide For The Totally Clueless (a free promotional leaflet available at a screening of the film in Britain) includes Cher's advice about make-overs, boys, and shopping for clothes (see appendix E, fig. 2 and 3).[42]

Most reviewers of Clueless demonstrate little interest in addressing the feminist issues thrown up by the film. Only a handful of critics actually use the word "feminism" in their reviews. Amanda Lipman argues that the film makes a "nod to feminism" by transforming Cher into a more sympathetic character than the Emma of Austen's novel. Peter Stack notes that one character, Dionne, responds to her boyfriend's stereotypically macho behaviour with "tirades of feminist righteousness". Finally Joe Brown refers to Cher as a

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[40] Suzanna Danuta Walters, Material Girls: Making Sense of Feminist Cultural Theory (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: The University of California Press, 1995) 117, 118, 119.

[41] Susan Faludi, Backlash: The Undeclared War Against Women (London: Vintage, 1992). As further proof of the way in which Faludi's book entered the public consciousness, particularly in America, one can point to the way in which it is referenced in Nora Ephron's Sleepless In Seattle (1993). The film's heroine, Annie, is discussing relationships with her male colleagues. One of them cites the infamous statistic which says that a women over a certain age are more likely to get hit by a meteorite than they are to get married. Annie retorts that this is not true, and adds that practically a whole book has been written about how the statistic is untrue. This refers to Faludi's discussion of the myths of the post-feminist backlash - one of which being the "man shortage" which affects single women (21-45).

[42] This was available at a screening of the film in October 1995 at the UCI cinema in Solihull.

"post-post-feminist airhead". The fact that Brown actually uses the word "post-feminist" backs up my assertion that some critics are aware of the topical debates in feminist studies that the film might be said to touch on. Nor is he the only critic to describe Cher as a post-feminist character. Hal Hinson may not use the actual term, but his judgement of Cher undeniably alludes to the so-called "new woman": "She is the epitome of the shallow, status-and-style-obsessed *modern girl*, dressed to the hilt in computer-coordinated outfits".[43] Yet if so few critics discuss feminism directly, how can I convincingly argue that it is an issue which informs a considerable number of critical debates surrounding the film? In answering this question it is vital to point out what is perhaps a glaringly obvious concept, but one which bears repetition here: an issue does not have to be referred to explicitly for it to be the conceptual foundation of a critical argument. As I demonstrate, a number of debates which are repeated across reviews of Clueless are in essence debates about the role and relevance of contemporary feminism. They are concerned with, or at least informed by, such interrelated topics as the anti-feminist backlash, post-feminism and the "new femininity", as well as women's views (as directors, actors, characters, viewers) about them.

As if to agree with Hinson's evaluation of Cher as the shallow post-feminist girl made flesh, numerous reviews describe her as little more than a braindead bimbo. To take just three examples, Owen Gleiberman refers to her as "the beautiful and vacuous young heroine" who has a "vacant, gum-snapping personality"; Ann Billson calls her a "braindead character"; and Hinson states that she "hasn't a care in the world or a thought in her pretty blond head."[44] Janet Staiger has written that one of the reasons Jodie Foster may have been criticised by gay activists for her role in Silence of the Lambs is because of the way "strong women" are popularly stereotyped as "lesbian". Following similar logic it is plausible to suggest that the character of Cher (played as she is by the beautiful, blonde actress Alicia Silverstone) is viewed through the popular cultural stereotype which associates blondeness and beauty with

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[43] Lipman 46; Stack E1; Brown, "Silverstone's Sassy Clueless N38; Hinson D1. Italics mine.
[44] Owen Gleiberman, "The Kids in the Mall," Entertainment Weekly 28 July 1995, Entertainment Weekly Online Archives 29 Oct. 2000 <http://www.ew.com/ew/archive/0,1798,1|15805|0| Kids%o2bIn%o2bThe%o2bMall,00.html>; Billson "In With Babies"; Stack E1; Hinson D1.

stupidity: Hinson implies as much when he uses the phrase "her pretty blond head".[45] So much so, in fact, that Silverstone (aided and abetted by her publicity machine) takes steps to ensure that she is not confused with the frivolous character she plays in the film.

In an interview with Beverley D'Silva, Silverstone answers a question which asks if she is anything like Cher as follows:

> "Oh no, I'm not like Cher at all," she says with horror at the comparison. "I was not well put together at school. I wore thick glasses and had my hair scraped back. I never went on dates. I was the class nerd...[At Beverly Hills High]...The kids were all quite rich and shallow...But I was only interested in my acting class and I didn't fit in.[46]

She goes on to claim that she is "so un-fashion-conscious, it's not true", and expresses alarm at the thought of actually wearing Cher's "skimpy little dresses" in real life: "When I go out I don't want any skin showing. A big suit, something slightly macho. I like to be covered up." Silverstone is clearly anxious to distance herself from Cher, and prove that there is more to her than simply good looks. As the subtitle of D'Silva's article proclaims, she "already has her own production company" and is "certainly no dizzy blonde". Silverstone rejects what she sees as the "trappings" of conventional femininity (shopping, make-up, skimpy clothes), as a prerequisite to being taken seriously as an actress, a Hollywood player and an intelligent woman. In the same way that Jodie Foster favours a rather androgynous look in order to underline that, both literally and metaphorically, she means business (see chapters four and five), she expresses a sartorial preference for a "big suit, something slightly macho." Silverstone is clearly wary of femininity, possibly because on some level she subscribes to the idea that feminism and femininity are largely incompatible, and if she is wary it is almost inevitable that some reviewers will be too.

This interpretation of Cher as stupid is by no means universal. A few critics are compelled to defend her by claiming that she is far more intelligent than she seems. Adam

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[45] Staiger, "Taboos and Totems" 153.
[46] Beverley D'Silva, "More Than a Material Girl: Alicia Silverstone," Sunday Times 22 Oct. 1995, Style sec.: 8.

Mars-Jones writes that we soon "realise that Cher is not only nice but clever"; and David Elliot comments that Cher is "kind of a ditz, but not an airhead really. Cher is a bright tootsie with some air holes in her mind". Her most vociferous defender, however, is Philip French who sees her as sharp and witty social observer, and consequently urges us to "resist the patronising temptation to write off Cher as a selfish airhead."[47]

Critical opinion about the worthiness of Clueless' heroine is clearly as divided as it is about the aesthetic value of the film itself. Many reviewers (such as Ann Billson and Quentin Curtis) view her as a shallow, self-absorbed, spoilt young woman, whose life is devoid of any *real* meaning. As Hinson puts it, "For Cher, the world outside the galleria barely exists". By contrast, others (such as Lizzie Francke) see her as a young women who should be praised for her self-confidence rather than condemned for her narcissism. In the words of Roger Ebert, her self-absorbed nature is not an entirely negative attribute because "she isn't a victim, and we get the idea she will grow up tough and clever, like her dad".[48] It is intriguing that critics should charge Cher with narcissism given that it is a quality that has often been identified with femininity. To quote Jackie Stacey, "Narcissism has had derogatory connotations in a number of ways within psychoanalytic and other cultural discourses because of its association with femininity".[49] For these critics the rituals and practices of femininity (and in this case teenage femininity) are little more than exercises in self-indulgence. To refer once again to Hinson's phrase, it is the world "outside the galleria" (away from shopping, trying on clothes, and gossiping with female friends) which matters. Critics such as Hinson adhere to the school of thought which views typically "feminine" subcultures as less valuable than their masculine equivalents. In fact, as Joanne Hollows points out, (masculine) youth subcultures are "often

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[47] Adam Mars-Jones, "A Peach and a Lemon," Independent 19 Oct. 1995, CD-ROM ed.: 11; David Elliot, "Fashion Conscious: Clue to Next Teen Star Found in 'Clueless'," San-Diego Union-Tribune 20 July 1995, San Diego Union-Tribune Online Archives 10 Sept. 2000 <http://pqasb.pqarchiver.com/sandiego/index.html>; Philip French, "Epistles at Dawn," Observer 22 Oct. 1995, CD-ROM ed.: 13.
[48] Billson, "In With Babies"; Curtis, "Deliver Us"; Hinson; Lizzie Francke, "Teen Movies: Money, Make-up and Morality," Guardian 21 Oct. 1995, CD-ROM: 30; Roger Ebert, rev. of Clueless, Chicago Sun-Times 19 July 1995, Chicago Sun-Times Online Roger Ebert Archives 2 Feb 2000 <http://www.suntimes.com/ebert/ebert_reviews/1995/07/988626.html>.
[49] Stacey, Star Gazing 208.

defined and given coherence by a rejection of the feminine."[50] In short, while men are permitted to be both self-indulgent (because their subcultural practices are, thanks to their gender, inherently valid) and self-confident, women have to "earn" the right to these behaviours. Hence the reasoning behind Glenn Kenny's statement that, thanks to her many talents, "Silverstone's Cher *almost* convinces us that her self-love is earned."[51]

Staying on the subject of "feminine" subcultures, Clueless is a film which pays a great deal of attention to fashion: as I have already argued, the studio saw it as one of the key selling points of the film. From the opening scene, in which Cher chooses an outfit with the aid of her computerised wardrobe, the film is a blur of teenage styles, and a showcase for numerous designer labels. Amruta Slee notes that Clueless (which the American media called the "fashion movie of the year") used clothes by designers such as Anna Sui, Dolce and Gabbana, and Donna Karan, to name but a few. Some of these designer names were also advertised within promotional materials for Clueless, and in the film itself: Cher's Guide For The Totally Clueless contains a photo of Cher carrying bags from designer clothes shops; and one scene in the film shows Cher walking down Rodeo Drive past shops like Tiffany and Co, Cartier, and Christian Dior.[52]

Traditionally the realm of fashion has been approached with hostility by feminists. Elizabeth Wilson argues that, within feminism, fashionable clothes are "conventionally perceived as expressions of subordination". This belief stems from what Charlotte Brunsdon identifies as the anti-consumption stance of many seventies feminists, whose ideas about identity were "marked by notions of sincerity, expression, truth-telling": what we might term the "natural" as opposed to the artificial or contrived. According to this logic self-adornment detracts from a "naturally" beautiful womanhood, which needs or wants none of the material accoutrements of a patriarchally-constructed "femininity".[53] These notions have subsequently

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[50] Joanne Hollows, Feminism, Femininity and Popular Culture (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000) 166.
[51] Kenny. Italics mine.
[52] Amruta Slee, "Absolutely Clueless," Sunday Times 30 July 1995, Style sec.: 3.
[53] Elizabeth Wilson, Adorned In Dreams: Fashion and Modernity (London: Virago, 1985) 13; Brunsdon 85.

been challenged. Mavis Bayton, for example, notes that even women who reject so-called "feminine" clothing and make-up are still making a statement which is constructed around dress and style.[54] Yet fashion is still viewed with suspicion by some feminists. Susan Faludi devotes a chapter of Backlash to the way in which eighties couturiers tried to replace the practical "dress-for-success" clothes favoured by women with Neovictorian frills and flounces. In addition Joanne Hollows notes that in recent years the fashion world has been charged with promoting anorexia by some feminists as a result of its creation of trends like the "waif look."[55]

Although none of the reviews of Clueless make what can be described as a sustained "feminist" attack on the film's use of fashion, it is still possible to uncover elements of feminist (or feminist-inspired) criticism of the way in which Cher/Silverstone's body is flaunted in the film, which is also linked to criticism of the highly-fashionable, but also highly-revealing outfits she wears. Some critics apparently view fashion with an element of distaste, or at least refuse to take its role in the film seriously, even if their objections are not motivated by a feminist politics. Both Joe Brown and Tom Shone imply that the film's interest in fashion is indicative of its low cultural and aesthetic value. In Brown's words, the plot is as "skimpy as one of Silverstone's teeny costumes"; and for Shone, Clueless is not actually about anything "unless you count the question of whether or not it is possible to have too many *clothes*." Meanwhile Owen Gleiberman criticises the characters for putting too much focus on appearance. He trivialises the film by calling it an "Alicia Silverstone fashion show", and comments that it is full of bitchy "upscale '90s Valley Girls who worship at *the altar of the shopping mall*". He also complains that its "meandering plot" has "something to do with Cher doing nice things for people - *if they're wearing the right clothes*, that is".[56]

There are some critics who give the film's use of fashion serious consideration, but they are not specialist film journalists. Consequently one of the film's key themes is relegated

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[54] Mavis Bayton, "Feminist Musical Practice: Problems and Contradictions," Rock and Popular Music: Politics, Policies, Institutions, Tony Bennett et al. eds. (London: Routledge, 1993) 182.
[55] Faludi 203-236; Hollows 139-40.
[56] Brown, "Silverstone's Sassy Clueless" N38; Shone, "Spirit of the Age" 7; Gleiberman.

to discussion in a completely separate, and arguably what is perceived as a less prestigious, sphere. Two female journalists (Amruta Slee and Tamsin Blanchard) wrote pieces on Clueless for the fashion sections of the Sunday Times and the Independent, while a third (Anna Maxted) wrote a piece for the "Real Life" section of the Independent On Sunday. Aside from these articles, there are a couple of film journalists who mention fashion in a more positive and more considered, or at least less hostile way. David Hunter might not consider the film to be a great work of art, but he does praise the efforts of the costume designer for "the vast array of crazy get-ups and cool threads." Similarly Lizzie Francke writes that fashion has a dual function in Clueless, acting as both a witty commentary on the teenage obsession with wearing designer labels, and a showcase for these clothes: "Clueless's Cher wouldn't just want any old cashmere sweaters. They would have to have a label...It's like the downside of the mercurial, designer-obsessed 1980s never happened, as the film has its tart take on such consuming desires but sneakily allows you to buy into them too." A few reviewers, such as Joe Brown, Kenneth Turan and David Elliot also recognise that the film's relationship with fashion extends to the way it treats other characters apart from Cher and her friends. They suggest that the look of the male characters is also highly stylised. However considering the critical reactions to Clueless as a whole, evaluations such as these are the exception rather than the rule.[57]

Although it is important to realise that film reviews (which by their nature are usually short in length) are only able to give limited attention to individual themes, it is equally intriguing (especially considering the way the filmmakers continuously draw attention to the subject in the marketing) that so few reviewers should choose to acknowledge the way fashion functions in the film. Janet Staiger has argued that an important part of evaluating the reception of a film is to recognise "what the readings did not consider" as well as what they

[57] Slee; Tamsin Blanchard, "Sixth-formers, Pull Your Designer Socks Up," Independent 3 Oct. 1995, Fashion sec.: 12-13; Anna Maxted, "Metropolitan Life: Clueless in Selfridges," Independent On Sunday 5 Nov. 1995, Real Life sec.: 5; David Hunter, rev. of Clueless; Francke, "Teen Movies" 30; Brown, "Silverstone's Sassy Clueless" N38; Turan F1; Elliot.

did.[58] In Clueless' case one must not only point to the relative lack of critical interest in discussing fashion, but also to the absence of critical readings which consider the theme in certain ways. Although Brown, Turan and Elliot do apparently recognise fashion as one of the key themes of the film, and consequently comment on the way both men and women are dressed, there are no reviews which comment on the way the male characters' fashion choices make them look "sexually" in the same way that several critics discuss the revealing nature of Cher/Silverstone's outfits.

Little thought was given by reviewers to the way in which the use of fashion in Clueless might be designed to appeal to a young female audience, and as such would need to be assessed in a manner that bypassed considerations of an artistic or intellectual nature. Few critics recognised, or at least saw any value in, the way in which the fashion elements of the film held interest for teenage girls. It is only Francke's piece, the articles by Slee, Blanchard and Maxted (which recognise the way Clueless has shaped teenage fashion trends), and also an article by Susan Corrigan in which she argues that the film's display of aspirational designer fashions is one of the things teenage girls find so appealing, which touch on this subject.[59] Yet in four online film reviews actually written by young women they identify the clothes worn by Cher as one of the things they like best about Clueless. The reviews appear on SmartGirl, a "website by girls, for girls" in which those aged twelve to twenty can submit their own film reviews. Ashley (aged twelve) writes, "The best thing about the movie that I liked is the way they dress. I think [that] is really cool! And how Cher has all of those cool clothes!" Elyse (twelve) says "I like the talk about fashion, make-up, and boys." Louisa (fifteen) comments that the best thing about the film is "The way it's so girly. It covers sex, make-up, looks, boys, and most importantly, shopping!"; and Day (fourteen) writes that "[Watching the film] puts me in a 'Cher mood.' It makes me wanna whip out a plaid skirt...and wear knee socks, all totally in fashion of course!"[60]

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[58] Staiger, "Taboos and Totems" 144.
[59] Brown, "Silverstone's Sassy Clueless" N38; Turan F1; Elliot; Slee 3; Blanchard 12-13; Maxted 5. Corrigan 6.
[60] Ashley, rev. of Clueless, Smart Girl 5 Nov. 2000 <http://www.smartgirl.com/pages/movies/cluelessashley.html>; Elyse, rev. of Clueless, Smart Girl 29 Oct. 2000

What reasons might there be for this critical neglect in examining the role of female spectatorship vis-à-vis fashion within Clueless? In her book about fashion and the cinema Stella Bruzzi refers to the assumption that the on-screen selling of a dress by a female film star is analogous to "the selling of the body it adorns". Consequently "the look directed at the clothes on display" is allied with "the look directed at the body, and...this desiring look is male." She reveals that one of her primary objectives in writing the book is therefore to raise the possibility that women "might not dress with men in mind at all, but rather that women's fashion...is an exclusory dialogue between a female image and a female spectatorship." In answer to the question, then, many critics make the assumption Bruzzi describes, and consequently overlook the place of female desire in the equation. Cher's dress is interpreted as a means of displaying her body to its best advantage, and that display is read as a purely sexual one designed to appeal to men. Yet as I shall demonstrate, comments made by other reviewers have the effect of undermining such a reading.[61]

As if to prove Stella Bruzzi's comment that "[a] woman (and a female film character) is more likely to be 'read' through the way she looks than her male equivalent", critics of the film demonstrate an almost obsessive need to mention Cher/Silverstone's body, and to make reference to her physicality/sexuality. Peter Stack writes that Silverstone has become famous for her "winning smile and perilously brief miniskirts." Owen Gleiberman says that she "dresses in skirts so short they'd shame Madonna". Hal Hinson calls her a "cool morsel of teen sex appeal"; and Geoff Brown uses an old standby when he refers to her as a "blonde bombshell".

Many reviewers also use what can be termed "Lolita" metaphors in their descriptions of Cher/Silverstone. Gleiberman argues that she "has the most ripely precocious *baby-doll* allure since the *nymphet* glory days of Tuesday Weld."; and notes that "In a red Alaia evening gown, she's a shapely dazzler, ready to star in Basic Instinct II." Joe Brown, on the other

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<http://www.smartgirl.com/pages/movies/cluelesselyse.html>; Louisa, rev. of Clueless, Smart Girl 29 Oct 2000 <http://www.smartgirl.com/pages/movies/cluelesslouisa.html>; Day, rev. of Clueless 5 Nov. 2000 <http://www.smartgirl.com/pages/movies/clueday.html>.

[61] Stella Bruzzi, Undressing Cinema: Clothing and Identity in the Movies (London: Routledge, 1997) 20, xix.

hand, drools over " those 'Lolita' looks" and terms her " playful, pouty, baby-voiced *jailbait*...a baby Marilyn." Both of these descriptions include references to young, sexually attractive girls, who are especially appealing to older men.[62] The reference to Lolita crops up frequently in the reviews, usually in connection with Silverstone's role in her first film The Crush (1993) in which she played a teenager obsessed with an older man. She is described as "Lolita-esque", "a psycho-lolita", and "[d]ressed in her plaid schoolgirl minis, she's a naughty Lolita fantasy". The last comment, however, is not made in relation to her role in The Crush, but about the character of Cher. This critic has evidently taken the role Silverstone played in the earlier film, and transferred it onto her role in Clueless: the schoolgirl clothes she wears as Cher become emblematic of her perceived status as an under-age male fantasy.[63]

On one level these descriptions of Cher/Silverstone are perhaps to be expected, given that the "film-star-as-sex-symbol" is one of the most common (and oldest) constructions of stardom within Hollywood. The fact that Silverstone is repeatedly mentioned as being the most memorable thing in the film, and referred to as a beautiful, bright, new star in the making (both by male and female critics) helps explain why she should be singled-out for such fervent attention. Nevertheless other commentators also display a sense of wariness at this kind of attention: a wariness which is hinted at by Silverstone who, having explained that she has an anti-nudity clause in her contract, balks at the idea that her body might function as the selling-point of a film: "I will not be told it's my body that will sell a film."[64]

Amongst reviewers this wariness is expressed by raising the issues of under age sex and paedophilia. Predictably enough some of the complaints about Clueless' attitude towards teenagers and sex come from the conservative, religious media. Christian Spotlight On The Movies berates the film for its "sexual innuendo" and the way it disparages "virginity". Similarly, Ian Katz informs us that's film review line gave the film an "O" or "morally

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[62] Bruzzi 126; Stack E1; Gleiberman; Hinson D1; Geoff Brown 35; Brown, "Silverstone's Sassy Clueless" N38. Italics mine. The phrase "baby-doll" is linked to a 1956 Tennessee Williams screenplay of the same name, in which (much like the plot of Vladimir Nabokov's 1955 novel Lolita) an older man is obsessed by his teenage bride.
[63] Angie Errigo, rev. of Clueless, Empire Oct. 1995: 45; Fuchs, rev. of Clueless; Gleiberman.
[64] D'Silva, "More Than a Material Girl" 8.

offensive" rating "because of its acceptance of sexual activity between teenagers." However such criticism is not confined to these groups. In the Deseret News Chris Hicks writes that the film's "cavalier" suggestion "that casual sex is perfectly acceptable for 15-year-olds" is "extremely irresponsible." He also questions whether a teen film should "encourage romance between step-siblings" (Cher's love-interest, Josh, is also her slightly-older step-brother).[65]

Hicks's concern is magnified by two critics who mention what they see as the film's possible inclusion of an incest/paedophilia theme. Susan Wloszczyna claims that "the romantic resolution [of the film] fails to satisfy (actually, its Soon-Yi-ish icky)." Using the same real-life comparison, Owen Gleiberman (who is ironically also one of the critics who praises Cher/Silverstone's youthful good looks) argues that the ending of Clueless "makes you wonder if Heckerling is warming up for The Soon-Yi Previn Story." Such extreme reactions are curious given that the age difference between Cher and her step-brother Josh is only a few years, and that between Woody Allen and Soon-Yi (the daughter of his long time girlfriend Mia Farrow who is now his wife) is several decades. However it might make more sense when considered in the light of two pieces of background information.[66]

Firstly, the release of Clueless coincided with the release of Kids (1995) which also explored the sex lives of young teenagers. Kids met with a considerable amount of controversy from critics who felt it was voyeuristic and treated its young stars in a sexually exploitative manner. Libby Gelman-Waxner references this controversy when she says the film belongs to a new fad of "pedophile chic". Since these two films were contemporaneous with one another, were perceived as dealing with similar issues, and both elicited a few hostile critical reactions (although Kids met with far greater hostility), it is possible that some critics were tempted to draw parallels between them. Indeed Gelman-Waxner's article is written as a comparison between the two films, and in it she claims that both depict morally

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[65] Lisa Vitello, rev. of Clueless," Christian Spotlight On The Movies 21 Oct. 2000 <http://www. christiananswers. net/spotlight/movies/pre2000/rvu-clueless.html>; Ian Katz, "Films For Jesus," Guardian 7 Dec. 1995. CD-ROM ed. G2 sec.: 12.; Chris Hicks, rev. of Clueless, Deseret News 19 July 1995. Deseret News Online Archives 29 Oct. 2000 <http://www.desnews.com/movies/view/1,1257,341,00.html>.

[66] Susan Wloszczyna, "Silverstone Shimmers in Clever 'Clueless'," USA Today 19 July 1995: D1. USA Today Online Archives 2 Jan. 2001 <http://pqasb.pqarchiver.com/USAToday>; Gleiberman.

empty teens who are "obsessed with cheap sex". In a seminar at the AFI Amy Heckerling was actually asked by one audience member to comment on Kids because, as she saw it, "both films essentially treat the same subject."[67] Secondly, Alicia Silverstone's role in The Crush, as well as an earlier part in an Aerosmith video, had already helped establish her as a Lolitaesque figure. This element of her star-image was already formed when she came to make Clueless, and inevitably became a point of reference in the reception of this new film. As Barbara Klinger points out, the presence of a star is one of the elements that potentially has an affect on reception: "Whether through the publicity of sexuality, consumer items, or...stars, the intertextual network surrounding films and spectators adds a significant dimension to viewing that is not driven by film dynamics."[68]

As my discussion of the SmartGirl reviews indicates, comments about Cher/Silverstone's appearance are not only of the "Lolita" variety, and not necessarily couched in sexual terms. Several female critics make reference to how beautiful and appealing they find this new star. Susan Wloszczyna notes that she has "a star-is-born luster", and calls her a cross between "Meg Ryan" and "a new-born chick". In Beverley D'Silva's words, "Silverstone does cute by the bucketload" like "a baby Meg Ryan". Ann Billson finds her "adorable", Libby Gelman-Waxner, "irresistible", and for Corrigan she is a "cute shopaholic."[69] In this they share the opinion of Amy Heckerling, who says of her lead: "She's so beautiful and you just watch it [the Aerosmith video] and you go, what's this little girl going to do next. I just loved her."[70] By reference to the SmartGirl reviews and the fashion articles written about Clueless, I have demonstrated that Cher/Silverstone appeals to teenage girls. By saying that they like what she wears, and in some cases actually emulating her style, these girls prove that she holds a strong attraction for them. One only has to look at a recent survey carried out by the website Razzberry (a discussion site for female teenagers which is

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[67] Libby Gelman-Waxner, "Wild in the Malls," Premiere Oct. 1995: 46.; Amy Heckerling, "The 'Harold Lloyd Master Seminar," at the AFI," AFI Online 20 June 2000 <http:// www.afionline.org/ haroldlloyd heckerling index.html>.
[68] Klinger 118.
[69] Wloszczyna D1; D'Silva, "More Than a Material Girl" 8; Billson, "In With Babies"; Gelman-Waxner 48; Corrigan 6.
[70] Heckerling.

part of the woman-orientated Chickclick web ring) which asked teen girls to name their favourite films to see that it is still popular amongst this demographic: four out of thirty nine respondents named it as one of their all-time favourite films.[71]

Jackie Stacey, who has carried out extensive research into the nature of female spectatorship, writes that "forms of intense intimacy and attachment within feminine culture, potentially separate from individual women's connections to men through heterosexuality and marriage, are...central to understanding the role of consumption within female spectatorship." In the case of these young and adult women's feelings about Cher/Silverstone I use the word "consumption" not only in the literal sense to refer to the way in which female spectators (usually teen girls) want what Cher has (clothes, popularity), but also figuratively as an indication of the way in which they "consume" her with their eyes, and derive satisfaction from *looking at her* as well as from the way she *looks*. Stacey illustrates that this feminine fascination with the woman-on-screen can take many forms, each of which offer different kinds of pleasure for the spectator: adoration, devotion and worship (which articulate the strong emotional bond the spectator feels she has with the star, which may or may not be homoerotic in nature); transcendence (which embodies the fantasy of taking on the stars identity); and aspiration/inspiration (wanting to look and act like the star, and to have the things she has).[72] In short all these ways of seeing raise the possibility of what Stacey refers to in an earlier article as an "active feminine desire", and a female audience which experiences a pleasure-in-looking which "cannot simply be reduced to a masculine heterosexual equivalent", but which is also not necessarily lesbian in nature.[73]

Stacey's "aspiration/inspiration" category speaks to the connection between "looking, desiring and buying" that she judges to have evolved with the "emergence of the department

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[71] Survey taken from Razzberry 5 Nov. 2000 <http://razzberry.chickclick.com/_ hanging_out/_ movies_and_ tv/favorite_ movie/ Default.asp?pp=41>.
[72] Stacey, Star Gazing 212, 138-159.
[73] Jackie Stacey, "Desperately Seeking Difference," The Sexual Subject: A Screen Reader in Sexuality, eds. John Caughie and Annette Kuhn (London: Routledge, 1992) 249.

store" and the "beginning of consumer culture".[74] In Clueless's case this connection has apparently been understood and exploited by the film's marketing team who have filled both the screen and the promotional materials with attractive consumer durables (designer clothes, mobile phones, music, cars), the majority of which are designed to have special appeal to young women. It has also been understood by those critics who recognise that the film functions as a celluloid fashion show. Susan Corrigan notes that Silverstone has "a body seemingly built to wear the endless combinations of designer gear that are the film's real focal point." David Elliot and Jonathan Bernstein hint at this more subtly when they refer to Cher/Silverstone as "this doll" and a "beautifully accoutred, still shrink-wrapped toy doll".[75] Their use of the word "doll" is significant since not only does it refer to the idea of woman-as-object (like a plastic Barbie doll), but also the way in which the doll is traditionally a plaything for a little girl. In this latter reading Cher/Silverstone becomes a kind of on-screen dress-up doll made-flesh for teenage girls. By calling Cher/Silverstone a "doll" Bernstein and Elliot articulate one of the contradictions inherent in female stardom that Stacey has identified: her body functions simultaneously as "both sexual spectacle and the site of consumption." It is arguably a contradiction which is at the heart of the split between those critics who read Cher/Silverstone as a sex-object and male fantasy, and those for whom she *embodies* other pleasures and desires. In fact one reviewer who states that she did not like the film because of the damaging "message" it sends out to women, actually uses the doll reference herself. She writes, "Repeat after me. 'Women are not Barbie dolls!'"[76]

These alternative readings of Cher's body illustrate that, in Stacey's words, women do have "agency as consumers". They are not simply passive spectator/consumers who look at the star on-screen in order to learn how to become the ideal object of the male gaze.[77] As Joe Brown says, Boys may "flock to anything with Silverstone in it" but girls are also "hungry for

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[74] Stacey Star Gazing 178.
[75] Corrigan 6; Elliot; Jonathan Bernstein, Pretty In Pink: The Golden Age of Teenage Movies (New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 1997) 221.
[76] Stacey Star Gazing 206; "ClueFull", rev. of Clueless, Smart Girl 5 Nov. 2000 <http:// www.smartgirl.com/ pages/movies/cluelessclue.html>.
[77] Stacey Star Gazing 185.

anything that even remotely resembles their lives."[78] Corrigan has rightly argued that Clueless would probably not have succeed by appealing exclusively to male desires: "Silverstone...[is] surely enough to cause a stampede of pubescent boys, rockets in pockets, to the box office, but little boys' desires alone do not good box-office make."[79] That it did manage to reach out to female audiences is not only clear from the various comments made by female spectators mentioned above, but also from the fact that, after its release, some critics subsequently categorised it as a "woman's film". In Jami Bernard's Chick Flicks, which lists films that have made "a special connection with a female audience", Clueless is included in the "Funny Girls" section of the book. The website Karmavore also includes the film in its list of "Enlightening Films for Women".[80] Moreover the makers of Clueless had obviously realised how popular the film was with women by the time it of its American video release, since it featured in a K-Mart/Paramount video promotional advert which was specifically designed to appeal to women. The advert reads "Accessorize Your Evening", and shows five videos (Clueless, The First Wives Club, Sabrina, Harriet The Spy, and The Evening Star), all of which are perceived to have appeal to women of various ages. In order to emphasise their "feminine" appeal further these videos are arranged against a background of fabric, roses, a perfume bottle, and jewellery (see appendix E, fig. 4).[81]

In relation to the issue of consumption I should also draw attention to critics who touch on the idea that Clueless can be read as a fantasy. Jackie Stacey writes that the display of commodities, either in the shop window or on-screen, offers the female shopper or spectator "pleasure in looking, contemplation and *the fantasy transformation of the self* and her surroundings through consumption." In this way the act of coveting and/or purchasing goods displayed by and on the body of the female star, as well as the act of "consuming" the female star by buying a cinema ticket which allows you to look at her, are inextricably linked

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[78] Joe Brown, rev. of Clueless.
[79] Corrigan 6.
[80] Jami Bernard, Chick Flicks: A Movie Lover's Guide to the Movies Women Love (New Jersey: Citadel Press, 1997) xii., 102-3; "Enlightening Films For Women" Karmavore 7 Jan. 2001 <http://www.karmavore.com/gogirls.asp>.
[81] Advert in Premiere Women In Hollywood Special 1998: 15.

with the process of fantasising about the ways in which *you* (as female audience member) and *she* (as a celluloid image) might be brought closer together. Or to put it another way, these are fantasies about the process by which her "reality" can become your reality.[82]

Susan Corrigan recognises this process at work in Clueless when she argues that it is the "hyper-reality" of the film that makes it so appealing. A deliberate gap exists between real-life as experienced by a teenage girl and Cher's "hyper-real" life, but it is this reality gap (in which fantasies are allowed free-reign) that proves so attractive to spectators. She writes, "[I]n reality, most American high-school girls" may "tread the well-worn path to The Gap instead of cruising Rodeo Drive". Yet this does not mean that they do not want to imagine what such a shopping trip would be like, or how it might feel to be someone else for ninety minutes.[83] Danielle in the Girls On review of Clueless implies as much when she says that "This is no documentary on the plight of teens around the world: CLUELESS is like a pint of Ben and Jerry's: delicious." As does Trixie, a reviewer for SmartGirl, who says what she likes most about the film is the way "Cher has all those riches that no normal middle class person like me could have ever."[84] Lizzie Francke voices a similar opinion to Corrigan's when she states that the film takes teenagers out of their "natural habitat", such as down-market malls, clubs, and diners, and middle-class schools, and "puts them on Rodeo Drive instead." Gone is the "brooding adolescent existential angst", and in its place is a "glossy dream world in which everyone is in the big-time money...It's like the downside of the...designer-obsessed 1980s never happened...[T]he film has its tart take on such consuming desires but sneakily allows you to buy into them, too.[85]

Both Corrigan and Francke interpret the perfect world of the film as a deliberate conceit. They view it as a glossy fantasy designed to facilitate our pleasure, allowing us to

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[82] Stacey, Star Gazing 178.
[83] Corrigan 6.
[84] Danielle; Trixie, rev. of Clueless, Smart Girl 5 Nov. 2000 <http://www.smartgirl.com/pages/movies/cluelesstrix.html>.
[85] Francke, "Teen Movies" 30.

"buy into...desires" (both material and emotional) without ever having to pay for them, rather than merely another generic example of Hollywood's poor grip on reality.

Cynthia Fuchs is more wary about the film's play with fantasy. She comments that "there's not much going on" in Clueless that's subversive or remarkable (except perhaps that it's so watchable, which it may have no business being)." She also remarks that "As "teen movies" go" it's "obviously, self-consciously lightweight: there are no suicides, no violence, no generational battles (no mothers in sight, either). There's no class or money angst...no racial conflicts...no sexual crises...The world of the film is ideal, shimmering, stable." Fuchs's first comment sets up an opposition between the capacity of a film to make a serious (political) statement (something which subverts the status quo), and its status as entertainment. Her bracketed remark suggests that she feels compromised by her enjoyment of a film which she, as a feminist reviewer, views as ambiguous in its feminist intentions: an ambiguity which she hints at in the second quote when she points to the film's omission of a maternal character. Fuchs implies that something which does not provide a clear "message" has no right to be pleasurable viewing as well. Her second statement suggests that she is uncomfortable with the way the film fails to reflect the "real life" of the majority of its (teen) audience: it offers no "serious" issues for discussion, only a mediated view of "reality".[86] Her reaction finds a parallel in comments feminist critics have made about Thelma and Louise. Sharon Willis points out that some feminist reviewers were concerned with the issue of that film's "plausibility", criticising it for its failure to "work as a feminist parable or prescription", and consequently overlooking the pleasures produced by the "play between plausibility and fantasy" that were a vital part of the narrative.[87] Fuchs is clearly aware of the way in which Clueless is designed to function as fantasy (she uses the words "obviously" and

[86] Fuchs, rev. of Clueless. I refer to Fuchs as a "feminist reviewer" because she writes reviews for The University of Maryland's Women Studies Page on the web which concentrate primarily on films made by, or of interest to, women. Moreover, her co-film reviewer on this page, Linda Lopez McAlister, hosts a radio show in Florida called "The Women's Show", and also issues an annual "Best Feminist Feature Films" list.
[87] Willis 122-3.

self-consciously"), but she also proves that the question of whether fantasy is inherently regressive or potentially liberating remains a bone of contention for feminist critics.

It seems to me that the issue of fantasy is yet another manifestation of the high/low cultural debates which preoccupy so many reviewers of Clueless. The question of whether "women's films" (and some feminists would be inclined to read, although not necessarily to endorse, Clueless as a "woman's film" because it has a female director and a female lead character) should serve as an outlet for fantasy or endorse reality is, on one level, a specifically feminist version of the debate over the worth of mass culture. It asks whether the pastimes that have traditionally proved popular with many women (such as buying clothes, reading romantic novels and women's magazines, watching soap operas and melodramas) and which, according to feminist critics like Ien Ang, Janice Radway, Helen Taylor, Elizabeth Wilson, and Jackie Stacey have also afforded them the pleasurable (although not necessarily progressive) opportunity to fantasise, can ever be wholly embraced by feminism.[88] Are these popular women's genres recuperable? Or are they the cultural remnants of a male-authored femininity that should have been discarded long ago? Just as the wider world of film criticism is seemingly preoccupied with the need to find, and then mark a line between, that which belongs to the popular, the every day, the mass, and that which transcends it, so feminist film criticism continues to squabble over the location of the celluloid border between those "feminist" films which are intellectual, political, or iconoclastic enough to move the cause of women forward, and those (often denounced as too "feminine") which simply hold us back. Like the critics who compare Clueless to generic junk-food, feminist criticism struggles with the issue of whether films that feed female fantasies can ever be more than simply emotional junk-food.

Whether they are about satire, Austen or Cher's clothes, the critical debates under discussion here eventually relate in some way to the issue of high versus low culture, and seek

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[88] See Ien Ang, Watching Dallas: Soap Opera and the Melodramatic Imagination (London: Methuen, 1988); Janice Radway, Reading the Romance (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984); Helen Taylor; Elizabeth Wilson, Adorned In Dreams (London: Virago); Jackie Stacey, Star Gazing.

to determine which of these categories Clueless rightfully belongs to. Those critics who do not see the film's exploration of "feminine" themes as a problem are far more likely to believe that it has certain values (such as its subcultural value) which function independently of its artistic values. That is, many of the teenage girls who liked Clueless did so because it represented aspects of their own lives on screen and/or the way they would like their lives to be (their fantasies). Critics who found it possible to take the "feminine" character of Cher seriously, crediting her with intelligence rather than dismissing her as a bimbo, were also those who credited the film with intelligence as well. The logic being that if they were able to accept Cher's interests (shopping, socialising, fashion) as those of a girl who is bright and thoughtful, then the way the film concentrates on those interests does not preclude it from also being based on a Jane Austen novel, or employing satirical techniques.

On the other side of the critical debate, one reason why reviewers of Clueless see femininity as a "problem" is probably because of its link with low or mass culture. As Barbara Klinger has stated, many critics

> still refuse the "vulgar" enjoyments suspected of soap operas. This refusal... functions to divorce the critic from an image of a mindless, hedonistic crowd he or she has actually manufactured in order to definitively secure the righteous logic of good taste. It is also...perpetuates negative notions of female taste and subjectivity. Critiques of mass culture seem always to invoke a disdainful image of the feminine to represent the depths of the corruption of the people.[89]

In Clueless' case the "mindless crowd" would refer primarily to the teenage girls who make up the film's target audience, and whose importance as spectators is undervalued by all save the studio who sees them as a viable market. It would also apply to the teenage girls depicted in the film whose "frivolous" interests are supposedly proof of their shallow nature. Even some of those critics who said they liked Clueless did so because they believed it was a film

[89] Klinger 96.

which broke with rather than conformed to the established generic patterns of the teen movie. In their opinion it encouraged the spectator to laugh *at* rather than *with* the characters it depicted, which suggested that the filmmakers had put a critical distance between themselves and their subject, and made it easier for them to do the same. Or to put it another way they liked the film because it fulfilled their need for a buffer zone between high and low culture.

Another reason why femininity in Clueless is constructed as a problem is because it is set against feminist (or feminist-inspired) worries that femininity is inextricably linked to post-feminism and the anti-feminist backlash. The film revolves around the essential tension inherent within post-feminism that has been identified by Charlotte Brunsdon. Brunsdon argues that feminists have found the post-feminist girl "difficult" because she does not reject "the conventional aspects of femininity."[90] In other words she personifies the fear that the post-feminist woman is really just the pre-feminist one in disguise. This tension informs the writings of those reviewers who worry about the way Cher/Silverstone looks, and those who deride the film's use of fashion. It is also to be found in the comments of teen girls who dislike the way Clueless represents women, such as the already quoted SmartGirl reviewer who feels the film depicts women as "Barbie dolls". Finally it is also a tension which runs through Alicia Silverstone's comments that she is not at all like Cher because she isn't interested in fashion and hates to show off her body. In fact one might argue that it lies at the very heart of Silverstone's image, which is caught between the inescapable fact that playing characters like Cher will inevitably lead to being viewed as a sex symbol (especially since that is one of the ways in which she can be marketed), and her denial that she either is or wants to be seen as anything so regressive: "I never once, in any of my work, never am I trying to be sexy. It's just being...[My image is] not a girl trying to be sexy. It's just a girl going through life."[91]

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[90] Brunsdon 4.
[91] Kristen O'Neill, "Love Me So Naughty," Premiere Aug. 1995: 75-6.

Not even Amy Heckerling is immune to the critical obsession over what it and is not "high" or "low" culture. On two occasions she shows herself to be aware of this divide, but intriguingly implies that her own work should belong to the "low" side. She tells Matt Wolf that "My favourite movies are A Face in the Crowd, The Sweet Smell of Success, Reservoir Dogs, Mean Streets. I like to watch those, but as far as what I'm able to create goes, they are much sillier, lighter pieces." Similarly in her seminar for the AFI, she expresses disbelief that a film "about teen girls called Clueless", which at various points she refers to as "light and fluffy" and "silly", "would ever be taken so seriously."[92] Of course by interpreting her words in this way one could easily be charged with possessing the same prejudices about "high" and "low" films that this chapter has identified. Heckerling might not actually be saying that her work is less valuable than these other films, merely very different in style and tone. Nevertheless her use of words such as "light" and "silly" is extremely suggestive since, as we have seen, they are the kind of words used by reviewers who attack the film for its frivolity and lack of aesthetic value. Perhaps Heckerling talks about her work in this way to avoid being forever seen as the woman who made Fast Times, the woman who changed the genre of the teen movie. It is a way of rejecting the expectation that, as a woman director, she *should* want to make films of great political and cinematic significance which treat genre from an overtly critical perspective, rather than pursuing more commercial projects. As she says in an interview with Janis Cole and Holly Dale, "I feel this desperation to hop away from where they want you to go...I don't want to make a movie that a bunch of critics say is great, but it makes no money...I want to make movies that people stand in line for...And I don't work independently." Seen in this light Heckerling's comments about the films she makes can be interpreted as a restating of the aesthetic contract she feels she has established with her audience (which is different in content from the one some critics believe she has drawn up)

[92] Wolf 35; Heckerling.

which promises them light-hearted pieces of entertainment rather than political tracts or meditations on the state of generic cinema.[93]

In conclusion this chapter gives an overview of the wide range of critical readings of a text (Clueless) using an extensive number of reviews, articles and promotional materials written about it. Although this list of readings is not exhaustive it does identify recurring patterns within responses to the film, and manages to distil these patterns into two key, and interconnected, groups: debates which are motivated by the urge to locate Clueless aesthetically and those which are driven to determine how it relates to questions about gender, feminism and femininity (or to use shorthand, post-feminism). It is feasible to argue that while these critical concerns may not be exhaustive they are certainly representative. Influenced by the work of critics such as Janet Staiger I have argued that critical readings are influenced by a number of contextual factors (such as in Clueless' case the way in which the film is promoted, the nature of its target audience, the low cultural status afforded young women and their interests, and the reputation of the filmmaker) which not only help define the topics for discussion, but are also consumed by the reviewer in order to feed his or her personal prejudices (such as those about the value of popular film and the nature of "femininity"). It has never been my intention to argue for a "right" reading of the film, nor to prove why the film *is* or *is not* feminist. Instead I have aimed to provide a snapshot of the ways in which Clueless was interpreted, and the possible reasoning behind such interpretations, in order to better understand the issues raised in the reception of a woman director's film. To use Christine Gledhill's words, I have drawn Clueless into "a female or feminist orbit" not to argue that it is an inherently progressive or reactionary text, but to mak[e] it productive for feminist debate and practice."[94]

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[93] Janis Cole and Holly Dale, Calling The Shots: Profiles Of Women Filmmakers (Ontario: The Quarry Press, 1993) 115, 117.
[94] Quoted in Christina Lane, Feminist Hollywood: From Born in Flames to Point Break (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2000) 26.

Conclusion

The objective behind this thesis was to address a subject which has received insufficient attention in feminist film criticism: the woman director who works at the heart of the Hollywood film industry. I set out to question the idea that only female filmmakers who work in the "independent" field are worthy of serious feminist analysis, as well as to move away from the tendency to privilege (and often recuperate as "feminist") only those "mainstream" directors who are seen to keep one foot firmly planted in the realm of "alternative" cinema even while the other rests tentatively in Hollywood. In other words: those directors who keep the Hollywood film industry at a "safe" distance. My research makes no such judgements, but instead devotes attention to those female directors who make commercial studio films whether they possess an independent or avant-garde cinematic heritage or not. I have no interest in labelling directors or their films as "feminist" since I believe that this is one of the main reasons why certain female filmmakers have been overlooked by feminist theorists.

In the scramble to discover where the feminism of a work or artist lies the female director who appears not to engage directly with feminist and/or female issues can find herself left to one side as a "problem" that has no obvious "feminist" solution. Yet if we stop looking for these solutions and accept instead that the study of female creativity will always present us with dilemmas and ambiguities, we can find new ways to think about this creativity as well as new female creators to discuss. Since my research eliminates the need to "solve" the woman director's work it refrains from interpreting or reading the texts of "mainstream" female filmmakers. Rather it sets out to contextualise both the woman director and her films by considering her as theoretical construction, historical entity, and image for consumption; and the films in the contexts of production, promotion and reception.

Chapter one resisted the death of the cinematic author, but also acknowledged that authorship, or rather its cinematic variation "auteur theory", needs to be examined by and renegotiated for feminist film theory. The woman director's relation to auteur theory is

without question ambiguous. On the one hand there is no obvious place for her within auteurism because the auteur is traditionally conceptualised as male. On the other hand despite the multiple flaws in auteurist thinking the idea of the auteur still has meaning in the film industry, and thus it may benefit the female director, both critically and commercially, to be viewed as an auteur. Consequently from the outset of this thesis I demonstrated that the woman director typifies the paradoxical and plural relationship between women and cinema. She is not adequately defined by masculine models but equally unable to reject them completely for fear of affirming her marginality.

Chapter two looked at the various routes into Hollywood filmmaking for female directors and explored the issue of mentorship as it relates to those women. As with auteur theory I argued that the concept of mentorship is a problematic one for the woman director, and by extension the feminist film theorist. It has the potential to diminish her artistic talents if the mentor (usually male) receives credit for her achievements. Yet women directors cannot afford to reject it entirely since it is one of the mainstays of the film industry: it does not just help women to gain job opportunities in Hollywood but everyone else as well. In other words it is not a gendered concept as such but, because most mentors are men, is effected by gender issues. By examining women's entrance into the Hollywood film industry historically and considering the ways in which that industry functions to exclude women, I was able to articulate women's precarious position as filmmakers and move the thesis into its next contextually motivated gear.

Chapter three focused on a particular case study, the marketing of Mimi Leder's The Peacemaker and Deep Impact, in order to prove that those in charge of film marketing have a tendency to use a director's gender as a promotional tool. This kind of marketing brings both dangers and rewards for the female filmmaker. It can help to get her noticed as a director but also potentially limits her creative options by typecasting her as essentially a "feminine" or "feminist" filmmaker. It uses her uniqueness as, in Leder's case, a woman director making action films in Hollywood to target a "female" niche audience without acknowledging that

such a strategy makes stereotypical assumptions about women's (and men's) cinematic preferences which may or may not reflect reality. Once again the female director finds herself in a paradoxical position. Mimi Leder is made visible in the Hollywood marketplace thanks to her gender but this visibility also has the potential to lead to a kind of "invisibility" in the form of greater marginality.

Chapter four was the entrance point into my studies of the female director as "star". This chapter asserted the validity of star theory for my thesis by insisting that the "look" which is so important to the Hollywood star also has a bearing on the way in which off-screen women, such as directors, are represented and read by the media discourses which surround the industry, as well as by the industry itself. I used the idea of androgyny to symbolise the indeterminate position of "mainstream" women directors who are not wholly outside Hollywood (feminine) and yet not entirely inside it (masculine) either. Rather they inhabit an "androgynous" boundary location from which they negotiate the terms of their access into the Hollywood "boy's club".

Chapters five and six were an extension of chapter four, and once again I employed case studies of individual female directors, Jodie Foster and Penny Marshall, to develop my arguments. These chapters worked in conjunction with one another to provide two contrasting examples of a woman director's star image. Foster's image was shown to be the one which has proved more attractive for feminist film critics, and Foster herself was shown to be more successful than Marshall at managing the inevitable contradictions of that star image. Despite the differences in Foster and Marshall's star images, however, I also identified common elements between them. Both women employ various tactics to avoid being defined in terms of their gender while simultaneously exploiting their femaleness as one raw material from which to fashion their star images. That is, they have both on occasions refused the tag "woman director" despite the fact that Foster has been know to represent herself as something akin to a feminist role model, and Marshall has emphasised her "femininity" as a director. Like chapters three and four, these chapters also reveal that the

way in which the director and her films are packaged is one of the most important factors in determining the way in which she and they are received, whether by industry executives, journalists, reviewers, film critics or audiences.

Chapter seven was the next logical step in my project to contextualise the woman director: the consideration of the reception of female-directed films. I considered the nature of critical responses to Kathryn Bigelow's Blue Steel (1990) and Strange Days (1995) as well as her reply to these responses, and the tactics she uses to try and evade being labelled as a "feminist" or "woman's" director. This chapter proved that the female director's gender can be utilised by critics to isolate her as a pleasing novelty or, because her films depict scenes of a violent and/or sexual nature, a disgusting (and sometimes it is implied equally exciting) aberration, which means that the real reasons behind her visibility as a woman making "masculine" films in Hollywood (namely inequality within the industry) are obscured. In other words it was my contention that the controversy which surrounds Bigelow is generated because she is a *woman* director rather than because her films are truly shocking and reprehensible.

Finally, chapter eight was a more sustained analysis of the female-directed film as, to use Janet Staiger's term, an "event". It identified two main critical debates which recur across reviews of Amy Heckerling's Clueless (1995): the struggle to identify the film as a work which belongs either to the realm of "high" or "low" culture; and the quest to determine its relation to feminism, or more particularly post-feminism. Thus the critical debates discussed here are another variation on two of the underlying themes of this thesis. The "high" versus "low" culture debate points to the fact that I am considering the work of female directors who make popular films from within the "mainstream" film industry, and thus taking seriously as a subject for feminist analysis (although *not* rescuing as "feminist") those directors which feminist film theory (which has traditionally privileged the work of "independent" or avant-garde "feminist" filmmakers) has frequently neglected. The feminist or post-feminist debate is another variation of the obsession (shared by those both inside and outside the film

industry) with pinning down the woman director and her work on issues of gender, and fixing them in feminist terms. This is an obsession which my work does not share because I did not begin my thesis by choosing a theoretical context (feminist or otherwise) in which to place the woman director and her films, but rather with the desire to identify and comment upon the various contextual factors which have a bearing on the way she and they are understood: this has been a descriptive project rather than a prescriptive one.

Having completed my research, one of the most striking aspects is how little has changed since women first sat in the Hollywood director's chair all those decades ago. In many ways directing is still "no job for a lady". The numbers of women directing "mainstream" films has seen no dramatic increases, and true statistical equality remains maddeningly out of reach, as indeed it does for all "minority" groups within the industry. The same sexist stereotypes and gender-based assumptions which Dorothy Arzner was subject to continue to surround the woman who directs in contemporary Hollywood, even though they may sometimes (although by no means always) be expressed in more subtle ways. Second wave feminism may have argued for women's capability to do "men's" jobs, but this has not translated into widespread and sustained success for female directors working in Hollywood. I have shown that women are still not viewed as "natural" directors, or even *just* "directors". They are always "women" and then "directors", and if they are women of colour their racial or ethnic identity as well as their gender might also be used as prefix to the term director. Labelling female filmmakers in this way has developed into a kind of lazy shorthand which helps Hollywood executives, entertainment journalists, film reviewers, film theorists and so on to account for the feminine interloper whose presence within this predominantly white male world is still strange enough to merit attention. Unlike their male colleagues, women directors have to be constantly mediated, negotiated, and moulded until they, as square pegs, fit into the round holes of the film industry. My research has concerned itself with the terms of this negotiation by revealing how and why directing was and still is "no job for a lady", and illustrating some of the ways in which women directors have dealt with this reality.

Yet I do not wish to leave this project on a wholly depressing note. The woman director's access to Hollywood may be limited and fraught with difficulties but she is still *there*, and as such her interaction with the mainstream industry serves as another rich and fruitful area for feminist film theory to explore. As my research has illustrated this interaction also has the valuable effect of identifying those topics which would benefit from further analysis by feminist theorists, such as the role of women directors in the television industry, the experiences of minority directors, or the place of female executives, producers, editors, and so on in Hollywood. A determination to undertake such explorations is not simply important for the development of feminist film theory, it is actually indispensable if we are to truly understand women's complicated relationship to cinema in all its possible permutations.

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NOTE ON BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Internet

A number of the Online sources from which I have taken articles are premium services. That is, you have to pay to download each article. As a result I have given the URL which takes you to the archive search screen for the relevant publication. Occasionally I have also had to give the nearest possible URL for free downloads when a direct link to the article is unavailable.

Of the sites I have used, the following charge for downloads as of September 2001:

Northern Light Special Collections Documents; Baltimore Sun Online; Boston Globe Online; Hollywood Reporter Online; Los Angeles Times Online; Chicago Tribune, Time, Washington Post, New York Times.

NB. Page numbers from articles sourced from the internet are given only when available.

CD-ROM

Where indicated British newspapers have been taken from a CD-ROM source, and consequently page numbers have only been given if available on the CD-ROM version itself.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Appendix A

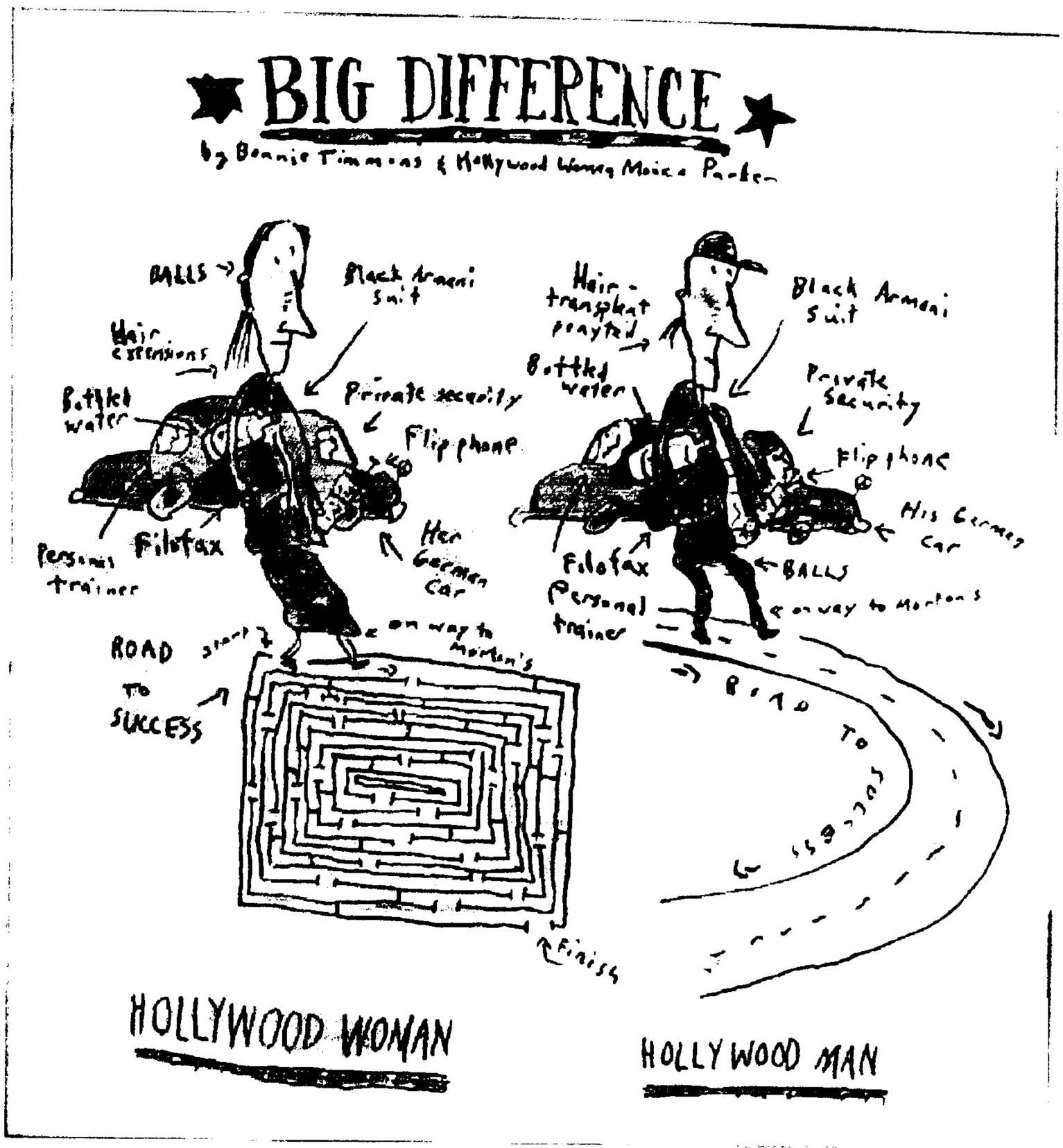

Fig. 1 . "Big Difference" by Bonnie Timmons and Monica Parker, in Caroline Kirk Cordero, "The Numbers Never Lie. Tracking the Progress of Women in the Industry," Premiere Women in Hollywood Special Edition 1993: 36.

Appendix A, Table 1.

Name	Actress?	TV Director?	Other	Mentor?	Studio Features Directed	Back To Previous Career/ Other jobs in the Industry Since She Directed her Last Studio Feature?
Allison Anders	No	*Sex and the City* (HBO, Season 2, episodes 22 and 24.)	She attended film school at UCLA. She made the independent film *Border Radio* (Coyote Productions, 1987) which won prizes. She followed this with two other independent movies, *Gas, Food, Lodging* (Cineville Inc., 1992) and *Ma Vida Loca* (Channel 4 films/Cineville/HBO/ Showcase Entertainment, 1993)	Wim Wenders Martin Scorsese	*Four Rooms*: segment called "The Missing Ingredient" (Miramax, 1995) *Grace of My Heart* (co-produced and distributed by Universal, 1996)	She produced the independent film *Lover Girl* (Dream Entertainment Inc./ Peninsula, 1997) and directed an independent feature, *Sugar Town* (Channel 4 Films/October Films, 1999).
Gillian Armstrong	No		Tea girl and general dogsbody for Fred Schepsi in Australia. She showed a short she had directed to an editor of a TV series who suggested she work as an editor. Thanks to financial support from the Australian Film Board she directed a number of independent films, including the critically acclaimed *My Beautiful Career* (New South Wales Film Corp., 1979). She made the documentary *Hard To Handle* in 1986, and another documentary called *Not Fourteen Again* in 1996 In between *Mrs Soffel* and her next studio feature she made a number of independent films including *High Tide*		*Mrs Soffel* (MGM, 1984) *Little Women* (Columbia, 1994) *Oscar and Lucinda* (distributed by 20th Century Fox, 1997)	She is attached to *Charlotte Gray* which is slated for release in 2001, and will be co-produced and distributed by Warner.

			(FGH/Herndale/SJL, 1988), *Fires Within* (1991) and *The Last Days of Chez Nous* (AFFC/Australian Film Commission/Australian Broadcasting Corp., 1992).			
Kathryn Bigelow	No	*Wild Palms* (ABC, 1993) *Homicide* (NBC, 1993). 3 episodes: "Fallen Heroes Part 1", "Fallen Heroes Part 2, "Lines of Fire".	Art School (San Francisco Art Insitute; Whitney Museum) Film School (Columbia University) She directed two independent films: *The Loveless* (Pioneer Films, 1982, co-directed with Monty Montgomery) *Near Dark* (FM/Near Dark Joint Venture, 1987)	Oliver Stone (co-producer on *Blue Steel*)	*Blue Steel* (distributed by MGM, 1990) *Point Break* (20th Century Fox, 1991) *Strange Days* (20th Century Fox, 1995)	Since *Strange Days* she has been credited as co-writing a film -*Undertow* (Showtime Networks Inc./ Weintraub, 1996)-directed by her long time collaborator Eric Red She has also directed *The Weight of Water* (Le Studio Canal+/Miracle Pictures, 2000) which best qualifies as an independent since no major studios were involved in its making or distribution. She is also (as of early 2001) attached to *K-19 The Widow Maker*- a submarine film starring Harrison Ford which is to be distributed by Paramount.
Martha Coolidge	No	Some work for Canadian children's television prior to enrolling at NYU *City Girl* (1983) for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation She directed episodes of *The Twilight Zone* (CBS/MGM, 1985); *Sledgehammer* (D'Angelo Productions/ New World Television/ Spencer Productions, 1986); *Trenchcoat In Paradise* (MGM, 1989); *Bare Essentials* (Republic Pictures Corp., 1991) and *Crazy in Love* (Turner Pictures, 1992);	Brief stint as a folk singer Studied printmaking at The Rhode Island School of Design, and made an animated short while there. After an initial failed attempt eventually enrolled at NYU (She had spent the intervening years working in the Canadian film and television industry) Joined an Internship program at the AFI in 1975 Made three documentaries between 1973 and 1976. Made the independent film	Francis Ford Coppola saw her documentary *Not A Pretty Picture* (Coolidge Productions/Films Inc., 1975) and put her on the pay roll at Zoetrope. Renny Harlin persuaded Carolco to produce *Rambling Rose* (1991) after studio producers had passed on it. He had seen the script because his then girlfriend Laura Dern had received it from Coolidge. Geena Davis chose Coolidge over Jonathan Kaplan to direct *Angie*. Christina Lane (86) says she would have known Coolidge not just as a director	*The Joy of Sex* (Paramount, 1984) *Real Genius* (RCA/ Tristar, 1985) *Plain Clothes* (Paramount, 1988) *Lost in Yonkers* (Columbia, 1993) *Angie* (distributed by Buena Vista, 1994) *Out To Sea* (20th Century Fox, 1997)	She has combined directed for tv with directing features throughout her career. Although she has not made a feature since 1997. She has also become a prominent member of the DGA (Director's Guild of America).

		Also *Introducing Dorothy Dandrige* (HBO, 1999.) A TV segment called "1972" from *If These Walls Could Talk 2* (HBO, 2000) Executive producer on *Rip Girls* (The Disney Channel, 2000).	*Valley Girl* (Atlantic Pictures, 1983)	but also through her then husband Renny Harlin.		
Sophia Coppola	Yes		She has also worked as a model, fashion designer and photographer. She made her directorial debut with the independent short film *Lick The Star* (1998)	Her father, Francis Ford Coppola	*The Virgin Suicides* (distributed by Paramount, 1999)	
Tamra Davis	No	Short segments for TV (according to Christina Lane, 177)	She apprenticed at Zoetrope studios. Studied at Los Angeles City College and made a super 8 film there. She was hired by MTV and made numerous music videos. She also made a short film for a PolyGram Video Aids Benefit. She made her directorial debut with the independent film *Guncrazy* (Zeta Entertainment Ltd., 1992).	Her first studio film *CB4* was conceptualised by comedian Chris Rock and music critic Nelson George. George knew her through her video work, and lobbied for her to direct the film. She eventually got the job when the first choice male director turned it down	*CB4*(1993, Universal) *Billy Madison* (1995, Universal) *B Men* (1997, Rank/Orion) *Half Baked* (1998, co-distributed by Universal)	Since 1995 she has made the independent film *Skipped Parts* (2000, Trimark)
Nora Ephron	No	No	Began her career as a Journalist. She wrote the novel *Heartburn* (NY: Knopf, 1983) which was a great success. Prior to the novel's publication she had helped her husband Carl Berstein revamp the screenplay of *All The*	Meryl Streep helped Ephron get the job writing *Silkwood* when the head of ABC Films said he thought Ephron could only write comedy When she was head of Columbia Dawn Steel raised the possibility of Ephron directing a film, and asked Lynda Obst to send her a	*This Is My Life* (20th Century Fox, 1992) *Sleepless in Seattle* (Columbia, 1993) *Mixed Nuts* (Columbia, 1994) *Michael* (New Line/ Turner, 1996)	No

			President's Men (Warner Bros., 1976). She was hired to write a tv movie. She also wrote a rock and roll movie for Paramount, as well as numerous other screenplays, including *Silkwood* (20th Century Fox, 1983), and *When Harry Met Sally* (Castle Rock/Columbia, 1989).	project. Obst chose an adaptation of the novel *This Is My Life*. However it was Joe Roth who eventually green-lighted *This Is My Life* at 20th Century Fox.	*You've Got Mail* (Warner Bros., 1998) *Lucky Numbers* (Dream Works/ Paramount, 2000).	
Jodie Foster	Yes	Episode of *Tales From The Dark Side* (Laurel Entertainment/Tribune Entertainment/Paramount Television, 1984)			*Little Man Tate* (Orion, 1991) *Home For The Holidays* (Paramount, 1995)	Yes. Since 1995 she has taken roles in *Contact* (Warner Bros., 1997), *Anna and the King* (20th Century Fox, 1999) and *The Dangerous Lives of Altar Boys* (20th Century Fox, forthcoming 2002) She has also executive produced a TV movie *The Baby Dance* (Egg/Showtime Networks Inc., 1998) and a feature *Waking The Dead* (distributed by Paramount, 1999) through her production company Egg. She is also producing *The Dangerous Lives of Altar Boys* As of the end of 2000 she is in pre- production as director on *Flora Plum* which is not being funded or distributed by a major studio (it is being made by Egg/October Films and Good Machine International)
Randa Haines	Yes	She directed for television from 1979 to 1988 working on both series and television specials, including *Knots Landing* (Lorimar, 1979), *Hill Street*	Worked as a script supervisor in the theatre for ten years. She attended the Director's Workshop at the AFI		*Children of a Lesser God* (1986, Paramount) *The Doctor* (1991, Touchstone)	

		Blues (20th Century Fox Television, 1981), *Alfred Hitchcock Presents* (1985), *Tales From The Crypt* (HBO, 1989), and the after school special *There's Something About Amelia* (ABC, 1984) which was praised by critics.			*Wrestling Ernest Hemming way* (1993, Warner) *Dance With Me* (1998, Columbia)	
Amy Heckerling	No	Pilot of "19" for CBS (1992) Episodes of *The Twilight Zone* (CBS/MGM).	Attended the Manhatten School of Art and Design Film school at NYU in early seventies. Attended the American Film Institute in Los Angeles in 1975.		*Fast Times At Ridgemount High* (Universal, 1982) *Johnny Dangerously* (20th Century Fox, 1984) *National Lampoon's European Vacation* (Warner Bros., 1985) *Look Who's Talking* (TriStar, 1989) *Look Who's Talking Too* (TriStar, 1991) *Clueless* (Paramount, 1995) *Loser* (Columbia, 2000)	In the five years between *Clueless* and *Loser* she acted as producer on *A Night At The Roxbury* (Paramount, 1998), and executive producer on *Molly* (MGM, 1999). She also acted as executive producer on the spin off television series of *Clueless* (Paramount/ABC, 1996-1999)
Amy Holden Jones	No	No	Studied Film and photography at MIT, and tried to make a career in documentary film. Worked as an editor until she realised she wanted to direct. She wrote the script for the film which eventually became *Mystic Pizza* (Samuel Goldwyn Company/MGM, 1988) although she was denied the opportunity to direct. She also worked as a story editor for the independent company Vista for a while. She directed *Maid To Order* (New Century/	Scorsese was a judge at an independent film festival where her documentary *A Weekend At Home* (1975) won first prize. She wrote to Scorsese and was taken on as an assistant on *Taxi Driver*. She worked as an editor for New World and on a few other films, including one for Scorsese She also met Steven Spielberg and George Lucas who gave her films to edit. She then returned to New World to get a directing job.	*The Rich Man's Wife* (produced by Caravan/ Hollywood Pictures and distributed by Buena Vista, 1996)	Since 1996 she has worked as a screenwriter She has writing credits on *The Relic* (1997) and *Beethoven's 3rd* (Universal, 2000) Prior to *The Rich Man's Wife* she also wrote *Indecent Proposal* (Paramount, 1993) and *The Getaway* (Universal, 1994)

			Vista, 1984).	She directed two films for Corman: *Slumber Party Massacre* (New World, 1982) *Love Letters* (New World, 1983)		
Diane Keaton	Yes	*China Beach* (episode "Fever", Warner Bros. TV, 1990) *Twin Peaks* (episode 2.15, Spelling Entertainment/ Lynch/Frost Productions, 1991) TV movies *The Girl With The Crazy Brother* (1990) and *Wildflower* (Carol Newman Productions, 1991)	Apart from television she also directed the Belinda Carlisle Runaway videos (1986).		*Heaven* (Columbia, 1987) *Unstrung Heroes* (produced by *Hollywood Pictures* and distributed by Buena Vista, 1995) *Mother's Helper* (Touchstone, 1999) *Hanging Up* (Columbia, 2000)	She has continued to act while also working as a director.
Mimi Leder	No	Between 1986 and 1994 she has 14 directing credits to her name, including *LA Law* (1986), and *ER* (1994).	She attended LA City College She was the first female cinematographer accepted to study at the AFI Aside from her extensive TV directing work she has also worked as a script supervisor on various television programmes between 1979 and 1986, and has producing credits on episodes of *China Beach* and *ER*	Steven Spielberg who asked her to direct *The Peacemaker* and *Deep Impact* for DreamWorks.	*The Peacemaker* (Dream Works/Universal, 1997) *Deep Impact* (DreamWorks/Universal, 1998) *Pay It Forward* (co-produced and distributed by Warner, 2000)	As of late 2000 she is at work directing the film *Still Life* for Universal.
Kasi Lemmons	Yes		She wrote and directed *Eve's Bayou* (Trimark/ Lions Gate, 1997)	According to Allister Harry in *The Guardian* (August 7, 1998) Samuel L. Jackson acted as producer on *Eve's Bayou* and helped get it financed He was also executive producer on *The Caveman's Valentine*, and starred in both films.	*The Caveman's Valentine* (Universal, 2001)	
Sondra Locke	Yes	Television movie *Death In Small Doses* (Robert Greenwald Productions, 1995)		She has said in Jim Hillier (129) that being Clint Eastwood's partner enabled her	*Ratboy* (Warner Bros., 1986)	Apart from the TV movie she also directed an independent film called *Do Me A Favour*

				to be around his production company Malpaso. She made her first film for Malpaso and Warner Bros. This won her a deal with Warner's although she only directed one other film for them since they passed on all her other projects.	*Impulse* (Warner Bros., 1990)	(Mendillo/Form Productions, 1997). Since then she has also had a couple of acting roles in *Clean and Narrow* (Del Mar Productions/Sneak Preview Entertainment, 1999) and *The Prophet's Game* (Prophet's Productions, 1999)
Penny Marshall	Yes	Four episodes of *Laverne and Shirley* (Paramount/ABC) Episode 83.Season Four 1978-9 ("Squiggy in Love") Episode 108. Season Five 1979-80 ("The Duke of Squiggman") Episodes 118 and 127. Season Six 1980-81 ("The Dating Game"; "But Seriously, Folks") *A League of Their Own Series Pilot* called "Dottie's Back" (1993)		Brother Garry Marshall found her work as an actress in his television shows, and gave her episodes of *Laverne and Shirley* to direct. Whoopi Goldberg asked producer of *Jumpin' Jack Flash*, Joel Silver, if Marshall could replace the original directorHoward Zieff Jim Brooks asked her to direct *Big* (1988). Her friend Steven Spielberg, and her agent Mike Ovitz at CAA also encouraged her to direct.	*Jumpin' Jack Flash* (20th Century Fox, 1986) *Big* (20th Century Fox, 1988) *Awakenings* (Columbia, 1990) *A League of Their Own* (Columbia, 1992) *Renaissance Man* (Touchstone, 1994) *The Preacher's Wife* (Touchstone, 1996) *Riding in Cars with Boys* (Columbia, 2001)	No. Although has had a few acting cameos throughout her career as a director. In between directing jobs she has acted as a producer on *With Friends Like These* (Parkway/Miramax, 1998) and *Live From Baghdad* (Universal, 1999)
Darnell Martin	No	*Homicide*: "Sniper Part 2" (1993) *ER* : "Ground Zero" (1994) Episodes of *OZ* (HBO, 1997)	She attended Sarah Lawrence She applied to film schools with no success Woked as Assistant Director on *Do The Right Thing* and on some commercials Directed a number of music videos Attended NYU and made a short film- *Suspect* (1991)- which received much critical attention. This film won her a	According to Christina Lane Spike Lee made a call on her behalf to NYU after she had been rejected twice, helping her to be accepted Lane (157) also notes that the executive vice president at Columbia who helped get the *I Like It Like That* deal off the ground was a black woman	*I Like It Like That* (Columbia, 1994) *Prison Song* (New Line, 2000). Due to be released in the US in April 2001	Since *I Like It Like That* she has worked primarily as a television director, although she has directed one other feature and also acted in *Nowhere Fast* (1997)

			Director's Fellowship at Sundance. She wrote a script and submitted it to various production companies. Eventually it was picked up by Columbia and became *I Like It Like That.*			
Elaine May	Yes		Comedy writer and performer		*A New Leaf* (Paramount, 1971) *The Heartbreak Kid* (20th Century Fox, 1972) *Mikey and Nicky* (Paramount, 1976) *Ishtar* (Columbia, 1987)	She has taken a couple of acting roles since *Ishtar* in a TV mini series *The Fifties* (Téléfilm Canada, 1997) and the film *Small Time Crooks* (Sweetland Films/ DreamWorks, 2000) She has primarily been working as a screen writer. Credits include *The Bird Cage* (MGM/United Artists, 1996), *Primary Colors* (Universal, 1998)
Mira Nair	No	*My Own Country* (Showtime Networks Inc., 1998)	Went to Harvard and learned documentary film-making there. She made three documentaries and the Indian made film *Salaam Bombay* (Channel 4 Films/Cadragee, 1988) which won her the Camera D'Or at Cannes		*Mississipi Masala* (distributed by Samuel Goldwyn, 1991) *The Perez Family* (produced and distributed by Samuel Goldwyn, 1995)	Since 1995 she has made the independent film *Kama Sutra: A Tale of Love* (Mirabai Films, 1996), and directed *My Own Private Country* (1998) for TV
Euzhane Palcy	No	*Ruby Bridges* (Marian Rees Associates, 1998)	She made two shorts in French: *The Message* (1974) *The Devil's Workshop* (1982) *Sugar Cane Alley* caught the attention of Hollywood executives but she passed on the material they offered her since it did not deal with black issues. She wrote the script of *A Dry White Season* based on		*Sugar Cane Alley* (distributed by Orion, 1983) *A Dry White Season* (MGM, 1989)	Since *A Dry White Season* she has made two features in French *Siméon* (1992) and *Aimé Césaire* (1994). She also has one other TV directing credit: *The Killing Yard* (Harris and Company/ Paramount/Showtime Networks, 2001)

			Andre Brink's novel and it was picked up by MGM.			
Susan Seidelman	No	*Confessions of a Suburban Girl* (1992, documentary for BBC Scotland) *Early Edition* (Columbia/Tristar, 1996) *Sex and the City* (HBO, Season One, episodes 1, 5 and 10) *Now and Again* (CBS/Paramount, 1999)	Studied design at The Drexel Institue of Technology in Philadelphia Attended NYU film school 1974-1976 Made three shorts between 1979 and 1980. Made the independent film *Smithereens* (1982) which was shown in competition at Cannes.		*Desperately Seeking Susan* (Orion, 1985) *Making Mr Right* (Orion, 1987) *Cookie* (Lorimar/ Warner, 1988) *She-Devil* (Orion, 1989)	Apart from the television she has directed an independent short film called *The Dutch Master* (Regina Ziegler Films/WDR, 1994) She also directed a film called *A Cooler Climate* for Paramount television and Showtime Networks (1999), and the independent film *A Gaudi Afternoon* (Lola Films, 2000).
Joan Micklin Silver	No	*How To Be A Perfect Person in Just Three Days* (Highgate Pictures/PBS, 1983) *Finnegan Begin Again* (1985 for Tron-EMI/ HBO TV) A segment of *Prison Stories: Women on the Inside* (HBO, 1991) *A Private Matter* (HBO, 1992) *In The Presence of Mine Enemies* (1996) *Invisible Child* (Gross-Western Productions/Hearst Entertainment/Lifetime TV, 1999)	Attended Sarah Lawrence University Freelance writer for educational film company in the late sixties. Did a stint as a writer on *The Village Voice* Sold screenplay to Universal in 1972 Wrote the screenplay for *Hester Street* (1975) which was distributed through her and her husband's own film company, Midwest Films. Made a short *Bernice Bobs Her Hair* (1976) and another feature for Midwest films *Between The Lines* (1977)	Formed Midwest Film Productions in partnership with her husband He helped raise the money to finance her directorial debut, *Hester Street*. Ally Acker writes: "Silver readily admits that she might never have become a film director if it weren't for her husband (*Reel Women*, 34) Steven Spielberg helped her get *Crossing Delancey* (1988) off the ground	*Head Over Heels* (United Artists, 1979) *Crossing Delancey* (Warner Bros., 1988) *Loverboy* (Tri-Star, 1989).	She has worked as a television director since 1991. She has also made the features *Big Girls Don't Cry... They Get Even* (1991, New Line) and *Fish in the Bathtub* (1999, for Curb/ Northern Arts)
Penelope Spheeris	No	Segment of *Prison Stories. Women On The Inside* (HBO, 1991) *Dear Doughboy* (2000)	She graduated from UCLA in 1973. She worked for an educational film company, and then formed her own independent company in 1974 to produce and direct	Lorne Michaels approaced her to direct *Wayne's World*	*Wayne's World* (Paramount, 1992) *The Beverly Hillbillies* (20th Century Fox, 1993)	She has made the third part of her rock documentary series: *The Decline of Western Civilization Part Three* (New Line, 1998) She also directed an

			music videos. She worked as a producer for Lorne Michaels of *Saturday Night Live* fame. She also made a documentary, *The Decline of Western Civilization* (1979) Her first independent feature was *Suburbia* (New World, 1982). This was followed by another three independent films: *The Boys Next Door* (New World, 1985), *Hollywood Vice Squad* (Concorde Pictures, 1986) and *Dudes* (New Century Vista, 1987) and the documentary *The Decline of Western Civilization. The Metal Years* (New Line, 1988)		*The Little Rascals* (Universal, 1994) *Black Sheep* (Paramount, 1996) *Senseless* (1998, distributed by Miramax)	independent feature *The Thing In Bob's Garage* (Act 3 Productions, 1998) And as of late 2000 is said to be attached to a Miramax project *Posers.*
Barbara Streisand	Yes		Singer		*Yentl* (MGM, 1983) *The Prince of Tides* (Columbia, 1991) *The Mirror Has Two Faces* (Columbia, 1996)	She returned to singing but has not worked as an actress or director since *The Mirror Has Two Faces.* She has also continued to work as a producer. Since 1996 she has acted as producer or executive producer on the TV movies *Rescuers: Stories of Courage* (Barwood Films, 1997) *The Long Island Incident* (Barwood Films, 1998) *Frankie and Hazel* (Barwood Films/Hallmark Entertainment/Showtime, 2000)

						Varian's War (Barwood Films/Showtime, 2000) *What Makes A Family* (Barwood Films/Columbia Tristar TV/Lifetime TV, 2000) And the documentaries *City at Peace* (Cabin John Films/Seventh Arts Releasing, 1998) and *The Living Century* (Barwood Films/PBS, 2001)
Rachel Talalay	No	She has worked directing television from 1995 to the present. Programmes have included *Band of Gold* (Granada Television, 1995) *Ally McBeal* (20th Century Fox, 1997) and *Randall and Hopkirk Deceased* (Working Title Television, 2000, ITV)	She graduated from Yale with a degree in Maths. She then worked as a computer analyst in Baltimore. She met John Waters and became production assistant on *Polyester* (New Line, 1981) She also produced *Hairspray* (New Line, 1988) *Cry-Baby* (Imagine Entertainment/ Universal, 1990) for Waters. This led to producing work on the *Nightmare On Elm Street* films, and finally her directorial debut *Freddy's Dead. The Final Nightmare* (New Line, 1991) Due to the unusual nature of the concept (which was especially unappealing to the older male executives with power at the studios) it took her three years (1990-1993) to get *Tank Girl* off the ground. She also fought off Steven	John Waters	*The Ghost in the Machine* (20th Century Fox, 1993) *Tank Girl* (MGM, 1995)	She has been directing for television since *Tank Girl*. She is also slated to direct *Preacher* which is in production for Storm Entertainment.

			Spielberg and James Cameron for job of directing it.			
Betty Thomas	Yes	*Hill Street Blues* *Midnight Caller* (1988) *Mancuso FBI* (1989) *Dream On* (HBO, 1990) *On The Air* (1992) *My Breast* (1994) *The Late Shift* (HBO/Northern Lights Entertainment, 1996)	After gaining experience directing for television, Thomas made an independent film *Only You* (Dayjob Films/Hight Communications/Live America/Pro Filmworks, 1992)	While she was working as an actress on *Hill Street Blues* she pestered Steven Boccho to give her the opportunity to direct the show.	*The Brady Bunch* (Paramount, 1995) *Private Parts* (distributed Paramount/Columbia, 1997) *Dr Doolittle* (20th Century Fox, 1998) *28 Days* (Columbia, 2000)	As of early 2001 she is said to be attached to the feature *Surviving Christmas* for Columbia.

NB For the purpose of this chart, and for the sake of consistency, I am counting films produced and or distributed by New Line and Miramax within the "studio films" category only if they were made post New Line's 1993 merger with The Turner Broadcasting Corporation, or Miramax's 1993 merger with Disney. This is not a perfect categorisation, but it will serve here- although it also acts as a reminder of just how indistinct the boundaries between "mainstream" and "independent" have become.

The information for this chart was drawn from various sources including

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