

Nicolas Roeg/Chromatic Cartography

Submitted by **Andrew Mark Patch**, to the University of Exeter as a thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Film, January 2010.

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..... **Andrew M. Patch**

Abstract

The aim of this thesis is to analyse the function of colour in film through three films by British director Nicolas Roeg. To this end, this thesis has the following three correspondent aims: first to consider the theoretical relationship between colour and film within film studies as a discipline. Second, to propose a means of discussing film colour outside the dominant approach of restoration and degradation. Third to explore how Roeg's implements colour within three of his films *Performance*, *Don't Look Now*, and finally *Bad Timing*, and the ideological and aesthetic questions that emerge through a consideration of colour in these works. By looking at colour and Nicolas Roeg this thesis will not only present a critical response to the research question but it will also fill a small gap in the current dearth of work that exists on both colour and British cinema in the 1970s.

Acknowledgements

I first and foremost thank the AHRC for sponsoring this research project.

Above all I am indebted to my mentor and supervisor Professor Susan Hayward, whose guidance, intellect, friendship and enthusiasm for this project has been the foundation of this journey. Without her support this thesis would neither have started nor finished.

I would also like to thank the faculty of the Film Studies department and in particular, Dr Will Higbee for his advice, support and friendship.

I would like to thank all members (both past and present) of the Centre for Research into Film Studies at the University of Exeter who have not only been loyal colleagues but who have offered me invaluable feedback on my work. In particular thanks go to Dr Jenny Cousins, Dr Bridget Birchall, Tom Williams and Gábor Gergely for their patience in sharing an office with me during my research.

Thanks also to those who have generously supported me throughout these last four years. Special mention must go to Paul and Jo for a conversation on a beach that kick started this whole adventure. Thanks also to Chris for summer nights of boarding to relieve the stress and maintain my adrenalin levels too their optimum.

My family have shown me tremendous encouragement and unrelenting support throughout my studies. I am forever indebted to my parents Terry and Mary, for without their support this thesis would never have happened. I would also like to thank my two children, Eleanor and Harrison, who have both arrived during this period of student existence, and in turn have been the best motivators that I could have asked for.

This thesis is also dedicated to the person who shared my interest in film, and whose passing showed me that life was for taking chances, thank you Andy, it still seems that every dog has its day.

Finally my biggest debt of gratitude goes to my best friend, inspiration, and wife, Ann-Marie whose support, love, understanding, patience and generosity made this possible.

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*Somebody I never met
But in a way I know
Didn't think that you could get
So much from a picture show
Man dies first reel
People ask what's the deal?
This ain't how it's supposed to be
Don't like no aborigine*

*Took a trip in Powis Square
Pop star dyed his hair
No fans to scream and shout
When mobsters came to flush him out
Gangland slaying underground
New identity must be found
On the left bank for a while
Insanity Bohemian style*

*Ritual ideas relativity
Only buildings no people prophecy
Time slide place to hide nudge reality
Foresight minds wide magic imagery*

*Met a dwarf that was no good
Dressed like little Red Riding Hood
Bad habit taking life
Calling card a six inch knife
Ran off really fast
Mumbled something `bout the past
Best sex I've ever seen
As if each moment was the last
Drops of blood colour slide
Funeral for his bride
But it's him who's really dead
Gets to take the funeral ride*

*Ritual ideas relativity
Only buildings no people prophecy
Time slide place to hide nudge reality
Foresight minds wide magic imagery*

*Space guy fell from the sky
Scratched my head and wondered why
Time slide into time
Across international dateline
Scientist eats bubblegum
Hall of fame baseball
Senators a Hoodlum
Big chiefs in the hall*

*Ritual ideas relativity
Only buildings no people prophecy*

*Time slide place to hide nudge reality
Foresight minds wide magic imagery*

*Stray thoughts fear to tread
Placed upon the screen instead
She's my flame too hot to hold
Had to settle for her cold*

*Bloodlust - Greek God - Gold discovery
Gone bust - Tight wad - Slow recovery
Axe job - Flame thrower - Iron bar and
gun
Betting shop - New owner - A walk in
the sun*

*Ritual ideas relativity
Only buildings no people prophecy
Time slide place to hide nudge reality
Foresight minds wide magic imagery*

*Spread the news the Maestros back
With a beat - box soundtrack
The King of brains - Queen of the sack
Executives have heart attack
It's assault course celluloid
The money makers would avoid
Sometimes notions get reversed
Centre of the universe*

*Ritual ideas relativity
Only buildings no people prophecy
Time slide place to hide nudge reality
Foresight minds wide magic imagery ...*

**Big Audio Dynamite, $E=mc^2$
(1985)**

Nicolas Roeg/Chromatic Cartography

You cannot understand by
making definitions, only by
turning over the
possibilities.

The Professor in
Insignificance (Roeg, 1985)

I would like to have written
on the front of all cinemas
'Abandon all
preconception, ye who
enter here'.

Nicolas Roeg (Hacker &
Price 1991: 353)

As the title *Nicolas Roeg/Chromatic Cartography* infers the focus of this thesis is the intersection of two differing, but I would argue inextricably linked, subjects. The first is the British filmmaker Nicolas Roeg the second is that of the function of film colour within his films. It is important from the outset of this thesis to establish that what it is *not* is an auteur-based approach that will repeatedly set out its arguments within the confines of the creative and artistic intentions of the filmmaker. In fact the thesis deliberately omits a linear discussion of progression and evolution in the context of the filmmaking style of Roeg. An analytical approach that Roeg himself once referred to as being akin to ‘murder [...] assembling my life and career into some kind of neat little order’ (Lanza 1989: 91). Instead the central aim of this thesis is to explore the theoretical and ideological tensions that emerge through a consideration of colour within Roeg’s work. Not only in terms of intellectualising colour as a discourse of aesthetic spectacle, but further how colour functions as a chromatic refrain to a film’s thematic and narrative preoccupations.

One outcome of focussing in on colour rather than the auteur is that this thesis, rather than engaging with Roeg’s entire canon, comprises of only three case studies; the subjects of which are *Performance* (co-directed with Donald Cammell, 1970), *Don’t Look Now* (1973) and *Bad Timing* (1980). Admittedly this triadic canon may initially seem somewhat reductive. In particular when one considers that Roeg’s canon consists of both a cinematographic career comprised of 18 films, from *Jazz Boat* (Hughes, 1960) through to *Petulia* (Lester, 1968), and a directorial body of work (so far, for of course Roeg is still working) that consists of 20 projects from *Performance* to *Puffball* (2007).¹ Further this thesis does not consider other ancillary aspects of Roeg’s career, for example his time at the Danziger studios (notable for being where Roeg meets long time collaborators Alex Thomson and Tony Richmond), nor his advertising work, (an iconic example being the iceberg advert for the UK government AIDS awareness campaign), or the numerous pop videos and corporate projects that Roeg has been involved with.²

¹ Of course what is not evident in such a division is that Roeg’s cinematographic work extended into his directorial projects notably on *Performance*, *Walkabout*, and *Don’t Look Now*.

² Joseph Lanza refers to the AIDS advert in his writing on Roeg, asking:

Why is everyone being so secretive about the identity of the director who made the Government’s television commercial about AIDS? [...] Perhaps

The central reason behind limiting my analysis in the main to just these three films is that if one attempted to approach film colour through an overview of Roeg's entire canon, then the analysis itself would become shaped by the desire to fit the presence of the auteur into the arguments made. Questions of intentionality, creative aims and thematic desires that originate from the filmmaker (though admittedly at points these discourses do enter into my case studies) would become the central focus of my engagement with colour. Colour would function primarily as a signifier of Roeg's development as an artist rather than exploring the question of how one can *think through film colour*?

Therefore to enable my intellectual consideration of colour to come to the fore, rather than be defined by an element that would dominate, the auteur has been relegated to the periphery. Ironically such an act takes its lead from Roeg himself. For he made the point that 'the film belongs to the spectator as much as to the director [...] even more so' (Sinyard 1991: 4). Consequently when the auteur persona of Roeg does enter into my analysis it is always with the caveat that it is primarily a Roeg defined by my approach to colour, not a Roeg that defines my approach to colour. For as John Izod rightly points out the filmmaker:

[...] is a compound firstly of elements encoded into the film texts together with, secondly, our own inscription of the psychological and moral characteristics that seems to us to explain those traces and, thirdly, our projection of our own needs and emotions into the text.

(Izod 1992: 249)

A further reason for limiting my analysis to just three films is an intellectual response to the complexity of colour within Roeg's work. To put it quite simply, to attempt to provide a series of case studies that endeavoured to cover Roeg's entire cinematographic and directorial output would simply result in an theoretical engagement with colour that could only function on a surface level. The resultant

someone decided that the New Celibacy might not be helped by association with Roeg's name. *Bad Timing*'s main claim to fame is the scene where Art Garfunkel has a nasty attack of necrophilia, in glorious Technicolor, on Theresa Russell's naked and lifeless body. It gives a whole new layer of meaning to the gravestone in the AIDS commercial.

(Lanza 1989: 91)

analysis would be based more on neo-formalist aspects of colour rather than delving into the ideological and cultural values being played out through colour's onscreen presence. Therefore, by choosing to focus on a small selection of films not only brings colour to the fore but also provides the space within which I can demonstrate the intellectual richness that emerges in the face of colour. This methodology of basing my analysis on a select number of focussed case studies is an approach that I have drawn from Technicolor theorist Scott Higgins who rightly notes that:

While film scholars have provided technological surveys and broad-spectrum discussion of style, we have generally shied from the problems of how color is handled moment by moment, what specific duties it serves with respect to narrative, and how it helps shape visual perception. *Only* case studies [...] afford the opportunity to examine precise details of color style and to consider how color develops across films in their entirety.

(Higgins 2007: 19) [italics my emphasis]

So the next question that needs to be addressed is why have I selected these particular three films as my case studies? One reason is simply that these films belong to a twelve-year period in which Roeg created work that both challenged and subverted normative cinematic strategies. In his first decade as a director Roeg released five feature films and one cinematographic project, for aside from my three films already mentioned Roeg also directed *Walkabout* (1971) and *The Man Who Fell to Earth* (1976), and performed cinematography duties on the documentary *Glastonbury Fayre* (Neal, 1972).³ My decision to focus on this period was also influenced by the, until recent, lack of academic engagement with the seventies in British film studies. Before the ultimate shift to focussing in on colour, the original inception of the thesis was to contribute to the recent upsurge in the critical re-evaluation of this maligned period in British film culture. A period bereft of critical consideration until the recent collections *Seventies British Cinema* (Shail, 2008) *Don't Look Now: British Cinema of the 1970s* (Newland, 2010) and the 2007 conference *Don't Look Now* held by the University of Exeter. As Robert Shail notes in terms of film scholarship the 1970s is a 'period that seems to have remained unknown' (Shail 2008: xi). A key reason for such neglect has been that the 1970s has, until recently, been perceived as a period of cinematic

³ Projects that never saw the light of day but that Roeg was attached to during this decade included (allegedly): *Hammett*, *Rocky*, *Flash Gordon* (which was going to star Debbie Harry of Blondie fame, another pop-star insertion by Roeg), *Deadly Honeymoon*, and *Out of Africa*.

mundanity. A decade of *Confessions*, big screen adaptations of sitcoms, the demise of Hammer and the subculture of pornography. As Shail continues to discuss:

One hazard confronting anyone attempting to re-examine British cinema of the 1970s is the low reputation of a good deal of its commercial output during the period. The sexist, racist and homophobic attitudes that casually appear in some films, particularly the comedies, horror and sexploitation vehicles seem to have placed them beyond critical examination.

(Shail 2008: xvi)

Such output has led, as Andrew Higson puts it, to the seventies being routinely ‘regarded as a transitional period for cinema, caught between two more significant moments’ (Higson 1994: 217). A period bookended by the popularity of British filmmaking in the 1960s and the envisaged renaissance of the 1980s embodied by *Chariots of Fire* (Hudson, 1981) and the heritage genre amongst others. Intriguingly though synonymous with the 1970s, Roeg himself has been somewhat marginalised from this resurgence of critical interest, as if his work was beyond the need for further consideration.⁴ For example Shail, in discussing previous writing on the seventies, seems to express a sense of boredom with Roeg’s output in this period:

More recent single-volume histories such as Amy Sergeant’s *British Cinema: A Critical History* at least privilege these years with the same level of coverage given to other decades, although her choice of film to represent the 1970s, Nicolas Roeg’s *The Man Who Fell to Earth* (1976) is revealing. Robert Murphy’s choice of film for the decade in his collection [...] is yet another Nicolas Roeg film, *Bad Timing* (1977) [sic].

(Shail 2008: xi-i) [italics my emphasis]

Shail’s sense of frustration, manifest in his use of ‘yet another’ and noting that the choice behind *The Man Who Fell to Earth* is somewhat ‘revealing’ (though Shail never continues to explain what it is that is actually revealed) demonstrates that familiarity has in some respects bred contempt. That even though Roeg during the 1970s was producing a body of work that we can rightly argue would grace any period of

⁴ A marginalisation that I have sought to address within recently published work including a chapter on *Don’t Look Now* in *Don’t Look Now: British Cinema of the 1970s*, and an article on film colour in Roeg’s films in *The British Journal on Film and Television*.

filmmaking, in some respects his notoriety and familiarity, alongside his gradual artistic decline since, has led him to becoming somewhat a blasé topic.

However if we pause to consider Sergeant's choice in focussing on *The Man Who Fell to Earth* it can be justified for a number of reasons. A notable reason is that the film reflects the complex financial situation that British cinema was experiencing at the time. A situation compounded by rising inflation, an economy in recession, and an industry rocked by the dramatic withdrawal of American finance. Such financial uncertainty was compounded by the continual ascendancy of alternative forms of entertainment, such as television, that diverted the consumer and their money. As Justin Smith notes:

Few old-style studio producers and their journeymen directors survived into the 1970s. From now on the old rules did not apply. Much film funding was characterized hereafter by one-off projects, often financed from a range of diverse sources [...] Scratch production outfits were formed and disbanded, new temporary alliances forged on the basis of expediency. This situation, while tenuous, may also be seen to have opened up rare opportunities for creative freedom on the part of enterprising and ambitious talents.

(Smith 2008: 74)

Smith's latter point, of creative freedom, is one that I would argue is particularly apt for Roeg and the means in which he secured funding for his work. Famously *The Man Who Fell to Earth* is notable in that it was the first British film, shot by a British crew, entirely financed by British money (the film was backed by British Lion), to be shot on location in America (to be precise New Mexico).⁵ The film also saw Roeg's continued fascination with casting pop-stars in his films, David Bowie taking on the role of James Newton. Roeg's casting of Bowie (a casting that followed Mick Jagger and preceded Art Garfunkel) post The Beatles and their global impact both musically and cinematically is somewhat subversive in that Roeg did the unthinkable, by placing pop artists into his films but denying them the space to perform their normative musical

⁵ Financially *The Man Who Fell to Earth* also performed well at the box office, in particular the US, where it was the 23rd highest grossing British film of the seventies. Making \$3m in rentals, though this pales somewhat when one considers that the top grossing British film in the US during that decade was *Superman* (1978) that achieved \$82.8m.

persona.⁶ Therefore, I would argue, that it is actually *unsurprising* that Sergeant should pick a film that exemplified the differing discourses surrounding British cinema at the time.

The decision therefore to focus on Roeg and his work from this period is in part to still contribute to the emerging critical engagement on 1970s British cinema. That through considering colour's role in Roeg's experimental and innovative stylistic strategies, not only can we reflect on the vibrancy of this maligned decade, but further reassess the role of Roeg in this period. Consequently it is as much colour's role within the *mise-en-scene* that has been the basis for my choice of films to engage with via the case studies. For, as will become clear as the thesis progresses, not only is each film of considerable importance within the context of Roeg's canon but further that each film employs a notably different strategy in its implementation of film colour.

A final aspect behind choosing these three films is that each has attracted a considerable level of theoretical consideration since their release. Both *Performance* and *Don't Look Now* are subjects of monographs published by the *BFI Modern Classic* series (written by Colin MacCabe and Mark Sanderson respectively), and writers such as John Izod, Teresa de Lauretis, Peter Wollen, Philip French, Anna Powell, Robert Kolker, Pauline Kael, Marsha Kinder (amongst many) have all written on one, or more, of the three films. I have made a deliberate decision to focus on those films in Roeg's canon that have attracted critical engagement, rather than those Roeg films that have been subject to a certain level of academic neglect. For, as I hope to demonstrate, through an analysis of colour what emerges are fresh perspectives, perspectives that, as it were, remained hidden within the chromatic. That through colour what emerges is an alternative Roeg, one that augments and intersects with previous critical discussion. Hence it is worth pausing to consider how Roeg's work has been considered in previous theoretical writing and how in turn this thesis' focus on film colour contributes to that existing body of work.

Currently there are five monographs dedicated to Roeg, the first being Neil Feineman's 1978 *Nicolas Roeg*. The second monograph released on Roeg was Joseph Lanza's 1989 *Fragile Geometry: The Films, Philosophy and Misadventures of Nicolas Roeg*. This were then followed by Neil Sinyard's 1991 *The Films of Nicolas Roeg*; John Izod's

⁶ Of course Mick Jagger was the exception to this rule in that he did get to sing in *Performance*.

Jungian centered *The Films of Nicolas Roeg: Myth and Mind* (1992); and finally Scott Salwolke's 1993 *Nicolas Roeg Film by Film*. Aside notably from Lanza's, each monograph has adopted the same linear approach to Roeg's work, covering each directorial project with a case study that predominantly explores aspects of space, time, representation and narrative.⁷ Each ventures the well-established argument that Roeg through his temporal and narrative play constructs a commercial cinema that denies the normative conventions so inherently associated with that model. As Lanza recounts Roeg is, in some respects, 'a Luca Brasi of the cinema world who prefers to disfigure narrative conventions prior to obliterating them' (Lanza 1989: 16). However, narrative subversion aside, Lanza importantly reaffirms that Roeg '[...] remains a commercial director meeting the conservative trend with a frontal assault, deploying hackneyed stories and subverting them at the same time' (Ibid: 16).

Filmmaker Paul Greengrass, in a recent BAFTA celebration of Roeg's work, made a powerful point regarding Roeg's resistant position in the larger context of British cinema. That for him Roeg:

Stands as a beacon, he was a defender who refused, in a sense, to bow his vision to the great culturally conservative juggernaut that rolled into town in the 1980s [...] which demanded a certain filmmaking conformity, it was the victory of genre, it was the victory of commerce, in the sense, culturally conservative hegemony.

(Greengrass 2009)

Whereas Danny Boyle found within Roeg's films an alternative cinematic experience to that of the normative models of Hollywood and British cinema:

For me [...] I couldn't find anything in David Lean [...] I couldn't find anything in light sabres either [...] I was into punk and music which was exploding at the time, this freedom, this sex, revolt and violence [...] I found it in Nic Roeg's films. We had a Picasso in our midst, at that time, an iconoclast, a guy not interested in perfection, but interested in blowing things away to see what else was there [...].

⁷ Lanza's book differs in that its structure flows like a Roeg film, shifting backwards and forwards, connecting seemingly disparate chapters and subjects together. However stylistic differences aside Lanza retreats to discussing Roeg through those key aspects that have become the dominant signifiers of Roeg's filmmaking persona.

(Boyle 2009)

This tension between commercialism and artistic expression within Roeg's work leads Neil Sinyard to locate Roeg's subversive presence as a continuation of what he terms the:

[...] mad poet stream of British cinema which, for some, is the real, great tradition of British film: not the tasteful quality cinema of Lean, Olivier, Carol Reed, the social realists, Puttnam or Attenborough, but the cinema of Powell and Pressburger, Russell, Boorman, Michael Reeves – Hammer rather than Ealing.

(Sinyard 1990: 4)⁸

However such associations, though on one hand can attract critical acclaim, can also lead to condemnation. As Lanza notes:

Powell and Pressburger's exploits foreshadow Roeg's own career debacles since the British film establishment bestows a similar reception: praise for technical skill and condemnation for what is perceived as poor taste, flamboyance and lack of coherence

(Lanza 1989: 127)

Scott Salwolke also adopts a similar position proposing that the issue with the critical, industrial and spectator reception to Roeg's films is that they are inherently complex objects. A complexity that dislocates the spectator more used to being submerged into a recurring pattern of genre, star and narrative. Salwolke asks the question of 'what lies behind the neglect Roeg has suffered?' before offering the following factors as possible answers:

In fact, there have been a variety of factors, some of which Roeg has had little control over. The first is that his films demand attention. They cannot be viewed in the same manner as can a film by Steven Spielberg or Brian DePalma, in which the images hurtle at the viewer. Roeg's films seem subliminal by comparison. They are filled with references to other mediums which help to expand on the film's central theme, but these references are often so brief that most viewers can easily miss them or if

⁸ As Roeg himself argues, 'of course I could make a film in the realist or social tradition. It would not be me and I could only do it once' (Roeg 1985: 14).

they do notice them, they may not make the necessary association. The editing also frustrates viewers, with its nonlinear approach; past, present and future are often juxtaposed in the same sequence. More problematical is Roeg's tendency to create lead characters who are unemotional and detached.

(Salwolke 1993: Vii-Viii)

Though I don't fully concur with Salwolke's argument that a filmmaker can be too complex to be successful (Christopher Nolan is a British filmmaker whose innovative work in Hollywood are box office successes for example), I do agree that in the dawn of the blockbuster, the age of linearity and closure, Roeg (along with contemporaries such as Jarman, Russell and Greenaway) offered a considerably different cinematic experience. As Sinyard discusses Roeg's visual style constructs:

A packed visual and aural surface that engages an audiences attention on more than one level at any time. He is a complete film-maker who, one feels, could not express himself in any other form.

(Sinyard 1991: 1)

A complex surface within which 'time is fragmented, perceptions are fractured. Roeg's films often move towards enigma rather than closure, leaving a space that the spectator must fill out for him or herself' (Ibid: 138). A point that I will return to in a moment.

Roeg's commercially subversive stance echoes ideas raised by François Truffaut who Roeg worked with in 1966 on *Fahrenheit 451*. For Truffaut, in his iconic interview with Hitchcock, notoriously dismissed British cinema out of hand. Truffaut proposed that Hitchcock only found his true creative 'peak' when he made the transition to Hollywood, that, for Truffaut, 'there's something about England that's anticinematic' (Truffaut 1983: 124). Pressed by a somewhat bemused Hitchcock to elaborate exactly what he means, Truffaut offers the following:

Well, to put it bluntly, isn't there a certain incompatibility between the terms 'cinema' and 'Britain'. This may sound farfetched, but I get the feeling that there are national characteristics [...] that are antidramatic in a sense [...] national characteristics [that] are in conflict with plastic stylization and even with the stylization of the actors.

(Ibid: 124)

Truffaut continues his castigation by listing a number of what he considers British characteristics that he found to be, in essence, anticinematic: including subdued emotion, visual modesty, absence of passion and a literariness which affects Britain's cinematic output. It is interesting to note that those elements that Truffaut listed as being typical of British cinema, are notably absent in Roeg's own work. One charge that could not be levelled at his work in the 1970s would be a lack of passion or visual modesty.

Roeg himself acknowledged that his collaboration with Truffaut was in some respects a defining point in terms of his own directorial style. In particular one notable influence upon Roeg's stylistic approach was Truffaut's aim for his films to 'be 'read' in terms of images' (Combs 1984/85: 43). An ambition that Roeg subsequently reaffirmed:

I create image and tell stories on film and if you're dealing with thought on film, then I think it's cheating to use literary means. I want people to read the images in my films.

(Roeg in Kennedy 1980: 24)

As Roeg himself reflected such an approach eventually left him situated 'outside the mainstream of British cinema. But then I have to watch the films I make. I can't make films to please the organizers of a film year or whatever' (quoted in Lanza 1989: 82). A statement that of course is not fully truthful when one considers for example that *Insignificance* was one of the UK submissions to the in-competition films at the 1985 Cannes Film Festival, winning the Technical Prize.

Consequently however it has been those alternative cinematic traits that predominantly define Roeg's stylistic and narrative strategies that have drawn the greatest amount of critical attention. A principle focus of past writing has been on Roeg's manipulation of time and space, in particular his distinctive montage strategies. As Michael Dempsey has pointed out, though resembling the montage theory advocated by Eisenstein, Roeg produces markedly different results:

Roeg's montage does not say that two shots are connected, it says that they might be. Eisenstein's editing aims at certainty, Roeg's for uncertainty. With Roeg, A plus B does not necessarily equal C; it may equal D or Q or nothing, and plus may be minus. When his rapid juxtapositions outrun our ability to sort them out, we tumble into an uncertainty that, in the hands of a hack, would be merely cheap but that, in his, becomes genuinely

metaphysical. He uses them to undercut our allegiance to reason, our dogged confidence that we are standing on solid ground.

(Dempsey 1974: 175)⁹

Roeg's 'mosaic manner' (Milne 1980: 43) has become a recurring draw for the majority of writing on Roeg's work. In part this can be attributed to the way in which Roeg's narrative structures, as I have already noted, defy the normative modes that we find dominant within British cinema. Instead of continuity and linearity we find ourselves immersed into realms of ellipses and fractures that ultimately reflect on the art of film itself. As Lanza argues Roeg's 'self-enclosed storytelling calls attention to a ruptured communication system. Its gaps tempt us to impose our own meaning' (Lanza 1993: 117). Gaps that Kinder and Houston, in their consideration of the function of insider and outsider in Roeg's work, point out forces the spectator into a unique position. That the spectator is 'forced to dissect and reconstruct in order to gain access to meaning; we [the spectator] provide the consciousness in which the perception of opposition and integration must take place' (Kinder & Houston 1978: 317).

Robert Kolker argues that Roeg's disruption of the act of spectatorship through the construction of time, space and narrative is a continuation of the 'great experiments in narrative cinema which took place in the 1960s' (Kolker 1977: 82). A period of experimentation that came to an end due to differing economic and artistic pressures. As Kolker goes on to discuss in the seventies 'filmmakers seem to be returning to safe structures: motivated characters, closed narrative forms, invisible editing, unobtrusive composition, in short the zero degree style of classical Hollywood moviemaking' (Ibid: 82).

Kolker continues that whereas the likes of Penn, Russell and Antonioni had become increasingly marginalised, Roeg in contrast through the 1970s 'is one of the few

⁹ Roeg described the origins of his montage style in an interview with Hacker and Price that:

What first really hooked me into thinking that this was a job that I would like to become deeply involved in was as a young man sitting at 'Lingua Synchrona,' where they dubbed French films into English. Running the films backwards and forwards to get the words right, I realized that film was a time machine.

(Hacker & Price 1991: 352)

commercial directors who upholds a spirit of experimentation' (Ibid: 82). An experimentation that is based around an organic structure comprised of many differing layers. As Kolker goes onto illustrate:

Roeg tends to suppress transitions, withhold almost any sense of motivation, supply the least amount of information possible for an event or an action taken. The decoupage of the films is not based upon a desire for clear transitions and conventional narrative flow. Great leaps of time and space are made, the connections of which are left unstated. At the same time, the composition of any given shot, often in deep focus, is rich and suggestive, not only in terms of what is going on within the shot, but between shots as well. Roeg is one of the great montage makers of modern cinema, and his narratives depend on the enormous amount of information offered by the repetition of forms, objects, gestures, colours and sounds from shot to shot and from sequence to sequence.

(Ibid: 82)

Kolker succinctly lays out those elements that have signified Roeg's filmmaker persona, in particular his innovative use of montage. Narrative, time and space become within Roeg's work unfixed, tenuous links that as Kinder and Houston set out we, the spectator, interact with both consciously and subconsciously. It is also worth noting that Kolker raises the question of colour, but as we will later discuss in this thesis, most theorists quickly shut down such chromatic avenues preferring instead to engage with more traditional elements within the *mise-en-scene*.

As film theory has developed through the last three decades so there has emerged a small corpus of work that has returned to Roeg's seventies work from differing directions. However, within each there still lingers a preference for analysing his work through an exploration of space, time and composition. The likes of Teresa De Lauretis, whose writing I discuss in the case study of *Bad Timing*, locates time and space as epitomising representations of femininity and power. Sabine Schülting in analysing *Don't Look Now* in her 1999 article *Dream Factories* adopts a Deleuzian based approach that draws on the latter's concept of chrySTALLINE time to explore narrative and space within the film. Ironically, though this Deleuzian approach seemingly proffers a new way of interacting with Roeg, the resultant analysis actually retreats back to that which has already been said, by the likes of Kolker et al, albeit through markedly different terminology.

When analysis chooses to move beyond the domination of narrative structure and temporal play, what emerges are articles that demonstrate the rich complexity of Roeg's work. Of particular note is Mark Gallagher's 2004 article *Tripped Out: The Psychedelic Film and Masculinity*. Gallagher returns to the idea of Roeg's films being a continuation of the counter-cultural aesthetics of 1960s Hollywood. In particular Gallagher discusses the relationship between psychedelic and masculinity in a range of films including *Performance*, and also *Easy Rider* (Hopper, 1969) and *Point Blank* (Boorman, 1967). I will return to Gallagher's article in my discussion of *Performance* but suffice to say for the moment that a central aspect of the article is that Roeg, Boorman and Hopper created realities in which the crisis of masculinity was played out through a subversive milieu that he argues is now lacking in contemporary Western cinema.

A final article that offers an innovative approach to Roeg is Mattias Frey's *London a la Mod*, in which Frey explores the tension between fashion, genre and space in *Performance*. Frey's article is of further note for it is one of the few moments in which colour is raised as possibly having some significance in Roeg's style. That *Performance*'s *mise-en-scene* is 'depicted in such an over-the-top, stylized manner that it becomes abstraction. Preceding an ambush [...] the walls of Chas' flat are splashed and smeared with red paint [...]' (Frey 2006: 371). However Frey, on raising the question of colour and its potential within the *mise-en-scene* quickly returns back, quite rightly, to his principle questions surrounding the body and fashion.

The overall reticence in engaging with colour in Roeg's films is intriguing when one considers the majority are replete with moments where colour's presence seems to burn out from the screen. The omnipresent red coat of *Don't Look Now*; Bowie's orange hair in *The Man Who Fell to Earth*; the golden river spilling out into the white snow of *Eureka*; *Performance*'s red hair and green walls; the green landscapes of *Puffball*; the blue seas of *Castaway*; the pastel shades of *Track 29*, the traces of purple silks on skin tones in *Full Body Massage*, the primary colours of *The Masque of the Red Death*.

When colour has been engaged with, it has consistently resulted in a superficial or vague consideration of colour's function and presence within the frame. For example Lanza describes Roeg's implementation of colour in *Don't Look Now* as:

A mystifying visual pattern with numerous red images: the daughter's raincoat; the person in the slide; the robe worn by a hotel tenant who

discovers John lurking; a handkerchief the psychic fondles; and even the tinted base of the glass John drinks from while hearing the news of his son's injury.

(Lanza 1989: 98)

Red's presence for Lanza is 'mystifying', and rendered only articulate through reducing colour to an association to its object other. In other words, Lanza recounts the multiplicity of red within the filmic frame, inscribing a negative or threatening quality to its presence, but apart from identifying it as a 'pattern' Lanza ends his analysis here. However Lanza's is not the only analysis that reneges from moving beyond the symbolic when discussing colour in Roeg's work. Salwolke, again in relation to *Don't Look Now*, at one point in his analysis seeks to argue that the colour red has a consistent thematic presence:

The opening sequence will delineate many recurring motifs of the films: the figure in red (and the prominence of this colour throughout the film), broken glass, and water, as well as indications of John's special gift. The image of the red figure in the slide becomes the reflection of the girl's red coat in the water, the resemblance already uniting them [...] In his haste, John knocks a glass of wine over, and the red liquid spreads across the table and onto the slide. The liquid begins to turn the image red, as if it were bleeding.

(Salwolke 1993: 39)¹⁰

However, like Lanza before, Salwolke though inferring a connection between images through the presence of red is seemingly incapable of moving beyond the cosmetic façade of red's on-screen presence. Salwolke in his analysis of the red liquid spreading across the frame of the slide, for example, ignores that the red finally turns to blue at the zenith of its arc. One can only assume that Salwolke's omission of this moment of blue is primarily due to his focus on red and its thematic potential, and further, how blue's presence in turn resists his reading of colour in the film. However, as we will later discuss in the case study on *Don't Look Now*, it is this very collision of colours that is a fundamental component of Roeg's colour strategy.

¹⁰ Given its symbolic use of red *Don't Look Now* seems to be the Roeg film that draws out discussions in and around colour.

It does therefore seem somewhat paradoxical that what both Lanza and Salwolke have identified, the importance of the colour red within the visual scheme of *Don't Look Now* is not taken any further. Instead colour is simply an offshoot, a visual manifestation of the *mise-en-scene*, nothing more or less. However Salwolke and Lanza are not the only scholars to ignore questions that emerge within the chromatic. As Edward Branigan rightly noted 'criticism of film to the present day has largely proceeded as if all films were made in black and white' (in: Dalle Vacche & Price 2006: 121). Aumont reaffirms this paucity of engagement with colour concluding that it is 'surprising to have to report that a theory of colour is still almost totally lacking [within film studies]' (Aumont 1997: 216). There has existed a general reticence within film theory to engage with colour, to consider what role colour plays when we as spectators engage with a film, how colour functions alongside narrative, and finally the role of colour within a filmmaker's body of work. However this omission of colour has begun to be recently readdressed by film theorists such as Scott Higgins, Brian Price and Sarah Street, as well as the recent conference, *Colour and the Moving Image* hosted by the University of Bristol in 2009.

Therefore it is this lack of critical analysis and attention paid to Roeg's use of colour, in comparison to the extensive writing on Roeg's fractured narrative arcs and associative editing techniques, that reinforces the relevance of this thesis and its contribution to writing in and around Roeg. For I feel, if we dare to unpick colour, it may well enhance our understanding of the importance of Roeg as a director in the context of British cinema, whilst adding to the growing reassessment of colour's on-screen presence theoretically. As Roeg in the promotional book released alongside his film *Insignificance* commented:

Days and weeks go by in my life and my thoughts of love, life, hopes and dreams flip about in such a random way that it seems they have no pattern at all, until it gets to the point when I feel that I must find some order, and then in a half-conscious way I look for some common root or at least a staging-post or milestone from which to get my bearings.

(Nicolas Roeg in: Norman and Barraclough 1985: 4)

Thus film colour is the 'common root' that will be the focus of this thesis, a staging-post through which patterns of interest will hopefully emerge. In the next chapter I set out my own approach to the question of how to discuss film colour. Considering the issues in thinking through, approaching, and analysing film colour. The questions that I seek

to address is how we can discuss colour outside of the normative strategy of conceiving colour as being a signifier of something else (i.e. colour as emotion, moral status or substitute for the semiotic). How does ideology fit into colour if one moves away from semiotics? Finally what does it mean to think through colour?

What then follows is a series of case studies each focussing in on a different relationship between film colour and a specific Roeg film. The first case study is on *Performance*, and considers the potential relationship between colour, masculinity and violence. For colour within *Performance* focuses primarily on two masculine bodies that of the gangster and the rock star. What the chapter seeks to consider is the relationship between colour and masculinity and what happens to the body cinematically when it becomes one dominated by colour. It also seeks to explore the relationship between violence, a thematic preoccupation of the film, and the film's colour strategy. Finally I explore how colour and femininity functions in this matrix of masculinity and violence, and what occurs when it is the masculine, and not the feminine, that is the spectacle of attraction.

The second case study looks at a Roeg film synonymous with its use of colour, and in particular one specific hue, that of red, the film being Roeg's cult horror *Don't Look Now*. Intriguingly, and as I have already briefly alluded to, for a film that uses colour so deliberately, past intellectual consideration has always been drawn to more traditional areas of enquiry, such as editing, time, genre and adaptation. What I seek to explore in this case study is how colour works alongside the film's themes of perception, memory and recognition. In particular it is colour's relationship to horror, and to Freud's notion of the uncanny that forms the basis of this case study. For what happens to colour when one considers it through the lens of a semiotic constructed discourse such as psychoanalysis? Is there a relationship between colour and horror, do concepts such as Kristeva's notion of the abject share similar qualities to colour? How does the film use red to explore notions of identity, gaze and recollection?

The final case study takes a slightly different tack to the previous two, for the central question is how can colour be discussed if it is not dominant feature of the aesthetic? How can colour be analysed if there is no colour? To answer this question the chapter focuses on the Freudian laden, voyeuristic and sadistic melodrama that is *Bad Timing*. The chapter adopts two different considerations of colour, the first being that of how colour acts as a means of connecting seemingly disparate spaces and bodies. This is then followed by a consideration of the function of artwork of Gustav Klimt that is

predominant within the film. In particular how Klimt's painterly style informs not only the film's colour strategy, but also its themes and narrative concerns.

The overall aim of this thesis, to conclude this introduction, is to explore whether a consideration of colour opens up alternative perceptions of a film. What does it mean to think through colour? Are there ideological ramifications in terms of body and gender when we examine colour? How can we talk about colour? Is there any point in talking about film colour? These are some of the questions that I attempt to address in the chapters that follow.

Sculpting in Colour: Film, Theory & Aesthetics

Shut your eyes, wait, think of nothing. Now, open them [...] One sees nothing but a great coloured undulation. What then? An irradiation and glory of colour. This is what a picture should give us [...] an abyss in which the eye is lost, a secret germination, a coloured state of grace [...] Lose consciousness. Descend with the painter into the dim tangled roots of things, and rise again from them in colours, be steeped in the light of them.

Cézanne (quoted in Milner 1971: 25)

Practically everybody who judged the photoplays from the aesthetic point of view remained at the old comparison [...] something which simply imitates the true art of the drama on the stage. May it not be, on the contrary, that it does not imitate or replace anything, but is in itself an art as different from that of the theatre as the painter's art is different from that of the sculptor? And may it not be high time, in the interest of theory and of practice, to examine the aesthetic conditions which would give independent rights to the new art? If this is really the situation, it must be a truly fascinating problem, as it would give the chance to watch the art in its first unfolding. A new aesthetic cocoon is broken; where will the butterfly's wings carry him?

Hugo Münsterberg (quoted in Langdale 2002: 63)

Questions of Sculpting

I've likened this chapter's theoretical consideration of film colour as being akin to sculpting for two distinct reasons. Firstly I have come to consider colour to be a plane of sculpture born from the interface of technology, artistic intent and spectator. Secondly when approaching the unknowable qualities of colour from a theoretical perspective in order to fashion out my argument I have engaged in bouts of intellectual sculpting. A sculpting that has required utilising various different tools, from Batchelor's chromophobia to Bakhtin's grotesque, to fashion out of the seemingly formless presence of colour within Roeg's films a sense of meaning, a sense of understanding. Before moving onto a discussion of how exactly my intellectual sculpting in colour takes form it is first important to consider colour's theoretical and industrial development. For colour's relationship to both raises up implications that have in turn shaped my own theoretical approach to colour.

The first point that needs to be made is that film colour is the element within the *mise-en-scene* that seemingly divides opinion. Not only in terms of how colour within a film should be implemented but further its ideological, cultural and artistic worth. For example filmmakers Eric Rohmer and Sergei Eisenstein adopt disparate positions in their respective writing on colour in film. Rohmer was moved to express his anxiety that the emergence of film colour 'may tarnish the object's natural brilliancy which the camera recreates very well on its own' (quoted in Dalle Vacche and Price 2006: 124). Eisenstein in contrast argued that film colour deserved to be placed 'on an equal footing with the other elements of montage within film-making' (Eisenstein 1975: 142).

Film colour was not only a preoccupation for those behind the camera. Douglas Fairbanks for example, discussing his 1926 two-strip Technicolor feature *The Black Pirate*, was moved to note that the use of colour at the time was:

[...] always met with overwhelming objections. Not only has the process of colour motion picture photography never been perfected, but there has been a grave doubt whether, even if properly developed, it could be applied, *without detracting* more than it added to motion picture technique. The argument has been that it would tire and *distract the eye*, take attention from acting, and facial expression, blur and *confuse* the action. In short it has been felt that it would militate against the simplicity and directness which motion pictures derive from the unobtrusive black and white.

(Fairbanks 1967: 54) [Italics my emphasis]

Like Rohmer, Fairbanks situates colour as a presence that potentially can disrupt and divert. Adornments that if used unwisely will needlessly draw the spectator away from the reality onscreen. One could argue that Fairbank's dismay at colour can be interpreted as being located around its impact on his onscreen star persona. For, as we will later discuss, colour would eventually lead to the elevation of the feminine over the masculine in terms of spectacle (an elevation not without ideological implications of course). However, it was not only those associated with production that felt unease with colour's potentially subversive presence, but also some within the critical domain who initially perceived colour as again being a negative adornment to the image.

Rudolf Arnheim in *Film as Art* express his concern that for all of its implicit potential colour may ultimately prove detrimental to film as an art form. Arnheim argues that:

What will the colour film have to offer when it reaches technical perfection?
We know what we shall lose artistically by abandoning the black-and-white
film. Will colour ever allow us to achieve a similar compositional precisions,
a similar independence of 'reality'?

(Arnheim 1958: 130)

Arnheim's concern is one echoed by Siegfried Kracauer within his book *Theory of Film*. Kracauer seems to dismiss colour altogether but then paradoxically in the same sentence notes its centrality for film. Kracauer states that 'this book [...] avoids broaching the problems of colour [...] film being a complex medium, the best method of getting at its core is to disregard, at least temporarily, its essential ingredients and variants' (Kracauer 1960: vii). Kracauer in his disregarding of colour adopts the hegemonic reaction of colour being artistically inferior to black and white, arguing that:

Now note that colour, for example, involves numerous issues which cannot be apprehended in a cursory manner. To mention one such issue, experience shows that, contrary to what should be expected, natural colours, as recorded by the camera, tend to weaken rather than increase the realistic effect which black and white movies are able to produce.

(Ibid: vii)

Kracauer and Arnheim exemplify at some level the issues that have complicated film theory's engagement with colour. An engagement defined by an overall neglect, limited to a corpus of work that has intermittently emerged only to then subsequently retreat back to the edges of film theory. As film colour theorist Brian Price rightly argues 'despite the *centrality* of colour to the experience and technology of cinema, it has most often been no more than the occasional subject of the theorist, historian, or practitioner' (Price 2006: 1) [italics my emphasis]. Price proposes that this sporadic engagement with film colour has resulted in it being nothing more than 'a source of fleeting observation [rather] than of rigorous conceptualization' (ibid: 1). Resultantly 'one is hard pressed to find traditions of colour scholarship, a series of articles over time that make use of, acknowledge, and build upon the claims of a previous colourist' (ibid: 1-2).¹¹

It seems somewhat paradoxical that film theory has overall deemed colour worthy only of fleeting observation when one considers that we spend our lives immersed in a sensory experience that is visually defined solely by colour. That our perception of reality as we know it visually *is* colour. Natalie Kalmus, the head of Technicolor development, argued that in terms of intellectual interest:

Colour appreciation, as a study, is almost entirely neglected, although colour plays a most important and continuous part in our lives. The average person listens to music for only a short portion of the time, but every moment of the day he [sic] looks upon some form of colour.

(Kalmus 1935: 140)

It's intriguing, an ideological oxymoron, that we resist thinking about colour because it is ever present. That due to our sense of reality being embodied by colour we paradoxically fail to see what is, quite literally, in front of our eyes. In the case studies that follow one conscious decision was to explore moments when colour is manifestly brought to our attention, as in *Performance*; but also those uses of colour which would

¹¹ Colour scholarship, though limited, does comprise of writing from both industrial and theoretical perspectives. For example the writing of Natalie Kalmus and Sergei Eisenstein in the 1930s; the innovative work of Arnheim and Bazin in the 1960s; Steve Neale and Dudley Andrew's writing in the 1980s; and finally the current upsurge in film colour led by the likes of Sarah Street, Tom Gunning, Scott Higgins and Brian Price amongst others.

seemingly adhere to maintaining a sense of reality within the *mise-en-scene* as in the case study on *Bad Timing*.

Another factor behind film theory's lack of engagement can be put down to the problem with the way in which we can talk about colour. Brian Price proposes colour has become demarcated as superficial and thus devoid of intellectual worth due to the very issue of what we mean by colour. Price argues that:

Despite the centrality of colour to the experience of film and the extent to which filmmakers exhibit high degrees of colour consciousness, it remains subject to much skepticism and apprehension within the discipline [film studies].

(Price 2006: 3)

In fact though colour had existed since the inception of the art form itself, it wasn't until the 1970s that critical engagement turned to the question of how one could talk about colour in film. In particular Edward Branigan's article 'The Articulation of Colour in a Filmic System' (1976) in which he explored the relationship between the auteur and colour in Godard's *Deux Ou Troi Choses Que Je Sais D'elle/Two or Three Things I know About Her* (1966-67). Eschewing narrative context, Branigan explored colour through its plasticity, applying a rigid schematic of solidity versus fluidity, shape and surface etc. Ed Buscombe was another who engaged with colour in his article 'Sound and Colour' (1978), in particular the tension between representation and realism within Hollywood's use of colour. Stanley Cavell's consideration of colour in his 1979 work *The World Viewed: Reflections on the Ontology of Film* was intriguing in that Cavell was one of the first to look beyond colour. Cavell sought to move beyond technical or empirical approaches to consider how 'colour can serve to unify the projected world in another way than by direct reliance upon, or implication toward, the spatial-temporal consistency of the real world' (Cavell 1979: 81). Disappointingly though Cavell soon retreats back to discussing colour through the lens of fantasy, but what he brings up is the idea of colour as connection, an idea I will return to later in this thesis.

However for those cases where colour is perceived as a positive aspect of the filmic experience, there still lingered equal doubt about colour's onscreen presence.

Tarkovsky for example in 1975 felt moved to write the following:

The perception of colour is a physiological and psychological phenomenon to which, as a rule, nobody pays particular attention. The picturesque character

of a shot, due often enough simply to the quality of the film, is one more artificial element loaded onto the image, and something has to be done to counteract it if you mind about being faithful to life. You have to try to neutralize colour, to modify its impact on the audience. If colour becomes the dominant dramatic element of the host, it means that the director and cameraman are using a painter's method to affect the audience.

(Tarkovsky 1975: 138)

In the 1980s what begins to emerge is a series of writing that brings to the fore questions of ideology and socio-cultural implications of film colour. Dudley Andrew in his essay 'The Post-Struggle for Colour' (1980) for example adopts a transnational perspective to discuss France's delayed implementation of colour in the aftermath of World War II. However it is Steve Neale's writing on Technicolor in 1985, a major re-engagement with film colour, which broaches an approach that combines empirical discussion alongside debates concerning ideology and representation. For Neale eloquently sets out the technical development of Technicolor, whilst introducing the intellectual tensions that also emerge in its implementation, in particular the onscreen interaction between colour and femininity. It is Neale's proposal of approaching colour via its ideological qualities that I intend to follow this thesis, focusing on questions of cultural relations, representation and ideology with colour in Nicolas Roeg's work.

I will return to questions of theory and colour later for aside from colour's theoretical complexity another interesting tension is that of the relationship between the film industry and colour. Pam Cook locates colour's emergence as being at the formative stages of film as an art form. That '[...] colour has been associated with the cinema in one form or another from the earliest years of the medium: as early as 1896, for example, teams of women were employed to hand-colour films, frame by frame' (Cook 1985: 28).¹²

¹² Intriguingly sounds technical progression, from sound-on-the-disc to direct recording of sound onto film, had a direct impact on colour's technical progression. As Pam Cook continues:

[...] tinting and toning were discontinued because it became evident that the process affected the quality of the soundtrack. It was eventually decided that post-production conversion of black and white images to colour was less sensible than filming with colour stock (Ibid: 28).

Technicolor historian and theorist Scott Higgins also concurs with Cook's argument of colour being one of film's earliest technological innovations. Higgins notes that the:

[...] efforts to join colour to the moving image are as old as cinema itself [...] Spectacular hand colouring was an important aspect of the magic-lantern tradition, and filmmakers had been painting frames at least since the release of Edison's *Annabelle's Dance* in 1895. George Méliès achieved astonishingly intricate hand-coloured effects, most famously in *Le Voyage a travers l'impossible* (1904) [...] Colour in these films is an extravagant embellishment; it captures the eye and inspires wonder [...].

(Higgins 2007: 2)

In the context of the British film industry colour was also being incorporated, albeit in less fantastical productions, through a series of experiments that incorporated colour into both narrative and documentary films. For example the tinting process evident in Percy Stow's adaptation of Shakespeare's *The Tempest* (1908), or the more elaborate stenciling techniques applied in Oliver Pike's *Glimpses of Bird Life* (1910).

It is important to note that film colour at this point became a site of both artistic innovation and corporate competition. In particular in Hollywood during the late twenties wherein emerged a competitive race in terms of developing colour techniques and technology. As David Bordwell comments 'in 1929, over twenty companies claimed basic colour patents, but a single firm won control of the field' (Bordwell 1985: 353).¹³ This company was Technicolor, whose industrial practices would influence the implementation of film colour within Hollywood and beyond for the following decades to come.

The 1930s was the decade in which colour shifted towards becoming technically feasible in terms of studio implementation, as demonstrated by the 1935 Hollywood release of the first three-colour feature *Becky Sharp* (Mamoulian, 1935). As Bordwell comments:

¹³ Bordwell proposes that Technicolor succeeded whilst others failed due to a number of factors. That the 'firm carefully developed, revised and publicized its process. The company was generally sensitive to the business and engineering requirements of Hollywood film production. Moreover, Technicolor Corporation worked effectively with the professional associations, especially the SMPE.' (Bordwell 1985: 353)

During the 1930s, colour film stocks became widely used for the first time. In the 1920s, a small number of films had Technicolor sequences, but the process was crude, using only two colours in combination to create all other hues. The result tended to emphasize greenish-blue and pink tones; it was also too costly to use extensively. By the early 1930s, however Technicolor had been improved. It now used three primary colours and thus could reproduce a large range of hues. Though still expensive, it was soon proved to add hugely to the appeal of many films [...]

(Bordwell & Thompson 2004: 483-4)

However this boom in colour technology also had direct ramifications for the way in which colour would become implemented within film, in particular for Hollywood and by association British cinema. Between 1929-1931 colour film was, as Bordwell notes, very much in vogue. However Technicolor became concerned that untrained cinematographers who were using their processes would produce work that would prove to be detrimental to their product. Consequently Technicolor took an aggressive approach to negate such a possibility, seeking a strategy that, as Bordwell acknowledges, would ensure that colour within 'filmmaking procedures [would become] standardsized' (Bordwell 1985: 354). A standardization that impacted on all aspects of production and through which Technicolor could ensure that their influence would permeate all aspects of the film making process. As Bordwell describes to make a film using Technicolor's film stock:

[...] a producer had to rent the cameras, hire a Technicolor cameraman, use Technicolor make-up, and have the film processed and printed by Technicolor. The producer would also have to accept a 'colour consultant' who would advise what colour schemes to use on sets, costumes, and make-up [...] Only trained crews could operate the camera, and the production's cinematographer had to work closely with the Technicolor cameraman.¹⁴

(Ibid: 354)

Such a specialist vertical approach to production was not simply confined to Hollywood, for Technicolor's production techniques were also carried over into British filmmaking. For example in the late 1930s, Technicolor offered a training programme for British cameramen. The first beneficiary was Jack Cardiff, who would become the

¹⁴ For a reflection on Technicolor's training requirements a succinct discussion takes place with British cinematographer Jack Cardiff, entitled *Cameraman: The Life and Works of Jack Cardiff* (McCall, 2009).

outstanding British Technicolor cinematographer of the 1940s.¹⁵ Technicolor's influence over production was also mirrored in the 1930s and 1940s by an aggressive program of expansion to consolidate its market position, both domestically and abroad. For example in 1937 Technicolor began operating a British division of its business., which produced the first British Technicolor feature, *Wings of the Morning* (Schuster, 1937). Subsequently Technicolor's presence in the United Kingdom led to the likes of Korda's London Films quickly adopting the process, with *The Drum* (1938) and *The Four Feathers* (1939), both shot in Technicolor by Georges Périnal.

However Technicolor's reign was, in some respects, short-lived for despite their control over processes and techniques Technicolor's dominance over British filmmaking was overturned with the emergence of the cheaper Eastman Kodak colour film in the 1950s. The arrival of this cheaper alternative that required no specialist training or equipment was a principal reason for the majority of British films in the 1960s being shot in colour. It is worth noting that in the context of Roeg's cinematographic career up till 1964 his work had been conducted exclusively in black and white, with the last film being Michael Winner's *The System*. That same year however Roeg also conducted his first colour cinematographic project, the colourful and subversive Corman film *The Masque of the Red Death* which was shot on Pathecolour. Colour would from then on be the only form of film stock that Roeg would work in as a cinematographer. Using colour both to adhere to the verisimilitude of the image, as in the adaptations of *Far from the Maddening Crowd* (Schlesinger, 1967) and *Doctor Zhivago* (Lean, 1965), or alternatively to evoke a sense of fantasy and wonder as in *The Masque of the Red Death* and also Truffaut's sci-fi *Fahrenheit 451* (Truffaut, 1966), or the comedy-musical of *A Funny Thing Happened On The Way to the Forum* (Lester, 1966).¹⁶ During Roeg's cinematographic career is evident the emergence of other colour film processes to compete with Technicolor. For Roeg in total worked on ten colour features of which

¹⁵ Talent-spotted by director Michael Powell when lighting second unit shots on *The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp* (1943), Cardiff was promoted to lead cinematographer on *A Matter of Life and Death* (1946), for which he shot the black-and-white scenes in monochrome (i.e. Technicolor but without the colour being added) to achieve an effect he described as "sort of pearly". He won a well-deserved Oscar for *Black Narcissus* (1947), and would almost certainly have won another for *The Red Shoes* (1948) had Hollywood not had cold feet about recognising the same foreign cameraman twice in consecutive years. (<http://www.screenonline.org.uk/tours/cinematography/tour6.html> accessed 10/10/10)

¹⁶ Of course *Dr Zhivago* was a short project for Roeg as Lean, due to artistic differences, replaced him early into filming with Freddie Young.

five were shot on Technicolor, and the other five on differing brands of Eastman Kodak primarily Pathecolour, Metrocolour and DeLuxe.

Competition from Eastman Kodak aside another aspect of resistance to Technicolor's monopoly emerged from the studios themselves. In particular Technicolor found its product being identified, against its own desires, with certain genres. As Neale argues Hollywood in the 1950s perceived colour as still being:

[...] overwhelmingly associated, aesthetically, with spectacle and fantasy. In consequence colour continued to be regularly used in genres like the musical, the western and the adventure film, as well as in Disney's feature cartoons [...] Outside these genres, however, the aesthetic and market values of colour were less certain, less predictable and less profitable.

(Neale 1985: 119)¹⁷

A point that Bordwell concurs with arguing that:

As a service company, Technicolor maintained almost complete control of its product; as a colour process, it had to conform to classical norms. Hollywood's use of Technicolor was almost entirely motivated by genre. It was to the firm's advantage to stress that colour was simply an increase in realism applicable to any film, but the argument did not convince. On the whole, Technicolor was identified with the musical comedy, the historical epic, the adventure story, and the fantasy – in short, the genres of stylization and spectacle.

(Bordwell 1985: 355)

Such a relationship between colour and genre is manifest in Roeg's cinematography, in which we can see evidence that Bordwell's point of colour being associated with particular genres is not restricted simply to Technicolor's early days. For example the use of lighting in conjunction with black and white film stock accentuates the claustrophobic interiors of *The Caretaker* (Donner, 1963). In contrast the following year's *The Masque of the Red Death*'s fantastical splendor cannot be envisaged in anything other than its rich colour aesthetic. Intriguingly this division of colour between genres as evident in these two films quickly became eroded. As Maltby notes the relationship between colour and genre in Hollywood came to an end in the 'mid-

1960s' primarily when colour itself 'became the norm' (Maltby 2003: 250). A normalcy born as Neale rightly identifies from television's adoption of colour:

As television itself adopted colour, meanwhile the aesthetic value of colour in the cinema began to change. As colour began to be used on television for news and current affairs programmes, the overwhelming association of colour with fantasy and spectacle began to be weakened: colour acquired instead the value of realism. Realism, however, was one of the discourses used to support and motivate the use of colour in the cinema in the first place.

(Neale 1985: 121)

A second aspect of concern, one that has particular relevance to this thesis, is that of film colour and its relationship with the body, in particular the female form. As Bordwell recounts 'throughout the 1930s, Technicolor calmed cinematographers' fears that colour would aggravate facial blemishes' (Bordwell 1985: 356).

Such concerns over the representation of the body through colour in turn influenced Technicolor's own colour strategy, particularly surrounding the female form. As Richard Maltby reflects 'Technicolor's colour consultants keyed colour reproduction to skin tones and forcibly discouraged the use of filters or unconventional effects. Above all, a movie's colour was coordinated around the visual presentation of its female star' (Maltby 2003: 249). Edward Buscombe notes that the female star:

[...] must be given undisputed priority as to the colour of make-up, hair and costume which will best complement her complexion and her figure. If her complexion limits the colours she can wear successfully, this in turn restricts the background colours which will complement her complexion and her costumes to best advantage

(Buscombe 1978: 24)

This relationship between colour and femininity will form the basis of my analysis in the case studies on *Don't Look Now* and *Bad Timing* so I won't dwell on the subject now. But it is worth noting from the outset that colour has been a site of contention not only for production but also in terms of ideology and representation. As Maltby reflects in the context of colour and female stars 'the technology that produced them was meant, like Hollywood's other technologies, to be both present and invisible' (Maltby 2003: 249).

It is ironic that as much as Hollywood desired to conceal its artifice of creation so too did film theory ignore colour's theoretical presence within the frame. Resultantly until recently, as Price rightly identifies, this the lack of serious consideration of colour and further colours own complex physical and cultural presence has led to the 'dominant approach to colour primarily adopting an empirically influenced route of thinking' (Price 2006: 3). A route defined by discussions of technical development, industrial demands and fashions of the time. One reason for this preference for an empirically based approach is that colour is a complex element, one imbued with a sense of instability and laden with differing cultural and metaphorical meanings. As Price argues 'the major stumbling block thus far for film theory has concerned the stability of colour as an object (if colour in fact warrants objecthood)' (Ibid: 3).

One aspect of colour's unstable quality is eloquently demonstrated in the following extract from Steve Neale's work on film colour. Neale demonstrates that in reality colour is a physical paradox that exists on multiple levels of reception:

Colour, basically, is the mental or psychological result of the physical action of different light waves on our eyes and optical nervous system. Light itself consists of radiant energy of distinct and different wavelengths. The wavelengths in total form the spectrum of light – that range of radiant energy which the human eye can perceive. The eye and the optic nervous system overall form a specialized apparatus for responding to this range of radiant energy. When we perceive an object as being of a particular colour, this perception is the result of two distinct processes. First, it is the result of the modification of light by the object itself, which, in accordance with its own physical properties, will reflect some elements of the spectrum of light that strikes it and absorbs others. Secondly, it is the result of the physical and psychological characteristics of the perceiving subject and its optical apparatus.

Light is made up, then, of different wavelengths of energy which we perceive as different colours. Objects are perceived as being differently coloured insofar as they absorb and reflect different colour in the spectrum. A red ball, for instance, is a ball which reflects the red light in the spectrum and which absorb most or all of the other colours.

(Neale 1985: 110)

In other words a red ball is, in one sense, every colour except red. This redness at the same time may be altered depending on the source of illumination and degrees of saturation. Consequently colour, or to be more specific the interaction between light,

surface and eye, is not simply a singularity, of one particular quality, but a moment of plurality. A moment marked by an intersection of differing factors that affects the way in which the eye, and in turn the brain, interact with colour's (unstable) presence. Factors simultaneously both physical and cultural, external and internal affect the way in which colour is both perceived, identified and in turn incorporated into our sense of self.

One example of a physical manifestation of this plurality is that of colour-blindness, that is the biological sensitivity to differing wavelengths on the spectrum. For example a non-colour-blind person perceives as 0.44μ (blue-violet), 0.53μ (green-blue) and 0.565μ (green-yellow), any differentiation from the norm will result in the colours that reflect off the screen being internally perceived as markedly different. Or in some cases one hue being close to another, a dominant pattern being that of red and green being hard to differentiate from each other. Hence an individual's experience of a film can differ greatly depending on the way in which the mechanisms of eye and brain in conjunction with light operate. Thus at a physical level we can see that colour itself is unstable, it is not what we see, nor is one spectator's perception of colour necessarily the same as that of a fellow spectator's in the auditorium. In light of colour's physical mutability, it is little wonder that theorists have turned towards more concrete issues and concerns, such as degradation and restoration, that are imbued with a certain sense of finiteness, rather than the infinite theoretical issues that linger within colour itself. Though questions of degradation and restoration are not an aspect that I consider in this thesis, it is worth briefly considering one aspect of how such questions demonstrate colour's physical fluidity in the context of the physical properties of film. A key example, one that has been well documented, is related to the emergence of the cheap colour stock produced by Eastman Kodak.

Positioned as a low cost colour film based on a single-strip colour process, in comparison to the then dominant Technicolor who utilized a three-strip system (which required specialist apparatus and production methods), the former's cheaper costs led to studios embracing the new film stock. However this saving in the present would prove to be detrimental in the future. For Eastman Kodak's physical qualities had repercussions for the durability of film colour as it aged. For whereas Technicolor's development process, known as imbibition, resulted in colour film maintaining over time its original hues and tones. This aging quality was in sharp contrast to films shot on Eastmancolour, which due to the film containing all of the dyes on a single strip,

were prone to rapid fading. Martin Scorsese, as much an avid collector of films as he is a director, famously complained that ‘it took me seven years to find a 35mm print of Luchino Visconti’s *The Leopard* [...] and it’s pink. It’s a pink leopard!’ (quoted in Jacobsen 1980: 147).

Steven Spielberg also expressed his reservations for the way in which *Jaws* (Spielberg, 1975) had become chromatically affected by the degradation of film stock. Spielberg recounting that ‘after only five years, the blue is leaving the water of *Jaws*, while the blood spurting from Robert Shaw’s mouth gets redder and redder’ (quoted in Dalle Vacche & Price 2006: 4). Such degradation of course raises issues concerning our subsequent interaction with colour. As Brian Price asks ‘how can we speak confidently about colour if fading disrupts the original composition? How will we know which version is correct?’ (Price 2006: 4).¹⁸

Price’s question in the context of this thesis will remain unanswered, for questions of aesthetic fidelity, the interaction between biological and industrial apparatus, are areas outside the scope of this thesis.¹⁹ But what emerges from this brief consideration is that colour as a biological and industrial quality, is an element marked by a sense of plurality. That colour is never fixed, it shifts and bleeds, alters and mutates, an ever transforming quality that is not only associated with the physical aspects of colour, but permeates its cultural presence also.

For when colour is perceived and transformed by the spectator’s nervous system into being part of an overall image, this unconscious act of reception is simultaneously intersecting with a series of socio-cultural relations and connections. In other words colour is a moment of both physical and cultural interfacing, in which manifest a series of meanings, understandings and social reactions. For example from a Western perspective we are familiar with the relationships such as red equates hot, blue equates cold etc. These colour terms give identity to the differing wave-lengths that we can

¹⁸ As a slight anecdote, part of my viewing involved watching all three films in their original 35mm prints, and of course on DVD. What was notable was that the colour palette of the DVD was far more subdued than the original prints. All three films used Technicolor, and hence had not suffered in terms of colour change, but the size and depth of the colour and the image in the auditorium, in comparison to watching the same film on a smaller screen, had a direct impact on colour’s presence onscreen.

¹⁹ Dr Liz Watkins of the University of Bristol has presented various papers on the question of restoration in connection to Roeg’s work, in particular *Shadows of the Photographic: Restoration and Loss in Don’t Look Now* (Nicolas Roeg, 1973)’, *Screen Studies Conference*, University of Glasgow, UK, July 2007.

identify on the spectrum, but importantly these terms themselves are not unified. For colour's identity differs depending on the cultural identity of the spectator, the artist and the period amongst other factors. Consequently when theoretically analyzing colour the resultant analysis is itself informed by such socio-cultural influences.

How such analysis approaches colour however differs dramatically, the next section therefore explores previous examples of colour analysis that I have found useful in either incorporating, or alternatively reading against, in my own approach to colour.

Towards Chromatic Cartography

I refer to my own approach to colour as being akin to that of chromatic cartography for the act of analyzing film colour is similar to that of mapping an unknown space. As the previous section demonstrated though we consider colour to be both knowable and stable, the reality is that colour is not so easily defined. Colour is something we find to be both familiar and unfamiliar, something that we can understand but are unable to explain. As David Batchelor in his work *Chromophobia* notes:

Colour spreads flows bleeds stains floods soaks seeps merges. It does not segment or subdivide. Colour is fluid [...] Colour is indivisibly fluid. It has no inner divisions – and no outer form.

(Batchelor 2000: 86)

So the fundamental question that one needs to consider is how does one talk about colour? For if colour is this formless entity, an ever transforming, ever mutating quality, then one evidently needs to find an approach that embraces such pluralism and thus not lose that quality of colour that makes it such a vibrant aspect of study. This section therefore briefly engages with particular approaches to reading film colour that in turn have informed my own approach to colour.

The first point of consideration is that of the writing of Soviet filmmaker Sergei Eisenstein, who, as I earlier mentioned, perceived film colour as being worthy of consideration. Eisenstein in his article *On Colour* offers up a key idea that I have incorporated into my own thinking towards film colour. For Eisenstein colour is a substance that 'assumes an endless multitude of forms and is bound up with a most complex set of phenomena' (Eisenstein 1975: 33). Eisenstein forcefully makes the further point that colour cannot be understood as a site of a single meaning, a place of absoluteness. As Eisenstein notes:

[...] some eccentrics claim to find a musical note that is the sole, absolute equivalent to a single colour which possesses such a multitude of objective links and subjective associations!

(Ibid: 34)

To demonstrate the multitude of associations Eisenstein, in a most patriotic manner, gives a few of the connections that he identifies within the colour red:

The colour of the revolutionary flag. And the colour of the ears of a liar caught red-handed. The colour of a boiled crayfish – and the colour of a crimson sunset. The colour of cranberry juice – and the colour of warm human blood.

(Ibid: 35)

The multiplicity of associations aside, what Eisenstein also brings to the fore is that the relationships that connect and define colour are importantly those of language, ideology, body, behavior and emotion. Connections that in turn offer one way of approaching the question of colour within the film image, but I will return to that point later in this chapter.

Hence Eisenstein eschews the idea that colour is a site of a fixed set of meanings, but instead a plane of pluralistic quality that one needs to embrace in order to understand the potential of colour artistically. Importantly for my own approach to colour Eisenstein moves onto the idea of colour's meaning being generated by narrative context. Discussing how the author Gogol uses colour within *Dead Souls*, Eisenstein offers up a perception of colour that has particular resonance with Roeg's implementation of film colour:

There are places where Gogol's descriptive use of colour reaches such a degree of tangibility that it is almost as much of a direct transference from the mental pictures that was obviously in his mind's eye [...] the drama itself, the struggle between characters is not confined to the structure of the plot! It also shows through in colour. The very clash of colours becomes an arena of the struggle and, echoing the drama, first one colour and then another captures the characters.²⁰

²⁰ Of further relevance to Roeg's gradual decline in using colour expressionistically is Eisenstein's discussion of Gogol's own chromatic retreat. Eisenstein notes that:

(Ibid: 42)

Eisenstein's argument that colour, aside from a sense of synaesthesia, can have a narrative function is central in terms of my own approach to colour. For, as the case studies will later demonstrate, a notable recurring chromatic theme within Roeg's films is that colour functions as a means of augmenting and accentuating the psychological clash between characters. In turn this leads to colour becoming more than simply a moment of spectacle, of distraction, it transforms from being 'frivolous amusement [into] a force capable of profound psychological revelation' (Ibid: 44).²¹ Colour becomes a chromatic refrain within which multiple connections linger, connections that in turn make colour an active element within the *mise-en-scene*.

Eisenstein's evocative theorizing of colour in film however is not the only approach that needs to be considered. Of further pertinence to my analysis is the writing of Natalie Kalmus of Technicolor. Kalmus also devised a relationship between colour and narrative but her approach differs greatly.

The range of colours in Gogol's early works, blazing with the bright fullness of the spectrum of primary colours, undergoes a change in the later works written towards the end of his life, when he moves over to a palette containing more grey and black.

(Eisenstein 1975: 42)

²¹ Eisenstein's positioning of colour was one echoed in Jean Mitry's writing on colour and psychoanalysis. Mitry argued that:

The danger is in using colour to compose a "good-looking" image, to make "pretty pictures," to signify through harmonies within the shot, tacking a colour symbolism onto the formal symbolism and thereby picking up all the faults of Expressionism in a kind of contrived Impressionism. Colour expression is an effect of the discreet way it is handled. The signification must come from the dynamics of colour, in other words, from their transformations and contrasts, from the ever-changing associations of form and colour, emphasizing first one and then the other. Instead of creating "inherently" harmonious compositions, the filmmaker must create structures in tune with the psychological meaning of the drama.

(Mitry 1998: 226-7)

It is important to firstly acknowledge Kalmus' relationship to film colour differs from that of Eisenstein's practitioner informed approach primarily due to her role as head of the Colour Control Department within Technicolor (referred to by some as the Colour Advisory Service). As I have already mentioned Kalmus' department was pivotal in how colour within film was implemented, shaping, indeed creating, the colour rules that dominated Hollywood, and thereby Western European cinema, for a large part of the 20th century. The department's main function was to ensure that, as earlier mentioned, the (Hollywood) filmmaker's use of Technicolor avoided the 'purported excesses of the late 1920s and early 1930s' (Higgins 2007: 39). Higgins continues that Technicolor's:

[...] basic argument was that since three-colour has so substantially increased the filmmaker's palette, the regulation of colour design now became more essential. If colour were to provide more than a novelty, it would have to be carefully crafted, and the Colour Advisory Service provided guidance.

(Higgins 2007: 39)

The methodology behind Technicolor's implementation of colour into a film's *mise-en-scene* was one defined by a control that desired to render colour paradoxically invisible to the spectator. Such an intention is evident within Kalmus' 1935 article *Colour Consciousness*:

We must constantly practice colour restraint. In the early two-colour pictures, producers sometimes thought that because a process could reproduce colour, they should flaunt vivid colour continually before the eyes of the audience. This often led to unnatural and disastrous results, which experience is now largely eliminating.

(Kalmus 1935: 147)

Whereas Eisenstein saw potential within colour to liberate film as art, it is evident that for Kalmus colour had the potential to have a negative impact on the image, and in turn, disrupt the spectator's immersion into the film. Kalmus' concerns over colour echoing a philosophical lineage that perpetuated an intellectual stance which sought to relegate colour to the superficial (from Aristotle to Kant, from Blanc to Rousseau). For example Aristotle wrote in *Poetics* that '[...] a random distribution of the most attractive colours would never yield as much pleasure as a definite image without colour' (Aristotle 1993: 59). Similarly Rousseau maintained that:

Colours, nicely modulated, give the eye pleasure, but that pleasure is purely sensory. It is the drawing, the imitation that endows these colours with life and soul, it is the passions which they express that succeed in arousing our own, the objects which they represent that succeed in affecting us. Interest and sentiment do not depend on colours; the lines of a touching painting touch us in etching as well; remove them from the painting, and the colours will cease to have any effect.

(Rousseau 1986: 279)

Such a perception of colour as a negative aspect is one that subsequently then leads, as Batchelor notes, to demands that ‘colour [...] be controlled. It must be ordered and classified; a hierarchy must be established’ (Batchelor 2000: 48). For colour has no meaning without order, has no ideological, cultural or artistic merit without control.

Indeed faced with the threat of filmmakers utilizing their product improperly Technicolor created a hierarchy that implicitly informed the industrial methods of Hollywood et al. A hierarchy that impacted on all levels of production as Kalmus describes:

In the preparation of the script of a picture we read the script and prepare a colour chart for the entire production, each scene, sequence, set and character being considered. This chart may be compared to a musical score, and amplifies the picture in a similar manner. The preparation of this chart calls for careful and judicious work. Subtle effects of beauty and feeling are not attained through haphazard methods, but through the application of the rules of art and the physical laws of light and colour in relation to literary laws and story values.

(Kalmus 1935: 146)

I will return later to the question of colour and its relationship to ‘literary laws’ or language, but what is implicit is that for Kalmus, a structured approach was required to use colour. Importantly this structured approach was not only for the sake of artistic intent but also concerned with the act of reception. Kalmus’ concern was that colour should not overwhelm the spectator, that as she goes onto argue:

A super-abundance of colour is unnatural, and has a most unpleasant effect not only upon the eye itself, but upon the mind as well. On the other hand, the complete absence of colour is unnatural. The mind strives to supply the missing chromatic sensations, just as it seeks to add the missing inflections to the actor’s voice. The monotony of black, gray, and white in comparison to colour is an

acknowledged fact [...] In other words, that which is monotonous will not hold our attention as well as that which shows more variety. Obviously, it is important that *the eye be not assailed* with glaring colour combinations, nor by *the indiscriminate use of black and white*. Again taking our cue from Nature, we find that colours and neutrals augment each other. The judicious use of neutrals proves an excellent foil for colour, and lends power and interest to the *touches* of colour in a scene. The presence of neutrals in our composition adds interest, variety, and charm to our colours [...] We have found that by understanding the use of colour we can subtly convey dramatic moods and impressions to the audience, making them more receptive to whatever emotional effect the scenes, action, and dialog may convey. Just as every scene has some definite dramatic mood – some definite emotional response which it seeks to arouse within the minds of the audience – so too, has each scene, each type of action, its definitely indicated colour which harmonizes with that emotion.

(Ibid: 140-1) [Italics my emphasis]

As the extract powerfully demonstrates, colour for Kalmus was something that adhered to the realism of the scene, a *supporting* discourse that evoked the emotion that *her department identified* in the script. Colour was a discourse of representation, of particular associations and symbolism that reflected a film's thematic preoccupations, but, importantly, in a subtle and subdued manner. Kalmus' approach of defining colour through a hierarchy of production ensured that colour was not the source of pleasure but a refrain to the overall aims of the film. The question that then emerges is of course what possible meanings reside within colour when it is rendered, to all intents, non-existent?

The answers to this question is in some respects aligned with those thinkers that Eisenstein so disparaged for connecting a single musical note to a particular hue. For the focus of Kalmus's codes was colour's synergy with an association derived from a semiotic other. Colour becomes within Technicolor's hierarchy a chromatic signifier that connected and reflected socio-cultural expectations of a particular hue, a particular tone. The following extract from Kalmus' article elaborates on this idea:

As to the use of a single colour alone, *each hue has its particular associations*. For example red recalls to mind a feeling of danger, a warning. It also suggests blood, life, and love. It is materialistic, stimulating. It suffuses the face of anger, it led Roman soldiers into battle. Different shades of red can suggest various phases of life, such as love, happiness, physical strength, wine, passion, power, excitement, anger, turmoil, tragedy, cruelty, revenge, war, sin, and shame [...] Proceeding to the other colours, orange is bright and enlivening; it

suggests energy, action. Yellow and gold symbolize wisdom, light, fruition, harvest, reward, riches, gaiety; but yellow also symbolizes deceit, jealousy [...] Green immediately recalls the garb of Nature, the outdoors, freedom. It also suggest freshness, growth, vigor [...] The neutrals, white, gray, and black, *while theoretically not* in the category of colours, also stimulate very definite emotional responses. Black is no colour, but absorption of all colour. It has a distinctly negative and destructive aspect. Black instinctively recalls night, fear, darkness, crime. It suggests funerals, mourning [...] Our language is replete with references to this frightful power of black – black art, black despair, black-guard, black hand, the black hold of Calcutta, black death, black list, black-hearted, etc.

(Ibid: 37) [italics my emphasis]²²

Unlike Eisenstein who situated colour as comprising ‘a multitude of objective links and subjective associations’ (Eisenstein 1975: 44), for Kalmus colour’s meaning was derived primarily through its relationship to language. That colour was nothing more than a metaphor, a signifier of a linguistic other. Such a positioning of colour is part of a discourse that has drawn on many differing voices and positions: from Aristotle to Goethe, Kant to Newton, Klee to Kadinsky. As Umberto Eco notes:

When one utters a colour term one is not directly pointing to the state of the world (process of reference), but, on the contrary, one is connecting or correlating that term with a cultural unit or concept. The utterance of the term is determined, obviously, by a given sensation, but the transformation of the sensory stimuli into a percept is in some way determined by the semiotic relationship between the linguistic expression and the meaning or content culturally correlated to it.

(Eco 1985: 171)

²² Kalmus’ semiotic reliance is also reminiscent of this point by Ludwig Wittgenstein, that:

Of course, saying that the word ‘red’ refers to’ instead of ‘means’ something private does not help us in the least to grasp its function; but it is the more psychologically apt expression for a particular experience in doing philosophy. It is as if when I uttered the word I cast a sidelong glance at the private sensation, as it were in order to say to myself: I know all right what I mean by it.

(Wittgenstein 1945-9: 274)

This sort of chromatic shorthand is of course culturally hardwired into our relationship with colour. We understand from an early age for example that white equates to good and black to that of evil. The problem is that this approach does lead to colour becoming inert, lacking the connections and associations that Eisenstein found lingering within. For as Neale argues, by focusing on language instead of colour leads to an ‘over-rigid ascription of meaning, the attempt to reduce colour or colours to specific, verbalisable phrases or words, or, at best, clusters of phrases and words’ (Neale 1985: 156).²³ Or as John Gage rightly notes the ‘problem with such an approach ‘ when analyzing colour ‘is that the stable referent has usually been more interesting and important than colour’ (Gage 2006: 23).

Take for example this passage from Neil Sinyard’s discussion of Roeg’s *The Witches*. Sinyard describes one sequence in which ‘the *Lady in Black* departs in high pique, causing the snake also to disappear with as it were, a petulant sleight of hand [...] the ground has been prepared for the confrontation to come between *good and evil*’ (Sinyard 1991: 128) [italics my emphasis]. Sinyard notes that colour is present, associated with a particular femininity, but what defines, and in turn closes down, the presence of colour is

²³ A physical and linguistic representation of the disparity between language and colour is that of the vast spectrum that exists within, and outside of, human perception. As Batchelor notes:

The human brain can distinguish minute variations in colour; it has been said that we can recognize several million different colours. At the same time, in contemporary English, there are just eleven general colour names in common usage: black, white, red, yellow, green, blue, brown, purple, pink, orange, grey [...] They coincide with the hypothesis, put forward by the anthropologists Brent Berlin and Paul Kay in 1969, that all natural languages have between two and eleven basic colour terms.

(Batchelor 2000: 87)

However as Batchelor goes on to describe, Berlin and Kay’s hypothesis does not fully cover differing cultural interactions with colour. For example Russian culture has ‘two words for blue [an approach that is similar to how western culture] deal[s] with red and pink (Ibid: 90). In contrast, Umberto Eco describes how the Maoris of New Zealand have over 3000 differing colour terms. A range that is in stark contrast to that of the Hanunoo of the Philippines who describe colour through only four central terms. Yet even this seemingly limited spectrum leads onto a complex and interactive system of colour, for each term refers to what Eco refers to being an ‘expansive host of colours’ (Eco 1985: 168-9).

the hegemonic pressure of colour as metaphor. Admittedly Sinyard is not concerned with discussing colour within his analysis but we can see that in some respects the dyadic of colour/metaphor is a default position that we both understand and feel comfortable with using. However my concern with simply following this approach to colour, is not only its limitations, as in language not colour is brought to the fore, but that where else can this approach take us? What can it say about colour? For if one consigns colour to nothing more than an inert link in a chain of metaphor then colour as a result becomes a passive surface on which meaning is inscribed.

Whereas colour within the image for Eisenstein could open up a plethora of meanings, for Kalmus colour seemingly needed to be closed down, made finite. Therefore my own approach to colour takes it leads from Eisenstein, and deliberately omits the semiotic approach that Kalmus adopted. Instead therefore of following a path that is set out by this dyadic of colour equating to a semiotic other, I want to take my approach into a different direction. I again take my lead from David Batchelor, who like Neale, finds the focus on language and colour misses the point of what colour actually is. Batchelor points out that:

To attend to colour [...] is in part, to attend to the limits of language. It is to try to imagine, often through the medium of language, what a world without language might be like.

(Batchelor 2000: 79)²⁴

Batchelor's argument that colour exists outside of language is echoed in Jacqueline Lichtenstein's writing on colour within painting, in which she raises the ideological complexity between these two disparate, but ultimately inseparable, discourses:

Colour has always displayed a tension that runs through all theories of representation. For colour is material in, or rather, painting, the irreducible component of representation that escapes the hegemony of language, the pure expressivity of a silent visibility that constitutes the image as such. The impotence of words to explain colours and the emotions that it provokes – the commonplace of all discourse on painting – betrays a more fundamental

²⁴ John Gage concurs, arguing that 'languages have never been used for labeling more than a tiny fraction of the millions of colour-sensations [...] (Gage 1999: 23). Gage also refers to 'the feeling that verbal language is incapable of defining the experience of colour' (Gage 1993: 10).

disarray in the face of this visible reality that baffles the usual procedures of language.

(Lichtenstein 1989: 34)

Consequently to move colour forwards theoretically, to avoid simply readdressing colour through a structure that naturally reduces colour to a cipher one needs to address colour through a methodology that moves away from questions of hues and tones. In fact one needs to find an approach that permits colour to be an active component of the *mise-en-scene*. To set up how such an approach might work I want to briefly consider a still from Roeg's 1976 *The Man Who Fell to Earth*.

The Man Who Fell to Earth



Image 1.1: Colour in *The Man Who Fell to Earth*.

The still from *The Man Who Fell to Earth* in terms of colour may seem somewhat bereft of visual interest, and indeed there are far more colourful and energetic images within the film that could have been considered. However this image, for all its seemingly realist implementation of colour, epitomizes my proposal that colour is one that can exude from the image, expressing an essence of the film itself. That film colour's presence can raise questions beyond simply realism or fantasy, of hues and tones, or that of metaphor.

The image is taken from an early sequence in the film in which the central protagonist, an alien visitor who goes by the name of James Newton (played by David Bowie) makes his way towards a local American town after his ship has crash landed on Earth.

Newton stands at the edge of the highway, his crossing of this man made border marking his first interaction with humanity.

The image is actually part of a one-shot take, that begins with a close up of the back of Newton's head, the brown hood of the coat cloaking his hair and features. As Newton removes the hood the camera pulls back slowly, coming to a rest at this point. For the first time in the film we get to see David Bowie/James Newton, though of course Roeg subverts this moment of revelation through shooting Bowie from behind. However in the absence of the opportunity to look at the star body I would argue emerges a subtle play of colour that, in an Eisenstein-esque manner, connects and informs our interaction with the image.

In terms of reading the presence of colour within this still one could adopt a number of differing approaches. Firstly, at one level, the colour within the image can be read as representative of Kalmus' subordination of aesthetics to the narrative. The colour within the image is certainly definable, a series of planes stretch out from Newton's body, moving from the browns and grays of the road, into the latter third of the image dominated by the water, sky, and trees, a palette of blues and greens. From a neo-formalist perspective we could surmise that there is a harmonious composition to the layout of the image that colour is providing a pleasing representation of space and depth, and locating the centrality of our protagonist to the narrative. What is notably lacking however is any sense of metaphor or simile, for we find no iconography, no signifiers that lend themselves to any such reading. James Newton is not clad in black to evoke a sense of threat to the nearby townsfolk for example. Therefore the use of colour within this composition would seemingly be devoid of any theoretical interest.

Of course I have deliberately omitted in my discussion of the colour scheme within the image the bright orange hair of our protagonist. This moment of follicle colour would not seem to have any differing qualities to that of the blue of the sky, or the grey of the road. However it is this very manifestation of colour that both demonstrates the inadequacy of approaching colour through metaphor, through language, and the pluralistic connections that Eisenstein argued existed within colour's onscreen presence.

Roeg's composition of the image is one imbued with a Renaissance like quality. The three bands of neutral colours (blues, browns, greens etc) facilitate the spectator's eye as it glides across the image, naturally drawn towards the bright flash of orange that resides at the centre. If one was to continue a neo-formalist approach one could argue

that orange reaffirms the centrality of the protagonist, that this flash of colour maintains our gaze upon his body. Rightly so, with the warm advancing colour drawing the eye, whilst the cooler blues and browns recede.

However, one could then argue why have Bowie remove the hood at all? Why reveal the orange hair? What does it signify at this moment in particular? I would propose that this moment of chromatic revelation is one of intertextuality, of connection. A moment that brings us closer towards the idea of colour as a volatile and active element within the *mise-en-scene*, rather than an inert aesthetic that lies passively before the spectator's gaze. For we can propose that the bright orange hair is a signifier, however not of metaphor, but of David Bowie himself. In particular, the bright orange connects James Newton to one of Bowie's rock alter egos, specifically Aladdin Sane (a lad insane), who evolved from Bowie's previous rock persona the alien Ziggy Stardust. Or to paraphrase Bowie, Sane was in reality Ziggy goes to America.

Therefore this revealing of orange has, I would argue, a doubling effect. At one level it supports the narrative for our eye is naturally drawn towards the central protagonist/hero, simultaneously however this moment of orange also connects the spectator to their knowledge of Bowie's glam-rock career. In turn then as we look at the body of James Newton, we see not only the alien within the narrative we also see David Bowie, and further we see Aladdin Sane. I would argue that subsequently the latter's exotic associations reflects back onto the body of Newton and, for the spectator these multiple layers coalesces to evoke a sense of otherness. Thus this intertextual chain of pop and film, through this moment of orange, informs us of Newton's social status and character within the film before the narrative unfolds.

These chains of connections are one defining aspect of Roeg's use of colour, connections that turns colour into an active aspect of his film's *mise-en-scene*. But further I would argue that what emerges is an innovative and complex use of colour that moves it beyond simply being adornment. As Eisenstein argued:

For one of the aims of art is to blaze new trails in our awareness of reality, to create new chains of association on the basis of utilizing those which already exist [...] It is only a dull, sterile, feeble, parasitic art form that lives by exploiting the existing stock of associations and reflexes, without using them to create chains of new images which form themselves into new concepts.

(Eisenstein 1975: 54)

Film colour is a plane of plurality and complexity, and to simply resort to a linguistic approach to colour inevitably reduces our ability to think through those complexities. For ultimately this leads to colour being positioned outside of ideology, held within matrices of signifiers that revolve around a binary of colour/word. For me it is imperative to think through colour, not of colour. In other words, I seek not to simply focus on the aesthetic but like Eisenstein, to utilize colour as a means to talk about a film's themes, ideologies, and representations. The final section of this chapter therefore turns to my methodology of approaching film colour. In particular how through David Batchelor's concept of chromophobia emerges a network of connections within the image in which ideology and representation coalesce with colour.

Chromophobic Cartography

The foundation for my ideological approach to reading colour through film is that of David Batchelor's concept of chromophobia. In discussing his model Batchelor raises a pertinent question that is 'how can we describe that which has no inner divisions and no outer form, like a fog seen from within?' (Batchelor 2000: 86). This final section turns to answering that question, in particular how to analyse the connections that linger within colour without reducing them down to signifiers of language. For as Umberto Eco notes when considering colour:

[...] the puzzle we are faced with is neither a psychological nor an aesthetic one: it is a cultural one, and as such it is filtered through a linguistic system. We are dealing with verbal language in so far as it conveys notions about visual experiences, and we must, then, understand how verbal language makes the non-verbal experience recognizable, speakable and effable.

(Eco 1985: 170)

The most obvious course of action would seemingly be first to group differing chromatic elements together into a definable singularity, in turn deriving a sense of unity within the seemingly formless. Edward Branigan for example proposed that:

One should approach the analysis of colour in terms of groupings or systems of colour, some of which conventionally have contrastive or opposed meanings and all of which may overlap with one another in different ways

(Branigan 1976: 26)

Branigan's idea of identifying groupings or systems is eloquent and succinct, in particular it has pertinence when analyzing colour within a director's body of work. For of course a filmmaker presents us with a defined corpus, marked with an authorial signature and signs of progression, fascination, or strategy concerning colour. Indeed Branigan takes his systematic approach to discuss colour in Godard's *Deux Ou Trois Choses Que Je Sais D'elle* (1966-67). Interestingly Branigan concludes that Godard's use of colour 'cannot be read in terms of character psychology, the exigencies of drama, or of versimilitude' (Ibid: 35). That instead colour 'divorced from its natural object through such strategies' has become a 'mobile element [...] of equal significance with other elements' (ibid: 35). I would counter however that colour can be still of equal relevance within the image even if one chooses to read it through aspects of narrative and psychology etc. That in fact considering colour as a means of connecting together aspects of theme and image does not result in colour becoming itself meaningless.

This is where I have found Batchelor's concept of chromophobia to prove particularly useful in terms of reading film colour. For importantly, chromophobia not only facilitates my approach to reading film colour as I will demonstrate in a moment, but it also enables the intersection between colour and established film theory concepts. In other words through chromophobia one can talk about colour from any number of differing perspectives, as the case studies later demonstrate.

Batchelor defines chromophobia as being the cultural fear of colour. That colour has been throughout Western culture primarily cast as a source of mistrust, of primitivism. An example of such a chromophobic position is demonstrated in this extract from Charles Blanc who in 1867 was moved to writing the following:

Intelligent being have a language represented by articulate sounds; organized beings, like all animals and vegetables, express themselves by cries or forms, contour or carriage. Inorganic nature as only the language of colour. It is by colour alone that a certain stone tells us it is a sapphire or an emerald [...]
Colour, then, is the peculiar characteristic of the lower forms of nature, while drawing becomes the medium of expression, more and more dominant, the higher we rise in the scale of being.

(Blanc 1995: 70)

Arguments like Blanc's on colour's cultural presence are the catalyst to Batchelor's concept. For Batchelor seeks the answer to the question of why if 'colour is

unimportant [within society] is it so important to exclude it so forcefully? If colour doesn't matter, why does its abolition matter so much?' (Batchelor 2000: 21).

Batchelor's answer to this question is that colour has been culturally excluded within Western culture, driven by what he terms a sense of chromophobia. This exclusion manifests primarily because colour is perceived as being a threat to the hegemonic values and ideals of Western culture. As Batchelor goes onto explain:

The notion that colour is bound up with the fate of Western culture sounds odd, and not very likely. But this is what I want to argue: that colour has been the object of extreme prejudice in Western culture [...] since Antiquity, colour has been systematically marginalized, reviled, diminished and degraded. Generations of philosophers, artists, art historians and cultural theorists of one stripe or another have kept this prejudice alive, warm, fed and groomed. As with all prejudices, its manifest form, its loathing, masks a fear: a fear of contamination and corruption by something that is unknown or appears unknowable. This loathing of colour, this fear of corruption through colour, needs a name: chromophobia.²⁵

²⁵ Ironically this entire thesis was born from a moment tinged by chromophobia. Roeg visited the University of Exeter in his role as Honorary Professor, and on the visit he took part in a session reflecting on his career. One of the questions asked by an undergraduate concerned whether there was anything behind the interplay between red and blue in *Don't Look Now*. Roeg mulled the question for a couple of seconds, and with a curt 'no' dismissed the question outright swiftly moving onto the next one. In some respects one could defend Roeg and say that this dismissal was a desire to maintain a gap between himself and the image. As Sinyard argues:

Roeg has been increasingly reluctant to talk about his early career as a cameraman. This is probably not so much a desire to denigrate his own past achievements as to discourage a misconception about his subsequent films as a director: that is, the glib critical deduction that, because he was formerly a cameraman, *his films have a predictably glittering surface but no depth*. Speaking of Josef von Sternberg, John Grierson coined the memorable aphorism: "When a director dies, he becomes a photographer." With Roeg, this process seems to have been reversed: when a photographer dies, he becomes a director.

(Sinyard 1991: 136-7) [Italics my emphasis]

Hence for Roeg a return to the image is a return to his role as a cinematographer, as he himself commented:

(Ibid: 22)

Brian Price notes that this chromophobic omission within Western culture of colour's cultural worth was in part an attempt to define pleasure as an outcome of order. Thus in turn maintain the moral values of art. Price argues that:

The pleasure of the art object is thus owed to the perceptual certainty and formal mastery of the pictorial field. By contrast, colour disrupts order: its promises to undo the Gestalt effected by line and form. The closer we look at colour, the less legible forms become, the less able we are to comprehend the narrative and its moral message. Colour thus defies the goal of Aristotle's *Poetics*: to establish narratives that effectively convey moral lessons and that purge society of emotions and impulses deemed hazardous to the healthy functioning of the republic.

(Price 2006: 79)

What is important about this sense of moral value, values defined of course by the hegemonic patriarchal normative, is that colour becomes within this structure a superficial and meaningless object. In other words colour becomes nothing more than a cosmetic, an embellishment, a moment of frivolous adornment. Thus, as Batchelor continues, chromophobia is a discourse not only of omission but is implicitly linked to ideology and representation (a point important to my own intellectual interaction with colour). Batchelor notes that:

Chromophobia manifests itself in the many and varied attempts to purge colour from culture, to devalue colour, to diminish its significance, to deny its complexity. More specifically: this purging of colour is usually accomplished in one of two ways. In the first, colour is made out to be the property of some 'foreign' body – usually the feminine, the oriental, the primitive, the infantile, the vulgar, the queer or the pathological. In the second, colour is relegated to the realm of the superficial, the supplementary, the inessential or the cosmetic. *In one, colour is regarded as alien and therefore dangerous; in the other, it is perceived merely as a secondary*

Because I was a cameraman, people tend to look at what I do on the visual level first, and to imagine that the camerawork is primarily in my mind. But I don't think it really is [...] It's not useful to preserve these old divisions, and to assume that a cameraman who becomes a director is not interested in all the other aspects of the movie: literary side, the actors, the design – everything.

quality of experience, and thus unworthy of serious consideration. Colour is dangerous, or it is trivial, or it is both [...] Either way, colour is routinely excluded from the higher concerns of the Mind. It is other to the higher values of Western culture. Or perhaps culture is other to the higher values of colour. Or colour is the corruption of culture.

(Batchelor 2000: 22-3) [Italics my emphasis]

This passage can be considered the core of Batchelor's concept of chromophobia. In particular what is incredibly pertinent to studying film colour is Batchelor's idea of situating colour as a material through which ideological questions can manifest. For the outcome in terms of film theory is that colour becomes part of the ideological matrix within the film. No longer solely a property defined by hues and tones, but now also imbued with questions of representation. For example if we return back to the still (image 1.1) from *The Man Who Fell to Earth* one could see that within the possible readings is one marked by a sense of chromophobia. As I earlier discussed Newton's orange hair function both as a means of drawing the eye of the spectator and as a connective device to Bowie's off-screen personas. However through chromophobia we can also now propose that the orange functions as a means of reasserting Newton's otherness. That, due to the overwhelming presence of colour on his body Newton is chromatically marked as a 'foreign body', one whose attempts to integrate into society will be resisted. As Batchelor succinctly puts it 'the Not-self is other; the other is colour' (Ibid: 34). Indeed as Newton progresses from interstellar vagrant to business tycoon to rock star, his journey is marked by both a sense of otherness (Newton does not age for example) and rejection, with the state finally deciding to imprison and subsequently perform experiments on Newton.

It is important to acknowledge that the connection between other and colour, in particular in film terms, has been raised before. For example James Snead in his discussion of lighting and ethnicity in his book *White Screen, Black Images: Hollywood from the Darkside* discusses the way in which lighting (and thus colour) was designed for white skin not other skin types, and how in turn the black bodies of the natives of Kong's island became a mass of oneness in contrast to the individualized white bodies of the Americans. A further example is Neale's discussion of the technical aspects of Technicolor, in which at one point Neale brings together the relationship between colour and femininity on-screen:

It is at this point that a further element [...] enters into the ideological equation. That element is the female body. Since women within the patriarchal ideology already occupy the contradictory spaces both of nature and culture (since they evoke both the natural and the artificial) and since they are marked as socially sanctioned objects of erotic looking, it is no wonder that from the earliest days of colour photography they function both as source of the spectacle of colour in practice and as a reference point for the use and promotion of colour in theory. The female body both bridges the ideological gap between nature and cultural artifice while simultaneously marking and focusing the scopophilic pleasures involved in and engaged by the use of colour in film.

(Neale 1985: 152)²⁶

Hence the dyadic of femininity and colour is one that, though not fully explored theoretically, is a familiar and recurring trope within film theory. What I would argue however, and what is particularly interesting is that within Roeg's work colour and the body is not simply one linked to a dyadic of femininity and scopophilia (though such moments do occur, in particular in connection with Teresa Russell). In fact colour in some respects within Roeg's work is gender neutral, that what emerges through colour is a chain of bodies connected through a dyadic of normative/other. It is this sense of otherness (in the sense of unfamiliar, queer, alien etc) that I explore in the case studies; an otherness that crosses gender divides, whilst also intersecting with a film's theme or narrative preoccupation.

Batchelor argument that colour's presence is of the other we can in turn extrapolate to arguing that colour's absence, or cinematically the prominence of black and white, is habitually linked to the normative protagonist (the familiar), the white male, the keeper of patriarchal hegemony. Within Roeg's films a recurring thematic pattern is that of a central protagonist, either male or female, who find their concepts of both identity and society coming under threat by an otherness marked by colour. For example *Walkabout's* (Roeg, 1971) colour strategy at points focuses primarily around bodies. The film's narrative is the survival of the white English children (played by Jenny Agutter and Luc Roeg) who have been left abandoned in the Outback by their suicidal

²⁶ For when we think of colour inevitably we are drawn towards the feminine body, the yellows of Sirk's women; Marilyn Monroe's white dress; *Scarlet O'Hara* in *Gone with the Wind*; Dorothy and The Wicked Witch of the West (and her scarlet shoes) in *The Wizard of Oz*; the nun's of *Black Narcissus*, all spring to mind.

father, and their interaction with a potential saviour, the Aboriginal boy on walkabout (played by David Gulpilil). Towards the end of their journey through the Outback, the group is confronted by the ramifications of Western culture on Aboriginal Australia, from abandoned homesteads to hunters killing for sport not food. Seemingly overwhelmed by the realization of the ramifications of Western capitalism on his environment the Aborigine decides to commit suicide. This moment is one marked by the emergence of colour, for the boy transforms his body through white paint (accompanied by bright yellow flowers) into a skeletal figure. Intriguingly the English children do not understand, they cannot comprehend his chromatic transformation, and in turn, this moment of colour reinforces the gap between the two differing cultures.



Image 1.2: The Aboriginal Other Marked by Colour.

This moment of chromatic otherness, occurs within an abandoned settlement (the edge of Western society), and consequently happens at the border of the Western children's concept of civilization and primitiveness. It is unsurprising that after this point of chromatic rupture the children leave the Outback and reenter back into their monochromatic world of Western consumer civilization.

This tension between colour and civilization, of normative and other is also raised in a sequence that depicts aboriginal workers working in the employ (for little money one assumes) of an Australian couple. The workers bodies become marked and daubed in the white clay they are using to create tourist knickknacks. At one point the white male

boss slaps his clay covered hand onto a child's chest, leaving behind a white hand print. This moment of whiteness on black skin unsubtly conveys that the Aboriginal bodies are owned, they are nothing more than slaves in the act of creation for the gain of their Westernised others. Somewhat ironically, the items they are creating are icons of Australian 'culture', Sydney Harbour Bridge and kangaroos for example, that are being sold as 'genuine Australian artifacts'. Articles not of Aboriginal culture, but of Westernised perceptions of Aboriginal culture, rendering a trophy of otherness safe and familiar.



Image 1.3: White as Marker of Power.

A further example of otherness and colour occurs at the mass death of the evil witches in Roeg's adaptation of Roald Dahl's *The Witches*. During the film the witches' connection to otherness is forcibly made through their bodies. A corporeality of twisted femininity that rejects the maternal over cannibalism. Their abjectness marked corporeally through a distorted mix of oversized ears, big noses, baldness, gnarled teeth and elongated fingers. Towards the end of the film, the witches find their plans for world domination usurped when they are all transformed into mice (due to them unwittingly consuming a potion they intended for children to drink!). At this point colour also reaffirms their otherness, for as the transformation from witch to mouse takes hold, so a vibrant green billow of smoke accompanies the moment of mutation. As if the corporeal being of the witches is colour itself, one that a mouse's body would

be unable to contain, and hence like the clothes that remain on the floor, the colour belches out from the body transformed.



Image 1.4: The Green of Transformation in *The Witches*

Another important aspect of colour's cultural presence is what Batchelor notes as being its association with falling, of a loss of identity. Batchelor describes colour as akin to an 'abyss; disorientation; loss of consciousness; descent' (Ibid: 34). Batchelor later continues this idea arguing that:

Falling or leaving: these two metaphors of colour are closely related. Their terminologies – of dreams, of joys, of uprootings or undoings of self – remain more or less the same. More than that, perhaps, the descent into colour often involves lateral as well as vertical displacement; it means being blown sideways at the same time as falling downwards.

(Ibid: 41)

A notable example of this moment of chromatic displacement within Roeg's films occurs in *Eureka*. Jack McCann (played by Gene Hackman), a prospector down on his luck and living a hard existence in the frozen tundra of Alaska. However he experiences a sudden transformation in his fortunes, one that is literally marked by a fall into colour. Upon discovering an icy chasm Jack descends and begins hacking at a wall, his pick releases a flood of gold liquid that cascades through an underground tunnel before exploding through the ground out into the air. Jack's unconscious body is carried by this golden torrent and when he regains consciousness he emerges no longer a man marked by destitution and suffering, but a man of immense wealth and thus power (see image 1.5).



Image 1.5: Jack McCann (Gene Hackman) falling into gold in *Eureka*.

A last example that I want to consider is that which occurs in Roeg's latest film, *Puffball*, for this film has a preoccupation with the colour white. A colour that Batchelor raises as being culturally and ideologically validated within Western culture.

In *Puffball* an English couple move to Ireland to develop a farmhouse in a somewhat catastrophic state disrepair. As their project takes control of this aged building the film follows their burgeoning interaction with a local family that live on the nearby farm. This interaction is one that moves from awkwardness and unfamiliarity into a tale of death, superstition and magic. What is intriguing about the development of the farmhouse is that the English couple's appropriation of this space as being that of their home, is one marked by the introduction of white. The house's interior during their restoration becomes a space of smooth white walls, of air and light. In some respects a possible reading is that the couples' attempts to claim this space, and thus by turn insert themselves into this foreign culture, is one of chromatic erosion. That through colour the history of the building becomes concealed beneath the white walls. Eroding both a sense of time, and a sense of space within the interiority. This use of white as a means of suppression or erosion, one habitually marked as being linked to the normative Westernised individual, is another motif in Batchelor's writing. Batchelor discusses the ideological implications of white in the context of the architectural hyper-design of a house he visited that was owned by a wealthy Anglo-American art collector:

Inside this house was a whole world, a very particular kind of world, a very clean, clear and orderly universe [...] It was a world that didn't readily admit the existence of other worlds.

(Ibid: 10)

Batchelor then continues his discussion of this dominance of white as being akin to 'bleach' that:

There is a kind of white that is more than white, and this was that kind of white. There is a kind of white that repels everything that is inferior to it, and that is almost everything. This was that kind of white. There is a kind of white that is not created by bleach but that itself is bleach. This was that kind of white.

(Ibid: 10)

Hence white marks both an absence of anything, an absence of colour, and also stands in for a certainty of being, of rationality, of self. One can say that the erosion of place that occurs in *Puffball* is an eloquent example of white as a means of stability. That colour leads to a loss of identity, destabilises a sense of self and in turn, absence. That is the monochromatic, for want of a better word, implies a sense of order and rationality.

Therefore, what is evident is that through chromophobia we can begin to explore questions of ideology, representation, gender and hegemony within film colour without resorting to metaphor. Of further importance is that the central themes and issues that shape chromophobia have particular relevance within other theoretical approaches within film theory. Consequently chromophobia not only opens up a possible route through which to analyse colour within film; it also importantly facilitates other areas of film theory, for example psychoanalysis, abjectness, horror and masculinity, to be incorporated.

Whilst chromophobia functions to raise the ideological questions surrounding colour within Roeg's work, the second aspect of my approach to colour is that of colour as connection. As I suggested earlier in the brief analysis of *The Man Who Fell to Earth* colour can act as a form of connection, opening up differing levels of interaction and association. This idea of colour as an active component of the *mise-en-scene* has been influenced by a number of differing approaches. One influence was that of Gilles Deleuze, who in his writing on the art of Francis Bacon, describes colour as being a series of relations, what he terms 'modulations', that enable us to comprehend the 'unity

of the whole, the distribution of each element and the way each of them acts upon the others' (Deleuze 2005: 101).²⁷ Within Deleuze's idea of modulations is the key to unlocking what I consider to be the 'organic' sculpting of colour that resides within Roeg's work (Hay & Davis 1975: 175). For it is the modulations and interactions between colours, and also the intersection between colour, camera and the diegetic gaze, that produce a series of connections. Resulting in an aesthetic cartography that maps out onscreen the interplay and negotiations of identity, power, desire and society that permeate Roeg's narratives.

As Deleuze goes on to note in the context of Bacon's paintings:

Colourism (modulation) does consist not only of relations of warm and cool, of expansion and contraction, which vary in accordance with the colours considered. It also consists of regimes of colours, the relations between these regimes, and the harmonies between pure tones and broken tones.

(Deleuze 2005: 106)

In some respects through Deleuze what emerges is an approach to colour's material presence that resists the inert invisibility that Kalmus demanded that Technicolor achieve. Instead colour, whatever its function on screen, is part of a pattern of shifting relationships. Intriguingly I have found that the intersection between Deleuze's modulations and certain conceptual ideas raised by Mikhail Bakhtin enables us to set out two examples of regimes of colours.

For I would propose that Kalmus' implementation of film colour has a conceptual synergy with Bakhtin's model of the classical form. Bakhtin described the classical form as being a self-contained unity:

[...] an entirely finished, completed, strictly limited body, which is shown from the outside as something individual. That which protrudes, bulges, sprouts, or branches off is eliminated, hidden or moderated. All orifices of the body are closed. The basis of the image is the individual, strictly limited mass, the impenetrable façade. The opaque surface of the body's valleys acquires an essential meaning as the border of a closed individuality that does

²⁷ It is important to note that Deleuze within his work on film does not directly engage with the function of film colour. As film theorist Anna Powell acknowledges, Deleuze 'briefly refers to colour in cinema' but 'his main theoretical application is to painting [...] because he regards cinema's chief expressive tools as light and movement [...] painting's as colour, texture and form' (Powell 2005: 135).

not merge with other bodies and with the world. All attributes of the unfinished world are carefully removed, as well as all signs of its inner life.

(Bakhtin 1984: 320)

Bakhtin's classical body is one that for me resonates with Kalmus' perception of how Technicolor should function within the image. As already discussed the key for Kalmus was to make colour invisible, to support the narrative without disrupting the spectator's immersion into the reality onscreen. As Kalmus wrote 'it is desirable to have all the colours in any one scene harmonious. Otherwise we strike an unpleasant, discordant note' (Kalmus 1935: 146). Colour becomes inert, the potential for colour within Kalmus' model to instigate connections within the spectator is seemingly unwanted, an unwelcome distraction. Like Bakhtin's classical body, colour within the context of Hollywood's classical mode is controlled, restrained, moderated. A structured combination of language, taste, technical limitations and above all fidelity to the drama of the script lead to colour becoming an inactive plane. Signs of chromatic expression, experimentation and vibrancy are suppressed in the desire for cohesion and harmonization within the frame. Of course connections still emerge, for after all, colour cannot be contained, but those elements that would threaten to protrude, to disrupt are hidden within the folds of the artifice.

In contrast I would argue that Roeg's use of film colour is one that flows between moments of verisimilitude (moments of the classical one could say) to moments in which colour is elevated, moments in which colour disrupts the integrity of the image. That colour in fact becomes a series of connections that enable the spectator to 'read the images' that Roeg described as being a 'transference of thought' (Kennedy 1980: 22). Colour becomes active, indeed colour 'escapes' to paraphrase Julia Kristeva's work on colour, a model that she referred to as the triple register. Kristeva's triple register forms the basis for my discussion of colour in the case study on *Don't Look Now*, so I will leave this to one side for the moment. Suffice to say Kristeva takes up a position reminiscent of Lichtenstein's in her writing on Giotto and colour in his frescos. As Kristeva notes:

Although semiological approaches consider painting as a language, they do not allow an equivalent for colour within the elements of language identified by linguistics. Does it belong among phonemes, morphemes, phrases, or lexemes? If it ever was fruitful, the language/painting analogy, when faced with the problem of colour becomes untenable.

(Kristeva, 1987: 216)

To resolve this linguistic dilemma Kristeva shifts towards reading colour through psychoanalysis, linking colour towards ‘subject/object indeterminacy’ to a state before the self is formed in language (Ibid: 218). Consequently colour becomes a disruption in the symbolic order, in particular in the context of the arts colour becomes unique for it ‘escapes censorship; and the unconscious irrupts into a culturally coded pictorial distribution’ (Ibid: 223). Consequently the ‘chromatic experience constitutes a menace to the self’, or what Kristeva refers to as colour resulting in the ‘shattering of unity’ (Ibid: 226). Hence, subjecthood aside, it is through colour, and here Kristeva identifies the likes of Cezanne for example, that ‘Western painting began to escape’ the regimes and hierarchies of Academic art (Ibid: 227).

Therefore, the experimental and expressive qualities that emerge within colour in Roeg’s work can be read as a moment of escape, a moment of resistance to the normative demands of both industry and convention. Thus colour slowly unfolds to become a myriad series of connections and flows, of ideology, realism, body, culture and power amongst others. These pluralistic qualities in turn I would propose result in colour being less the classical body and rather its antithesis, what Bakhtin referred to as the body of the grotesque. Bakhtin’s writing on the grotesque depicts it in terms that seem as suited to film colour as to his own conceptual model. That the grotesque is ‘a festival of becoming, a plurality, not a closed system but a perpetual experiment’ (quoted in Stam 1989: 157). As Robert Stam continues:

Against the static, classic, finished beauty of antique sculpture, Bakhtin counterposed the mutable body, the ‘passing of one form into another’, reflecting the ‘ever incompleting character of being. The body’s central principle (like that of language) is growth and change; by exceeding its limits, the body expresses its essence. The grotesque body is not a rigid *langue*, but a *parole* in constant semiosis.

(Stam 1989: 159)

Whereas Kalmus’ notion of colour is that of it being classical, as in colour is subordinate to design (both narrative and stylistic), Roeg demonstrates in his work that colour can be an element that is continually in a state of semiosis. That colour is a skin, *the* skin of the film, comprised of connections and flows. As David Batchelor comments ‘colour [...] a continuum [...] colour is formless but ever formed into patterns and shapes’ (Batchelor 2000: 86). In Roeg’s work colour’s formless quality

manifests, at points, as a skin that exceeds its realist limits, colour breaks the cohesion of the frame (the spiral in *Don't Look Now* that sweeps across the slide); obliterates the image (the red that overwhelms at the point of Joey Maddocks being shot in *Performance*); or disrupts corporeality (the green mist that is the result of the evil witches demise in *The Witches*).

The connection between skin and colour is itself a dyadic that has a long tradition in Western culture. As John Gage argues 'in Greek thought, the idea of colour (*chroma*) was itself related on the one hand to skin (*chros*), that is, to the surface rather than to the substance, and on the other to movement and change' (Gage 1999: 69). Therefore through Bakhtin's colour to be both active and passive. That colour can be both a means of representation and realism (colour as classical), and also a discourse that opposes such restraints, defies our expected notions of representation and conduct (colour as grotesque). As much as language desires to reduce colour to a classicist discourse, colour resists, colour rebels, and thus colour offers up, in turn, ideological implications. For colour, at some level, is a body, or plane, which is active and rooted in a sense of transition. Much as the light waves that reflect off of the screen and in turn reflect back off the spectator's eye is a flow of colour in constant movement, so too, I would argue does colour create new meanings and connections beyond simply a chain of signification.²⁸

In the case studies that follow it is the tensions between identity, power and gender through colour that I seek to explore. What is important to reiterate is that what follows is not a theory of colour, nor a set structure into which colour is forced into some sense of structured meaning. Instead, this thesis looks at film, and in turn film theory *through* colour, seeking comparisons, similarities and points of tension in which potential readings may reside. The case studies therefore are a series of attempts to suggest a

²⁸ Kristeva in her writing on colour, in her analysis of the art of Giotto noted the following, for Bakhtin himself never explored the connection between colour and the notion of the carnival:

Giotto's joy is the sublimated jouissance of a subject liberating himself from the transcendental dominion of One Meaning (white) [...] Giotto's joy burst into the chromatic clashes and harmonies that guided and dominated the architectonics of the Arena Chapel frescoes [...] This Joy evokes the carnivalesque excess of the masses [...]

(Kristeva 1982: 224)

potential language, potential approaches to film colour. Approaches which far from leading to a reduced narrative of description, lead instead to a reconsideration of this incredibly productive period for the other subject of this thesis, Nicolas Roeg.

Unknown Pleasures: Colour and Violence in *Performance*

The theme expressed in colour leit-motifs can, through its colour score and with its own means, unfold an inner drama, weaving its own patterns in the contrapuntal whole, crossing and re-crossing the course of action [...] supplementing what could not be expressed by acting or gesture.

(Eisenstein 1975: 28)

In art, and in painting and in music, it is not a matter of reproducing or inventing forms, but of capturing forces.

(Deleuze 2005: 40)

We were choreographing it as a work of art: the re-creation of pain, humiliation, love, pride, revenge, weakness, ruthlessness - what you get when you see it without these references, I cannot judge.

(James Fox 1983: 108-109)

Introduction

The only performance that makes it,
That really makes it,
That makes it all the way,
Is the one that achieves madness, right?
Am I right? Are you with me?

(Turner to Chas in *Performance*)

Rock star turned recluse Turner (Mick Jagger) with his Artaud inspired monologue to gangster Chas (James Fox), captures the thematic impetus behind *Performance* (Cammell & Roeg, 1970). A film shaped by performances of power, identity, body, gender and violence. Performances that ultimately lead to a kind of madness epitomised by the film's enigmatic and provocative denouement. As Colin MacCabe notes *Performance* is 'the finest British gangster film ever metamorphosed into a psycho-sexual drama' delivering 'an anatomy of masculinity which promised a genuine liberation from the cage of gender' (MacCabe 1998: 8).²⁹ Though I find myself not completely convinced by the argument that the film offers a true liberation from gender what does occur is a blurring of boundaries and borders within the film, of corporeality, space and time, that invite a re-consideration through their relationship to colour.³⁰

As this chapter will go onto propose *Performance*'s complex interplay of gender, power and genre is defined and shaped by the triadic construction of colour, violence and masculinity. These three discourses overlap, interconnect, and reflect each other, creating a British masculinity that blurs the more normative stereotypes typical of mainstream British cinema. As I will go onto discuss colour, in tandem with violence and masculinity, is more than simply a passive aesthetic but is a plane of interaction

²⁹ I find that Mark Gallagher's argument that *Performance* 'offers a strong subtext of male bisexuality and homosexuality, albeit in terms of transgression or perversion, with heterosexuality as the implicit point from which difference proceeds' to capture the balance between normative and other more succinctly (Gallagher 2004: 162).

³⁰ As any potentiality for resistance or release is quickly assimilated back into normative structures, with the execution of the reclusive bisexual rock-star Turner, and Chas's reintegration into the gang, albeit to die for his transgressions.

through which is sculpted discourses that intersect with themes, narrative and character. Drawing the spectator into a visual network of connections and flows that opens from the realist hues of Chas's gangster reality, that of suits, cars and violence, into Turner's realm of counter culture, of sexual experimentation, hallucinogens and decadence. Colour within the film is an intriguing and beguiling chromatic presence flowing through and intersecting with *Performance*'s complex interplay of sex, drugs, genre, time and space. An aesthetic that turns London into a kaleidoscopic archipelagic realm of Technicolor inhabited by bodies locked into a ballet of violence, a ballet both physical and cognitive. An aesthetics that creates a social space seemingly infected by colour, in which conversations and interactions are infused with a sense of the chromatic, bodies are bled 'white', people desire to 'decorate' their nemesis, 'dyed' becomes 'died', 'red' infers to be, and juxtaposed against the word 'dead'.

What should be acknowledged from the outset is that *Performance* is a film that has been given considerable critical analysis, but one notable aspect, though mentioned in passing has been generally overlooked, is the function of colour. This chromophobic omission is unsurprising when one considers the rich levels of intertextuality, cultural, social and cinematic, that permeate the film. Born from the mythology of The Rolling Stones to Artaud; the labyrinthine writing of Jules Borges to the criminal notoriety of the Kray Twins; the art of Francis Bacon to the electronic score of Jack Nitszche; the films of Kenneth Anger to both co-directors careers that followed, *Performance* is a film that can overwhelm the spectator.³¹ David Hay and Elliot Davis argue that the

³¹ Those familiar with the mythology that permeates and surrounds the production of *Performance* may at this moment be somewhat bemused by my reference to Roeg as the originator of colour within the film. What about Donald Cammell? What about the role of set designer Christopher Gibbs? What of David Litvinoff? For *Performance* is a film that has been dominated by the desire for an absolute truth, specifically in the creative roles of Cammell and Roeg. I find myself however drawn to Colin MacCabe's eloquent argument as the definitive response to this question:

Perhaps the most frequent and least interesting question asked [...] is whether the film was "really" Roeg's or "really" Cammell's. [...] To understand why any attempt to so attribute the film is deeply misleading takes us to the heart of *Performance* [...] for the period that they were working together Roeg and Cammell seemed to literally, in imitation of Chas and Turner, to fuse and to merge [...] it might seem sufficient to stop here, to

film was akin to that of an ‘onslaught’ one that brought a ‘challenge to the type of personal identity and objectivity that had been presented in characterization up until then’ (Hay & Davis 1974: 175).

The rare occasions when colour within *Performance* has been discussed critically has routinely focussed in on drug culture and psychedelia, (not to say the consideration of drug culture and colour is entirely irrelevant, as the final section of this case study will attest). Such a connection is understandable due to the film’s counter-culture discourses; co-director Donald Cammell’s own artistic and hedonistic aura; the mythology of the Chelsea set and Rolling Stones, and lastly the presence of set designer, and Chelsea set dandy, Christopher Gibbs. Gibbs stated that he believed in the ‘transforming quality of hallucinogenics on the collective conscious’ (Savage 1995: 25). Gibbs use of colour, particularly in the set design of the interiors of 81 Powis Square (the house of reclusive rock star Turner), reflects this sense of transformation. Rich in colours, textures, fabrics and cultural influences (in particular Morocco) the contrast between Chas’ space of conformity and order (one that reflects his own sense of masculinity) and that of Turner’s more eclectic and exotic spaces lead a sense of

accept that the film was the work of these two men and to leave the question at that. But the reason the question of “authorship” of *Performance* is so irrelevant is that the genius of Cammell and Roeg was to allow an almost unprecedented level of creative contribution to the film they were making. [...] It was their ability to let both people and things find their own voice and angle which makes *Performance* the greatest British film ever made.

(MacCabe 1998: 23-24)

For me this is the answer to the conundrum of *Performance*, that there is no answer, just series of flows and connections of authorship that result in the film we engage with. But hypocritically I do accord the function of colour to Roeg primarily due to *Performance*’s producer, Sandy Lieberson, who stated in *Influence and Controversy*, that ‘[...] Roeg was going to be co-director, he was responsible for the look of the film, the textures, the colours, how it was going to be lit [...]’. I therefore consider my continual reference to Roeg as the originator of colour and the omission of Cammell in this case study to be justified, enabling me to avoid engaging with this somewhat irrelevant production and auteur centred enigma that has been the focus for other writers on the film.

otherness to the latter's presence. From the outset Gibb's set design hints at the oppositional social status of both men.

Frey in his consideration of fashion within *Performance* briefly brings colour into his discussion, stating that the combination of Gibbs set design and Roeg's cinematography resulted in a 'scrambling [of] one's senses into seeing music, feeling light, or tasting words [...]' (Frey 2006: 374). Disappointingly Frey fails to open up into a discussion of synaesthesia, instead retreating to a point of non-engagement by simply linking this 'scrambling' as a manifestation of counter-culture. Frey does re-engage with colour later in his article, acknowledging its importance to *Performance*'s construction of space, that within the 'intimate zones of Turner's flat and Chas's person, Roeg employs a more dramatic, stylized, lighting of reds, greens and purples [...]' (ibid: 373). However again Frey seems to find that colour deserves no further consideration, that it has no potential beyond being a stylized amalgamation of coloured lights reflected off the interior sets.

Frey is not the only one though to acknowledge, but simultaneously neglect colour, Salwolke in discussing *Performance* commits in my view several cardinal sins, as typified by this quote:

Roeg is one of the few commercial filmmakers who consciously experiment with film grammar in presenting their stories: he does this particularly in his early films. It is most evident in his editing style, but it can also be seen in his use of techniques that break with the traditional rules of cinema. In *Performance* his experimentation was evident in his use of black and white, in his imbuing some sequences with a particular colour and in the exchange of characters without warning or apparent reason.

(Salwolke 1993: 26)

It is Salwolke's somewhat naïve and dismissive discussion of Roeg's 'techniques' that I will challenge in this case study. In particular his assertion that Roeg imbues 'some sequences with a particular colour and in the exchange of characters without warning or apparent reason' (Ibid: 26). For as I will demonstrate in the section that considers the interiority of London, this movement to black and white, far from being without reason,

is a moment of aesthetic realisation, a moment that brings Chas's subconscious desires to the fore.

Whereas colour has lacked consideration, an area that has drawn a considerable amount of critical consideration, and one that is also relevant to my analysis of colour, is how *Performance* is a film defined by two realms. The first realm is that of the gangster which, as the narrative develops, becomes displaced by the counter-cultural interiority of the rock star. To return to Frey he argues that *Performance* has become perceived as 'a gangster film that dissolves into a hippie psychodrama [...] somehow slapped together as one' (Frey 2006: 370). For some writers this coming together, this disparate combination is one particular route into unlocking the film's complexities. Neil Sinyard for example finds that 'it is clear that the film breaks into two distinct halves' (Sinyard 1991: 16), a bifurcation that for Sinyard results in *Performance* becoming 'a cluster of themes and structured juxtapositions: life/death; male/female; sanity/insanity; reality/performance; wholeness of personality/disintegration of identity' (ibid: 12).

Though Sinyard's binaries are relevant, the result is that by reducing the film to a litany of juxtapositions, he affords no space to consider alternative approaches. For such a tight network of contrastive modes and discourse based around a hegemonic model of normative/other logically leads to an appropriation of the other to ensure the stability of the status quo. I would however propose that *Performance* is aesthetically not simply a series of binaries, but in fact is a chromatic discourse that embraces the notion of the schism, whilst simultaneously enabling analysis to move beyond the notion of a chain of binaries, of causes and effects. In other words through considering the function of colour within *Performance*, we can challenge the idea of the film being comprised of two differing halves, and instead consider the film as a whole, one constituted by a complex and intricate tapestry of connections and relations, of power and identity. Colour, masculinity and violence within *Performance* I would argue functions as a flow of connections and relations that link these two seemingly disparate worlds together. As Peter Wollen insightfully puts it *Performance* is 'a gangster movie gradually absorbed by a hippie pastoral, but there remains an irreducible core of violence, which psychedelia and music and sex cannot ever overcome [...]' (Wollen 1995: 23). I would argue that rather than a film defined by a schism through a consideration of colour and violence we can see how an aesthetic emerges that organically absorbs the gangster into a new realm.

My referring to the notion of organic is drawn from an interview that Roeg gave in 1974 when working on pre-production for (the regretfully unfulfilled) *Out of Africa*. Hay and Davis describe *Performance*'s design insightfully as being 'very hard-hitting, very intense: indeed, its labyrinthine and organic form is vitally important in tying the viewer into the processes of transformation that Chas and Turner are going through [...]' (Hay & Davis 1974: 175). It is this notion of the organic, the processes of transformation, and their interaction with the spectator that is central to my own consideration of colour and its function within *Performance*; a more interesting and challenging reading in contrast to Salwolke, one that chimes with Eisenstein's notion of colour as a means to 'unfold an inner drama' within *Performance* (Eisenstein 1975: 28).

To explore this idea of colour and violence within and to counteract the potential pitfall of describing Chas' and then Turner's individual worlds, separating the film into two differing texts, I will map my argument and my writing to the contours of Chas' journey through *Performance*, using Chas as my guide to explore the film's aesthetic. In part this decision is influenced by a desire to explore Champlin's argument that:

Like the films to follow, *Performance* majored in states of feeling, impressions; in sensations of an other-consciousness in which the boundaries between the real and the unreal dissolve and the filmmaker offers no maps.

(Champlin 1976: 26)

Whereas I find myself agreeing with Champlin that *Performance* is a space in which 'boundaries' are dissolved, 'sensations' are evoked, it is his assertion that Cammell and Roeg offer 'no maps' that I find myself, at the level of aesthetics and colour, disappointed by, for colour is a map that is offered, one that as I will demonstrate has an inherent logical presence. Thus through colour, by focussing in on Chas we can explore notions of violence and masculinity, which in turn inform Chas' sense of self. Also by charting the use of colour through Chas allows us to engage with David Batchelor's ideas surrounding the relationship between colour and the fall, and also consider how the diasporic body of Chas, a body that knowingly crosses the border from gangster to fugitive, is mapped out through colour. However before focussing on the individual I

want to firstly consider how *Performance*'s depiction of London as a chain of Technicolor interiorities reflects notions of masculinity, power and status.

Constructing London: Technicolor Interiorities

Performance is a film synonymous with London, in particular the dying embers of that iconic and mythological cultural entity of Swinging London. As Marianne Faithful noted the film 'preserves a whole era under glass' (quoted in Wollen 1995: 20). Mattias Frey rightly argues that the familiar geographical and spatial trope of Swinging London, manifests within 'a number of films from 1964 -1968' and that these films 'consciously reflected and invented the notions of youth, freedom, and uninhibited sexuality' (Frey 2006: 369). One need only reflect on the images of the occupants of 81 Powis Square and their triadic sexual contentment and freedom of expression (in contrast to Chas' narcissistic and sadistic lovemaking) to find evidence of a preoccupation with youthful hedonism, permissiveness and thus in turn subversion, or resistance to, social norms and discourses. Peter Wollen, amongst others, identifies *Performance* as one of a canon of films that interact with this alternative London, films such as *The Servant* (Losey, 1963), *Repulsion* (Polanski, 1965) and *Blowup* (Antonioni, 1966), but that *Performance* differs in that it is not set in 'Chelsea or South Kensington' instead we are geographically located 'north of the park, to Powis Square, just off Portobello Road, then seen as a crumbling crime-ridden ghetto' (Wollen 1995: 23).

This relocation has particular significance, in part as it offers what Charlotte Brunson refers to as 'local London' (Brunson 2007: 51). A spatial milieu that reflects the verisimilitude of the gangster (in particular its depiction of East End London) and pop star (through Christopher Gibbs' set design work drawing on influences ranging from Morocco to the Chelsea set) in this decade synonymous with The Beatles, The Krays, The Rolling Stones and the Chelsea set. For *Performance*, unlike the majority of Roeg's films in which characters are routinely defined by their distance to the environment and culture they find themselves confronted by, locates its protagonists within an environment of familiarity.³²

³² I do like to set people against an unfamiliar background. I think the background can be used tremendously by the actor. It makes him stand out. I don't want the characters to meld with their environment. In an

However this representation of Swinging London, though familiar, is one defined by the near absence of the hegemonic cinematic space that is traditionally evoked onscreen. For the London of *Performance* is not one imbued by images of red buses, fog and Victorian cultural artifacts, a cacophony of iconic elements that Brunsdon refers to as being cinematically ‘Landmark London’ (ibid: 21). Instead, *Performance*’s London is one defined by seemingly more banal spaces. A melange of mini-cab offices, courts, bars, apartments, betting shops, garages and porn cinemas, emblematic of what Brunsdon terms as representing the opposite of landmark London, what she terms ‘local London’ (Ibid: 57) (see image 2.1). Brunsdon notes that the ‘authenticity of ‘local London’ is often guaranteed by its eschewal of landmark iconography’ offering instead ‘the ordinary and the quotidian, the unspectacular’ (Ibid: 57) what Lefebvre refers to as ‘social space’ (Lefebvre 1991: 16).³³

When iconic tropes of London do occur they are either those of more mundane qualities (for example the overhead long-shot that captures Paddington Station from the air) or alternatively their presence is mediated through the gangster. To elaborate on the latter, when Chas and his fellow gang members drive through London en-route to their first destination/victim London becomes a series of glimpses through the windows of the vehicle. For example the base of Nelson’s Column and the extremities of Trafalgar Square are briefly visible through a rear windowpane of the car (imperialist iconography is thus at one remove and thus one can argue that so too is the production

unfamiliar place they can’t help relating differently, until all their sharpened concentration goes on with their own problems, which is the story.

(Roeg quoted in Kennedy 1980: 26)

³³ Everyone knows what is meant when we speak of a ‘room’ in an apartment, the ‘corner’ of the street, a ‘marketplace’, a shopping or cultural ‘centre’, a public ‘place’, and so on. These terms of everyday discourse serve to distinguish, but not to isolate, particular spaces, and in general to describe a social space. They correspond to a specific use of that space, and hence to a spatial practice that they express and constitute. Their interrelationships are ordered in a specific way

(Lefebvre 1991: 16)

of the normalising hegemony and justice of the nation and its identity). The omission of the iconic and the elevation of the mundane subsequently situates London not as the centre of the film but as a supporting space in which discourses of identity and violence dominate.³⁴



Image 2.1: The Gangster and Local London.

Intriguingly, Brunsdon describes ‘local London’ as ‘the place of origins and ordinariness’ (Brunsdon 2007: 58), one that is defined by a ‘time of repetition’ (Ibid: 57). We can see how *Performance*’s London, for Chas and his associates in particular,

³⁴ This primacy towards discourse rather than iconography is made expressively clear in the film’s vibrant opening sequence. For *Performance* resists a traditional strategy in its representation of space and city, replacing the classical establishing montage strategy (inferring this is London through cultural and historical tropes) with a mosaic of energy and movement. Energy and movement that commences with a supersonic jet leaving a white trail through a dark blue sky, followed by a black Rolls Royce journeying country roads intercut with Chas’s sadomasochistic tinged sex with Dana. This play between machinist movement and corporeal movement focuses the spectator onto Chas, unlike the obscured occupants of plane and car. Chas is depicted as a forceful masculinity that desires control (his narcissistic gazing into the mirror as Dana fellates him) and the primacy of violence to his sense of self and social position (as exemplified in his striking and his attempts at asphyxiation that forms part of the love play). *Performance* thus from the outset establishes that it is not the question of location that is significant for the film, but more of subject, in particular that of Chas.

but also for the non-time of Turner's interior realm, is one of repetition and reiteration. Dialogue is repeated, actions reoccur that we have seen before, and a sense of weariness and familiarity permeate. It quickly becomes clear that the role of extortion is akin to a postman on his rounds, with both extorter and victim trapped in a repetitive cycle of threat and appeasement.

Brunsdon concludes that 'the local [...] has many modalities, and can be reassuring or constricting, familiar or claustrophobic – and sometimes all these things at once' (Ibid: 59). A sense of claustrophobia is a defining spatial quality of *Performance*, for this space of the unspectacular, of the ordinary, is one that is dominated by interiority, and thus in turn colour and lighting. Evoking the Pinter-esque construction of space that defines Roeg's cinematographic work on *The Caretaker* (Donner, 1963), the primacy of interiority, accentuates colour's function through the multiplicity of planes and textures within settings and costumes present. Thus London within *Performance*, it could be argued, is a re-imagined space defined by chains of interiorities, a re-appropriation of the colourful interiors located within the iconic *The Masque of the Red Death* (Corman, 1964), a film that Roeg worked on as a cinematographer. For that ballad of death and madness is one celebrated for its vivid interiors each dominated by a singular hue.

In turn *Performance*'s London, adopts a similar strategy to that found in Prospero's castle, becoming a space comprised and located around a series of interiorities, within which colour plays a prominent role. Though not interiors of a singular hue, colour marks out territories, a series of coloured spaces. The presence blue and/or yellow that is prominent in various locations (Chas' flat, Maddocks' betting shop, the mini-cab office (see image 2.1)) the dark green and gold of Harry Flowers' office (see image 2.2) and the multi coloured, multi textured psychedelic realm of Turner's home.



Image 2.2: Harry Flowers' Green and Gold Office.

Intriguingly this placing of the gangster and his world within the interior is one that connects to recent writing on the relationship between masculinity and violence explored by Suzanne E. Hatty, who proposes that:

Men are now a highly visible and powerful presence in the public domain [...] men in public now exercise a wide range of powers: over some men in the public domain; and over all other men in the private domain. Furthermore, there is a silence surrounding the relationship between men's activity and experience in the public and private domains. *Men are powerful and visible, yet fractured and disconnected; men's lives are split into compartments.*

(Hatty 2000: 161) [italics my emphasis]

Performance's London and its intersection with masculinity is one, I would argue, that reflects this concept of men existing in compartmentalised lives, disconnected and fractured. To take the example of Chas he is depicted as existing in a world of interiorities, exercising his range of power (the torture of the chauffeur, intimidation of the mini-cab manager, sexual beating of Dana), a man in control. However there are two interiors in which he relinquishes his alpha-male status (self-perception), the first being that of this criminal patriarch, queer gangland boss Harry Flowers, the second when (as we will later discuss) Chas is challenged by the hallucinogenic world of Turner. Hence this focus on interiority, the focus on the private, rather than the public, reinforces the theme of power and control that plays out in this space. To elaborate on

this idea I want to focus now on one particular locale in which such struggle between two masculinities take place, that of the office of Harry Flowers.

The Lair of the Boss: From Green/Gold to Black/White

Harry Flowers' office is marked by an interiority dominated by a tri-colour strategy, that of dark green (in particular the walls), gold (the decorative beading on the walls) and red (present in the roses, curtains and ornaments on the desk), colours that are also present in the interior in which we first see Turner. In particular it is green that has significance, for, I would propose, green is linked to Flowers and his command and status as patriarchal leader of the gang. Green is a recurring chromatic presence, a series of molar-chromatic-borders: Flowers' office; the dark green car that ferries his underlings on their business for him; the public phone that connects Chas to Flowers when pleading for clemency; Maddocks' suit on joining the gang.

Green also intersects with the milieu of local London, an area that the Flowers' gang dominate via their challenge to the system of law and order through their persecution of local businesses. Local London is a space marked by a proliferation of green, on lampposts, a bridge over a by-pass, and most notably, the green tinged hue to the image as Chas unwittingly arrives and walks towards Maddocks' ambush. To refer to Lefebvre, if 'each mode of production has its own particular space' then the production of power that emanates from Harry Flowers' control over his domain, is one that is marked out, defined by, a series of interiorities and bodies, that are interconnected through colour. Green flows out from the office, linking bodies and spaces together, a chromatic-network, marking chromatically the territory of the Flowers' gang, and also the crime boss' position at the centre of it.³⁵

³⁵ Of course green has notable symbolic connotations, one being economic, with green a colour strongly associated with the American economy, hence lending to a reading that Flowers' office is a space of prosperity, of economic vitality. Indeed through the enforcement of Chas and his fellow gang members the turnover for the Flowers' gang is moving into 'six figures' we are told.

It is also worth noting that when Flowers is informed of Chas's transgression he is not in the office but instead in his bedroom a domestic space of pinks and soft textures (tropes of his queer desires abound, from the muscle magazine; the photograph of two boys both clad in coloured underwear and hats; and of course the rent boy in the bathroom), a space that he finds himself unable to take control (Flowers

Intriguingly, it is within this space of green, gold and red that the moment occurs which is the impetus for Chas' exile from the gang. For the introduction of long time rival/friend/lover (the relationship between the two never being clear) Joey Maddocks into the gang is one that for Chas threatens his position, and in particular, it is inferred his relationship with Flowers.

Chas: What's all this about Joey Maddocks? You steaming into that slag?

Flowers: Course not, he's been invited to join our associated group of companions my son.

Flowers: (addressing Rosebloom and Dennis): He's an old friend of Chas' good pals they was, like that since they were kids, game boy hey Chas?

Chas, in his desire to maintain his position within the gang wants to ensure Maddocks position within the hierarchical structure is lower than his. Thus he demands that Flowers allows him to encourage Maddocks to see the error of his ways, he should be allow to 'see to the ponce ... I'll decorate him and his shop'. It is Flowers refusal, preferring to keep 'personal relations out of business' that Chas subsequently ignores (turning up at Maddocks' betting shop post attack to escort him to Flowers' office) that is the catalyst for the events that follow which leads to Chas fleeing the gang. Intriguingly colour plays an integral part, alongside editing and composition, in depicting this break in power and control between boss and underling.

As Arnheim argues 'it is quite conceivable that by a careful choice and arrangement of objects it might be possible to use colour on the projection surface artistically and harmoniously' (Arnheim 1992: 48). As I will now demonstrate this moment of rupture is one that implements colour in an artistic way that challenges the spectator's sense of verisimilitude whilst reinforcing the narrative. For what occurs at this moment of Flowers denying Chas over Maddocks, is that the colour balance in the sequence is gradually eroded (see images 2.3.1 – 2.3.3). The greens, gold and reds that dominate the interiority are gradually displaced by black and white, through a progressive desaturation of colour within the frame (achieved primarily by a change in film stock). Strangely this moment has drawn little in the way of critical attention, when it has it

literally hides himself within the bed covers as the gang deliberate the ramifications of Chas's actions and cedes the final decision regarding Chas to Dennis (Antony Morton)).

seems that it is not really worth considering, a prime example, and one worth recalling is that of Scott Salwolke:

In *Performance* [Roeg's] experimentation was evident in his use of black and white, in his imbuing some sequences with a particular colour and in the exchange of characters without warning or apparent reason.

(Salwolke 1993: 26)

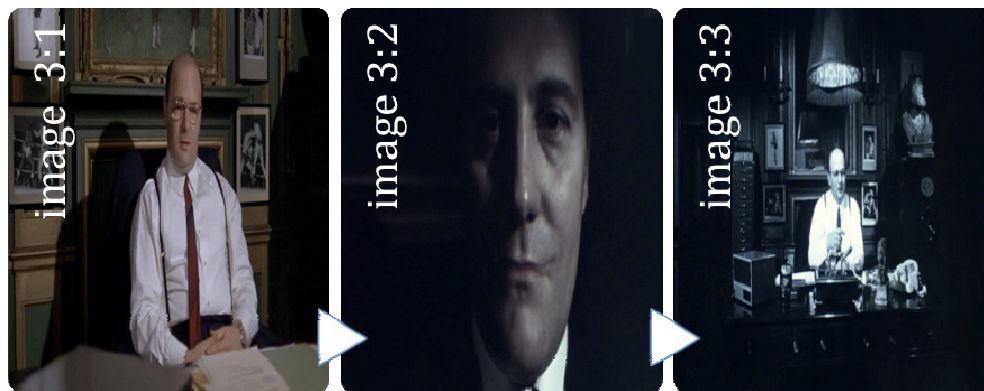


Image 2.3: The Gradual Erosion of Colour.

The dismissal of this rupture in colour may well be because the logic behind this playing with colour is seemingly in contradiction to the discourse of the gangster environ we would expect to encounter. For experimentation we would assume would not occur in a space of realism and solidity, not in the representation of the gangster the normative body of hyper-masculinity. That in fact one would assume that moments of colour would manifest only in the realm of the counter-cultural, the domain of the psychedelic, a space as we will later discuss that is markedly defined by a combination of music, drugs and colour. However a playing of colour does occur in this (seemingly) rational space, one that punctures the sanctity of the image, breaking the normalised codes and conventions of realism that we would usually encounter in such a genre. Importantly this shift in the aesthetic is positioned from Chas' point of view (see images 2.4 to 2.6), and represents a moment of dislocation between gang boss and underling.

In some respects this shift from in colour schemes (from colour to absence) is evocative of Deleuze and Guattari's concept of power and space:

No sooner do we note a simple opposition between [...] two kinds of space than we must indicate a much more complex difference by virtue of which the successive terms of the opposition fail to coincide entirely. And no sooner have we done that than we must remind ourselves that the two spaces in fact exist only in mixture: smooth space is constantly being translated, transverse into a striated space; striated space is constantly being reversed, returned to smooth space.

(Deleuze & Guattari 2004: 524)

Deleuze and Guattari's description of space being not one of singular and unique existence, rather space (and all its ideological potential) exists in "mixture", is relevant in my consideration of the sequence, for what occurs is a shift from colour to monochromatic and back again. One could argue that the striated space of Flowers, is contrasted by the smooth interiority of Chas, but when the moment of confrontation is brought to an end, signalled by Flowers' offer of a nightcap to the assembled gang then we return to the normative colour scheme.

To return to the sequence and the erosion of colour, Flowers to ensure that Chas understands his wish that the latter stays away from Maddocks ask 'what's the thing I say, my motto?'. Chas, framed in a medium shot, his eyes somewhat glazed and his face unresponsive, replies 'at the death, whose left holding the sodding baby, Harry Flowers'. At the moment of his answer, so occurs the erosion of colour, with the gradual de-saturation of the colour balance, which results in two differing ruptures occurring. Firstly the achromatic reveals that beneath the façade of Chas' peers lingers natures that are more abject and troublesome, Dennis' face becomes one bejewelled in sweat, Rosebloom's (image 2.3:2) is a face mixed of placidness and malevolence, no longer the comfortable and familiar faces of colleagues, what we are confronted with our countenances of distortion. This distorted nature in turn informs that the status quo is being compromised, that those faces of familiarity for Chas are becoming uncanny, and that in turn will become the faces that will pursue and punish Chas in the end.

Second, the emergence of black and white, as I have already noted becomes an aesthetic platform for the aggressive rupturing of the image, for as Flowers' continues his rant responding to Chas' uttering of his motto by replying three times 'me', each utterance is matched by a jump cut. Each cut moves Flowers further away, distorting the cohesive

space of his office, for it seems to elongate, become tunnel-like (see images 2.4 – 2.6). The images composition and coloration, particularly as we are aligned with Chas' point of view, infer that his relationship with Flowers is no longer of master/servant but one whose power dynamic has become broken. As Flowers' presence becomes diminished, both by the gap between him and the foreground and the blurred quality of the image, so too it is inferred is his control over Chas.



Image 2.4: The Dominance of Black and White.



Image 2.5: Distance and Colour.



Image 2.6: Dislocation and Disempowerment.

Hence what may seem as simply a random occurrence, an experimenting with film colour for the sake of experimentation, can alternatively be read as a chromatic manifestation of subjectivity and power. Throughout the film this disruption of the image, particularly through the use of white is a recurring motif. In one instance white represents the flash of a (unseen) camera, taking a photo of Flowers and his new protégé Maddocks (see image 2.7), the image nearly overwhelmed by the colour. Later in the film Turner will violently use white, in the guise of a fluorescent tube, to penetrate Chas' deconstructed identity, lunging at Chas' head, the camera travels down this beam of colour/light into Chas' ear (see image 2.8). Intriguingly in the context of the latter, this moment of chromatic violence (both to Chas and image) results in a rupture in the film, as it is the catalyst for our entry into Chas' mind itself. Here his drugged consciousness recreates Turner as Flowers, his fellow gang-members and Chas now begrudging participants in a musical interlude, a song entitled *Ode to Turner*. In some respects it is right that the intersection of colour, sound and drugs provide a psychedelic moment, manifest in an hallucination. Of course this moment offers the spectator Jagger as Jagger, in other words the rock star emerges and fulfils his normative function, that of singing. It is worth noting that the final shot (see image 2.9) of this musical sequence reveals the rich intertextual nature of the use of colour in the film. For the greens and reds that dominate Flowers' office become a tableau that adopts a style reminiscent of Francis Bacon, with the naked bodies of the gangsters replicating Bacon's own twisted manifestations of corporeality.



Image 2.7: Fame of the Gangster Inferred by White.

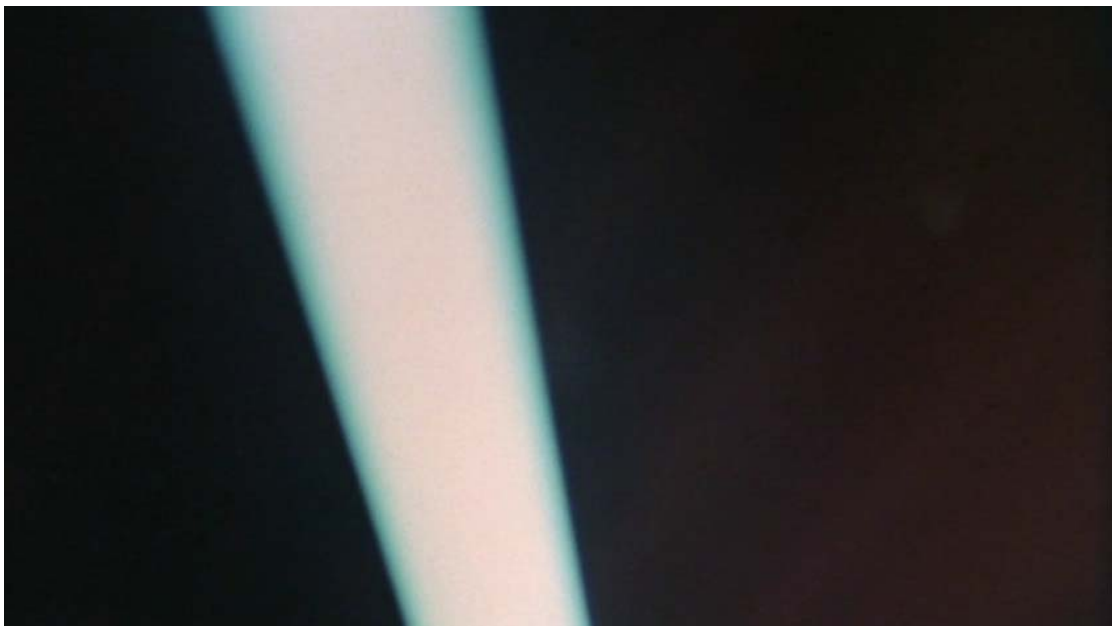


Image 2.8: White as Penetration, White as Weapon.



Image 2.9: Iconography of Francis Bacon.

Thus colour, I would argue, is more than simply an aesthetic passive plane associated only with décor. As I will now go onto discuss, it's colours connection to violence that is of particular interest, a connection that is fully realised in Chas' fatalistic confrontation with Joey Maddocks. A confrontation that has colour at the heart of its playing out of violence.

Violence

Filming on *Performance* commenced on 22 July 1968 (though (in)famously the film was not released by Warner Bros until 1970) and it is the sixties that is notable as a point of reference in terms of both aesthetics and violence. In terms of the latter Martin Amis found that:

In the cinema, if not elsewhere, violence started getting violent in 1966 ... And I was delighted to see it, all this violence. I found it voluptuous, intense, and (even then) disquietingly humorous; it felt subversive and counter-cultural. Violence had arrived.

(Amis 1996: 12)

The arrival of violence, as has been well documented, was primarily due to legislative changes within Hollywood. A key example occurring in 1966, when modifications to Hollywood's Production Code resulted in what Stephen Prince identifies as 'a wave of tougher, harder-edged, and controversial films' epitomised by Arthur Penn's 1967 *Bonnie & Clyde*. As Prince notes:

Ultraviolence emerged in the late 1960s, and movies have never been the same since. The factors that helped produce this new violence were instigated by two watershed events in Hollywood history: the revision in September 1966 of Hollywood's thirty-six-year-old Production Code and the creation two years later of the Code and Rating Administration with its G-M-R-X classification system. These changes were responses to the more liberal and tolerant culture of the period, particularly the revolution in social mores tied to the youth movement.

(Prince 2000: 6)

Of course *Performance* deploys a rich tapestry of violence, liberalism and youth, one that seems in tune with the films that Prince argues proffer 'new artistic freedoms' through 'graphic violence, profanity, and sexuality' (Prince 2000: 7).

A ramification of considering *Performance*'s production, through focussing on American, and in particular Hollywood-centric legislation may be considered inappropriate given *Performance*'s British and European heritage. But it cannot be ignored that the film was funded with American capital, primarily through Warner Bros and had been originally conceived of as a film about a American hit man (to be played by Marlon Brando) on the run and finding shelter in a pop star's house (from the outset to be played by Jagger).³⁶ Thus the changes in terms of how and to what extent violence could be represented was being drawn from both Hollywood and Britain. As historian Arthur Marwick notes on a broader socio-cultural level 'after the parochial

³⁶ As Colin MacCabe rightly highlights:

It is easy [...] to understand why Warner Bros. were keen to finance a film starring the lead singer of the Rolling Stones. The Stones had already established themselves as second only to the Beatles in the wave of music that had rolled out of Britain and round the world in the mid-60s. To cast a Stone, particularly if there was an album attached and the budget was kept to reasonable proportions, was a sure bet.

(MacCabe 1998: 34)

post-war years, there was a new openness to ideas and attitudes from both the Continent and the United States' (Marwick 1986: 120).

It is intriguing to consider that this moment of violence, one that reflected the concerns of the day, as Prince puts it 'the savage bloodshed of the Vietnam War established a context whereby filmmakers felt justified in reaching for new levels of screen violence' (Ibid: 8), was one that brought colour into the equation. It would seem somewhat tenuous, maybe, to argue that there resides an interconnection between these two modes of representation within film. An interconnection that would seem tangential at best, incompatible at worst, but colour and violence share a symbiotic relationship, one that as technology and spectator demands evolved, has become prevalent in modern day cinema. For example the red, blue, green light-sabres synonymous with the *Star Wars* (Lucas, 1977) series, blades of coloured light that cut down good and bad alike (strikingly reminiscent of Turner's fluorescent light tube that he penetrates Chas with!); the spontaneous eruption of blood/red under the impact of a bullet; the yellow and orange flower that erupts from an explosion, colour from this point in the sixties became a signifier that denoted violence, marked out its presence.

In other words in black and white film stock the graphic manifestation of violence was primarily achieved through a balance between sound, image and edit; for example the punch that strikes the face, marked by sound and action, its force sending the body back. In contrast colour evokes the disruption, the breaking of the corporeal border, the spreading of red through costume being a classic example. Thus with the likes of *The Dirty Dozen* (Aldrich, 1967) and *Bonnie and Clyde* (Penn, 1967) violence manifested itself through a new and more visceral aesthetic, one that emerged due to changes of production, cinematography and technology. To return to Prince, in his discussion of the latter film, he argues that this aesthetic of violence manifested through the appropriation of techniques developed by Kurosawa, notably 'multicamera filming [...] slow motion and montage editing' (Ibid: 10). However, central to a consideration of colour and violence was Penn's incorporation of a new technique, for as Prince notes 'Penn added squibs [...] and thereby] changed the way screen violence looked' (Ibid: 10).

It is worth pausing to consider the way that squibs transformed cinematic violence for prior to its implementation the impact of bullet on body would normally be represented by the body being thrown back, or rocked, by the bullet's invisible trajectory. Sometimes, in particular if the hero of the film had been hit, or a close colleague/gang

member, this impact would then be followed by a shot that revealed the slow spreading of a dark stain, that signified the blood emerging from the point of impact.

The squib changed this dynamic, now it was no longer necessary to represent the impact of a bullet through physical movement of the body, instead an explosion of colour, the spurting of red erupting from the body became a chromatic signifier for the moment of violence. Colour thus becomes a synaesthetic moment of momentary transience, the quick spurt of blood, but one that manifests through colour discourses of pain, loss, grief, redemption and finality, amongst others.

However to return to the central text of this chapter, unlike *Bonnie & Clyde*'s graphic and realist representations of violence, what Pauline Kael charmingly termed the cinema of 'blood and holes' of *Performance*'s approach to violence is one that adopts an alternative strategy to its depiction of violence, one that omits these technological changes. Of course such an omission can be argued as being due to the context of the violence within the film (mythological American gangsters with machine guns in comparison to the more hands-on thugs of the East End), or due to production costs and budgetary concerns.

However there is a certain verisimilitude to the violence of *Performance*, in which protagonists (as we will later discuss) show a preference for more pugilistic forms of violence. With Chas seeming to prefer to use intimidation followed by physical demonstrations of violence than the detached violence of the bullet. A preference that echoes the film's own construction/performance of violence as not only a means of domination, but also a source of masculine competition, identity and thus status, as the images of an earlier Chas, hitting a speed ball (an on-looker Harry Flowers caught over Chas shoulder in the photograph), or of his adversary Maddocks, when Flowers recalls his boxing prowess, throwing punches at the camera. Hence, intrinsically the use of fists rather than guns is linked to a sense of masculinity, of identity. It is somewhat fitting that when Chas has lost all hope, all identity and thus place, he executes Turner with a gun, the final act of a man who knows that all he believed in was meaningless.

What is intriguing about *Performance*'s implementation of violence is the centrality of colour to this act, from paint being thrown to paint being removed, from a red mushroom to a white light penetrating, violence within *Performance* is one that instead of reproducing 'blood and holes' in fact resists such realism, and instead turns violence into an expressionist abstraction.

A conversation that takes place between gang members Moody and Rosebloom, en-route to the mini-cab firm with Chas acknowledges the issues regarding representations of violence:

Moody: It's 8 o'clock in the evening, the kiddies are still viewing ain't they? I mean there's claret all over the screen ... geezer's got half his ear hanging off ...

Rosebloom: disgusting

Moody: I mean, how are the kid's going to grow up? It's not right ...

Rosebloom: definitely not

This dialogue infers that *Performance*'s implementation of violence is one that (for all its boldness in its depiction of sex and drug taking) is one of a restrained discourse. In part it can also be argued that this shift in representation, away from realism, is in part due to another cultural manifestation of the late sixties. For whilst the technology of violence in cinema was slowly shifting toward more realist and violent representations, so too was colour also subject to a shift in cultural value and resonance. As Alexander Walker comments:

From 1967 onwards, shapes and colours began to figure far more prominently than ever before in the lyrics of pop music and in street posters which now aped the style of the Underground advertisements that had emerged during the summer of 1966, with their peculiar phosphorescent use of Day-Glo paints and dyes designed to convey the effects of the mind-blowing drugs.

(Walker 1970: 412)

Colour theorist David Batchelor concurs, arguing that

Something important happened to colour in art in the 1960s [...] an entirely distinct and unrelated use of colour occurs in the work of those artists who were identified [...] with the emergence of Pop art and minimalism [...] an entirely new conception of colour.

(Batchelor 2000: 98)

Consequently colour can be positioned as having a paradoxical if not oxymoronic status in the late 60s. Colour becomes a means of resisting society, not only in terms of its counter-cultural prominence, but also that colour leads to new conceptions of representation. In the case of *Performance* the film replicates within its *mise-en-scene*

such new conceptions, appropriating Technicolor and colour in ways which would seemingly defy the formulaic cause-effect structure of film). For though colour is used to adhere to creating a sense of realism, colour also subverts and challenges our notions of representation. As I have already discussed the black and white rupture in *Flowers*' office is a notable example, but we could also mention the blue that transforms the jury into a porn cinema audience; the playing of colour as ethnicity with the seemingly ill fitted mother and Noel, the former a white diminutive lady juxtaposed against the black skin of the counter-cultural musician. In some respects Roeg's use of colour is one that chimes with Marwick's notion of this period as time of transformation. As Marwick argues:

Never is there an era in which no writers or artists are expressing criticism of the society in which they live. It would be wrong to overstate the case for the late fifties and the sixties as a time of special social criticism; indeed, much that was newest and most characteristic rather formed a self-regarding part of the new culture than a forceful criticism set apart from it. Still, a number of influences, often inter-related, often quite different in strength or in kind, can be detected which together produced that transformation in British ideas and modes of behaviour which can, without quite slipping into bathos, be described as forming a 'cultural revolution'.

(Marwick 1986: 120)

Hence in the late sixties both colour and violence become cultural concerns, and I would propose that *Performance* in its integration of both, at some level picks up on the zeitgeist of the moment. What is crucial for both elements, and their interaction is that both become associated with the notion of identity. In a moment we will examine the relationship between colour and violence in the context of a key scene within the film, that of film (and a turning point for Chas' transition from gangster to fugitive) that of the assault by Joey Maddocks' gang on Chas in his flat. However I first want to consider the connection between masculinity and violence, that marks the film's interactions as a whole

Violence and the Self

Being a man [...] is not a fixed state [...] one is not born a masculine, but acquires and enacts masculinity, and so becomes a man.

(Connell 2002: 4)

Suzanne E. Hatty in her discussion of masculinity and violence notes a defining quality of the latter, and why it is pivotal for the former, is that it 'guarantees both individual and social control, while maintaining and perpetuating hierarchy and inequality' (Hatty 2000: 10). It is intriguing that colour of course, as Batchelor discusses, is a cultural presence that unhinges hierarchy. That whilst one discourse, violence, fixes and defines identity and place, the other, colour, subverts such structures. It is this tension between these two differing positions that is explored in *Performance*.

Within *Performance*, this connection between violence, masculinity and social order is evident in the way in which the hierarchy of the Flowers gang is structured. The queered patriarchy of Harry Flowers (a simulacra of the Kray Twins) exerts power over a criminal empire through intimidation, coercion and violence. This manifests itself most blatantly through the gang's extortion/protection racket, in which we see Chas, Moody and Rosie extorting money through the cinema owner and the taxi firm. Violence, or the threat of it, however, is not simply a means to economic gain, but is also implemented to consolidate and protect Flower's grip on both criminal empire and gang. As and when such a grip is threatened then it is the reality of violence, which is implemented to negate any challenge to his power, a key example being the torturing of the chauffeur, a calling card of violence to the prosecuting barrister and his witness. However, through these differing modes of violence, it is evident that if violence is to be implemented then, importantly, it must be only when sanctified by Harry Flowers. For, if violence is a means of consolidating social positions within the gang, then each member must acquiesce to the lines of control that stem from Flowers' management, all must abide to agreed codes and conduct of violence. Any signs of transgression are swiftly countered to maintain Flowers' hegemonic position (to ensure the safety of the criminal enterprise), and also the status of individual gang members.

Thus if violence is the hegemonic discourse that shapes the group at the macro level, then at the micro level it also accords a sense of identification for the individual, a means of consolidating a sense of self. Hatty continues her discussion of violence by

noting that ‘violence, in the service of the modern self, preserves individuality and forestalls the possibility of fusion with the dangerous not-self’ (Ibid: 10).

If we pause to consider Chas for a moment, it is evident that violence is key for Chas to maintain a sense of control over his environ. Chas’ desire to dominate femininity is depicted in his hitting and choking of Dana (an assault on femininity that he does not act out in 81 Powis Sq), violence also enables Chas to negotiate those established and defining class divides endemic within British society. For example his intimidation of forthcoming witness Mr Fraser leads to Chas confronting the upper class and educated barrister who is accompanying him (the barrister’s economic and social status marked by the chauffeur driven black Rolls Royce):

Council: Now look here I’m Mr Fraser’s council and I’ll warn you ...

Chas: (interrupting) I know that now shut your hole Mr Council.

Chas’ ‘calling card’ for the barrister later in the film is his attack on the car and chauffeur, both chattels of this man of justice. It is interesting to note that Chas in his torture of both objects of status focuses his assault in their surfaces, the black paint of the car scarred with acid, the marks then re-created through the then shaving of the head of the chauffeur. It is as if the attack at some level is a means of negotiating the implicit class structures that define British society, that by re-establishing his own working-class status as equal, Chas leaves his calling card, leaving both symbols of wealth and social status usable but marked.

During this torture scene Chas dismisses the chauffeur, as simply being an capitalist object of status, remarking ‘does your owner take care of his property?’. It can be also be inferred as a moment when Chas’ comes to his own realisation, that to Flowers he is nothing more than a chauffeur, a servant. Through his domination and humiliation of the chauffeur Chas attempts then to conceal from himself the truth of his relationship to Flowers. For the reality is that Chas is as much an object, a means of economic generation, as he is a colleague (for want of a better word). Chas’ use of violence is initially positioned as a means of establishing and maintaining his social status. It is therefore unsurprising that his positioned within the gang is compromised by the emergence of a potential rival, that of Joey Maddocks, whose own proficiency with violence (as hinted at by Flowers’ eulogy of Maddocks’ boxing style) could infer demotion for Chas. Hence Chas’ interference in Maddocks’ introduction to the gang can be read as an initial attempt to maintain the status quo, to protect his status within

the gang. An interference that subsequently results in Chas' flight into exile from the Flowers gang.

Chas reliance on violence as a means of asserting his sense of self is not confined solely to the domain of the gangster. As I have already mentioned Chas incorporates a playful violent tension into his lovemaking with Dana. Moments of striking and asphyxiation ensure that Chas establishes his control over the situation and further maintains Dana as nothing more than an object of the moment. For though after their lovemaking Dana expresses an interest in seeing Chas again, in contrast Chas is keen to usher Dana out of his flat, and ultimately out of his life. It is interesting to note, that Chas' sexual treatment of Pherber and Lucy differs greatly to that he accords Dana. For sexual violence is replaced by tenderness and compassion, a shift that can be attributed to Pherber and Turner's psychedelic deconstruction of Chas. For after their experiment a new Chas emerges, one who no longer relies on violence as a means of maintaining identity. Consequently the act of lovemaking, previously marked by a struggle for control, becomes instead a shared experience of understanding and mutual satisfaction.

Consequently, we can see that for Chas violence is a means of order, of control and thus of identity. For violence becomes a means of negotiating the dilemma of being confronted by that which is not self, and thus in turn, suppressing the other whilst simultaneously, reasserting one's sense of superiority. Thus through violence (as a means of constructing self) emerges the classical binary of self/other. This dyadic series of self/other is one mirrored in modernity's foundation of the primacy of reason and rationality. As Hatty continues 'reason erects a boundary around the territory of the real; it excludes and denies the legitimacy, and indeed the existence, of extraneous knowledge' (Ibid: 17).

Hatty then persuasively notes that:

Reason, of course, also attaches itself to masculine subjectivity. This subjectivity coheres in its proximity to the real. The unreal, and all its contents, belongs to the dangerous territory beyond the confines of normalized masculine subjectivity. There reside disturbing emotions, confused thoughts, transports of delight – madness, desire, and the feminine.

(Ibid: 18)

It is unsurprising that when Chas does descend into the multi-coloured world of 81 Powis Square, he finds himself displaced, unable to implement violence to reaffirm his

sense of self. Consequently confusion abounds, madness, desire, all emanating from the intoxicating presence of Pherber (a subject I will return to later in the case-study).

A sub-text of violence, but one that is relevant to our discussion is the recurring association of violence and sport, for boxing is a recurring discourse of masculinity within the film. The relationship between violence and sport is one of increasing social convergence for masculinity, as Hatty argues:

The emergence of organized sports served to deflect fears of feminization among middle-class men, and generated new arenas for asserting male superiority. Indeed [...] sport had come to be the leading definer of masculinity in mass culture. Sport provides a continuous display of men's bodies in motion.

(Ibid: 126)

Bob Connell also notes, this focus on the body is important in terms of masculinity, that 'true masculinity is almost always thought to proceed from men's bodies – to be inherent in a male body or to express something about a male body' (Connell 1995: 45).



Image 2.10: Contrasting Sporting Masculinity in *Performance*.

Both Chas and Joey are marked by their physical prowess, are defined by their boxing ability with Flowers talking warmly of the latter's talent (much to the chagrin of Chas), and Chas' flat contains black and white photos of his sporting past. Thus the equation of boxing as a means of social status, both public and gang, is one that is prominent

within the film. What is worth considering is that boxing is a very ritualised form of sporting violence, divided into spatial and temporal zones (the ring, the round), an agreed code of violence (i.e. no kicking, blows under the belt etc), and one inextricably linked to identity (as in the coloured robes, nicknames and circus-like atmosphere that surrounds fights at the higher echelons of the sport). A sense of ritual, of code and conduct that mirrors, as I have already mentioned, the way violence is used within the Flowers' gang, a ritual of violence, of controlled aggression. However the presence of boxing also demarcates social position and capability for the male inhabitants of *Performance*. For example image 2.10 shows Tony (Kenneth Colley), the friend that Chas is reliant on to sort out his means of escape from London, on the phone to Chas. The juxtaposition of the two bodies at the boxing gym in the frame, alludes to Tony's weakness, a weakness that will bring Chas, who is reliant on Tony for his escape, into danger, for as Hatty notes:

Dependence from a Western perspective, is an indicator of developmental immaturity or emotional deficiency. It is also closely associated with femininity and the normalized status of womanhood. The valorised construct of independence is associated with the exercise of masculinities in the public sphere [...].

(Ibid: 11-12)

The composition of the frame, and the use of colour, both infer Tony's weakness, his marginalised self-hugging posture in direct contradiction to the bulky and muscular body of 'Lex Hunter', both bodies are connected to yellow/blue, the robe of 'Hunter', the towel draped around Tony's shoulders. What can be inferred is that, through this *mise-en-abyme* of colour and costume, Tony is depicted as not being fully masculine in comparison to the fellow boxer. That in some respects he is socially nameless, that he is neither worthy nor able to wear the paraphernalia of the fighter. Of course one could also argue that the costume infers that Tony is simply waiting to throw in the towel, an act that he will do later in the film, with his subsequent betrayal of Chas to the gang

Hence boxing is a discourse of violence, one bound by notion of hierarchy and ritual, and in turn performativity. Such discourses in turn inform the Flowers gang, it is little wonder that there is a transition from boxer to gangster, as both seemingly share similar qualities, and both through performance, can provide notoriety and wealth.

A final useful aspect of masculinity and violence, to return to Hatty, is the notion of the 'imperial self' (Ibid: 11). Adopting Lasch's notion of the 'imperial self' Hatty argues that it is:

An autonomous, self-constituting subject with a predictable and *relatively fixed* identity, the imperial self is not content with domination as the mere instrument of order. The imperial self is also narcissistic, materialistic, and expansionist; hence exploitation, manipulation, and colonization of the natural and social world become allied drives. The *narcissistic dimensions* of the imperial self are manifest in the preoccupation with the *cultivation of an image* that accords with socially constructed symbols of perfection, status, and success. The body, relationships, and knowledge itself become objects to be exploited. Indeed, the imperial self of the modern era has a voracious appetite for expanding its domain of ownership and its territory of control in a bid to suppress all other competitors and to achieve omnipotence.

(Ibid: 11) [Italics my emphasis]

Chas (due in part to the commands of Flowers) is a powerful representation of this notion of the imperial self. He cloaks himself in an image of gangster life, his narcissistic ego exemplified by his use of mirrors early in the film (a use that will later be subverted by Pherber in her overlaying her own body through mirrors onto Chas). His desire to negate Maddocks position within the gang is a moment of suppression, both of their shared past (acknowledged by the short sequence taken from one of James Fox's child roles *The Magnet* (Frend, 1950)), and of the threat to Chas' own position within the gang. Chas is the imperial self, and it is this combination of narcissism, violence and colour that reflects and informs his identity.

It is intriguing if one considers the social changes that were taking place in Britain at the time, how Chas embodies (alongside Turner) the need for the self to be defined by consumption and power. As Donnelly notes:

If the sixties was the age when people were preoccupied with self - self-fulfillment, the autonomous self, the contemplative self, integrity of the self, self-adulation - then consumption was important because it offered more people than ever before the chance to buy themselves identities and lifestyles.

(Donnelly 2005: 29)

A combination evident in Maddocks' attempted retribution on Chas, an ambush that results in the death of the former, and the expulsion of the latter from the gang.

‘Shall I decorate him Joey?’

Joey Maddocks’ ambush of Chas is one provoked by the latter’s desire to become involved in the process of the former’s integration into the Flowers gang. An integration that Maddocks initially rejects which results in his betting shop being vandalised with white paint daubed across the yellow and blue walls of the interior, glass windows smashed, and a toilet freed from its habitual location and now placed on the betting shop counter. In retaliation for the assault on his property, Maddocks takes revenge on Chas by ambushing him when he returns home. A retributive assault in which colour, as I will go onto discuss, plays a central role.³⁷

Mattias Frey in discussing the sequence argues that it depicts violence:

[...]in such an over-the-top, stylized manner that it becomes abstraction
One scene is particularly exemplary. Preceding an ambush, the walls of
Chas’ flat are splashed with red paint in the manner of Jackson Pollock
paintings.

(Frey 2006: 371)

I would argue however that there is ideologically more to this implementation of colour than simply an aesthetic abstraction. The use of red as a synergisation of colour and

³⁷ It is worth recalling Anthony Valentine’s (Joey Maddocks) recollection of shooting this sequence, which goes some way to support the idea of violence as central to the film. Valentine recalls:

The fight sequence was finally shot on the set in Lowndes Square. They’d set aside three days for it. Donald said, "I just want this to happen." No planning, no forethought. Now James and I got along extremely well together and we both knew that you cannot Mickey Mouse fights, because somebody will get hurt. You've got to choreograph them like a ballet. I asked Don who was staging this, and he looked at me and gave me this ‘are we all going to dance around like faggots?’ schtick [...] on the first take, in the melee, one of these guys [sidekicks] got a broken nose and the other one three cracked ribs, and that was the end of the take. After three months working out at the Thomas A' Beckett [boxing club] James was as hard as the Rock of Gibraltar, and there was no way he was going to stand still for a smacking simply because some director with a fantasy didn't want to rehearse it.

(Valentine quoted in Brown 2000: 221)

violence is a modernist discourse that both adheres to and subverts the mimesis of the aesthetic. In other words, colour functions within the scene on many differing levels, both supporting the narrative and themes, but at moments, as I will discuss, colour takes primacy, its presence overwhelming the image. The subversive presence of colour is exemplified by the poetic image of the television that is caught in a lingering close-up, its smashed screen occupied by a discarded paint pot, and a framed black and white photograph of a scantily clad female (a correlation of colour and femininity's closely aligned presence one could propose). The image of the can metaphorically bringing to the fore the potential for colour to subvert, even overwhelm the integrity of the projected image, as colour will later in the sequence. However the presence of the paint can has further implications in considering both colour and violence.



Image 2.11: Colour and Breaking the Frame.

David Batchelor argues that in the 1960s the transition from tube the usual vessel for painters, to [paint] can 'may not seem much, but it carries with it the risk – or the promise – of abandoning the entire tradition of easel painting, of painting as representation' (Batchelor 2000: 99). Consequently the paint can's double signification, of both colour and violence (for it is the can we assume that has been used to smash the screen, as well as splash the red paint) can be read as an indication of the film's gradual abandonment of more visceral representations of violence - away from 'blood and

holes', towards an alternative conceptualization. A conceptualization of which colour is a foundational component.

The first emergence of this alternative conceptualization of violence occurs with Chas leaving his car for his flat. His passage is intercut, by two differing spatial and temporal moments of colour, a juxtaposition influenced by Burroughs literary cut-up methodology. First we see a Bacon-esque triptych of red paint being thrown against different white walls in Chas' flat (the splash of red paint being what Frey found to be reminiscent of Pollock). This triad is then followed by the first image of Turner in the film, he is shown to be playing with colour, spraying black paint onto a red wall (a reinforcement of the centrality colour has to masculinity within the film). This juxtaposition of paint as a means of vandalism (contrasted with Turner's use of paint as artistic expression), playfully acknowledges the plurality of meaning within colour. Moving from paint as a discourse of degradation, hatred and anger, to that of paint as a means of self-expression, play and discovery. Of further note is that this differing representation of masculinity, paint and colour, hints that Turner's role later in the film is not simply one of psychedelic recluse. In fact I would propose that the spray can is an early visual hint to the continuation of violence when the film relocates into 81 Powis Square. But that this violence will differ in as much that whereas Maddocks desires to inflict physical pain on Chas, Turner will inflict trauma of a more cerebral nature.

Therefore, this movement of red becomes a chromatic assemblage that primes the spectator, not only to be complicit in the anticipation of the violence that awaits the unsuspecting Chas, but also reinforces the centrality of colour within the representation of both violence and masculinity. In turn therefore we can propose that the energetic movement of red displaces a more classical representation of the act of violence. The screen is not replete with bodies engaged in the act of vandalism, we do not see Maddocks and his henchmen engaged in the cutting of fabrics, the breaking of furniture, the ransacking of drawers, or the throwing of paint. In other words, the prominence of the body as the epicentre of vandalism is omitted, instead colour is positioned not simply as an aesthetic extension of violence, but instead at this point colour becomes/is violence. It is the haptic quality of the flight of red across the screen, striking the white walls, accompanied by a score that emphasises the moment of impact that evokes a sense of violence. However, it should be noted that in terms of representation, for all of red's primacy at this moment, it is still bound within a discourse of realism, exerting a

verisimilitude of violence. As a result red could be inferred as simply being a chromatic substitute for the unknown assailant whose presence is left in the liminal space off-screen, its passage across the screen aesthetically mapping out the gap between body and action.



Image 2.12: Paint as Vandalism.

However I would argue that it is within this gap that an alternative conceptualization of red's function can be found. For if red is an extension of the body, then as much as red flows on-screen one way, as in hitting the wall, so too, I would argue, does an ideological discourse flow in the opposite direction, towards the unseen body. In other words the performativity of colour locates the unseen body (we assume that of Joey Maddocks) into an oppositional position to the hetero-normative status of Chas. For intriguingly Maddocks' implementation of colour, aligns his identity, with a canon of colour and body that Batchelor argues is well established within Western society. That of colour being aligned with 'some foreign body - usually the feminine, the oriental, the primitive, the infantile, the vulgar, the queer or the pathological' (Ibid: 22-23). Consequently Maddocks' appropriation of colour, his use of red as a means of expressing himself results in his masculinity being positioned as oppositional, as other, to Chas. This othering then informs the rest of the sequence, and, as I will go onto discuss, has an impact on the way that violence is implemented. For the driving force behind the assault, is not only Maddocks' desire for revenge for his betting shop, but

also the alluded to relationship between Chas and Maddocks. For daubed across the walls in red paint is the word 'poof' (another example of colour being aligned with the other in this case the queered body). Maddocks' violence becomes an attempt to transfer his repressed drives back onto the object of his past attention. A homoerotic tension that informs the fight, for as it develops it moves from brawl to being an act of humiliation, from the four men fighting (Chas vs. Maddocks and his two henchmen), to a dazed Chas being stripped to his underpants and whipped with a leather dog leash by Maddocks.

Maddocks' adoption of colour, and his subsequent use of a leash to convey his violent intent places him in opposition to Chas, whose own discourse of masculine violence in this sequence revolves around the traditional patriarchal forces of body and gun. The latter is removed by the gang from the front of his trousers at the outset of the fight, a literal castration that renders Chas impotent in terms of violence (it is only later when he reacquires a gun that Chas is able to take control of the situation). The dialogue further reflects the queered discourse of Maddocks' violence, notably when asked by one of his henchmen if he should 'decorate' Chas (a recurring euphemism for violence).

Maddock's angry dismissal, that he is 'not one of those, not him', reinforces the binary between Chas, whose response to violence is demarcated as hetero (the flashbacks to sex with Dana intercut by the lashing of the leash), in contrast to Maddocks' more sado-masochistic discourse (he is seemingly playful with the lashing at points).

As I alluded to earlier however colour also subverts the integrity of the image at points within *Performance*, a key example occurs at the denouement of the fight. Seemingly overwhelmed by Maddocks' whipping, Chas nonetheless overcomes the now complacent gang, reasserting both his supremacy and masculinity by securing his phallus, the concealed gun hidden beneath a chair, before confronting a now submissive Maddocks, cowering on the bed. At this moment aesthetically red has nearly been removed from the frame, instead white, through the lights on the bed is the dominant hue. Chas subsequently takes his revenge by shooting Maddocks, an act that reaffirms Chas' sense of self, of masculinity. For when Chas pulls the trigger he announces that he is becoming "a bullet", an announcement that resonates with Bob Connell's argument that "what it means to be masculine is, quite literally, to embody force" (Connell 1995: 45). Thus Chas' embodiment of force, his reinsertion into a more classical mode of symbolic violence, permits both the act of penetration (as in shooting) and is one that is in stark contrast to Maddocks' queered chromatic violence that,

though it disrupted the surface of the masculine, was unable to penetrate. Interestingly, in terms of colour, the moment the bullet hits Maddocks a synaesthetic eruption of red emerges, a strategy that has occurred earlier in the sequence with the Pollock-esque images juxtaposed to Chas being hit. A gradual transition depicts an emergence of red that begins to overwhelm Maddocks' body; accentuating the pain he is experiencing. The final total redness demolishes the image, much as the paint can smashed the television, obliterating body, space and narrative.

However the totality of red at this moment also becomes an aesthetic space of transition. A traditional metaphor for colour is that of falling or leaving, and as Batchelor notes, 'the descent into colour often involves more lateral as well as vertical displacement' (Batchelor 2000: 41). Not only can the eruption of red therefore be read as a manifestation of Maddocks' sense of being shot, but, thanks to its relation to Chas' subjectivity, with the next shot cutting back to infer that the red is from Chas' POV, *it also conveys the transition of Chas' identity*. For from this moment, from this fall into colour, Chas is no longer a gangster, no longer part of Flowers gang, his killing of Maddocks, whose final position knelt at the feet of Chas has distinctly pornographic connotations, is the moment that Chas becomes firstly fugitive, and subsequently performer.

Red in this sequence can be interpreted as a discourse that sculpts both violence and potential, both end and beginning. It is not unsurprising in his desire to escape punishment from Harry Flowers that Chas chooses to disguise himself with paint left over from the fight, coating his hair in red emulsion. A final act of violence, the self-deconstruction of his own identity. What is intriguing is that this moment of concealment, Chas' application of red to his hair is a performance of colour that I would propose produces a discourse of falling. For if the cosmetic and colour is linked to the other, then Chas, through this process of disguise, of becoming-colour, turns himself into the other. He can now displace himself culturally, move himself into a different zone, a different space. Chas becomes an aesthetic-exilic, a body of otherness, which in turn means that his old guise, that of the gangster (the bullet) is one that he is now unable to perform. An exile that has direct consequence for our final consideration of colour within the counter-cultural realm of 81 Powis Square. In particular how the combination of hallucinogens, colour and femininity all lead to Chas' identity becoming blurred with Turner's and in turn the film's preoccupation with violence moves from exteriority to interiority.

Colouring in the Psychedelic

The final section in this case study turns to the relationship between gender, violence and colour within the rhizomic interiorities of 81 Powis Square. A chromatic consideration tinged by the hallucinogenic lens of drug culture (a combination that I earlier noted as being a typical critical strategy in previous writing on the film). A triadic intersection that at the heart of which resides questions of identity, sexuality and power that revolves around Chas's intrusion/insertion into the community of 81 Powis Square. As we will discuss in this section Chas's sense of self is one that is deconstructed in the hallucinogenic masquerade that Pherber and Turner induce him into playing. At the zenith of this game of deconstruction emerges a new Chas, one that is a hybrid of himself and his host Turner. A game that resonates with Elisabeth Badinter's assertion that:

If masculinity is learned and constructed, there is no question that it can also change [...] What has been constructed can therefore be deconstructed in order to be reconstructed anew.

(Badinter 1995: 27)

It is the reconstruction of Chas, one that both Pherber and Turner take part in, that has drawn most critical writing, with many commentators noting that the film's thematic and narrative playing with identity comes to full fruition in the collision between gangster and rock star. For when Chas' masculinity, one defined by tropes of violence, narcissism and intimidation, (as mentioned earlier Chas literally becomes a bullet to maintain his sense of self), transfers into Turner's realm of interiorities he is confronted by a social order that negates these tropes of identity. Chas' insertion into the triad of Pherber, Turner and Lucy requires him to conceal his true identity to remain hidden from the Flowers gang. Thus he transforms himself from gangster to juggler, though a juggler of repute, one who plays 'A1 venues' and drives a 'Ferrari', hence Chas' concern with maintaining a dominant social position still permeates even this alternative identity.

The tension between these differing manifestations of masculinity, differentiated by both costume (suit versus androgyny), cosmetics (aftershave compared to makeup), sexual conduct (sodomasochistic versus permissive) and finally drug culture

(alcohol/legal versus hallucinogens/illegal) is one that reflects current writing that challenges the dominant notion of masculinity as being a normative hegemonic identity within Western culture. Christopher E. Forth in his 2008 book *Masculinity in the Modern West* proffers the following regarding masculinity as plurality:

[...] masculinities are always multiple, complex and often contradictory. They are not easily reduced to a single stereotype, set of qualities or horizon of aspirations. Being a man can surely imply aggressive or violent forms of behaviour, but it can also entail 'softer' forms of expression, sometimes moral or cultural, at other times conciliatory and connective. Arguably there is no single 'hegemonic masculinity' that dominates gender representations in society at large; rather masculinities are defined according to specific expectations of different sectors of the social world, the relationships among different male groups, and, of course, between men and women. What counts as acceptable masculinity in one domain would not necessarily hold true in others, and certainly not for men at every stage of the life course.

(Forth 2008: 3)

Hence *Performance*'s construction of masculinity, I would argue, is one of contradictions and similarities, and that it is the play between space and identity, that of what is defined as being an 'acceptable masculinity' in differing domains that is a subtext to the themes of the film. The shift from the masculinity of hyper-violence that defines the social interactions and relationships within the Flowers gang (one in which Chas' identity is acceptable) is contrasted by the psychedelic imbued space of Turner's interior world.

However, this simplistic binary between differing masculinities, and the juxtaposition of differing domains is not so simple. For one of the first acts that Chas engages in on securing his place in 81 Powis Square is to wash out the red paint that he had previously applied as a disguise. The removal of paint is as much an indicator of Chas' sense of self being restored after the trauma of Maddocks death. That in some respects Chas, for the moment, no longer feels under threat, that at some level he can re-establish himself (hence after the washing out of colour Chas re-instigates securing his means of escape through Tony). However this moment of restoration also hints at the blurring of masculinity (between Chas and Turner) that will occur later in the film.



Image 2.13: Man in the Mirror.

Adopting a similar compositional strategy to the sequence earlier in the film when Flowers removes the portrait of a horse from its position on a wall to reveal a mirror concealed behind, with Chas caught in the reflection over Flowers' shoulder combing his hair. In this instance the shot of Chas in the mirror allows a moment of contemplation over the fight (the plaster over his left eye) and the mark of his exile (the red paint. The prominence of red over Chas' face and hair replicated in the reflection of a promotional poster for Turner's concert at the Albert Hall. Chas is attempting to expel colour in contrast to the poster that depicts Turner's star persona (one that he has lost and thus resulted in his becoming a recluse) as one defined by colour (the psychedelic masculine). This juxtaposition of two masculinities marked by colour is also a hint to the blurring of the two later in the film. That the differences that seem to mark each as other to the male counterpart will gradually dissipate, as reinforced by the two shots that follow of a close-up of each face (see images 2.14 & 2.15).



Image 2.14: Masculinity as Chromatic Other (1).



Image 6: Masculine as Chromatic Other (2).

Therefore colour hints that this shift is not simply one of violence to non-violence (gangster to laid back counter-culture) but in fact is a space in which an alternative encapsulation of violence, gender and self has the potential to emerge. For example in terms of violence, what manifests in 81 Powis Square is not violence linked to the corporeal, as dominant in the environ of the Flowers' gang, for example Chas' shaving of the chauffeur, Maddocks' lashing of Chas' back (indeed Pherber upon discovering

Chas' scars from Maddocks' ambush bandages his wounds, turning him into a 'striped beast'). Indeed I would argue that the transition into 81 Powis Square sees not a rupture but a transformation in terms of violence. A shifting from a focus on seeking retribution via corporeality, the hitting and marking of skin, to a violence of more cerebral preoccupations, of deconstruction and reconstruction. Thus what emerges in the psychedelic space is a violence based on interiority, an assault that focuses on identity, reality and memory. An assault that, intriguingly, is not one dominated by the masculine on masculine violence of the gangster, but in fact is one that originates from the feminine, from Pherber's playful implementation of sex, drugs and costume. Hence this section will explore this metamorphosis in terms of violence, at the heart of which I would argue, is a tension between colour and gender. However before moving into this discussion I firstly want to briefly elaborate on my understanding of the term psychedelic and its relationship to *Performance*.

The connection between psychedelic culture (a lineage that can be traced from head movies to the works of Kenneth Anger) and *Performance* has been raised before, of particular note is that of Mark Gallagher's article *Tripped Out: The Psychedelic Film and Masculinity* (2004). However prior to discussing Gallagher's article it is relevant to establish exactly what I perceive the term psychedelic to encapsulate. I have chosen to adopt the *O.E.D.*'s definition of the psychedelic to inform my own implementation of the term:

Psychedelic adj. 1 relating to or denoting drugs (especially LSD) that produce hallucinations and apparent expansion of consciousness. 2 relating to or denoting a style of rock music characterized by musical experimentation and drug-related lyrics. 3 having an intense, vivid colour or a swirling abstract pattern.

Performance's transition into the interiorities of Turner's retreat is one that draws on all three elements, that of colour, sound and drugs, in its (re)creation of a psychedelic space. From explicit drug taking (Pherber injecting herself with heroin, the taking of hallucinogenics and the smoking of marijuana) to the counter-cultural presence of the rock star (Jagger reprising a role inspired by the life of his colleague Brian Jones), and as I will go onto discuss an intense use of colour. Thus through the intersection of these elements Chas is drawn into a reality, a labyrinthine interiority, in which the psychedelic dominates. As Christopher Gibbs, the set designer on *Performance*, recounted:

These were composed, invented, beautiful worlds, drawing on all sorts of forces and ingredients: chemistry of people, objects, clashes of cultures and ideas, a lot of visual surprises. In a way, you could think of this time as an alchemical experiment: we were all very interested in that hocus-pocus. It was also about the transforming quality of hallucinogenics on the collective consciousness [...].

(quoted in Savage 1995: 25)

This sense of a 'transforming quality', alongside the graphic displays of drug taking and sexual permissiveness has led *Performance* to being included within a corpus of films to emerge from the late sixties into the seventies. Gallagher, for example, locates *Performance* alongside films such as John Boorman's *Point Blank* (1967), Dennis Hopper's *Easy Rider* (1969), Michelangelo Antonioni's *Blow Up* (1966) and *Zabriskie Point* (1970). Gallagher argues that these films are connected due to their shared strategy of adopting 'narrative and iconographic structures from established genres' (Gallagher 2004: 161). Gallagher continues that such incorporation of these hegemonic narrative structures however does not lead to a burgeoning resistance or subversion of the normative generic codes and conventions. As Gallagher goes on to argue:

While modernist filmmakers' challenges to conventional narratives and sources of viewer pleasure threaten to undermine some films' generic appeals, popular art films addressed to film-going subcultures ultimately champion conventional formations of masculinity, or summon conventional formations to refute the alternative masculinities the films initially offer.

(Ibid: 161-2)

As I have already commented in the introduction, *Performance* does not deliver the liberation from gender roles it seems to offer. That in fact instead of liberation there occurs a restoration of the normative with the death of Turner. If liberation does exist it is only as an ethereal potential, encapsulated by the fleeting image of the hybrid masculinity of Chas/Turner being driven away in Flowers' white Rolls Royce (the chromatic opposite of the black Rolls that opened the film). However I would argue that there exists an alternative discourse of gender liberation within the film, one that emanates from the feminine.

As Gallagher's article title acknowledges it is masculinity that is the principal focus of his analysis. The main thrust of Gallagher's discussion on gender and the psychedelic

in *Performance*'s is that it adheres to a common representational strategy, namely that whilst they 'simultaneously display tendencies of art cinema and exploitation films' the representation of the genders is one in which 'men occupy a higher ground than do women on the field of representation' (Ibid: 162-3).

Gallagher continues that:

Like many ostensibly countercultural texts, *Performance* and other psychedelic films represent women in disempowered, conservative ways. The subgenre offers familiar iconography of female objectification, as women frequently appear bare-chested or fully naked, unlike their male partners. Additionally, and partly owing to their exploitation-film heritage, films in the subgenre regularly pose threats of sexualised violence to their female characters, despite the women's already limited roles in relation to male protagonists. *Frequently, women function principally as catalysts for male transformation.* Ultimately, then, while the psychedelic film promises a forum for altered or raised consciousness and for liberation from both social and narrative constraints, it tends to reaffirm traditionally male notions of artistic production and of psychological and physical bases of identity.

(Ibid: 163) [Italics my emphasis]

Performance's representation of gender, as Gallagher above argues, would seemingly conform to a potential subversion but culminate in a more classical mode of representation at its denouement. However it is Gallagher's assertion of *Performance*'s representation of gender, in particular it's (seeming) adherence to the hegemonic binary of active/masculine, passive/feminine that needs to be reassessed, in particular the latter dyadic. As Gallagher later argues:

Psychedelic films' representations of gender are indistinguishable from those in more mainstream texts of the same era, insofar as both forms privilege white men and heterosexual masculinity, and tend to present women as victims of male aggression, decorative objects for the aesthetic satisfaction of male viewers, or stimuli for male activity or change.

(Ibid: 164)

The charge of femininity as some source of victim of 'male aggression' is appropriate in some aspects of *Performance*'s representations of femininity. For example the opening sequence, as we have discussed, comprises of Chas's violent and narcissistic lovemaking with Dana. Though Dana can be positioned as being a victim of Chas sex-

play (a femininity that is sexually exploited for Chas' narcissistic pleasures and the spectator's scopophilic pleasure through graphic nudity), it is worth noting that in the morning after the night before, she shows no distress nor regret. In fact it is Chas's body, not Dana's, that bears the physical legacy of their love making, his body scarred either by her nails, or more likely, the baton that Dana whips Chas with.

However what of the female who functions as 'catalysts for male transformation' that Gallagher argues are prevalent in the psychedelic film? Within *Performance* this representation of femininity is located in Pherber, Turner's lover and long-term partner. However Pherber's presence within the film, I would argue, is more than simply that of a 'decorative object', more than 'aesthetic satisfaction' (Ibid: 164). For whilst Pherber is a catalyst for Chas's transformation from gangster to performer, a transformation she induces through a combination of colour and drugs (later discussed in the next section), she is a body that both adheres to, and resists, the normative coding of the female cinematic form. For as we will now discuss Pherber is also a body defined by movement, from a site of scopophilic pleasure (in particular when she negotiates Chas's rent) to wresting control of the image, from passivity to activity. To explore this idea, I want to briefly focus on the way that Pherber, is represented in the film, and in particular how her incorporation of colour into the narrative is an act of feminine violence one at the opposite end of the spectrum to the pugilist actions manifest earlier in the film.

Female Colours

Chas's first encounters Pherber as a disembodied voice emanating from the front door's intercom system.³⁸ Pherber initially resists Chas's attempts to gain entry, firstly by imitating an recorded message 'this is a recording speak now ... what do you want?', then forcing Chas to repeat himself on his reason for being there, before finally relenting and permitting his entrance into 81 Powis Square. This playful negotiation is one that sets up her use of play, in particular through sex and drugs, a combination that Pherber will later use to assert her authority over Chas.

³⁸ As Chas waits for the bell to be answered the film makes a not too subtle reference to the mythology of *The Rolling Stones*, with a pair of mars bars lying beside milk bottles and a tray of mushrooms, the latter a hint to the hallucinogenic games that will later manifest.

Upon entering the house, Chas meets the body of the voice, Pherber, who ascends/descends (the direction is unclear) from an internal lift, a interior space and movement (seemingly without origin) that is one associated with Pherber (and thus femininity) as neither Chas nor Turner use it to travel between floors (both seemingly preferring the stairs). The space and movement of the lift can be read as a means of defining the differences between genders, and in particular Chas and Pherber, with the formers lateral movement across London contrasted by Pherber's vertical movement within the interior. As Jon Savage argues the lift positions Pherber 'forever trapped in transition between Chas' basement and Turner's staterooms, in the zone between the quotidian and the underworld' (Savage 1994: 25). The lift also features at key moments for Pherber's narrative presence for it firstly transports Pherber and her silver platter of mushrooms to induce Chas' transformation and also features prominently in the film's finale. After Chas' return to the gang Rosebloom checks the rooms in the basement of the house. As he searches the corridor Pherber is shown in the lift, her white clothes smeared with Turner's red blood, her normal demeanour and sexual presence unsurprisingly suppressed, a close-up capturing an enigmatic smile lying across her face. Pherber silently closes the lift door on the camera and as we cut back to Rosebloom's navigation of the corridor and his subsequent discovery of Turner's body left in a cupboard, the noises of the lift's workings are clearly heard within the soundtrack. As in Pherber's introduction sound marked her entrance (her voice through the intercom) and so to does sound mark her exit. Pherber at the end of the film returns to where she first emerged, a nowhere space, a nowhere time. Much as Milena (Theresa Russell) in *Bad Timing* and the Dwarf (Adelina Poerio) in *Don't Look Now* are located in a space outside of masculine comprehension, so Pherber's exit from the film reaffirms the recurring motif of femininity as exotic other within Roeg's work. Intriguingly Gallagher misreads this moment of Pherber in the lift, arguing that:

While her [Pherber] sexuality is active rather than passive. Pherber's agency *operates only* in the sexual realm. Removed from this economy, she appears only as a conventional female victim, as her final appearance – covered in blood, cowering in a basement nook – demonstrates.

(Gallagher 1994: 168) [italics my emphasis]

Gallagher's assertion that Pherber's agency is one that only manifests in the sexual realm is one that I find reductive of this enigmatic femininity. For apart from Gallagher's misreading of Pherber's final presence (for she is definitely not cowering as

he proposes), Gallagher perceives that outside of a sexual role Pherber's presence is nothing more than a stereotypical cinematic representation. In his analysis Gallagher overlooks moments in which Pherber has agency outside of her being a source of scopophilic pleasure. The first is aligned with colour, the second with image. Two moments that will later combine in the film to enable Pherber's games of identity and play to emerge. Games in which Pherber becomes a catalyst that Gallagher asserts is emblematic of femininity in the psychedelic film.

In terms of colour, what occurs within 81 Powis Square chromatically is an extension of the colour play that has been prominent prior in the film. In particular it is the notion of colour as a component and outcome of the psychedelic milieu that Chas enters into (one that Gallagher surprisingly fails to explore in his own consideration of the psychedelic) that offers up an alternative perspective from which to consider Pherber's role in the film. As I have already mentioned it is the nexus of music, drugs and colour that combine to produce the psychedelic. The first hint of this drug inspired use of colour occurs when Chas follows Pherber into Noel's basement bedsit. On entry Pherber turns on the light, however instead of white light the room is flooded with a sickly green light that flows through the room (see image 2.16). The composition of colour, framing and body reaffirms the film's association of colour as an extension of masculinity, rather than that of it being aligned with femininity. As Chas negotiates with Pherber over the rent (negotiations that Pherber leads) the green light spilling from the strip light in the ceiling dominates the palette of the sequence, in turn evoking a number of readings. Firstly we have the bohemian setting of black musician Noel, the green hue across Chas' pallid skin adding to his sense of unease both with the environment and situation, as if this diasporic shift into a space of Martin Luther King and Hendrix is one that he finds uncomfortable (particularly in light of Chas' racist and xenophobic tinged ranting at the ethnic owner of the porn cinema). At the same time the composition of the image, and the use of lighting, places colour solely in the masculine, covering the decorated walls and Chas but notably leaving Pherber untouched, as if she is impervious to colour. It is as if at this moment the effect of colour (in particular the red mushroom that will feature prominently later in the film) over Chas' sense of self is alluded to, and that Pherber's role of not partaking but orchestrating is marked through this chromatic division in the room.



Image 2.16: Chromatic Divisions of Gender.

The sexual positioning of Pherber that Gallagher argues for is manifest in this sequence. Pherber whilst conducting her negotiations with Chas over the rent lies on a bed, her luxurious fur coat and robe the only barriers stopping Chas' (and of course the spectator) from the scopophilic pleasure of her naked body. For a moment the camera nearly caresses the skin of her thigh as her hand teasingly plays with the rich texture of the fur between her legs (a delightful textual metaphor for her sex) a playing that renders Chas transfixed by the imagined delights concealed from his inquisitive gaze. However after this playful representation of femininity as sexual object (a sexual object fully aware of her power) what then follows is a sequence that inverts this notion of femininity simply as a cinematic source of scopophilic pleasure.

Leaving Chas in the basement, Pherber ascends back up to the upper-floor, stopping in the bathroom she picks up a 16mm Bolex camera. Standing in front of a full-length mirror she begins to film herself, firstly from the hip as if holding a gun, then bringing the camera to her eye (see image 2.17).³⁹ The latter moment evocative of Vertov's

³⁹ The presence of mirrors are a recurring theme within the film, from the mirror in Chas and Dana's lovemaking; in Harry Flowers' office hidden by a portrait; the rear view mirror that Chas uses to apply the red paint to his hair; the hand mirror that Pherber uses to graft her body onto Chas; and finally the full-length mirror that Pherber and Turner use to reflect back their sartorial games. As Gallagher argues the recurring presence of mirrors is intimately linked to identity and spectatorship that:

masculine camera wielder, and also Raoul Coutard's cameo in the opening moments of *Le Mepris* (Godard, 1963) with the reflected gaze of the apparatus. Pherber moves with the camera into the bedroom she shares with Turner and Lucy. The bed lies at an epicentre of colour, the black walls of the room accentuating the multiple coloured fabrics and textures that drape down from the frame of the four-poster bed. The abundance of differing textures and colours accentuating the sexual tension within this space. As Pherber enters she climbs onto the bed, standing Pherber holds the Bolex up and begins to arrange the sleeping Turner and Lucy into a sexual similie. What is important in terms the context of both gender and colour is that when the film switches to Pherber's point-of-view, we shift from 35mm Technicolor to 16mm (see image 2.18). The resultant shift changes the colour palette, from the deep and vibrant colours to a grittier but warmer image, one that infers a sense of the image, the female gaze, as being akin to a home-movie. A further shift is that the image is marked as other by the presence of white framing guides within the image itself. Thus we see not Pherber's film but her perspective as she gradually arranges Turner and Lucy, before engaging in sex with the both. The, almost, home-movie aesthetic inducing a sense of closeness in contrast to the cold aesthetic that marks the sex between Dana and Chas.

The mirror recalls the spectator's position in cinema's psychodynamics of desire, re-enacting the Lancanian mirror stage, the fantasy of wholeness and ego gratification [...] For much of the film, Chas appears superficially as a savvy agent of his own destiny, yet he is nothing without his mirror [...] Though he rarely appears alone, Chas apparently requires not only other witnesses to his various performances, but also himself as a witness. Chas not only occupies a position for viewer identification, he references film's ideal spectator in his obsessive self-regard. Reflexively enacting the process of narcissistic identification, Chas' auto-fixation both accommodates and overwhelms the film spectator. Ironically the mirror ultimately provides a mechanism for the destabilization of Chas' identity.

(Gallagher 2004: 167)



Image 2.17: The Feminine Director Emerges.



Image 2.18: Female Perspective: the Female Director and the Home-Movie.

Thus Pherber is more than simply a femininity of enigmatic feminine sexuality, she becomes the creator of the image. It is this notion of creation that leads to my final consideration of colour in *Performance*. Being Pherber's (in tandem with Turner) act of reconstruction of Chas' identity. A moment that links both colour, image and notions of (re)creation together, a triadic combination that leads to the blurring of Chas' masculinity through discourses of the psychedelic.

Colouring within Masculinity

The sequence that initiates this blurring of masculinity is introduced by a Polaroid film being peeled apart to reveal Chas dressed as a gangster of the jazz age, a fake moustache, brown hat and suit recreating him backward through time in the guise of his pugilistic ancestors.⁴⁰ As Pherber presents the photo to Chas the camera pulls back to reveal him sat on a red bed, surrounded by red walls, his lap bearing Pherber's tray containing hallucinogenic mushrooms and a goblet. A holy grail to this last supper that will lead to Chas' identity being consumed by the hallucinogens he has, previously rejected, but now unwittingly imbibes (see image 2.19).



Image 2.19: Games of Colour, Masquerade and Hallucinogens.

The sequence is pivotal in the film, for it relocates the ability to (re)create (one that Chas has proved adequate at earlier in the film in his creation of the scarlet juggler, and his reasserted masculinity in the guise of a bullet) from the gangster to Pherber and Turner. Importantly it is Chas' initial need for a passport photograph (one that will

⁴⁰ Later in the sequence Pherber and Turner regress Chas even further, turning him into an assassin of ancient Persia, one straight from a Borges short story, and a body that links drugs and violence together. With the etymological root of the word assassin being one derived from the Nizari branch of Ismaili Muslims at the time of the Crusades, when the newly established sect ruled part of northern Persia (1094–1256). They were renowned as militant fanatics, and were popularly reputed to use hashish before going on murder missions, hence the word assassin originates from hashish.

enable him to secure his escape to New York) that produces the narrative impetus that in turn leads to the emergence of this act of masquerade, photographs, costume and identity. Chas' outside man, Tony, informs Chas that he can arrange the necessary elements but that Chas needs to provide a recently taken, preferably disguised, photograph for the counterfeiter. Therefore implicit within the narrative is that for Chas to enable his escape from the clutches of the gang he again needs to recreate himself. Importantly the desire for a passport photo also brings to the fore the notion of identity (the act of representation). Identity that Chas has been unable to maintain within the interiors of 81 Powis Square due to his usual recourse of violence being rendered meaningless (Pherber and Turner find Chas' juggler persona a source of particular amusement, for example Turner's throwing of coloured balls at Chas, that the latter, inevitably, fails to catch!). Thus for Chas, the ability to have his identity sanctioned (albeit illegally) by society, one that will enable him both means of movement and entry, will readdress the unfixed state he finds himself in within Turner's realm.

The chance to procure the passport photo, and thus identity, without venturing onto the streets of London (avoiding the potential threat of discovery) happens upon Chas when he finds a Polaroid picture in the house. The potential of resolving the matter quickly (being the nature of Polaroid and its innovative self-development technology) leads Chas into asking Turner if he can have access to the camera (Chas blames his imaginary agent for his request, stating that he needs some publicity photos, that, presciently, in his agent's opinion, it's 'time for a change').

However what becomes apparent as the narrative around the photo unfolds is that Chas quickly loses control of this act of self-recreation. Instead Pherber (in particular) and Turner wrest control from Chas by inducing him into consuming a bright red mushroom. A specimen of *Amanita Muscaria*, more commonly known as fly agaric.⁴¹ Pherber's proffering can be read as being a simile of her as Eve for the drug generation, a femininity that tempts Chas's Adam into a space of discovery, realisation and subsequent punishment.⁴² Indeed, Pherber's act of temptation in some respects adheres

⁴¹ A mind altering natural drug that according to William Deedes M.P. has been 'used by man [sic] since earliest times, certainly for hundreds and possibly for thousand of years. One of the oldest [being] fly agaric, an hallucinogenic mushroom grown in temperate zones'.

(Deedes 1970: 72).

to such an allegory, for example like Eve (who ate the apple first) she has consumed before, whereas Chas (like Adam) is unfamiliar with the affects of the hallucinogenic (see image 2.20).



Image 2.20: The Mushroom Revealed.

However the notion of Eve is also challenged, for Pherber's mushroom, far from leading to punishment and conservatism (the donning of clothing and the loss of social freedom) actually enables Chas to shed his gangster persona, and thus in turn a new Chas to emerges. A new Chas in stark contrast to the one depicted earlier in the film, as exemplified by his tender lovemaking (and affection shown) to the boyish French waif Lucy that occurs later in the film.

I would also propose that the administering of the mushroom, far from being simply a moment of hedonistic experimentation is in fact an alternative discourse of violence. Violence that is in keeping with the psychedelic milieu of 81 Powis Square, a movement from corporeal to cerebral. For the mushroom is a violence that results in

⁴² 'And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat'.

(Book of Genesis 3:6)

the internal breaking of the chains and structures of identity, one that has implications just as aggressive, and just as scarring, as Maddock's whipping of Chas' skin. As Turner describes to Chas (whilst simultaneously Pherber sits opposite, disassembling Chas' handgun (see image 2.21)):

I just want to go in there Chas ... you see the blood of this vegetable is boring a hole ... this second hole is penetrating the whole of your face ... the skull of your bone ... I just want to get right in there do you know what I mean? I want to root around.



Image 2.21: Deconstructing the Gangster (note the recurrence of red/white in this act of transformation).

Intriguingly the mushroom, this locus of violence, identity and reality, encapsulates a dyadic (being colour and drugs) that is a dominant relationship in Western culture, and one that has repercussions in terms of identity.⁴³ As David Batchelor comments:

Where do we find the idea of the Fall in contemporary culture? One answer would be in the image of drugs – or drug culture – and the moral panic that surrounds it. The fall-from-grace-that-is-drugs is often represented in a way that is not unlike the descent into colour [...] Sensuous, intoxicating, unstable,

⁴³ I refer its colour in particular for when Pherber reveals to Chas what he has consumed, a series of close-ups bring the red cap and the white gills of the vegetable to the fore. The combination of red and white a reoccurring chromatic synergy that demarcates moments of transformation or transition within the film, i.e. Maddocks' vandalism; Chas' disguise of red paint and white cream that he applies to his hair in a white Jaguar with a red interior!

impermanent; loss of control, loss of focus, loss of self [...] Now it turns out that there is a rather interesting relationship between drugs and colour, and it is not a recent invention. Rather, it goes back to Antiquity, to Aristotle, who calls colour a drug – *pharmakon* – and, before that, to the iconoclast Plato for whom a painter was merely ‘a grinder and mixer of multi-colour drugs’.

(Batchelor 2000: 31)

Batchelor’s comment to drugs and colour as leading to moral panic, would seem in stark contrast to *Performance*’s aesthetic that offers a somewhat glamorous representation of drug culture. Pherber, Turner and Lucy are all depicted as bohemians living a shared lifestyle replete in connotations of dropping out and resistance. A lifestyle akin to the euphoria found in films such as *Easy Rider*, rather than the a negative cinematic representations of drugs and drug culture, one that focuses on self annihilation and social destruction. In particular, *Performance*’s focus on the mushroom and its affects captures the late 1960s preoccupation with hallucinogens. For in the late sixties hallucinogenics had a oxymoronic cultural position being perceived as a means of personal liberation and experimentation, whilst also one that in turn threatened social cohesion, and in turn society, as a whole. The latter concern a prominent theme in the 1967 collection *The Drug Scene in Great Britain: Journey into Loneliness* the following extract typical of the books overall view of hallucinogenics in British culture:

Today what is creating great concern in Western society is the illicit use of hallucinogens [...] These powerful drugs alter the mind of the user in some manner which produces strange, sometimes beautiful, at other times horrible hallucinations or illusions.

(Glatt et al 1967: 11)⁴⁴

In turn *Performance*’s representations of Chas slow descent into the grip of the mushroom is one that draws on colour, light and composition to bring to the spectator a sense (synaesthetically) of hallucination. As Pherber tends Chas’ wounds (wounds that derived from Maddocks’ whipping) Chas becomes preoccupied by the play of light in the room. Firstly the flickering light of a candle catches his eye, a synaesthetic sense of touch and sight coalesce as Chas holds his hand over the flame.

⁴⁴ Note the title of the collection infers that drugs and drug dependency leads to isolation, whereas *Performance* offers up a perception of drug culture as being one that is all inclusive, a shared experience.

The next object of Chas' attention is the glass mosaic surface of a table, the light playing across its multi-coloured surface capturing his attention. The multiple layers of colour and light akin to Aldous Huxley's experience of taking mescaline:

Half an hour after swallowing the drug I became aware of a slow dance of golden lights. A little later there were sumptuous red surfaces swelling and expanding from bright nodes of energy that vibrated with a continuously changing, patterned life.

(Huxley 1994: 32)

Chas falls into his own slow dance, a dance of colour that unlocks his sense of self, and from which is born a new Chas. For Chas from this point on within the film is one far removed from his gangster self. His interaction with colour leads to Chas becoming a masculinity infused with a near sense of altruistic care, for example his relationship with Lucy (an androgynous female mirror of Turner) and his releasing Turner from his pain (a violent release with a bullet). Colour permits a new masculinity to emerge, one that in turn resonates with Forth's notion of masculinity as being 'multiple, complex and often contradictory' (Forth 2008: 3). Colour therefore in the realm of the psychedelic is one of violence, but a violence of creation, not of destruction. A violence that enables masculinity to shift and in turn, find itself, through discourses of experimentation and thus in turn liberation.

Conclusion

As I hoped I have demonstrated colour within *Performance* is a complex, fascinating, challenging but overall provocative element of the *mise-en-scene* that exists on planes far removed from simply being that of embellishment and adornment. In particular it is the notion of colour and violence, of identity and liberation that I have found of interest.

As Eisenstein once wrote:

The theme expressed in colour leit-motifs can, through its colour score and with its own means, unfold an inner drama, weaving its own patterns in the contrapuntal whole, crossing and re-crossing the course of action [...] supplementing what could not be expressed by acting or gesture.

(Eisenstein 1975: 28)

Hence in *Performance* colour functions as a means of expressing not only an inner drama of masculinity and violence, of psychedelia and conservatism. It is also functions as a space of experimentation, of attempting to locate an alternative mode of representation, one that resonates with notions of spectacle, body and space.

Performance in some respects is a cinematic bridge for Roeg as a filmmaker and his use of colour. For the aesthetic themes and strategies that follow (femininity and its relationship to colour; colour as liberation and threat; colour as a discourse that challenges patriarchy), as I elaborate on in the next two case-studies, are a recurring motif in Roeg's work. To illustrate this point however we can consider (albeit briefly) a film that does not feature predominantly in this thesis, for a clear example, a chromatic progeny of *Performance*, is the aesthetic connection between this film of gangsters and business, and a later Roeg film about gangsters and business, that film being *Eureka* (1984). For in this film occurs moments of colour that provide the film's central protagonist Jack McCann (Gene Hackman) with a similar sense of transformation and violence. The former captured in that awe inspiring sequence in which McCann discovers the gold that will make his fortune and guarantee him both wealth and power. This moment of transformation is marked by McCann's falling into colour, in this case gold (see image 1.10 in the previous chapter), and in turn he is transformed from prospector to entrepreneur, much as Chas' fall into colour moves him from gangster to juggler.

The second, that of violence, is again one that adopts a similarly striking aesthetic strategy, with McCann's bloody demise at the hands of a gang dominated by the presence of red and white and one that resonates with Maddock's Pollock-esque act of vandalism (see image 2.22).



Image 2.22: Of Colour and Violence.

Hence *Eureka* reflects *Performance*'s intersection of colour and violence (one of red and white!) one that occurs in the burgeoning rise of heritage cinema (and thus at some level implements colour of realist and rationalist design) but which chromatically looks back to this evocative period for British cinema.

Beneath the Surface: Red, Perception and Memory in *Don't Look Now*

Don't Look Now is a film of effect-making, the kind of thing to which some sensibilities surrender gladly and others don't. Its success was the start of the wider Roeg following, although for the stone-hearted among us there was a feeling of too much trickery visited upon too little and a lack of the discipline that defines art [...].

(Champlin 1976: 26)

In the visual arts the expressive qualities are an important - but not the only important - object of study in the field of color. It is equally necessary to explore what might be called the syntax of color composition, that is, the rules of structural organization. The masters of painting who handled these rules with the greatest ingenuity and sensitivity seem to have done so mostly by intuition rather than by intellectually formulated principles [...].

(Arnheim 1959: 283)

[...] professional writers on aesthetics ignore the subject of the uncanny, treating it as a mere side issue [...] it is precisely because traditional aesthetic approaches discard the uncanny, preferring to deal with 'what is beautiful, attractive and sublime – that is with feelings of a positive nature' that with 'the opposite feelings of repulsion and distress', that psychoanalysis must pay special attention to it.

(Kofman 1991: 122)

In one sense [...] *Don't Look Now* can be described as a search for the meaning of an image [...] a curious search to be sure [...].

(Izod 1992: 67)

Introduction

Whereas in the case study on *Performance*, colour was discussed and considered as a chromatic discourse on masculinity and violence, this next case study on Roeg's 1973 cult film *Don't Look Now*, focuses on colour's relationship to questions of perception, identity and memory. For it is the prominent role of one particular colour, that being red, that is the principal interest of this chapter. In particular it is red's relationship to femininity, and in turn femininity's normative position cinematically as that of the object of the patriarchal gaze that this chapter seeks to explore. For though on one level red can be considered to function as a signifier of its semiotic other(s), I will go onto demonstrate that due to its presence and absence within the *mise-en-scene*, red becomes a nexus in which discourses surrounding questions of perception, aura and the hegemony of patriarchy are manifest.

Don't Look Now, adapted from Daphne Du Maurier's original short story, tells the tale of English couple John and Laura Baxter (played by Donald Sutherland and Julie Christie respectively) coming to terms with the loss of their daughter, the red coat wearing Christine, through drowning. Whilst temporarily living in Venice, both John and Laura adopt oppositional positions from which to negotiate and work through their grief. Laura turns firstly to Catholicism, and then subsequently the possibility of the paranormal as a means of making contact with her lost daughter. In contrast John, the archetypal patriarchal embodiment of modernistic rationalism, seemingly accepts the loss of their child. Instead of turning to spiritualism John channels his grief into a restoration project on a church in Venice. Whilst in Venice, Laura meets two Scottish sisters (one of whom is blind and claims to have psychic abilities) who convince Laura that Christine still exists on a spiritual plane and that she is happy, that she is 'standing between the two of you'. John dismisses the sisters' claims ('my daughter does not come bearing messages from behind the fucking grave' he retorts to Laura) however he is concealing from Laura his own latent paranormal abilities (that earlier in the film alerted him, too late, to Christine's death). Laura then has to unexpectedly return to England to take care of their son, who has suffered an accident at his boarding school. John is subsequently confused by what he believes is Laura passing him by on a black boat when he thought she was in England. In his confused state he tries to locate Laura to no avail, culminating in him reporting her missing to the police. John still concerned by Laura's disappearance, finally locates the sisters but they too can offer no answers to Laura's whereabouts. Upon leaving the sisters' residence John spots a red cloaked

figure and gives chase, finally cornering the unknown protagonist in a labyrinthine crypt. The childlike figure is revealed to be in reality a Dwarf (played by Adelina Poerio) who has been behind a series of murders that have terrorized Venice's populace. The killer attacks and fatally wounds John, whose life flashes before his eyes, whilst Laura, who has returned from England but too late to save John, stands outside its locked gates unable to gain entry. The film concludes with Laura stood on a black boat, John's funeral cortège, the vision that John had mistaken for the present.

Through this brief synopsis, what is evident is that integral to the film's narrative and thematic discourse is the act of perception. The film narratively explores differing aspects of looking – patriarchal gaze, paranormal ability, blindness, and misrecognition - and also stylistically explores the act of sight - through repetition, reflective surfaces, and juxtaposition. Ironically for a film that pleads we *do not look*, it is the act of looking itself that is central to the film. As John Izod succinctly comments:

In one sense the plot of *Don't Look Now* can be described as a *search for the meaning of an image* as, utterly unconscious of what he is doing, a bereaved father searches among the living for traces of his dead daughter. It is a curious search, to be sure. For not only cannot John Baxter admit to himself that he is engaged upon it, but through most of the film there is little outward evidence of pursuit. Nonetheless it organises the events of the film and gives the narrative its thrust. For the *latter does not appear to work in the classical way*, that is through presentation of characters whose actions cause certain effects, which may in turn change some or all of the characters.

(Izod 1992: 67) [Italics my emphasis]

John's desire, his quest even, to understand and resolve the senseless and accidental death of his daughter is not one of inner reflection, but one of finding answers within what he sees, of understanding what the act of perception presents/represents to him. This question surrounding the act of seeing is doubled in on itself however. For John seeks not only to understand what it is that he witnesses in the unfamiliar environ of Venice (as in the Dwarf's presence and the vision of Laura) but also to come to terms with, and to then understand, the emergence of his own psychic ability. Hence questions of sight are not only located in the then and now, but also the notion of sight that is outside of time, sight that is not located in the near future, as in the time from light to eye to brain to comprehension, but of an inner vision, one projected from the mind to the eye.

This question of sight, its centrality to the film's themes, narrative and stylistic strategies is inferred from the outset of the film through the film's opening credit sequence. The sequence is comprised of two seemingly unconnected spaces, that of the pond in the garden of the Baxter household in England (in which Christine drowns) and the second being the window of the Baxter's hotel room in Venice (in which the Baxter's rediscover their relationship). The window and the pond can be positioned as being both a reflection on the mirror that is cinema and also metaphors for the act of seeing itself as in the water that reflects, the glass that facilitates looking. What is important is that these elements that would normally facilitate the act of sight are themselves disrupted. The surface of the water is ruptured by the impact of rain whilst the window is concealed behind ornate shutters. Thus at one level the artifice of the image is raised, in that film is about denying us the ability to see fully (through editing and composition for example) and secondly we as the spectator experience a moment of disconnection. We seek to understand the relationship between the images, what they represent and signify, and only later in the narrative is this question resolved.

Therefore I would propose that this opening sequence, this rupturing of vision, space and narrative, hints at the problems of sight that will pervade the film. Much as John Baxter is denied the ability to understand both his visions and the truth of the red body in Venice, so we, the spectator, are positioned from the outset of the film as seers. We see but do not comprehend, do not understand. We take these images to be of the present, not of the future, only later as the film progresses, and the true nature of these two seemingly disparate and unconnected images becomes revealed, do we comprehend their significance. A significance born from our recollection of our earlier interaction, hence the past informs the present through a connection between image and memory. As John Berger notes in the act of looking 'we never look at just one thing; we are always looking at the relation between things and ourselves' (Berger 1972: 9). In some respects the opening sequence performs numerous functions, it sets up stylistically a preoccupation with reflections and reflected surfaces (water and glass) and their treacherous qualities (the water that drowns, the glass that shatters and cuts). It also makes us question the relationship between the things we seen and they're meaning, much as John will question what he sees throughout the film.

The important aspect of the act of looking within the film is that it is located around John Baxter's perception of events, his interaction with his environment. Hence it is the patriarchal gaze (a gaze that Laura Mulvey would explore three years later in her 1975

article *Visual Pleasure*) that the film primarily focuses upon. For it is John's visions; his desire to find Laura; to solve the puzzle of the red coat; and to understand his sense of sight that is the impetus behind the narrative. Central to this act of patriarchal gaze is its interaction with femininity, in particular a femininity demarcated by colour, being that of the red wearing, chromatically conjoined doppelgangers, Christine and the Dwarf.

What is intriguing about this focus on the act of looking is that such questions were being brought to the fore a year prior to the film's release. John Berger in his 1972 BBC television series, and the same titled book, *Ways of Seeing*, sets out, through a discourse based on the writing of Walter Benjamin, to explore the way in which we see art, the way in which we relate to the stimulus we perceive visually. As Berger argues, sight is first and foremost a means of establishing identity, of locating ones individuality:

It is seeing which establishes our place in the surrounding world; we explain that world with words, but words can never undo the fact that we are surrounded by it. The relation between what we see and what we know is never settled. Each evening we see the sun set. We know that the earth is turning away from it. Yet the knowledge, the explanation never quite fits the sight.

(Berger 1972: 7)

The tension that Berger identifies between sight and language, perception and knowledge are the key tensions within John's relationship, through red, to that of the Dwarf. For it is the red of the past, that is the red coat that Christine drowns in, that informs through similarity of colour, shape, and size, both the spectator's and John's reading of the Dwarf in Venice (is it the ghost of Christine? Has Christine been resurrected? etc). What is important is that the Dwarf, at some level, becomes a mental reproduction of Christine, that the aura of the now dead informs the aura of the stranger that we do not/cannot understand. This tension between memory and the present within *Don't Look Now* reflects Rudolf Arnheim's writing on perception and art, in which he describes seeing as being an act of 'visual judgment':

[...] every act of seeing is a visual judgment. Judgments are sometimes thought to be a monopoly of the intellect. But visual judgments are not contributions of the intellect, added after the seeing is done. They are immediate and indispensable ingredients of the act of seeing itself.

(Arnheim 1956: 2)

Arnheim argues that in the process of seeing, in light hitting the retina, there occurs a simultaneous discourse of analysis and integration. That what we see are instinctive connections, formed both from what is within our field of vision, our cerebrally based past, and also, the way in which we are seeing the object of our gaze. As Arnheim argues 'the most recent image is an indivisible part of the huge stock of images stored in our memory' (Ibid: 33). Within *Don't Look Now* this relationship between present and past is a key aspect of the film's stylistic and narrative strategy. For it is the images of the past (that of Christine) and their relationship to what we see in the then (as in Venice) that the film plays with. We make a visual judgement about what we perceive John is seeing, and in turn these acts of visual judgment inform our reaction to the film's bloody denouement.

Hence the film is about the tension between the masculine gaze and the feminine body, however rather than resulting in a discourse based around scopophilic pleasure, of voyeuristic fulfillment, what actually emerges, as I will later discuss in this case study is a femininity that defies, resists such objectification. As Berger (prior to Mulvey's writing on the gaze and femininity) commented:

[...] men act and women appear. Men look at women. Women watch themselves being looked at. This determines not only most relations between men and women but also the relation of women to themselves. The surveyor of woman in herself is male: the surveyed female. Thus she turns herself into an object – and most particularly an object of vision: a sight.

(Berger 1972: 47)

What is intriguing about the relationship between the Dwarf and John Baxter is that it is one based on vision, not interaction but distance, and in fact, it is based on John Baxter's reading of femininity/otherness through colour that is the dominant discourse until the final reveal of the Dwarf's true identity. What emerges therefore, as I will discuss later in the case study, is a subject of the patriarchal gaze being one that doubly resists, in other words through the combination of femininity and colour, emerges a resistance to the hegemony of that very gaze.

However, as I have already noted, the film intersects not only past and present, but a third temporal discourse is also present, that of the future. The impact of this third strand of image is key to the film, for it is John's misunderstanding, misreading of the

visions he sees that leads to his death at the hands of the Dwarf. For sight is our way of negotiating with our environment, of maintaining our sense of self. In turn if what we perceive is not what we think we see, this can lead to our own sense of being becoming compromised. For John's paranormal ability, one that he both recognises and suppresses, leads to his sense of perception being tricked because his sense of judgment is located with the images being assumed to manifest within the duration of present-ness. In other words, Arnheim's model of present-past, becomes intersected by a third level, that of the future. However, John's refusal to accept his abilities leads him to misrecognise this third tier of vision, that he does not see it as a glimpse of the future, instead he perceives the future as the present. Hence his confusion when he spies Laura in Venice, but believes she is in England. He sees not Laura of today, but Laura of tomorrow, that is the Laura who rides on his watery funeral cortège in the film's final sequence.

Thus the act of looking within the film is not simply based on the intersection of the past and present (that of Christine and the Dwarf), but also of the potential of what lies ahead, in turn these discourses of perception and knowing are part of the narrative motivation that drives the film forward. It is John's (and the spectator's) desire to understand what the true identity of the person he glimpses in Venice's alleyways that motivate the narrative. At the same time, the locating of this question of vision, and in turn uncertainty, also brings to the fore a destabilizing of our 'hero's' place within the film. The power of the patriarch, which for the majority of the film is one that seemingly has some control over events, proves to be a fragile power at best. A point I will return to later in this chapter.

Don't Look Now's discourses of perception is located in a complex narrative interplay between past, present, future, which is then subsequently intersected with red. I would propose that the act of looking in *Don't Look Now* is not simply one of temporal and contextual uncertainty, as epitomised by the approach that the writing of theorists such as Kristi Wilson (1999) and Sabine Schülting (1999) have taken, but that it is through perception's engagement with colour that a nexus of time, identity and memory emerges. In other words, I argue that red's presence acts as an aesthetic connective strategy, through the body of the Dwarf, one that brings together the film's tale of grief, death and redemption.

Hence it is through a consideration of the importance of the nexus of sight, colour and body, that differentiates my analysis from the dominant strategy of symbolization and

allegory that previous theoretical analysis has retreated to in their discussions of red within the film. An approach exemplified in this extract by Palmer and Riley:

In the complexity of its images and their suggestive if ambiguous correspondences, what the film's narration does is provide an almost overwhelming array of associations among details in the images as well as individual shots and whole sequences [...] red is not only a color of both toy balls but of Christine's "shiny little mack" and the murderous dwarf's hooded cloak and of the mysterious form whose bleeding expanse spreads across a slide photograph when John's drink spills on it at the moment of his daughter's drowning. Red is also the color of the flames in the fireplace at the time of her death, and they in turn are shaped in the image much like the form of Christine in her mac [...] [the film] is decidedly modernist, for it exploits the resources of its form to undermine the conviction that an artwork's meaning(s) is *entirely knowable* [italics my emphasis].

(Palmer & Riley 1995: 18)

Though Palmer and Riley bring to the fore the prominence of red within the film, it is clear that their analysis is somewhat unsure in how best to approach it other than by reducing it simply as a quality of something else (i.e. a drink, flames, mac, toy balls etc), rather than discussing its own integral meaning (what Deleuze would call its haecceity). What Palmer and Riley do raise, but then disappointingly fail to explore, is the connection between femininity and red.⁴⁵ For it is the question of the identity beneath the red duffle coat in Venice that is the implicit drive that causes John to confront both his own paranormal abilities, and the legacy of his child's death. But in the build-up to this confrontation, it is John's inability to define the body concealed within redness, one that he wants to understand and thus in turn name, that is the puzzle, not only for John but also for the spectator, for this body is one that is defined by his/our aesthetic memory of Christine. It is her memory, that distinctive red shape, one that lingers in the peripheral spaces of the images of Venice within the film (see image: 3.1). For red, until the moment when John catches up with the Dwarf, is a sporadic

⁴⁵ As discussed previously such a relationship is atypical of Western cultures chromophobic relationship with colour, one that is further compounded by the abject nature of the Dwarf's femininity.

presence, one that lingers on the edges, much as the Dwarf exists on the edges of society, forced out by her abject status (a point that I will discuss later).



Image 3.7: Red as Peripheral Memory (see left of image).

To enable a discussion of this complex intersection of colour, abjectness, femininity and sight, I locate my argument within this case study primarily through Freud's notion of the uncanny and its relationship to femininity and colour. Intriguingly the potential of a psychoanalytically based approach to *Don't Look Now*, has been (inadvertently) raised before by film critic Leslie Dick, through his argument that:

[*Don't Look Now* is] profoundly unpsychoanalytic in how it messes with time [...] The fundamental irrationality of the proposed structure, the Catholic-psychic continuum within which this story makes sense, has nothing to do with the relentless search for rational meaning that constitutes the psychoanalytic project. Psychoanalysis explains everything, it finds meaning everywhere, it's hooked on meaning [...] The only way that this narrative could be retrieved for psychoanalysis is to suggest that Baxter pursues the figure in red because unconsciously he knows it will kill him, as his guilt and his grief over his daughter's death propel him towards his own murder.

(Dick 1997: 13)

Dick's dismissal of reading *Don't Look Now* through psychoanalysis, due to its chronological limitations, conveniently ignores elements that I would argue facilitate such an approach, for example a proliferation of doubles and a patriarchy challenged by a femininity marked as a site of castration. Dick focuses in on the question of time and narrative, of causality and motivation, and though these elements will be discussed implicitly through the case study, it is interesting to note that, again, for Dick the function of red is nothing more than an element, seemingly unworthy of further consideration. Hence, in response to Dick, the intention of this case study is to engage in a curious search to unravel the tension between colour, sight and femininity, and how in turn this intersects with the discourses of body, identity, horror and memory within *Don't Look Now*.⁴⁶

Before moving onto a detailed discussion of colour and the uncanny within *Don't Look Now*, it is appropriate to consider the context of the film's production, in particular how Du Maurier's original short story is adapted for the film, and the importance that red is accorded in this process.

Adaptation and Colour

Adaptation is, of course, a familiar mode of production within British cinema, inherently defined by preoccupations with discourses of fidelity, as Brian McFarlane notes 'discussion of adaptation has been bedeviled by the fidelity issue' (McFarlane 1986: 8). Not wanting to dwell too long on this theoretical *cul-de-sac* it seems appropriate to acknowledge that the issue of fidelity has resulted in some critics

⁴⁶ Metaphorically, the film's dominant setting, Venice, is one that evokes questions of death, plurality and transgression. Venetian expert Tony Tanner describes Venice as being 'a magnificent polis and a literal labyrinth, which might fairly be said to demonstrate and embody and image forth the constructive consummation of reason and desire [...] a thousand-year triumph of rational legislation and aesthetic and sensual self-expression, self-creation - powerful lovely, serene' (Tanner 1992: 4). However as Tanner argues the classical meta-narrative of Venice's geographical and architectural presence evokes Venice as being 'notoriously a site where opposites begin to blur and distinctions fade [...]' (Ibid: 356). A blurring that manifests itself in a 'Western city saturated with the East; a city of land and stone everywhere penetrated by water; a city of great piety and ruthless mercantilism; a city where enlightenment and licentiousness, reason and desire, indeed art and nature flow and flower together - Venice is indeed the surpassing-all-other embodiment of that "absolute ambiguity" which is radiant life containing certain death' (Ibid: 368).

perceiving film adaptations as inferior to their literary other. An inferiority exemplified by Gabriel Miller's argument that 'characters undergo a simplification process when transferred to the screen, for film is not very successful in dealing either with complex psychological states or with dream or memory, nor can it render thought' (Miller 1980: xiii).⁴⁷ In contrast, Lester D. Friedman argues that the process of adaptation leads to a 'tentative cinema [...] concerned more with accuracy than with audaciousness.' (Friedman 2006: 6). Similar to Friedman, Brian McFarlane acknowledges that 'British adaptations have exhibited a decorous, dogged fidelity to their sources, content to render through careful attention to their *mise-en-scene* the social values and emotional insight of those sources rather than subjecting them to critical scrutiny or, indeed, to robust exploitation [...]' (McFarlane 1986: 120-1).

Although Allan Scott's screenplay and Roeg's subsequent direction, displays a semblance of 'dogged fidelity', I would argue that it is less 'tentative' and rather more a 'robust exploitation'. That the process of adapting Du Maurier's original narrative offers an acknowledgement of fidelity to the linguistic, whilst simultaneously affording narrative space that enables the insertion of pro-filmic events and designs. Graeme Clifford, *Don't Look Now*'s editor reflected in an interview in 2002 that *Don't Look Now* was important in the context of Roeg's canon primarily because Roeg 'talked about the picture *being his exercise in film grammar*' (Clifford 2002) [italics my emphasis]. In turn the process of adaptation would have been key towards fulfilling

⁴⁷ Instead of pointing out the naivety of Miller's argument it seems appropriate to retort through a quote Roeg gave in an interview with Harlan Kennedy (delightfully in the same year that Miller's assertion was published), in which Roeg set out his own perception of the relationship between literature and film:

I believe film is an art, I believe it, I truly believe that. Thought can be transferred by the juxtaposition of images, and you mustn't be afraid of the audience not understanding. You can say things visually, immediately, and that's where film, I believe, is going. It's not a pictorial example of a published work, it's transference of thought [...] I've always wanted to get my thoughts over in film visually, without the intermediary of literature. I actively prefer to be in the cinema, but not the cinema of literature, which is like Victorian picture books. Faced with that, I'd rather stay at home and read.

(Roeg quoted in Kennedy 1980: 22).

Roeg's exercise intentions. For if fidelity was the concern, then the film would be secondary to the linguistic, but as Roeg once noted 'I've always wanted to get my thoughts over in film visually, without the intermediary of literature. I actively prefer to be in the cinema, but not the cinema of literature' (quoted in Kennedy 1980: 22).

Scott's screenplay comprises a series of gaps or ruptures that accommodate aspects of Du Maurier's original narrative (the Venetian setting, the Baxters, the blind sister, second sight and a dead child), but simultaneously alters or inserts elements that have direct bearing not only on the narrative, but also on the aesthetic design of the film. For example in terms of narrative Scott inserts a religious sub-theme that Sinyard argues is implemented:

[...] not simply to emphasize the theme of faith but to furnish an ironic context in which the limits of the hero's vision can be perceived. He might restore a church's mosaics - the film is a mosaic - but his interest is more *aesthetic* than spiritual [...].

(Sinyard 1991: 51) [italics my emphasis]

A further alteration is that the film commences at the Baxters' home in England, the offering up of a familial and domestic space (a point I will return to later) in sharp contrast to Du Maurier's opening that already has the Baxters located in Venice's alien spaces. The Baxters' role in Venice is also changed, from that of tourists to Laura accompanying John on his work as a church restorer. A profession that 'gathers cumulative resonance as the narrative develops' (ibid: 42).

This latter change has particular relevance to a consideration of the function of perception, gaze and memory. For John and Laura are engaged in different acts of perception whilst in Venice. Laura in the film is still located as a tourist (she accompanies John but is not working in Venice), thus her perspective of Venice is one of assimilation, 'an opportunity for integration and stimulation that will make up (implicitly or explicitly) for the deficiencies of daily life' (Negra 2006: 169). A gaze traditionally preserved through the capturing of images (e.g. photographs, postcards) moments of permanent present, of time and space held and knowable, but transposed and dislocated. Thus Laura interacts with a tourist Venice, however in a typical Roeg strategy it is a Venice outside of tourist season, even the hotel they are staying at is in the throes of preparing to close for the winter break.

In contrast, John the restorer (whose death brings some sense of resolution to the film, restores order one might say) does not interact with time as a network of memories, images and sensations, but instead creates and obliterates time through the act of restoration. In other words the process of restoration entails the removal of time's presence, the evidence that time has moved forward, for example the rebuilding and replacing of eroded elements. Consequently, whereas the tourist creates subjective moments of time, the restorer is a body that attempts to rediscover a sense of objective time, unfixed from subjectivity one that reconfigures or reassesses the past and in doing so, akin to Bergson's notion of memory, brings it back into the present. Of course John's work in time is then subverted by time itself, through the visions he experiences.

Intriguingly this schism between mother and father is further elaborated in their differing reactions to the possibilities of Christine being alive (reclaimed), whereas for Laura it is through spiritualism and faith that she finds a sense of confirmation, for John it is through colour, through red, that the possibilities of Christine manifest themselves. What is important about red is that it is one of two significant changes made by Scott in the adaptation of Du Maurier's text. For Christine is no longer associated with blue as she is in the Du Maurier's tale but with red.⁴⁸ The second change is located around Christine's death, which changes from being caused by meningitis (and thus one could argue unavoidable) to drowning (a death that is avoidable and one that leaves guilt behind).⁴⁹ Scott's changes therefore have implications for the narrative and aesthetic strategies that subsequently unfold in the film, firstly the film's predominant setting is Venice, a space defined by tributaries of water, becomes a space defined and demarcated by the omnipresent locus of Christine's death. Stylistically the change to drowning also accommodates Roeg's predilection for reflective surfaces, Venice becomes a space of mirrors, glass and water. Therefore the process of adaptation is one that has direct bearing on the film's engagement with colour and sight, one that is then subsequently carried over into the production process itself.

⁴⁸ For it is Laura, not Christine, who is linked through costume to red in the original text.

⁴⁹ Laura in Du Maurier's tale is the one associated with red. Logically of course one can see that in the design of the film, in particular the night sequence in which John pursues the dwarf, a blue coat flitting through the shadowy alleyways would not be as evident as red, hence in part the change is of a technical order.

Colour and Production

Colour is never a question of quantity, but of choice ... an avalanche of colour has no force. Colour attains its full expression only when it is organised.

(Matisse 2008: 98-99)

Don't Look Now is a film that implements colour not as an overwhelming, psychedelic, chromatic assault (ala *Performance*) but as a calibrated and meticulous sculpted elevation of one particular hue over a more restrained and desaturated palette (primarily due to the film being shot on Eastman Colour but then processed through Technicolor). In other words, *Don't Look Now* is chromatically constructed around the juxtaposition of a vibrant red against a series of bodies and spaces that are comprised of a more subdued palette of browns, grays, whites, blacks, blues, greens and so on. The central aspect of *Don't Look Now*'s chromatic strategy is that red occurs only sporadically, that in fact red is a colour deliberately omitted from the colour scheme.

This aesthetic juxtaposition, between vibrant/desaturated, between presence and absence, was an integral concern for the conception of the film's *mise-en-scene* in pre-production. As Anthony Richmond the film's D.O.P. recounts:

[Roeg] knew that taking the colour red out of everything except the dwarf's clothing and the little girl's mac, really played a very big part in the design and costume design [...] It's a very subtle thing, you don't miss it, your eye really just goes to the red jacket of that girl and then the dwarf.

(Richmond 2002)⁵⁰

Intriguingly such a meticulous approach to the function and presence of colour is ironically reminiscent of Natalie Kalmus' own perception of the need for film colour to be planned and controlled (though one would argue to the opposite effect since red draws attention to itself). As Kalmus noted:

⁵⁰ It should be acknowledged that red was not completely isolated from all aspects of the *mise-en-scene*, apart from the coats, for example the red is present at various points, through candles, scarves, curtains and other paraphernalia, but it is the red of the coat that consistently draws the spectator's eye. Roeg in an interview with Tom Milne acknowledges the planning over colour in the film, that 'the red, the flowers and so on, was also planned in the script' (Milne 1973: 4).

When we receive the script for a new film, we carefully analyse each sequence and scene to ascertain what dominant mood or emotion is to be expressed. When this is decided, we plan to use the appropriate colour or set of colours which will suggest that mood, thus actually fitting the colour to the scene and augmenting its dramatic value.

(Kalmus 1935: 116)

Of course Kalmus was, in some respects, seeking to maintain colour as a subservient element to narrative. In contrast, Roeg modernist predilections results (at particular moments) in red disrupting the mimesis of the artifice. A key example is that of the red that swirls across the screen obliterating the image of the church and the dwarf therein (a disruption that I will come to later in this chapter). Therefore I would argue that within *Don't Look Now's* seemingly simplistic chromatic strategy, one that implicates a symbolic resonance to red through its omission/elevation, is a chromatic structure that augments both narrative and aesthetic. As Jean Mitry argues in his writing on aesthetics and psychology in cinema:

Color expression is an effect of the discreet way it is handled. The signification must come from the dynamics of color, in other words, from their transformations and contrasts, from the ever-changing associations of form and color, emphasizing first one and then the other. Instead of creating "inherently" harmonious compositions, the filmmaker must create structure in tune with the psychological meaning of the drama.

(Mitry 1993: 227)

Consequently, *Don't Look Now's* chromatic strategy can be read as an aesthetic psychological structure that operates as a series of juxtapositions, one that seeks not harmony but contrast, and subsequently through this contrast emerges meaning. Thus *Don't Look Now's* colour strategy reflects on both the initial preoccupations of colour's cinematic function, of Kalmus' 'fitting' and 'augmenting', whilst simultaneously exploring the potential for colour to disrupt, even become, the image.

Colour becomes an active component of the *mise-en-scene*, a deliberate quality that in turn has ramifications for other elements within the image. For example, through this aesthetic strategy, Venice becomes a labyrinth comprised of a series of near achromatic spaces, the dominant hues being grey, blue, white and black. A wintry liminal urbanity within which the transient eruptions of the red of the Dwarf's body, draws the spectator's eye, teasing us to look. As Gordon Gow recalls in his review of the film,

‘[...] genuine thrills come from fleeting glimpses of a tiny red-garbed figure, reflected in canals or darting around corners, deceptively reminiscent of the dead daughter whose warnings continue to be delivered at second hand from beyond the grave’ (Gow 1973: 45).⁵¹



Image 3.8: The Fleeting Red Figure.

Hence not only do drama and mood become extensions of colour but what also emerges is a third function of colour within the filmic, that of its relationship to the spectator. For the drawing of the eye, as Gow recollects in his viewing experience of the film, through the deliberate colour strategy in *Don't Look Now*, raises the issues of identity and perception that permeate the film's narrative and thematic flows. For like Gow, John Baxter (Donald Sutherland) will find his gaze drawn to the red that symbolizes his loss and grief from the death of his daughter.

To elaborate on this point we first need to reaffirm that colour 'is not a property of objects [...] but lies within our perception' (Aumont 1994: 11). Colour is a sensation that emerges within the brain, for as light penetrates the eye, it passes through a chemical transformation before, finally via the optical nerve, it reaches the striated

⁵¹ A classic horror strategy as Barbara Creed argues, 'one of the original meanings of monster is from the Latin *monstrare*, meaning 'to warn' or 'to show'. In order to generate suspense and a sense of the uncanny, an effective horror film does not immediately put the monster on full display; instead it offers a fleeting glimpse, a quick disturbing glance (Creed 2005: ix).

cortex, whereupon a cerebral process produces the sensation of colour. The experience of colour, therefore, is a ‘product of responses to the wavelength of the rays of light emitted or reflected by objects’ (Ibid: 11). So red is a construction of the mind, and thus questions not only of perception but also of memory are implicitly present (a point I will return to later in this case study). Red in particular is notable on the spectrum as it is the colour with the longest wavelength, this in turn lends red a warm, opulent sensation, that subsequently leads to its metaphoric association with blood, warmth etc.⁵² Thus, the desaturated palette that defines Venice chromatically within *Don’t Look Now* acts as a chromatic harmony to red’s presence. Red, within this aesthetic, becomes both privileged and rare, its ensuring scarcity in turn amplifying those moments when it is onscreen, resulting in the eye being drawn to its warm vibrancy through its juxtaposition to the desaturated scale of colours that dominate the backdrop of the *mise-en-scene*.

One outcome of this privileging of red within the film’s aesthetic strategy is that its cultural presence informs our engagement with the film, and thus in turn, needs to be considered. As Eisenstein rightly argued ‘when we approach the problem of color in film we must think first of all of the meaning associated with a given color’ (Eisenstein 1970: 117).⁵³ For example the *Oxford English Dictionary* offers the following definition of red:

red • adj. (redder, reddest) 1 of a colour at the end of the spectrum next to orange and opposite violet, as of blood, fire, or rubies. > (of hair or fur) of a reddish-brown colour. > (of a person’s face) red due to embarrassment., anger, or heat. > dated or offensive (of a people) having a reddish skin. 2 (of wine) made from dark grapes and coloured by their skins. 3 of or denoting the suits hearts and diamonds in a pack of cards. 4 denoting a red light or flag used as a signal to stop. >

⁵² As Anna Powell notes reds ‘[...] vibrations are the least frequent. In the space of one second, it vibrates 400 billion times in succession, far too rapidly for human perception to register’ (Powell 2005: 137).

⁵³ Though not particularly relevant to our consideration of red in this context for Eisenstein, the colour red became synonymous with ‘[t]he colour of the revolutionary flag. And the colour of the ears of a liar caught red-handed. The colour of a boiled crayfish – and the colour of a crimson sunset. The colour of cranberry juice – and the colour of warm human blood’ (Eisenstein 1994: 256).

denoting something forbidden, dangerous, or urgent [...] involving bloodshed or violence.

(Pearsall 2002)

John Gage notes that in terms of red's symbolic qualities:

Few colours have been so heavily freighted with symbolic resonance as red. In the Indo-European languages this may have been because "red" has been seen as the colour par-excellence of life-giving blood. Indeed, the terms 'red', 'rouge', 'rot', or 'rosso' derive from the Sanskrit word *rudhira* meaning blood. In the Inca language Aymara, a synonym for *grana* (Spanish: crimson), beside *puca*, was *vila*, a term for 'blood'; and Sahagun includes in his encyclopedia an Aztec version of the widespread belief that the bloodstone (*eztetl*) could be used in the process of sympathetic magic to staunch menstrual or other bleeding.

(Gage 1999: 110)

Derek Jarman, in his eloquent eulogy to colour, *Chroma*, poetically captured his own perceptions of red:

Red protects itself. No colour is as territorial [...] Red is rare in the landscape. It gains its strength through its absence [...] Red, Red, Red. The daughter of aggression, mother of all colours. Extreme red, the colour of brigades and flags, marching Red. Red on the borders and fringes of our lives [...] Red is the most ancient of colour names from the Sanskrit *rudhira*. The face of the Sphinx was painted red.

(Jarman 1995: 31-37)

Thus red is a colour that infers a symbolic position that shifts from abject (menstruation, blood), to threat (violence, bloodshed), from that which should be repressed (something forbidden) to femininity and enigma (Jarman's Sphinx); and it is such symbolically informed readings that have defined the majority of previous critical and theoretical analysis in terms of red and *Don't Look Now*. For example Leslie Dick, in his review of the film, concludes that red 'functions as a sign for [...] loss, an image of the ever-present possibility of sudden death' (Dick 1997: 12). Mark Sanderson considers that the film's colour strategy denotes familial relations aesthetically. That 'father and daughter are identified with red, the colour of *blood*, *danger* and martyrdom and magic; mother and son seen in shades of blue, the traditional colour of hope, loyalty and faith' (Sanderson 1995: 44) [italics my emphasis].

In contrast to Sanderson's semiotically informed reading, John Izod, adopting a Jungian approach, offers a far more intriguing, though still inherently symbolic, interpretation of the function of red:

The associations probably most readily available to many people are aroused by the colour red. A long chain of linked ideas offers itself [...] the first section of the chain [...] associates red/blood/warmth/fire [...] the second segment connects red/danger/stop/death [...] these symbolic readings of the colour that thrusts itself at the eye throughout the film help the spectator integrate a set of meanings which the unfolding plot motivates.

(Izod 1992: 70)

Though I agree with Izod that colour is a means of navigation, the resultant chains of ideas that he argues for is one bereft of the ideological questions surrounding colour. Colour still seemingly is an inert object, waiting for an idea to be thrust upon it.

Robert Kolker, like Izod, identifies red as being imbued with connective properties surmising that:

Don't Look Now is constructed on the questions arising from understood facts conflicting with confusing perceptions. The association of Baxter's daughter in her red mac and the strange red figure in church is based on nothing but the coincidence of events and the perception of those events, a coincidence of events that happens to link both these figures with death. The paradox, of course, is that there is no coincidence at all; Roeg has managed and manipulated the association. The text is coded so that all the images, signs, events and dialogue that make it up refer to and control the association.

(Kolker 1977: 84)

Though I agree with Kolker, that Roeg manages and manipulates 'the association', Kolker's stance, again like Izod et al, infers that colour is no more than the aesthetic source of signification. What past analysis has continually overlooked is a consideration of red that looks beyond simply its prominent symbolic function, or conceiving it as only a means of generating associative connections. For it is red as a moment of slippage that I am interested in, that is when the output moves beyond expectation, that of both Roeg and the spectator. For this experiment in film grammar is more than narrative and stylistic exploration, due to its focus on colour and body emerge a series of questions that the rest of this case study seeks to explore, such as

what is colour's relationship to identity if the former is the dominant characteristic that defines the latter? Can colour's semiotic fluidity be a source of resistance to hegemonic structures, particularly patriarchy? Can colour be an externalisation of the body as abject, and if so what are the repercussions in terms of power? If the body is one of abjectness, is there a correlation between chromophobia and the uncanny, and if so how does this affect our reading of colour in the film? To answer these questions, to explore the role of red I first want to consider Julia Kristeva's (a theorist who wrote both on horror and psychoanalysis) concept of the triple register and how it brings together sight and colour, before moving the discussion onto the relationship between the uncanny, femininity and colour.

The Triple Register

Colour is the shattering of unity.

(Kristeva 1987: 221)

Kristeva has explored the questions that surround both horror and colour, respectively through her concept of the abject for the former, and the triple register for the latter. It seems somewhat remiss, when discussing a horror film that explores and integrates colour so eloquently to not consider how both ideas interact within *Don't Look Now*. Hence this section will set out how Kristeva perceives the triple register conceptually, before moving onto a discussion of the uncanny in which the abject will be manifest.

The concept of the triple register emerges through Kristeva's writing on the function of colour in the paintings of Giotto. Kristeva explores the questions that emerge through an engagement with colour and its theoretical complexities, colour that Kristeva describes as being 'difficult to situate both within the formal system of painting and within painting considered as practice' (Kristeva 1987: 216). As Louise A. Hitchcock notes Kristeva's 'examination of colour is an interpretive strategy that reveals the limitations of the traditional semiological analysis of art' (Hitchcock 2008: 154).

To resolve this limitation, Kristeva negotiates the theoretical complexities within colour by supplementing the structure of the sign with the psychic economy Freud develops between perception and thought process, resulting in the triple register. Thus the foundations of the triple register is informed by Kristeva's work on language and culture, in particular her notion of the semiotic, one that differs from the standard meaning of semiotics as the science of signs. As Louise A. Hitchcock reflects:

What Kristeva forwards [...] is a “semanalysis” a combination of semiotics and psychoanalysis that aims at revealing how the laws of the symbolic are resisted [...] the semiotic is associated with the pre-linguistic phase and the mother’s body [...] It exists within language [...] as a potentially subversive, eruptive force. The semiotic, then, can never be entirely constrained by the symbolic; it perpetually infiltrates the symbolic construction of meaning, reintroducing fluidity and heterogeneity [...].

(Hitchcock 2008: 152)

In her writing on the triple register, this concern with the power of the semiotic comes to the fore, in particular colour as an aesthetic plane of resistance to the censoring desire of the symbolic. For Kristeva colour is not ‘zero meaning’ but ‘it is excess meaning’ (Kristeva 1987: 221).

By overflowing, softening, and dialectizing lines, color emerges inevitably as the “device” by which painting gets away from the identification of objects and therefore realism [...] Color is the shattering of unity. Thus, it is through color – colors – that the subject escapes its alienation with a code (representational, ideological, symbolic, and so forth) that it, as conscious subject, accepts.

(Ibid: 221)

For example, if we consider that part of colour’s cultural quality is its resistance to identification, thus we can understand that this also represents a resistance to language. Though we attribute and divide colour by associating particular words and terms to specific hues, it always seems to escape true meaning. John Gage refers to ‘the feeling that verbal language is incapable of defining the experience of colour’ (Gage 1993: 10). It is this sense of plurality, of differing cultural semiotic relations, that for me is the defining quality of colour. For when we engage with colour what manifests is a myriad range of symbolic, metaphoric and synaesthetic discourses that emerge from any particular point. A chromatic discourse that through plurality escapes singularity and evades fixed meanings.

I will return to this point of escape, one that will become central to my reading, of the presence of the dwarf in a moment. Firstly how does the triple register function? Kristeva describes the triple register as being ‘made up of a pressure marking an outside, another linked to the body proper, and a sign (signifier and primary processes)’ (Ibid: 218). Kristeva describes the function of the tripled registers as comprising of:

[...] an instinctual pressure linked to external visible objects; the same pressure causing the eroticizing of the body proper via visual perception and gesture; and the insertion of this pressure under the impact of censorship as a sign in a system of representation.

(Ibid: 219)

In other words, the triple register attempts to define, to capture, the relationship between colour and perception, between colour and thought. For instead of simply situating colour as either solely objective or subjective, or a matter of cultural custom, it is a pluralistic and complex aesthetic discourse that locates itself within all three planes simultaneously. Here it is worth noting that Kristeva's triadic model has similarities to Arnheim's writing on perception that I discussed earlier, one that intersects object and subject through cultural memories and associations (a similarity that is unsurprisingly of course when both are writing on the same aspect of vision).

As Neale eloquently argues the triple register therefore is a 'complex phenomenon' comprised of 'the objective ("external objects"), the subjective ("an instinctual pressure [...] causing the eroticization of the body") and the cultural [(censorship)]' (Neale 1985: 150). In other words the triple functions thus: we see an object; the act of seeing this object automatically results in an internal response to that object (a classic example being that of the relationship between spectator and pornography, which evokes sensations of eroticism, pleasure etc); censorship then limits the extent to which we are allowed to enjoy that internal response (or in the case of pornography not). Thus the triple register represents a process of looking and identification that is based upon the object of the gaze being brought into a system of signification that in turn places it into a position within patriarchal hegemony. To elaborate on this we can first consider the way in which such a system would interact with that of the Actress (played by Teresa Russell) in *Insignificance* (Roeg, 1985) (see image 3.3). The actress is a femininity marked by white, the white dress of course, alongside the blonde hair, and red lipstick evoking the cinematic persona of the icon Marilyn Monroe. Hence as we engage with this femininity we situate her onscreen presence through identification with this other cinematic icon, resultantly a sense of scopophilia permeates our reading of her body, one evoked by the plunging cleavage and curvaceous body. Thus this femininity becomes defined by a body to be looked at, the Actress is a body to be consumed as a fetishised object, and consequently is placed within the structures of patriarchy as a passive object for our voyeuristic pleasure.

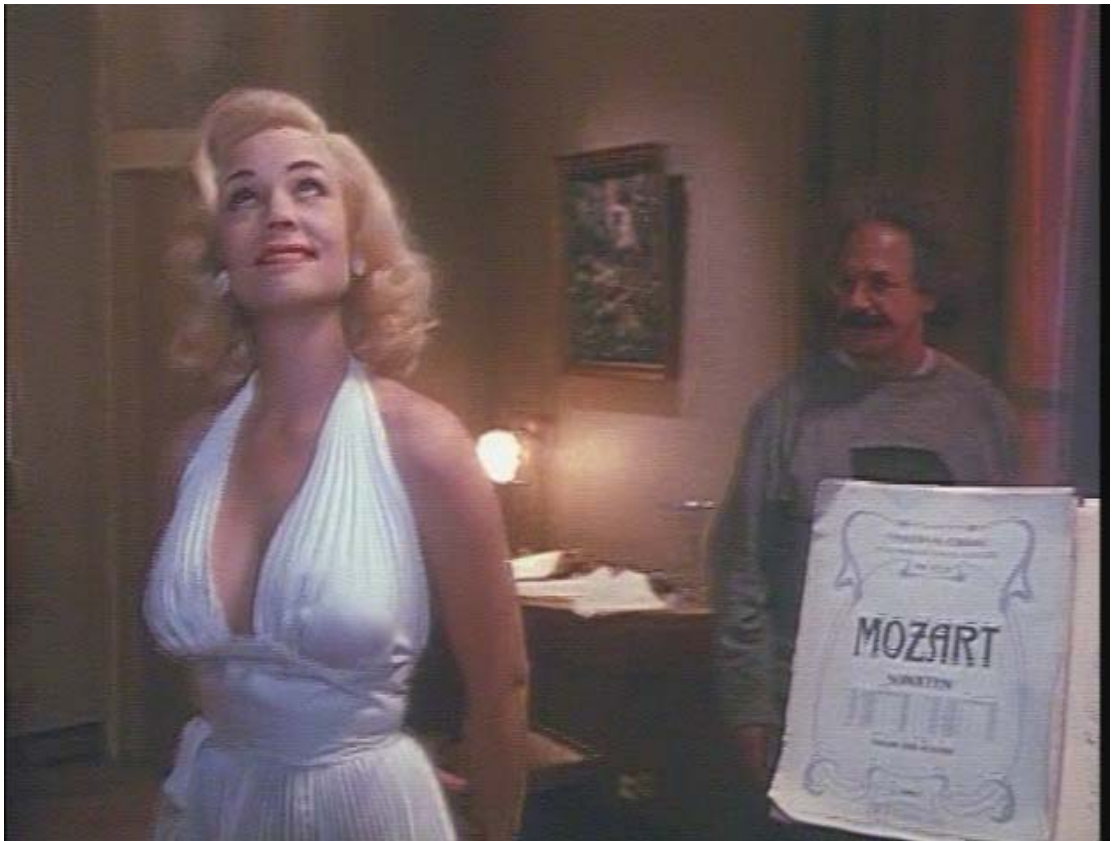


Image 3.9: Femininity as site of Scopophilic Pleasure in *Insignificance*.

In stark contrast the red of the Dwarf is one that denies such positioning. For though we see this femininity, albeit sporadically, I would argue that unlike the Actress who elicits out gaze, the Dwarf is a body that defies. That rather than femininity that becomes an object of scopophilia, the Dwarf resists any such readings being enforced onto her body, primarily due to colour's resistant quality (resistance to language and definition). In some respects we can argue that the red body of the Dwarf is one that acts as a metaphor for the triple register, primarily due to the prominence of red. That every time John sees her he cannot derive stage two fully, and thus he is unable to site the Dwarf within the discourse of censorship. In other words, when John sees the body internally he reconfigures this body as that of a child, and in turn his treatment of the body when he finally corrals it is one akin to fatherly concern. That because he cannot truly recognise the body for what it is then he cannot locate it into a system of signification and thus censorship. Subsequently when the real nature of what is concealed beneath the red surface is finally revealed, the outcome is John's death. In some respects we could argue that the Dwarf in fact censors John by killing him. That his misreading of the body of the Dwarf, his ability to understand and know red, leads both to the death of

his daughter, due to his misreading of the spiral (as I will later discuss), and his own bloody demise.

In the context of *Don't Look Now*, one can begin to see how the triple register facilitates an engagement with colour as a discourse of power, gender and patriarchy. That though Roeg's experiment is constructed around a classical chromatic position corporeally, being that of the presence of colour on the female form, the aspect of spectacle and sexuality is displaced by one of concealment and androgyny. Hence, *Don't Look Now* offers up a moment of colour as challenge, colour outside of cultural censorship. For whilst, as the narrative develops, red for John Baxter moves from coincidence (the red/white ball in the hospital) to potential (the resurrection of Christine), so too does colour move to challenge the hegemonic power of patriarchy. Colour shatters unity, resulting in the dwarf existing in a separate discourse and cultural position to more classical models of femininity.

To explain this latter idea I want to briefly consider the way in which the red of Christine functions differently to the red of the Dwarf. For Kristeva's notion of the triple register offers up a way of understanding the relationship between these two chromatically connected bodies. To focus on Christine for a second, her body is one defined by colour (as I have already discussed), but this colour is situated within a knowable cultural schematic, we understand her place within the family structure, her connection to the patriarch (the hero of the narrative) and consequently her body is one of conformity, her body/identity is knowable in spite of colour's presence. In fact colour is the most notable aspect of her cinematically, red and connotations of youthful playfulness, of innocence, of exploration and experimentation are all aligned together. This mix, of body, discourse and colour is then supplanted when we move to Venice onto a body that has similar qualities, in particular shape, size and of course colour.

However, this body in Venice, this body of red is not one that is knowable, It is worth considering that though both bodies are marked by seemingly a similar colour, one of comparable hue and tone. What is important to the film is that this play between colour, of contrast and similarity, is one that leads John (and the spectator) into desiring to resolve what lies beneath the red coat. John of course at the end of the film, due to the similarities of colour and size etc, believes it to be a child (though maybe not Christine), when the reality is of course far removed from innocence and youth.

However this body that teases both John and spectator is unknowable in reality, a body shaped by colour, a body whose features are masked, concealed by this abundance of colour. Thus due to the fact that this body resists, both John and spectator, that we cannot understand only interpret, leads this body to being one of chromatic enigma. What I mean is that the body of the Dwarf is positioned within the narrative of the film as a mystery, based on the memory that is the colour imprint of the body of Christine. Instead of a femininity of that is one that provides scopophilic pleasure, the intersection of red, body and memory provides only a negating of the gaze. John's ability to understand is denied, his desire to fix colour into a scheme in which he attributes meaning is one that's shown to be flawed. For John, though sceptical to start, pursues this red-body into Venice's depths, the size and shape evoking memories of his dead child. However the censoring of this body, that is, the Dwarf's adherence to patriarchal structures which others her social presence is one that resists such modes of representation. The patriarchal construction of reality is one that's shown to be flawed, based on a point of chromatic misrecognition, and thus in turn falls into colour, into his death. As Batchelor notes 'colour is formless but ever formed into patterns and shapes', patterns and shapes that linger both within and outside of language (Batchelor 2000: 86). Hence the Dwarf from John Baxter's perspective is a pattern that comes to echoing his dead daughter. For though John does not fully believe it is Christine, it is his desire to understand the truth that leads to his death.

Therefore colour, as well as resistance, can in this context be defined as being a source of horror, for it lingers on the edges of rationality, provoking and destabilising that which appears to be secure. For as much as Kristeva's triple register sets out that colour can be discussed in terms of power, nonetheless the intersection of colour and body denies John's patriarchal subjectivity. It provides instead a cinematic discourse that is outside of the semiotic, outside of language, and subsequently John's negotiation with colour renders him impotent patriarchally. As Jacqueline Lichtenstein comments colour 'is a pleasure that exceeds discursiveness. Like passion, the pleasure of coloris slips away from linguistic determination' (Lichtenstein 1993: 194). What is intriguing is this potential to resist, this cultural discourse of colour being one that denies language is also a quality that Kristeva notes in terms of horror, in particular through her notion of the abject.

Kristeva argues that 'abjection is above all ambiguity' that the place of the abject is 'where meaning collapses' (Kristeva 1982: 2-3). It is unsurprising that meaning

collapses in the chromatic presence of the Dwarf, that the combination of colour and abjectness is, in some respects, a doubled resistance to the normative gaze. Hence we can propose that colour and abjectness are discourses that share similar thematic and cultural qualities. For in the interaction with the body of the Dwarf what we encounter is a discourse of abjectness through colour. A connection of the chromatic and the horrific that in turn, due to its position as other to John's normative status, both threatens and confirms his sense of self. As Barbara Creed argues, to deal with such a body, one that threatens the place or status of the living subject, the other must be:

[D]eposited on the other side of an imaginary border which separates the self from that which threatens the self. Although the subject must exclude the abject, the abject must, nevertheless, be tolerated for that which threatens to destroy life also helps to define life. Further, the activity of exclusion is necessary to guarantee that the subject take up his/her proper place in relation to the symbolic.

(Creed 1993: 9)

Colour and horror are discourses of otherness that share similar qualities, resisting and challenging the linguistic, the symbolic. That the relationship between colour and horror in *Don't Look Now* opens up a complex and intriguing discourse that, through an alternative Freudian model, that of the uncanny, develops Kristeva's notion of colour as a discourse which overwhelms the hegemonic structures of patriarchy. For if the Dwarf's body is one that denies the normative representation of femininity then instead of accommodating a scopophilic reaction her body becomes a site of chromatic curiosity, a curiosity that leads to horror. To explore this connection between colour and horror I want to consider the relationship between colour and psychoanalytical approach, in particular Freud's notion of the uncanny.

Colour and The Uncanny

What is the uncanny? Does it belong to philosophy or literature or psychoanalysis? If it belongs, it is no longer a question of the uncanny. Rather, the uncanny calls for a different thinking of genre and text [...].

(Royle 2003: 18)

The uncanny [...] is not necessarily reducible to the general emotion of fear.

(Creed 2005: 3)

This section, as the title infers, explores red in *Don't Look Now* through Freud's notion of the uncanny. In particular, it is the uncanny and further its etymological components, the Germanic terms *heimlich* and *unheimlich*, as well as Kristeva's notion of the abject that are drawn into my consideration of the film's chromatic strategy.

The reason for adopting a psychoanalytical approach is that *Don't Look Now* is a film preoccupied with themes and aesthetics that display traits of the uncanny.⁵⁴ The manifestation of the uncanny within *Don't Look Now* has been explored by a few theorists, most notably Kristi Wilson who discusses the uncanny in relation to feminist geography and Sabine Schülting in terms of the film's representation of time and space. However neither acknowledges nor considers the intriguingly it is the connection between red and the uncanny, through the aesthetically conjoined chromatic bodies of Christine and the Dwarf. As always it seems that colour has been overlooked in preference to a theoretical engagement based upon elements that are somewhat easier to define such as editing, time and space (though of course these elements will also be present in my own consideration of the film).

I take my understanding of the uncanny not only from Freud, but also from the work of Barbara Creed (in terms of the monstrous-feminine/masculine) and Nicolas Royle's writing on the uncanny. Freud offers one description of the uncanny as being 'that class of the frightening which leads us back to what is know of old and long familiar' (Freud 2003: 12). Creed describes the uncanny as being the 'metamorphosis of the familiar into the unfamiliar', 'of bringing to light what should have remained hidden', and also the 'dissolution of boundaries between the real and the imagined' (Creed 2005: 7).

Creed's definition of the uncanny, in particular the tension between familiar and unfamiliar, reflects the narrative and thematic concerns of *Don't Look Now*. For example the metamorphosis of Christine into Dwarf, or the Baxters in their English based domestic space before relocating into the alien vistas of Venice. The film is also dominated by discourses of repressed grief (notably the Baxters but also that of the sisters) and the possibility of redemption raised through the return of a dead child. Finally, there is the subtext of John and Heather's paranormal abilities, which dissolve and connect the liminal spaces of past, present and future, and through which John is drawn towards his death.

⁵⁴ Like Anna Powell I find that one can draw together seemingly disparate approaches to film, that they can reside as 'complementary rather than oppositional' (Powell 2005: 3).

Nicolas Royle, in his book on the uncanny, offers a comprehensive definition of the term, one that is worth recounting in full:

[...] concerned with the strange, weird and mysterious, with a flickering sense (but not conviction) of something supernatural. The uncanny involves feelings of uncertainty, in particular regarding the *reality* of who one is and what is being experienced. Suddenly one's sense of oneself (of one's so-called 'personality' or 'sexuality', for example) seems strangely questionable. The uncanny is crisis of the proper: it entails a critical disturbance of what is proper [...] a disturbance of the very idea of personal or private property including the properness of proper names, one's so-called own name, but also the *proper names of others*, of places, institutions and events. It is a crisis of the natural, touching upon everything that one might have thought was 'part of nature': one's own nature, human nature, the nature of reality and the world. But the uncanny is not simply an experience of strangeness or alienation. More specifically, *it is a peculiar commingling of strangeness or alienation. It can take the form of something familiar unexpectedly arising in a strange and unfamiliar context, or of something strange and unfamiliar unexpectedly arising in a familiar context* [italics my emphasis].

(Royle 2003: 1)

The notion of the supernatural, one located around the red of the Dwarf, that flickers in the distance of John Baxter's peripheral figure is one that evokes a sense of uncertainty. Is it Christine? Is it a premonition? Or is it something else? The epicentre for this sense of strangeness is one that is located through the juxtaposition of colour and shape, which leads to both John and spectator interacting with the body, in Venice, that is familiar (it is physically and chromatically similar to that of Christine) but located in an unfamiliar context (being that of the intra-uterine passages of Venice). Hence it is this body that shifts between familiar/unfamiliar that evokes a sense of the uncanny, and in turn leads John Baxter towards crisis. For it is Baxter's desire, one located in his own faith in his modernist sense of rationality (unlike Laura who seeks resolution in both faith and the paranormal), that results in his patriarchal hegemony, his sense of self, being resisted by that which he cannot name. For he cannot attribute a proper name to this chromatic doppelganger, and in turn his sense of the natural, one heightened by Venice's twisted, near rhizomic, spaces is disturbed.

Within this case study I propose that the epicentre of this sense of uncanny operates within two differing but interconnected discourses, that of the body of the Dwarf (one, as I will later discuss, that is inextricably linked to Christine), and the rich intertextuality of Venice. To pause on the latter for a moment, Venice, for John and Laura, becomes a space that evokes strangeness and alienation, familiarity and unfamiliarity. As Sinyard argues, Roeg presents Venice as a 'city in peril, stagnant and submerging and in the process [...] dragging up fearsome things from its hidden depths – rats, corpses. It is also a city of peril, in which the hero will lose himself in dark narrow streets and alleys, a city in which to die' (Sinyard 1990: 50).

This notion of 'a city in which to die' is brought to the fore by the Venice of *Don't Look Now* being devoid of the classical tropes of tourism and romance. Instead what emerges onscreen is a Venice of winter, a Venice of the populace not the tourist. Chromatically, as I have already discussed, this theme is picked up by the dominant hues of Venice evoking this sense of winter, of closure, a palette of whites, blues, blacks, browns, grays and greens; hues that are transposed onto the bodies of both the Baxter's and other characters. Hence Venice is depicted as a city settling into its wintry hiatus (exemplified literally by the Baxter's hotel which due to their presence is caught in a uncanny state of open and closed for business), a moment of hibernation one that facilitates the manifestation of the true Venice. Not the tourist image of gondolas and piazzas but that of the indigenous, of death, labyrinths and decay. Thus the Venice that is depicted on screen proffers an alternative to the normative representations of this city within cinema. An alternative that refers to a rich legacy, as Venetian expert Tony Tanner argues:

Venice is not really ever written from the inside, but variously appropriated from without. And as it slips or falls out of history, Venice - the place, the name, the dream - seems to lend itself to, to attract a new variety of, appreciations, recuperations and dazzled hallucinations. In decay and decline (particularly decay and decline), falling or sinking to ruins and fragments, yet saturated with secretive sexuality - thus emanating or suggesting a heady compound of death and desire [...]

(Tanner 1992: 4).

In turn it is discourses of desire, death and decay that define the spatial presence of Venice within *Don't Look Now*. For example the first image of Venice is a drill boring a hole into the Church of St Nicholas (patron of pigs and children) the location of the

restoration project that John is overseeing, a poster affixed to the building declaring that 'Venice is in Peril'.⁵⁵ Of further note is the contrast between the open and familial spaces of England, consisting of a country home and a lush and open rural landscape, juxtaposed then by the dark labyrinthine spaces that both John and Laura find hard to navigate in contrast to the Dwarf who terrorizes the local populace at night. The former is a site of supposed bliss, which becomes a space of death, the other a space of death that does not fail to deliver.

In turn the narrative of *Don't Look Now* is one that resonates with differing arcs of desire, from John's desire to understand what truth resides beneath the red surface of the unknown protagonist whom he spots within the labyrinthine alleyways of Venice; Laura's desire to reconnect with her dead child; the sisters' desire to help Laura and John (however ambiguous their motivation); and finally the desire of the Dwarf to make a mark on a society and space that has spurned her abject form. Venice becomes a *mise-en-abyme* of these tales of desire, with differing manifestations of the uncanny prominent throughout. From the silent indigenous populace that looks on at the Baxters (the toilet attendant, the man in the window) to the reflected surfaces that present femininity as eternally doubled (Laura and Heather in the mirror of the café bathroom), and its intersection of solidity and fluidity, simultaneously proffering movement and restriction. Consequently Venice, through its appropriation by Roeg, becomes an architectural mirror to the film's narrative and thematic preoccupations. However the key feature is the interaction between this darkened space of death, desire and decay; the red body of the Dwarf; the patriarchal gaze of John Baxter; and finally the composition of the image. For at the nexus of these four elements the blurring of opposites occurs, of Christine and Dwarf, of present and (possible) future, of life and death. As Tanner notes Venice is 'notoriously a site where opposites begin to blur and distinctions fade [...]'. (Ibid: 356) It is this notion of opposition being brought together that is fruitful in my own thinking of the relationship between the uncanny and colour. For just as Venice is a site in which the uncanny and colour intersect, so too is the dyadic relationship between Christine and the Dwarf, a relationship of colour, memory and perception, the central uncanny discourse within the film.

⁵⁵ The sound bridge of the Laura's scream that turns into the shriek of the drill being a homage to Hitchcock's *The 39 Steps* (1935).

Chromatic Doppelgängers

More specifically, [the uncanny] *is a peculiar commingling of strangeness or alienation. It can take the form of something familiar unexpectedly arising in a strange and unfamiliar context, or of something strange and unfamiliar unexpectedly arising in a familiar context.*

(Royle 2003: 1) [Italics my emphasis]

The dyadic connection between the Dwarf and Christine, is, as I have already commented, the aesthetic epicentre through which the interaction between colour and the uncanny takes place. Bodies of familiarity - that of Christine whose memory becomes an aesthetic discourse - are, through both the spectator's and John Baxter's gaze, laid onto the unfamiliar scarlet canvas that is the body of the Dwarf.

The aesthetic interconnection between these two seemingly disparate bodies, one epitomised by innocence and potential the other by depravity, is meticulously constructed through the opening sequence set in England. Through editing, sound and colour, the interrelationship, through red and repetition of shape is one that, when the film moves to its Venetian setting, pushes the spectator into connecting through red the body of Christine to that of the Dwarf.

The opening sequence, quite rightly, has been heralded as an exemplary example of Roeg's spatial and temporal preoccupations. Mark Sanderson for example notes that the opening sequence 'contains more than one hundred shots but lasts just seven minutes' depicting the film's narrative preoccupations in a 'nutshell' (Sanderson 1996: 33). Through images, ellipses and compression, Roeg eloquently introduces key preoccupations and visual metaphors, drawing space, time, narrative and spectator into a 'mosaic of association' (Milne 1973: 237).

However in the context of red, and the function of colour overall, analysis of the opening sequence's domestic space usually results in simply a litany of moments, colour being displaced as either object or cosmetic. For example to return to Palmer & Riley:

Red is not only a color of both toy balls but of Christine's 'shiny little mac' and the murderous dwarf's hooded cloak and of the mysterious form whose bleeding expanse spreads across a slide photograph when John's drink spills on it at the moment of his daughter's drowning. Red is also the color of the

flames in the fireplace at the time of her death, and they in turn are shaped in the image much like the form of Christine in her mac [...]

(Palmer & Riley 1995: 18)

Though a dominant aesthetic feature, one that both connects the bodies and offers a moment of disruption, when the red spiral moves across the slide of the church and Dwarf, the use of colour within the sequence also sets up John Baxter's patriarchal position within the film.

If we consider for a moment image 3.4, we can see that it is not only red that has resonance aesthetically. For within the living space of the family home, we can see that chromatically John's body, which is comprised of light creams and whites, is one that is aligned with the domestic space, his clothing almost blurring into the walls.



Image 3.4: Colour, Space and the Patriarch.

This linking of colour, space and masculinity could be considered as somewhat surprising when one considers that the domestic space cinematically would traditionally be represented as the domain of the maternal. However Laura is not clad in similar colours, she is clothed in blue, and due to the paraphernalia of John's work, the projector, a screen, books and various implements, Laura is forced almost to the edge, moved to the side of the domestic space (see image 3.5).



Image 3.5: The Patriarchal Domestic Space.

Consequently through colour and composition it is John and the question of gazing that is brought to the fore, his position within the family accentuated through both colour and composition. Colour denotes John's patriarchal authority, one that is based around subdued hues and tones, contrasted by the bright vibrancy of red on his chromatic-other(s). Intriguingly this aesthetic juxtaposition, between adult and child, is a classical implementation of colour; as David Batchelor notes 'stories of adulthood tend more often to lament a world of colour eclipsed by the shadow of language; they present images of luminous becoming clouded by the habits of adult life' (Batchelor 2000: 79).

It is the presence and function of red that is of primary concern however, for the chromatic discourse of red in the opening sequence, I would propose, is the foundation for the manifestation of the uncanny that is manifest within Venice's labyrinths. In other words the intersection between colour and the uncanny is implicitly constructed within the juxtaposition of Christine and the photographic replication of the Dwarf in the slide.

Freud in his introduction to the uncanny brings to the fore the problematic theoretical position of aesthetics, that:

Only rarely does the psychoanalyst feel impelled to engage in aesthetic investigations, even when aesthetics is not restricted to the theory of beauty, but described as relating to the qualities of our feeling [...] Yet now and then it happens that he has to take an interest in a particular area of aesthetics, and then it is usually a marginal one that has been neglected [...].

Freud continues by locating the uncanny as a particular area of aesthetics, one that ‘belongs to the realm of the frightening, of what evokes fear and dread. It is equally beyond doubt that the word is not always used in a clearly definable sense, and so it commonly merges with what arouses fear in general’ (Ibid: 123).

The aesthetics of *Don't Look Now* in the opening sequence, in conjunction with Pino Donnagio's exemplary score, gradually moves from innocence to dread, from playfulness and family to death and loss. Initially, images of playful innocence and domestic bliss dominate. A sense of familial contentment is depicted through images of the Baxter children playing unsupervised outside, the remnants of a Sunday roast lying untended, of toy houses (uncannily juxtaposed with the Baxter home in the background), a doll, and a bike being ridden through trees. Whilst the children play outside, John and Laura are in the house, both preoccupied with differing actions of perception, John gazing at slides of the Church of St Nicolas in contrast to Laura's search for an answer to a question that Christine had asked her. That “if the world's round why is a frozen pond flat?” On finding a possible answer to the question she is met with John's prescient response that “nothing is what it seems”, a playful nod to the questions that will later possess John.⁵⁶

John Izod in his analysis of the sequence notes the prominence of red, arguing that ‘the opening sequence make[s] much of a succession of scarlet images’ (Izod 1992: 69). Izod continues that ‘many of these (notably shots of the girl in her mac, of the fire in the Baxter's living room, and of a small figure in one of the slides of a Venetian church [...]) are roughly triangular in shape. Thus the girl and the figure in the church are at once linked graphically’ (Ibid: 69).

Izod, through an analysis influenced by a Jungian approach, continues:

The two shapes [Christine and the image of the Dwarf] that are thus so irresistibly brought into relation cannot at this time be connected by the audience via narrative information. But the images themselves look so alike, and one of them is at the centre of so appalling an event, that the visual connection is enough to set one looking for explanations. The associations probably most readily available to many people are aroused by the colour red.

⁵⁶ Roeg in an interview in 2009 admitted that to get the right inflection for John's response involved approximately thirty retakes.

Disappointingly however, Izod concludes that this connection that is 'aroused' through red is a manifestation of Christian and alchemical symbolism. For Izod, red is again nothing more than a substitute, an aesthetic allegory for something else. I would argue that the aesthetic interconnection between the two bodies is manifestly uncanny in its chromatic depiction. It is this thisness (Deleuze's *haecceity*) of red that needs to be addressed.

The dominant sense of the uncanny is that of the doubling of bodies, that of the *doppelgänger*. Freud describes the manifestation of the *doppelgänger* as being:

The appearance of persons who have to be regarded as identical because they look alike [...] the constant recurrence of the same thing, the repetition of the same facial features, the same characters, the same destinies, the same misdeeds, even the same names [...]

(Freud 2003: 141-142)

Christine and the Dwarf are not classical *doppelgängers* in the sense of looking alike or sharing facial features.⁵⁷ Instead they are connected through similarity of colour, size and shape. Colour, size and shape that both infers a connection between these seemingly disparate bodies, but also functions to conceal the true nature of what lies beneath the red in Venice. This ambiguity is reinforced in the composition and framing of the bodies, for in contrast to the close-ups of Christine in the family garden, the Dwarf is always kept at a distance or on the edge of the frame. A distance that ensures it's monstrosity is obscured and concealed within the cosmetic layers of red.

However it is the repetition of composition and depiction, alongside colour and physical shape, which promotes the *doppelgänger* association. Roeg consistently depicts

⁵⁷ It should be noted that the face of the Dwarf is concealed to the end primarily to the elicit the horror payoff at the reveal, as Creed rightly notes:

One of the original meanings of monster is from the Latin *monstrare*, meaning 'to warn' or 'to show'. In order to generate suspense and a sense of the uncanny, an effective horror film does not immediately put the monster on full display; instead it offers a fleeting glimpse, a quick disturbing glance.

(Creed 2005: ix)

Christine as a reflection in the pond, a strategy that is later recreated in John's pursuit of the Dwarf. The act of reflection of course provokes a further set of doublings, as Sinyard notes:

At one moment we are shown an inverted reflection of the girl Christine as she runs alongside the pond, and it is a chilling shot on two levels; a premonition/anticipation of her falling into the water; and an inverted image that links her even more strongly to the transparency (for, of course, transparencies are inserted upside down, to be flipped over by the projector).

(Sinyard 1990: 48)

However the primary manifestation of this doppelgänger relationship is of course that of colour, of red. For as Izod rightly notes it is the 'succession of scarlet images' that are located in and around the juxtaposition of Christine (being one of familiarity) and the image of the Dwarf (being one of unfamiliarity) that is, for me, the aesthetic epicentre of the film's integration of the uncanny. It is the gap between these two bodies of red, bodies separated by time and space, connected by John's perception of events that provokes a sense of the uncanny. As Arnheim notes in his discussion of perception:

Shape is determined by more than what strikes the eye at the time of observation. The experience of the present moment is never isolated. It is the most recent among an infinite number of sensory experiences that have occurred throughout the person's past life. Thus the new image gets into contact with the memory traces of shapes that have been perceived in the past. These traces of shapes interfere with each other on the basis of their similarity, and *the new image cannot escape* this influence.

(Arnheim 1956: 32)

In the context of *Don't Look Now* it is the red mackintosh of Christine that firstly links red to notions of innocence, youth, purity and potential. In turn this mix of the chromatic and qualitative informs the red hooded duffle coat of the Dwarf. The 'new image' is connected through John's grief to his 'memory traces' but what is also of significance is that John exerts his own sense of memory-inspired perception onto the doppelgänger of the memory of his child. However, the Dwarf is not what he perceives, believes, or imagines it to be, the Dwarf resists John's patriarchal gaze, resists his authority to name. To return to Royle, the uncanny is the 'crisis of the proper: it entails a critical disturbance of what is proper [...] a disturbance of the very idea of personal or

private property including the properness of proper names, one's so-called own name, but also the *proper names of others* [...] (Royle 2003: 1).

Hence the relationship between Christine and the Dwarf is one of familiarity and unfamiliarity, or to return to Freud, it can be positioned as that of *heimlich* and *unheimlich*. For Freud argues that:

Among the various shades of meaning that are recorded for the word *heimlich* there is one in which it merges with its formal antonym, *unheimlich*, so that what is called *heimlich* becomes *unheimlich* [...] *heimlich* is not unambiguous, but belongs to two sets of ideas, which are not mutually contradictory, but very different from each other - the one relating to what is familiar and comfortable, the other to what is concealed and kept hidden.

(Freud 2003: 132)

It would seem somewhat obvious to position Christine, for John Baxter as a body that is *heimlich*, and the Dwarf as *unheimlich*. However Freud's discussion of the relationship between *heimlich* and *unheimlich* offers a third strand to its composition. For Freud argues that '*unheimlich* is the antonym of *heimlich* only in the latter's first sense, not its second' (Ibid: 132). In this context the discourse of *unheimlich* manifests itself through the familiar and the comfortable, not through that which is concealed. Hence as Creed rightly notes the term *heimlich* can therefore 'signify its opposite, it can come to have the meaning usually given to *unheimlich*. It can mean 'that which is obscure, inaccessible to knowledge' (Creed 2005: 4). Creed continues, arguing that it is the 'double meaning of *heimlich* [that is] important to a discussion of the uncanny as it underlines the close association between these two concepts: homely/unhomely; clear/obscure; knowable/unknowable' (Ibid: 4-5). Thus *heimlich* is doubly positioned, in turn as much as Christine is a body that evokes *heimlich* discourses, so too is the Dwarf both *heimlich* and *unheimlich*. For though her concealed presence is strange, it is also familiar, as much as it feels uncanny. The Dwarf, unlike the Baxters and the sisters, is not an alien within Venice, so she is the city's own *unheimlich* (i.e. she is *heimlich/unheimlich*). However *unheimlich*, if separated from its semantic twin, offers a further strand of consideration. As Creed notes '*unheimlich* can be used as the opposite of *heimlich* only when the latter signifies the homely. When used as a separate form, *unheimlich* means 'eerie, weird, arousing gruesome fear'' (Ibid: 5). Of further note, and one particularly relevant to our discussion of colour is that the *unheimlich* 'is often produced at the border, at the point of ambivalence' (Freud 2003: 134).

Heimlich is in part concealment. Just as the body of the Dwarf is concealed from both John and the spectator by the dominance of red, so too the Dwarf is *heimlich* and at the same time evokes the separate form of *unheimlich*. Thus Christine and the Dwarf are not polar opposites, but aspects of femininity that, through colour, raise questions of identity and place. In turn, colour is a means of positing these questions of *heimlich* and *unheimlich*, for as Royle notes ‘the unfamiliar [...] is never fixed, but constantly altering. The uncanny is (the) unsettling (of itself)’ (Royle 2003: 5). We can see now how the uncanny has qualities similar to colour, colour that resists language, subverts meanings and in all its hues is attributed differing qualities and meanings dependent on context. Colour, like the uncanny, is never fixed, never truly knowable.

However this still does not fully address the question of colour’s relationship to the uncanny. For what I have argued so far is that it is the memory of Christine - stylistically associated with the Dwarf in the opening sequence - that informs both spectatorial and character interaction with the latter. What of colour’s function above and beyond simply a signifier of memory?

Freud offers two approaches when engaging with the concept of the uncanny:

There are two courses open to us: either we can investigate the semantic content that has accrued to the German word *unheimlich* as the language has developed, or we can assemble whatever it is about persons and things, sense impressions, experiences and situations, that evokes in us a sense of the uncanny, and then go on to infer its hidden nature from what all these have in common.’

(Freud 2003: 124)

It is to the latter approach that I now turn, in particular the intersection of gaze, memory and colour that I will use to assemble a sense of the uncanny. A sense that I hope will demonstrate the subversive quality of both colour and the uncanny in the dominating perception of the patriarchal subject. In particular it is through the body of the Dwarf that I would propose an intriguing and exciting intersection of the uncanny and colour emerges, one that bridges the semantically informed uncanny and the linguistically resistant red. For colour in film is habitually one of subordination to language, as Batchelor comments ‘the exposure to language robs a life of its colour [but] are there then other stories in which it happens the other way around? [...] Are there equal and opposite stories in which exposure to colour robs a life of its language in which a sudden flood of colour renders a speaker speechless?’ (Batchelor 2000: 80).

The Spiral

Whereas my focus so far has been one of body, shape and colour, of connections of memory and identity, I now want to consider a moment within *Don't Look Now* that presents a manifestation of colour that subverts both the mimesis of the frame and brings to the fore colour and its function. The intersection between the slide, the Dwarf, red and water that, according to some, reflects the events that will later occur in Venice.

Prior to Christine's drowning, John is focussed in on his work. His paraphernalia (as already mentioned) dominates the domestic space, an abundance of surfaces and projections, a *mise-en-scene* of seeing, are incorporated into the familial. In particular it is a slide (see image 3.6) that depicts from a low angle the Church of St Nicholas, taken from the perspective of looking through the nave to the altar, pews flanking the edges of the frame, the one in the right occupied by a red figure. The altar and stained glass window dominate the background, reinforcing the patriarchal splendour of the church.



Image 3.6: John Baxter inspecting the slide of the Church of St Nicolas.

Whilst throwing Laura her cigarettes, a throw mirrored by Christine's tossing of her ball into the pond, John inadvertently knocks over his glass, spilling water onto the light box and slide. It is this intersection, of fluid, image and gaze that instigates both John's paranormal ability, and brings colour's autonomous and resistant presence to the fore.

For as John firstly mops up the water, then inspects the slide, the film cuts to a close-up of the image of the church (image 3.7). Already it is this surprising moment of chromatic intrusion that catches the eye of both spectator and John, for a red fluid lies on top of the image, seemingly part of/connected to the Dwarf for the originating point

of the colour is from the hood of her coat. The red then moves across the image from right to left, chromatically extending its presence.



Image 3.7: Colour Emerges.

The red continues to progress horizontally across the frame, until reaching the stained glass window. At this point the film cuts back to John Baxter, who seems lost in contemplation as if this rupture of colour and image, of fluid and red, has provoked some memory. The next shot however infers that this conflation of visual elements has triggered his latent, but repressed, psychic ability. For we swiftly cut to a long-shot of Jonny running to the house for help, the composition of the image, (Jonny is framed in a blurry and out of focus long-shot) evokes a sense that John's psychic ability is either undeveloped or does not fully enable John to comprehend. For of course it is not Christine that he sees, but the result of Christine's peril that foretells the tragic events that are unfolding. John, seemingly entranced still by this vision, exits the room, Laura enquiring 'what's the matter?', John simply responding 'nothing' whilst dropping the slide that he is holding onto the leather sofa occupied by his wife.

As John navigates his way out of the house, a labyrinthine architectural space that asserts the idea that he couldn't simply have looked out of the window and seen his son running for help, Laura picks up the slide and begins to inspect it. As John dives into the water to locate his daughter, Laura tosses the slide onto the leather sofa. It falls on

the book that John has written entitled *Beyond the Fragile Geometry of Space*; at this moment the second close-up of the slide emerges (image 3.8).



Image 3.8: The Emergence of the Spiral.

This transition back to the slide is accompanied by a defined change in the soundtrack, from the diegetic noises of John's laboured breathing as he plunges into the icy water, the score shifts and becomes comprised of an ominous melody of deep strings. At the same time it becomes apparent that, in the time between the first image of the slide and now, the progression of red's movement has developed. The body of the Dwarf is almost overwhelmed, whilst the tone of the hue has become more saturated, a near match for her red duffle coat. The movement of colour, clockwise across the frame, erupts. Spiralling across and up, the motion of red arcs deconstructing and obliterating the integrity of the image (see images 3.9 & 3.10).



Image 3.9: Red's progression.



Image 3.10: Dissolve from Slide to Pond, from Surface of Sight to Surface of Reflection.

The image then dissolves through colour to John Baxter pulling Christine's sodden body from the depths of the pond. John Izod in his analysis notes that red thus equates to an aesthetic echo of Christine, that 'the wash forms a fetal shape that with savage irony precisely matches the curve of the dead girl's body as her father cradles her in his grief' (Izod 1992: 69). As the slow motion retrieval of Christine is depicted, one that evokes the agony and trauma through use of jump cuts, repetition and John's near

primal outcry, the spiral is intersected, until as John leaves the pond carrying his dead child, we cut to the spiral for the final time. Its progression has brought it nearly full circle, however red, though still dominant, is not the only colour now present. For as the spiral unfurls it reveals blues, yellows, whites and purples (see image 3.11).



Image 3.11: The emergence of the Chromatic Spectrum.

This eruption of colours could be read as indicating that the singularity of red, as in it equating to Christine, is not the truth of its chromatic presence. The arcing of colours, a chromatic clue, that beyond the red lies another colour, another identity. As I have already mentioned Izod perceives this spiral as being a manifestation of the embryonic, and in turn links this movement of red fluid femininity to reproduction, menstruation and birth.

Alternatively some see no relevance to this moment of colour and movement, as exemplified by Scott Salwolke who seemingly is happy to conclude that there is nothing of interest in the spiral, describing the scene as being that of 'John [knocking] over a glass of wine over, and the red liquid spreads across the table and onto the slide. The liquid begins to turn the image red, as if it were bleeding' (Salwolke 1990: 39).

Irritatingly Salwolke's misreading of the sequence has ramifications for his analysis, for Salwolke incorrectly attributes the presence of red to being that of wine, whereas in fact it is water that is spilt. Colour is not introduced but emerges through the combination of water and image. Thus for Salwolke this is nothing more than an accident, whereas in

reality colour emerges as mixture of water and image, not as the result of an act of forgetfulness.

Salwolke's misreading aside Neil Sinyard describes the spiral as being a chromatic simulacra of space. That 'when the drink drops the transparency and the colour begins to run, it spreads into a particular shape - the shape of Venice, as seen later on the map on the Inspector's wall when he talks to Baxter' (Sinyard 1991: 48).

In all these previous engagements, the defining quality is that this moment of colour has been treated as a Rorschach test, an interpretation that reduces colour, as always, to a metaphor or allegory for something other than what it is, colour. I would propose however that this moment of colour, movement and its interaction with the frame has direct relevance to the questions of femininity and monstrosity that is the enigmatic revelation at the film's denouement. In particular I would argue that through the seemingly autonomous presence of red, discourses of abjectness become interfaced with the cultural presence of colour. An interface that functions as a chromatic hint to the real nature of the Dwarf, one that is concealed beneath the redness of her duffle coat.

I want first to think about the way in which colour both manifests and moves. For the movement of red within the slide is one that is seemingly both separated and connected. For it constitutes a layer over the image whilst also apparently emerging from the hood of the Dwarf. To return to Batchelor, this moment it could be argued, displays the independence of colour, that 'colour is in everything, but it is also independent of everything. Or it promises or threatens independence' (Batchelor 2000: 95).

In some respects it could be proposed that the emergence of the red spiral is one that reflects John Baxter's independent paranormal ability, a sight that seemingly overrides his own sense of reality, forcing him to engage with visual stimulus that he himself does not fully comprehend. Such a reading is supported by the fact that when Laura gazes at the slide, after John drops it on the sofa, she does not react to this manifestation of colour. One has to assume therefore that she does not perceive it, as indicated by her dismissive tossing of the slide onto the sofa, and that in turn this connects red not only to the Dwarf but also John's psychic ability. The image thereby becomes one of a doubled illusion, firstly that of the three-dimensional quality, which is of course two-dimensional in reality, and secondly the presence/absence of the spiral. Colour becomes a catalyst for John to fall into a state in which his latent psychic abilities can manifest. In other words colour can be considered akin to a chromatic trigger, one that

is the 'minor [that becomes] [...] the undoing of the major' (Ibid: 31). For Batchelor, as previously mentioned, argues that colour leads to the fall in culture, and this conflation of gaze and colour recreates this hegemonic position of colour in Western culture.

What occurs in this intersection of gaze and colour is that John's sense of control is displaced; his patriarchal subjectivity is forced into a position outside of the normative. John falls into a state of psychic rapture, forced to witness that which he should not be able to see. What of course is intriguing is that this undoing of John's sense of reality is one of a double articulation, born from both colour and femininity.

Intriguingly this spiralling of red would seem to negate any type of reading, as previously mentioned many have simply inferred it as being a representation of another object or place. However I would argue that an alternative reading is possible, that the eruption of red is a discourse that alludes to the truth of the being beneath the cloak. For this seemingly elusive moment, an unknowable chromatic materiality is one rich with questions to be asked. Indeed the spiral could easily be the subject of a question posed by Batchelor, that colour is a presence that:

[...] spreads flows bleeds stains floods soaks seeps merges. It does not segment or subdivide. Colour is fluid [...] It has no inner divisions – and no outer form. But how can we describe that which has no inner divisions and no outer form, like a fog seen from within?

(Batchelor 2000: 86)

It is this question of how to consider the spiral that is my next consideration, but instead of colour's seemingly formlessness being a hindrance, it is its denial of shape that is implicitly rich in a consideration of the intersection between colour and image.

As I have already discussed previously colour, through Kristeva, has a correlation with the abject. Kristeva also raises the notion of formlessness that Batchelor raises in the context of colour in her discussion of the abject. As Creed recounts 'most horror films also construct a border between what Kristeva refers to as the "clean and proper body" and the abject body, or the *body which has lost its form and integrity*' (Creed 1993: 11).

To focus on the latter point for a moment, in the slide the body of the Dwarf is one initially of contained, definable qualities, in the context of the two-dimensional image we understand the scale of the body (in comparison to the pews, altar and window), further the edges of the body are defined. However as the sequence progresses, the body loses this sense of integrity, red washes across the form, and thus the 'clean and

proper' body of John Baxter is juxtaposed by a body of chromatic abjectness. A body that almost threatens to overwhelm the image, and thus, it could be argued, breaches the borders of John's mind.

Kristeva continues her definition of the abject as being 'the place where meaning collapses' (Kristeva 1982: 2). In terms of past theoretical engagement with red we can see that meaning has always been unfixed, the spiral a cinematic Rorschach test, whose form and shape provides a palimpsest of meanings. From menstruation to cityscape, from simply being red to my own reading of the abject, the ability to fix and define collapses in the presence of colour's fluidic qualities. However, it is this very fluidic quality that I seek to embrace, to provide not the meaning behind the presence of the spiral, but one consideration that augments and harmonises with the chromatic strategy within *Don't Look Now*.

Colour is plurality; the place where meaning collapses. Within the context of *Don't Look Now* it becomes a site of abjectness. To pursue this idea we firstly need to understand the notion of the abject as 'things [...] that highlight the "fragility of law" and that exist on the other side of the border which separates out the living subject from that which threatens its extinction' (Creed 1993: 10). The spiral is that which is on the other side of the border, a manifestation of colour and movement that only John perceives, and one that through its otherness to his patriarchal gaze is outside his notions of language and identity⁵⁸. The spiral highlights the challenge to his patriarchal authority, the 'fragility of law', through being non-definable, resisting definition, resisting labelling. Thus it can be inferred that the colour of the spiral is feminine offering a formless discourse through which the enigma of femininity, its power and control in relation to the patriarchal gaze is illustrated.

No more so is this sense of formless discourse evident, and the way it resists the body of John Baxter, a body of knowable and modernist classicism, than if we turn to the Mikhail Bakhtin's writing on the grotesque. Robert Stam in his innovative consideration of Bakhtin's writing proposes that 'for Bakhtin the body is a festival of becoming, a plurality, not a closed system but a perpetual experiment' (Stam 1989: 157). Stam continues, arguing that Bakhtin's concept of the grotesque is one counterposed 'against the static, classic, finished beauty of antique sculpture [...] the

⁵⁸ Though of course John never sees the full flooding of the slide by the spiral.

mutable body, the passing of one form into another, reflecting the ever in completed character of being' (Ibid: 158).

In some respects we have the replication of the classic and the grotesque reflected in a number of bodies: John and the Dwarf (patriarchy in opposition to unknowable femininity); Christine and the Dwarf (innocence vs. corrupted; beauty vs. grotesque); Laura and Heather (mother vs. blind seer). The pivotal figure in this series of binaries is that of the Dwarf, one that is set up as a supernatural resurrection of Christine and the femininity that will eventually bring about the downfall of John. The relationship between grotesqueness and the Dwarf has been commented on before with Palmer and Riley noting that when John sites a gargoyle on the church (an event that nearly causes John harm) it 'oddly resembles' the 'grotesque knife-wielding creature' that is terrorising Venice (Palmer & Riley 1995: 16).

Bakhtin describes the grotesque as being 'that which protrudes, bulges, sprouts, or branches off is eliminated, hidden or moderated' (Bakhtin 1984: 320). Intriguingly, like Kristeva, it is the notion of the border as theoretical model that emerges in Bakhtin's examination of Rabelais, whereupon he notes that:

The basis of the image is the individual, strictly limited mass, the impenetrable façade. The opaque surface of the body's valleys acquires an essential meaning as the border of a closed individuality that does not merge with other bodies and with the world. All attributes of the unfinished world are carefully removed, as well as all signs of its inner life.

(Bakhtin 1984: 320)

Like Kristeva, it is the notion of the border, that for Bakhtin is a corporeal 'closed individuality' which in the face of the grotesque becomes corrupted and denied, a view that is reprised in Cixous's 'body without beginning and without end' (Cixous 1994: 123). As Stam continues, adhering to Bakhtin's proposal, 'the body's central principle (like that of language) is growth and change; *by exceeding its limits, the body expresses its essence*. The grotesque body is not a rigid langue, but a parole in constant semiosis' (Stam 1989: 159) [italics my emphasis].

The emergence of the spiral is a moment in which the grotesque, concealed body of the Dwarf manifests itself into the realm of the patriarch (through the erosion of the photographic integrity of the church), and into the patriarchal gaze (with John being the only one to perceive her presence). In doing so this moment of chromatic rupture

exceeds the limits of its own corporeality and in turn, through colour I would propose expresses its essence. For this moment of active colour and its relationship to the red of the Dwarf is one, to refer back to Kristeva, that does not ‘respect borders, positions, rules’ and in turn ‘disturbs identity, system, order’ (Kristeva 1982: 4). The spiral can be read as a chromatic ejection, not something that the body finds loathsome (as in shit, blood, urine etc) but instead a discourse of celebration, of release, one that brings the true nature of the identity within the red to the fore.

In other words this moment of red I would propose, is not a chromatic allegory for Venice, nor is it simply a moment of menstruation. I would propose that this spiral is a moment of revelation, of the true abject nature of the Dwarf being brought to the fore. For as much as red is the focus of the questions of identity and motivation that emanate from the Dwarf, so too is this discourse reversed, with the Dwarf’s nature played out and interjecting into the realism of the narrative. The spiral is the Dwarf as much as red is the spiral, a body without end or beginning, but one that constructs social presence through destruction and violence. A presence reflected in the destructive violence of the spiral, that destroys not only the integrity of the image, but the integrity of the body as well.

The above discussion has attempted to re-engage with the spiral in the slide from a differing perspective, to avoid simple seeing patterns and considering how this moment of red (one that is also present in *Performance* and *Eureka* to some extent) is a moment in which the avant-garde intersects with narrative cinema. The conflation of soundtrack (with its ominous dirge like tones), movement and colour all hint at the monstrous potential of the body held in stasis within the photograph. The transition from static to animate, from inert to active, hints at the subversive presence of the Dwarf. For like the Dwarf the spiral resists any real reading, resists definition. What I have offered here is an alternative approach, that fits the spiral into the binary of masculine/feminine, John/Dwarf, and moves red outside of simply being an aesthetic echo – returning red to its thisness.

Further this moment of colour is also an eloquent example of Roeg’s preoccupation with film grammar, to return to Clifford’s comment:

Obviously the red and the broken glass was all very deliberate, it wasn't something dreamed up in post-production, Nic always talked about the picture *being his exercise in film grammar*.

(Clifford, 2002) [Italics my emphasis]

What we have here, as much as a chromatic discourse of abjectness is also a moment of disruption, of colour being used as a means to consider the potential of narrative cinema, the defying of codes and conventions, which raise questions for the spectator to negotiate. For if Kalmus argued that colour should serve simply to accentuate the narrative, to be submissive to the representation of a given reality, then this moment of colour is a moment of liberation, a space of resistance to the normative demands of mainstream cinema. For though a horror film laden with a lament to loss, the experimentation of *Don't Look Now* is not only one of time and narrative, but also one of chromatic qualities.

Conclusion

[Woman] is an evil nature painted, with fair colours!

(Kramer & Sprenger 1948: 43)

Within *Don't Look Now* what we encounter aesthetically isn't the classical dyadic of colour and femininity as a spectacle constructed around discourses of scopophilia (as in the Actress in *Insignificance*).⁵⁹ In *Don't Look Now* instead of pleasure we encounter a body that denies our gaze, a femininity later revealed as an abject echo of the innocent representation of Christine. A body defined by red and memory, perception and resistance, one that epitomises Elizabeth Bronfen's argument that death and femininity are 'the two central enigmas of western discourse. They are used to represent that which is inexpressible, inscrutable, unmanageable, horrible; that which cannot be faced directly but must be controlled by virtue of social laws and art' (Bronfen 1992: 255).

However all the patriarchal forces within the film find themselves unable to control this femininity of colour. The police cannot solve the murders; the Bishop is seemingly nothing more than a passive voyeur; John only believes that he can because he misreads this combination of colour and body, and thus in turn incorrectly assumes, he has power

⁵⁹ To refer back to Neale the 'female body both bridges the ideological gap between nature and cultural artifice while simultaneously marking and focusing the scopophilic pleasure involved in and engaged by the use of colour in film' (Neale 1985: 152).

over this chromatic other. For it is through the elusive nature of her presence that Baxter's patriarchal position is firstly subverted, then finally overturned, for it's Baxter's inability to understand or define the Dwarf body that emerges in Venice that seals his fate. An uncanny interaction between patriarchal subject and feminine object, focused in and around the question of knowing. As Royle argues one aspect of the uncanny is that it 'is irreducibly bound up with the performative, in particular with the act of naming' (Royle 2003: 85). Hence the Dwarf becomes an uncanny body defined by the performative qualities of colour, death and femininity, a corporeality that resists the act of naming, and in turn resists the function of the triple register that emerges from the modernist rationality of John Baxter's gaze.

Creed in her pioneering work on the relationship between monstrosity and femininity proposed that 'all human societies have a conception of the monstrous-feminine, of what it is about woman that is shocking, terrifying, horrific, abject' (Creed 1993: 1). Implicitly connected to Freudian notions of castration, for Creed the monstrous-feminine 'speaks to us more about male fears than about female desire of feminine subjectivity' (Ibid: 7). In some respects *Don't Look Now's* representation of monstrous-femininity, is one that evokes castration (the Dwarf kills all her victims with a knife) and of 'male fears', representing an unknowable, uncontainable femininity that John Baxter fatalistically attempts to understand, to know.

The monstrosity of the Dwarf is also played out through the way in which her body is represented within Venice and the space of the frame. For as Creed notes:

One of the original meanings of monster is from the Latin *monstrare*, meaning "to warn" or "to show" In order to generate suspense and a sense of the uncanny, an effective horror film does not immediately put the monster on full display; instead it offers a fleeting glimpse, a quick disturbing glance.

(Creed 2005: ix)

Indeed in *Don't Look Now* the answer to the chromatic riddle that John Baxter is confronted with, is answered only at the end, in between we are offered glimpses, brief reflections, or indefinable compositions shot from distance. As if the camera itself was fearful of becoming the next victim of this seemingly unstoppable serial killer. At one point the camera's fear is all too evident, ducking behind a wall as the Dwarf scuttles into shot, only returning to its original position once the coast is clear of her abject presence (see image 3.12).

In terms of Venice, we are denied the tourist spaces, those that are marked as known, and instead Venice becomes towards the end of the film a labyrinth of intra-uterine passages. Creed argues that such spaces function as allegories for reproduction that ‘in many films the monster commits [...] dreadful acts in a location which resembles the womb. These intra-uterine settings consist of dark, narrow, winding passages leading to a central room, cellar or other symbolic place of birth’. (Creed 1993: 53) This implementation of space is intriguing because as Creed notes ‘when woman is represented as monstrous it is almost always in relation to her mothering and reproductive function’ (Ibid: 7). What is important however is that there is no metaphorical womb in Venice, no symbolic place of birth, in fact the Dwarf commits her acts in differing spaces, closed and open. That in stark contrast to Creed’s proposal that feminine monstrosity is one connected to maternal and biological functions (we know not her motivation for killing nor discover who she is) instead her presence is a shifting site of memory, colour and shape.⁶⁰



Image 3.12: Venice as Labyrinth.

⁶⁰ *Don't Look Now* is replete with differing aspects of reproduction (and loss) from the Baxter's children, the love-making sequence that some have proposed lends a reading of Laura falling pregnant, to the sister's collection of photographs, and the bust of their dead child Angus, the function of femininity as reproductive centre is brought to the fore. But each of these mothering bodies is tainted by loss, as much as the Dwarf brings death, one could argue that her physical disfigurement could have resulted in her inability to carry children.

I would instead propose that Roeg's intersection of colour, monstrosity and femininity is one that epitomizes David Batchelor's writing on colour and its relationship to otherness. To recount, Batchelor, as I have already discussed, defines colour as being the 'property of some "foreign" body – usually the feminine [...] the primitive [...] the infantile [...] the queer or the pathological' (Batchelor 2000: 23). In some respects what Roeg provides is a chromophobic body par-excellence, one that not only resists but also exacts retribution on her patriarchal other.

For the Dwarf is a body thrice removed from society, for her disfigurement marks her as other, her association with red (in contrast to the lack of it in the *mise-en-scene*) defines her as different, and finally her mute form (her only means of expression is through her knife) compounds her inability to integrate. Red therefore, is linked to femininity outside of patriarchal discourses, undefined and therefore outside of the symbolic. In some respects one could propose that the Dwarf is, abjectness aside, a feminist body par-excellence. Betty Friedan wrote in her 1963 work, *The Feminine Mystique*, the hegemonic idea that women could only find fulfillment through childrearing and homemaking, was a false belief system that rendered women as victims. Unlikely as it may seem, a decade later Roeg creates a representation of femininity that resists being simply that which is sanctioned by patriarchy. Instead of a cinematic femininity based upon discourses of matrimony, reproduction and thus victimhood emerges a femininity that defies becoming a commodity of the gaze. One that through colour not only resists but is able to subvert the hegemonic order of representation by turning the masculine body into a spectacle. An inversion of representation exemplified at the end of the film with the spectator confronted not by the monster defeated, but instead by the lingering shots of John's body spasmodically contorted in the throes of dying.

‘She Moves in Mysterious Ways’: Chromatic Connections in *Bad Timing*

It is not simply a question of saying what was done - the sexual act - and how it was done; but of reconstructing, in and around the act, the thoughts that recapitulated it, the images, desires, motivations, and quality of the pleasure that animated it.

(Foucault 1980: 63)

A sick film made by sick people, about sick people, for sick people.

(unnamed Rank Organization employee view on *Bad Timing* quoted in Lanza 1989: 55)

The same old story ... of a boy and girl in love ... but it's new to me

(Billie Holliday)

Introduction

This case study on Roeg's 1980 *Bad Timing* differs from the preceding analysis in that though still concerned about the question of colour, the question itself differs greatly. For whereas *Performance* and *Don't Look Now*, as I have previously argued, are films that incorporate a colour strategy both experimental and subversive. *Bad Timing's* implementation of colour in contrast seems somewhat reticent, less intriguing, less provocative.⁶¹ This is not to say that colour is nothing more than an inert plane within *Bad Timing* but initially the film's colour strategy seems to lack the power that we associate with Roeg's previous work. This case study therefore sets out to explore colour when it is seemingly functioning in the context of verisimilitude. In particular the question of how does one discuss colour when colour itself seems unworthy of attention? What can be said of colour when its very presence is inconspicuous, chromatically submissive to the demands of realism?

Before embarking on such a discussion it is worth pausing to consider the production and narrative context of *Bad Timing* for, as seemingly with all Roeg productions, the film was dogged with production, distribution and critical resistance. This sense of negativity can be attributed to the film's subject matter with its visceral representation of the destructive relationship between Alex (Art Garfunkel) and Milena (Theresa Russell). A relationship that culminates in a sadistic finale of overdose and rape that had ramifications for both the film's distribution and reception. Harlan Kennedy for example seemed a lone voice at the time in his review for *American Film* in which he argued that 'Roeg's work may be the shape of cinema to come, and *Bad Timing* his latest hypnotic stride into the future' (Kennedy 1980: 27). *Variety's* review was more representative of the negative reaction to the film questioning if whether the 'makers had been less obsessed with the refinements of carnality [...] their traumatic trip would have seemed more modern and less menopausal' (Simo 1980).

The most damning indictment of *Bad Timing* however was delivered by in the *Spectator* magazine in which critic John Coleman described the film as being nothing more than:

⁶¹ We need only recall the *Performance's* implementation of red as a chromatic expression of violence, or the chaotic destabilisation of the spiral that disrupts the mimesis of the frame in *Don't Look Now*. One wonders if *Bad Timing's* aesthetic reticent could be read as emblematic of the shift from the anarchic permissiveness of the sixties and seventies toward the dogmatism of Thatcherism.

A plethora of camera side-swipes at chi-chi cultural items, fed as false fodder to those who rejoice in making pseudo-intellectual connections of no relevance to anything [...] an overall style which plays merry hell with chronology [...] [the film] sometimes looks like the longest cigarette commercial ever, in the most literal sense a drag from beginning to end.

(quoted in Park 1984: 119)

Intriguingly it was not only the critical reception to the film that was polarised, for the reaction of the financiers who backed the film, in this case the Rank Organisation, warrants mention at this juncture. As Joseph Lanza recounts:

As usual, Roeg has difficulty getting the project started. After his two big cancellations [being *Flash Gordon* and then *Hammett*] and the need to pad his finances doing television commercials, Roeg manages to get producer Jeremy Thomas's approval only when assuming fifty percent of the responsibility for procuring funds. The Rank Organization is willing to help partly because *Bad Timing* promises to be an educational film that is daring enough to have Freudian overtones at a time when Freud is not all that fashionable.

(Lanza 1989: 57)

However Rank found that the film they initially envisaged as being 'educational' was rather more provocative in reality, hence *Bad Timing* was swiftly disowned as Lanza continues:

[...] the conservative and quasi-Methodist Rank Organization sees *Bad Timing*'s jagged plunge into the seamy side of "normal" relationships nothing short of highbrow pornography. Rank reacts so strongly that one of its representatives telephones Roeg shortly after the film's release to announce that they are taking their cherished Gong Man emblem off of all British prints.

(Ibid: 55)

Disowned by its backers and vilified by some critics *Bad Timing* became a film that Teresa de Lauretis identified as belonging to a collection of films that she terms 'non-mainstream'. De Lauretis discusses that:

Nicolas Roeg's *Bad Timing: A Sensual Obsession* seems to have caused more displeasure than pleasure to virtually everyone: general audiences (it was not a box office success) and official media critics, on the one hand, and women's groups involved in the antipornography campaign, on the other. It has been found boring and confusing, over-reaching and pretentious, 'technically good' and offensive to women. The X-rating and pattern of exhibition (art cinemas in first run, then, immediately, the revival circuit), plus the director's cult reputation [...] place *Bad Timing* in a special category of commercially distributed, non-mainstream films such as Oshima's *In the Realm of the Senses*, Cavani's *The Night Porter*, Pasolini's *Salo*, or, to a lesser degree, Godard's *Every Man For Himself*, and, lesser still, Bertolucci's *Last Tango in Paris* [...] All these films deliberately seek to articulate the sexual, the political, and the cinematic through a sustained questioning of vision and power; and thought not 'independently' produced (thus undeserving of the moral commendations extended to low-budget movies, the ethical rewards of poor cinema), they urge us to reconsider the current definitions of cinema no less forcefully than do other, more explicitly and programmatically "alternative" practices [...].

(de Lauretis 1984: 87-88)

Central to De Lauretis's reading of *Bad Timing* is that the film provokes the spectator through its deconstruction of time and narrative into a series of seemingly unconnected spaces and moments. This provocation in turn leads the spectator to reconsider their relationship with cinema. For Roeg once again deconstructs the narrative elements of the melodrama and what then emerges is a far darker tale of disclosure and inquisition. It is an insightful idea and one that I feel succinctly identifies the complex interplay that lies at the heart of the film. For *Bad Timing* is a film that challenges our conception far more violently than any previous Roeg work (*Performance* included) through its complex narrative structure; problematic subject matter; its intersection of art and film; and finally of course it's use of colour. It is the intersection of what De Lauretis describes as the 'questioning of vision and power' through the film's chromatic strategy that this case study seeks to consider.

In particular this case study will set out to consider two aspects of the film's colour strategy. The first is how colour within the film acts as a means of connection that interfaces with the film's narrative, temporal and spatial complexity. The second

approach is to consider how colour functions to connect the relationship between the diegetic presence of artworks (in particular the work of Vienna based artists Gustav Klimt and Egon Schiele that feature in *Bad Timing*) and celluloid. For within the narrative and aesthetic strategy of *Bad Timing* lingers a complex interplay between image, sound, temporality and narrative that is located in and around the synergy and discourse between paint and celluloid. Importantly it is not only a synergy of aesthetic similarities, or even that of a fetishising of the aura of the object. Rather it is a synergy that reflects, informs and develops the relationship and tension between Alex and Milena.

Bad Timing narrative is comprised of a series of flashbacks that slowly reveal the love affair between Viennese based Research Psychoanalyst Alex and Milena (who seemingly has no career till she and Alex part!). Milena is already married when she first meets Alex, but leaves her husband, Czech citizen Stefan (played by Denholm Elliot) for Alex.⁶² Alex, a self confessed voyeur (in a sequence in which he lectures to

⁶² It is worth noting that Vienna, akin to Venice's presence in *Don't Look Now* is a city in the act of becoming a cinematic palimpsest to this tale of romantic anxiety. As Neil Sinyard notes:

Just as *Don't Look Now* seems a story and a film that could only take place in Venice (the city of death, the city of the blind, the city in, and of, peril), *Bad Timing* is a story that could only take place in Vienna - the city of Freud and Strauss, of Schnitzler and Klimt, the city of psychoanalysis and sexuality, with the scent of neurotic romanticism and the lure of decadence

(Sinyard 1990: 72)

Or as Joseph Lanza notes:

There are constant references to espionage, searching, intrusion, betrayal and identity turmoil. In this respect, *Bad Timing* is really a sequel to Carol Reed's *The Third Man* - the post-war spy thriller already glimpsed at in *The Man Who Fell to Earth* and whose famous theme song Roeg alludes to in a scene where Alex tries to find out more about Milena through an unidentified third party. *Bad Timing* tells us how the duplicity and suspicion surrounding the city have not really altered since WWII.

(Lanza 1989: 56)

his students he describes himself as being ‘an observer ... a watcher of people’) finds his perceived ownership of Milena undermined by his recurring paranoia over her sexual past. A sexual history, a sexual time outside of Alex’s control, that manifests itself through the recurring presence of past lover and actor Konrad; a mysterious photograph of Milena in the arms of a younger man (which it transpires is in reality that of her dead brother); and, most notably, her marriage to Stefan that Milena conceals from Alex (a relationship that Milena initially refers to as simply being a relative who lives across the border).⁶³

Alex’s desire for Milena, a desire of both sexual obsession and ownership through matrimony, gradually shifts from initial excitement and overt eroticism (charged by Alex’s fascination with Milena’s enigmatic personal history) into a relationship that becomes defined by Alex’s paranoia and desire to resolve the conundrum that is Milena (compounded by the very lack of information that had been the instigation for their affair). As Alex notes in their first meeting, “if we don’t meet, there’s always the possibility it could have been perfect”. For Alex the superficial combination of imagination/fantasy and memory offers the ultimate representation of femininity, one unburdened by the past, fixed in the ever present duration of recollection. As Jan Dawson correctly notes ‘the joke behind Alex’s cocktail-party repartee is in deadly earnest: the perfection to which he immodestly aspires is a condition that cannot survive direct confrontation with any reality beyond his own mirror [...]’ (Dawson 1980: 33).

At this moment it is worth recalling that it is Milena who challenges Alex’s initial attempts at being enigmatic. Firstly she makes the first real advance by offering her telephone number on a box of matches (an early indicator perhaps of the combustible and short term potential of their affair), before then subsequently forcing Alex to

⁶³ However, it must be acknowledged that this paltry synopsis does not fully illustrate the complexity, both technical and narrative, within the film, as John Izod rightly notes:

In a way it is not unproductive to attempt a plot summary [...] since its reductive failure to come near to what one experiences as a spectator reveals the importance of its construction to interpretation.

(Izod 1992: 104)

acquiesce to a submissive position by exiting the party only when he has stooped under her leg. A stooping that she knows will enable Alex to glance up her skirt and thus reward his submission with a combination of sexual gratification, voyeurism and curiosity. This moment is one of the few rare occasions in which Alex permits himself to be positioned as subordinate to Milena. In fact their affair that emerges as the narrative unfolds, one told predominantly from Alex's memories, is defined by his desire to control, to structure and define the terms of their relationship. It is as if this moment of enforced submission is in fact a moment of deception on Alex's part. That by seemingly acquiescing to her sexual playfulness Alex will be able to then slowly exert his own desire for control over this enigmatic femininity.

Aside from Alex's paranoid behaviour, a second aspect that leads to the downfall of their relationship is Milena's rejection of Alex's marriage proposal in Casablanca. Alex proposes to Milena whilst they are on holiday, however instead of a ring he proffers one-way tickets to New York. The inference of such a gift is that not only will this relocation permit him to continue his academic career it will also function to simultaneously distance Milena from her sexual past. A distancing that will enable Alex to finally have full control over Milena. However to Alex's dismay Milena rejects his proposal, stating that she wants to think only about the present and not the future. This rejection compounded then by Milena's subsequent discovery that Alex has been employed by NATO to produce a psychoanalytical profile of both her and Stefan, leads to Milena leaving Alex. Alex's ever increasing voyeuristic and obsessive behaviour reaches a traumatic conclusion when Milena, who having taken an overdose, telephones Alex to tell him of her self-destructive act. Alex, goes to her flat, and for a while simply watches the incapacitated Milena struggle for help (he disconnects the phone at one point to deny her the last means of securing her own salvation). When Milena finally succumbs to unconsciousness, Alex's permits himself to fulfil his desire for control and pleasure through the ravishing of Milena's comatose body. An act that will eventually become the focus of the subsequent police investigation into Milena's suicide led by Inspector Netusil (Harvey Keitel). It is the police investigation that in turn provokes the flashback structure of the narrative, with Netusil's interrogation of the events leading up to Milena's admittance to hospital that drives the narrative forward. These flashbacks primarily manifest through Alex's memories of his relationship with Milena.

The narrative of *Bad Timing* is thus located primarily around the masculine recollection

of femininity or, in the case of a key sequence involving Netusil and Alex's coerced raping of Milena on the stairs, the masculine imagining of past events. To return to de Lauretis again, this intersection between voyeurism and observation, narrative and linearity is one that produces a 'production of displeasure' for the spectator (ibid: 88). De Lauretis continues that:

Its problem, I think, is not displeasure but *unpleasure*. *Bad Timing* undercuts the spectator's pleasure by preventing both visual and narrative identification, by making it quite literally difficult to see as to understand events and their succession, their timing; and our sense of time becomes uncertain in the film, as its vision for us is blurry [...] The nexus of look and identification [...] is central to Roeg's film [...] with its thematics of voyeurism twice relayed through the generic pattern of the police investigation, which in turn encases the 'confessional' investigation of sexuality.

(Ibid: 88-89)

This investigation, this balance between discovery, looking and confession is one located around 'the relentless, unruly return of an image-fetish – the female body, bound, strapped down, violated, powerless, voiceless or nearly inarticulate, lifeless – signalling the dimension of obsession, its compulsive timing, an illegality of vision' (ibid: 97). A body out of time, a near classical embodiment of Laura Mulvey's ubiquitous binary of passive/femininity contrapuntally balanced by the voyeuristic, and scopophilic, drives of both Alex and Netusil. The problem that de Lauretis identifies is that there is an implicit difficulty in having a heroine remain unconscious throughout the narrative, due to Milena being comatose by the anaesthetic of the operation. Consequently as Izod argues 'for the materialist this means that Milena cannot be the source of remembered events' (Izod 1992: 102). Izod then proposes a Jungian inspired reading to circumnavigate this issue, one that constructs Milena's disembodied voice, which erupts into the soundtrack at moments in the film, as emerging from her unconsciousness. However, though Milena remains throughout the narrative of the investigation in an induced comatose state, I would argue that this does not lead to her simply being an empty vessel that masculinity reconstructs. That through colour emerges a series of connections that links the Milena of the present to the Milena of the past. Connections that in turn become moments of resistance to the hegemony of the male gaze, and further, link questions of time and space together.

For space and time within *Bad Timing* is manifestly one of differing layers, differing passages. Time overlaps, bleeds and shifts, space seems to be unsettled, unfixed and in some respects unknowable. Therefore we can site time within the film as being 'bad'. At the centre of this time lies the body, the memory, of Milena. A body that is constructed from the outside, by Alex's recollections, Netusil's reconstructions, Stefan's memories and finally the surgical space of the operation. Thus the title of the film *Bad Timing* hints not only at Alex's attempt at temporal deceit (he lies to Netusil about the time he reaches an overdosing Milena in an attempt to conceal his crime), nor just Netusil's preoccupation with time (time marked Alfred Prufrock style by a bricolage of cigarette butts, radios and journeys) but at the nature of time within the film itself. For time is bad as in it defies narrative, chronology and the constrictive nature of cause/effect. Sound and image overlap, the future clashes with the present (as in Milena's answer phone message that takes place toward the end of the film but bleeds into earlier sequences), time seems to want to make its presence known within the romantic narrative (a genre habitually marked by causality and linearity). For it is time that is central to the romance, Alex desires time as much as he does romance; time with Milena (the marriage proposal being a prime example) that ultimately divides her from her other (potential) lovers.

De Lauretis notes this conflation of gender and time in her discussion of the film, arguing that the concluding New York based sequence is 'possibly the only "real" time for her [Milena] as a character independent of the investigative frame' (a frame constructed by both Netusil and Alex) (ibid: 95). However I would argue that even this moment of seemingly potential liberation for a time of feminine subjectivity is actually one still shaped by discourses of masculinity. For in reality the sequence in New York where Alex awaits a cab from which Milena emerges (Alex only realising who he has just walked past as the cab moves away) can be read as another occurrence of Netusil's visualising a possible future. As the sequence unfolds it is intercut with Netusil washing himself, during the act of ablution (a moment of cleansing, washing away the failure of convicting Alex maybe) he looks into a mirror at his reflection, a moment of contemplation that is then intercut with the New York space (a moment in which Netusil imagines Milena triumphing over Alex). Consequently, what de Lauretis perceives as potentially being a space and time of resistance, is, I would argue, can be described as another occurrence of masculine construction. For it can be read as

embodying the masculine desire for closure, offering a possible ending albeit Milena is still denied any sense of response, seemingly condemned to remain enigmatic to the end. The only mark of her relationship with Alex is the scar that lingers on her throat, a corporeal testimony to his invasion of her body.

So how does colour fit into this scheme of power and voyeurism? One aspect is that of the intersection of art and body, in particular Milena's, which will form the second half of my analysis. The first aspect I want to consider is that of colour as a means of connection, as a chromatic strategy that links space, time and narrative together.

Connecting Colours: Chromatic Space, Chromatic Time

The overall colour palette of *Bad Timing* is one dominated by tones of browns, whites, greys, blacks and blues. A subdued chromatic field within which the police investigation into the circumstances that lead up to Alex's ravishment of Milena is played out. In fact the colour system within *Bad Timing* can be defined as comprising of a bifurcation along two disparate but connected elements, that of the achromatic bleakness of the present and the chromatic luminosity of the past. For when moments of colour do occur they are either linked to a retreat to the past, or are present within the memories themselves.

This chromatic dyadic can be further defined as the present being associated with masculine time, and the past that of the masculine's conceptualisation of the feminine body. To put it bluntly colour once again is located within fantasy, a source of tension in the reality of rational masculinity. In some respects therefore we can position *Bad Timing* as a film that reinforces colour as being something un-associated with reality, much as Hollywood did in the 1940s and 1950s. For colour is significantly active in the fantasy spaces of the flashback. A fantasy as in it is primarily Alex's perception, and in turn we are only sure that we are seeing a certain truth, his version of events. However even though colour therefore is primarily used within the context of the flashback, it still connects to the present. To expand on this idea I want to first consider the way that colour is used within the present, and then how colour then functions in the flashbacks of Alex and Netusil respectively.

The epicentre of the present for the majority of the film is that of the hospital in which Milena is being operated upon. As is the fashion for such key infrastructural buildings

it is comprised of a series of seemingly labyrinthine corridors and offices clad in whites and greys. This use of colour is further mapped out onto the bodies that populate its corridors, from the hospital staff in their white uniforms to the police in a cacophony of gray and black outfits. Colours that are in turn mapped onto the two central male protagonists of Netusil and Alex. For both are dressed in dark blue and black suits, a monochromatic association that I will return to later. What this use of colour does evoke is Batchelor's assertion that the absence of colour and the elevation of what would be deemed monochromatic is one firmly associated with rationality and order. A colour scheme firmly linked to masculinity.

The setting of the hospital as the scene of the investigation is also worth considering. Of course at one level it adheres to the realism of the investigation. With the police presence due to being called to the hospital one imagines by concerned medical staff to investigate Milena's overdose. However the space of the hospital functions further to set up the tension between masculine and feminine, and further the narrative development of the police investigation. For Milena is only ever seen in sporadic moments, lying within the operating theatre, her body ruptured, bored into and kept alive by various medical apparatus. This fragmentation of the body in turn leads her to being outside time, to refer back to de Lauretis, a body whose eventual fate will be the key to Alex's escape from prosecution.

In turn the colour combination within the hospital functions on a number of levels. Firstly such institutional colours demarcate the building as being part of the systems of society. Secondly the absence of colour evokes a sense of it being a masculine space, and aside from one nurse the population of the hospital seemingly male dominated. We can then extend out to argue that the masculine chromatic space of the hospital is one through which the bad time of the narrative can be unpicked. For the hospital becomes the arena within which Netusil conducts his initial interviews with Alex. A space that Netusil exhibits a sense of absolute command, displayed through his act of continually smoking in a hospital room that he has turned into a makeshift office. For earlier in the film Alex was heavily chastised by a Doctor for smoking in a hospital corridor. Hence the subdued palette infers that the hospital is a knowable space within which Netusil can begin to unravel the question of time, action and motivation that will enable him to solve the case.

When colour does become active, when colour does draw our attention it is, like *Don't Look Now*, primarily through the insertion of a point of vibrant colour into the overall composition of the image. That through the juxtaposing of a point of colour with the blandness of the overall colour scheme within the *mise-en-scene* draws the spectator's attention. However unlike *Don't Look Now*'s combination of red and body, what occurs in *Bad Timing* is not the chromatic division between body and society but instead colour functions to connect body, society, memory and power together. For example in the hospital space noticeable points of colour are the red hints of a Marlboro packet, the red of the door of the ambulance and the red of a fire extinguisher in a corridor. This interplay between vibrant/subdued I identify as the chromatic connective strategy that operates within *Bad Timing*'s aesthetic strategy. A connective strategy that is raised in Perkins and Stollery's 2004 *British Film Editors: The Heart of the Movie* Lawson in which Tony Lawson, *Bad Timing*'s editor, discusses Roeg's influence on his editing strategy within the film:

By the early 1960s younger editors [...] were disseminating the emphasis upon cuts rather than dissolves beyond the British New Wave. This became routine as the 1960s and 70s progressed, and some editors and directors explored further possibilities inherent within the new convention. Tony Lawson learned from Nicolas Roeg "how to make transitions that are to do with association". A movement, a colour, or similarities in the composition of disparate shots can provide the link motivating a cut between earlier and later sequences. This makes it possible either to "lead you where you expect to go but make it surprising", or to "get away with so many apparently unrelated events by finding some key thing that's common to them all, and bringing them together, and it seems perfectly natural and yet totally unconnected". In *Bad Timing*, the first film Lawson edited for Roeg, transitions through association are sometimes achieved through cuts between shots of characters smoking cigarettes.

(Perkins 2004: 137) [Italics my emphasis]

As the extract notes, within *Bad Timing* the editing strategy is one designed to evoke connections through the linking of seemingly disparate spaces. An example of this connective strategy occurs in the film's opening sequence in which the blare of an ambulance's siren cuts across Tom Waits singing during the film's gallery set credit sequence. As the sound of the siren becomes dominant so the film cuts from the gallery to an ambulance careering toward, then past, the camera. As the ambulance exits the frame we shift into it's interior wherein lies the overdosed Milena. The only other

occupants are Alex and the male paramedic who is administering oxygen through a mask. As the ambulance travels to the hospital Alex becomes increasingly irritated by the paramedic's gaze lingering over Milena's slowly emerging cleavage. In what initially seems an act of chivalry Alex pulls Milena's purple silk nightdress together to maintain her decency. Of course, as the narrative unfolds, this chivalrous moment is transformed into being nothing more than a hypocritical attempt to deny a competing masculine gaze. For as the narrative unfolds it becomes evident that Milena's act of suicide has been due to Alex's own obsessive voyeurism. After this moment of the gaze and the object of the female form, Milena's voice suddenly emerges into the soundtrack, uttering "Stefan' I'm sorry". At the moment of utterance we are suddenly removed from the interior of suffering to the nowhere space of the border between Slovakia and Austria. Within this space we find Milena bidding farewell to Stefan (a moment that I will consider in more depth later) however this moment of calm tenderness and regret is suddenly wrenched by the reinsertion of the ambulance's siren. We cut back to the ambulance careering down the road, its form becoming a blurring of red as it exits the frame. A combination of movement, sound and colour that is used to trigger a spatial shift to a close-up of the now stationary ambulance's doors as hospital staff begin to extract Milena. In this albeit brief consideration what is evident is that *Bad Timing* connects disparate spaces and time through differing elements such as sound, movement and of course colour. That what becomes a narrative flow that moves forwards and backwards seemingly without logic or narrative impetus is actually based upon a series of connective devices that ensure a semblance of cohesion.

In the context of colour and how this functions as a connective device, one example is that of the red of a fire extinguisher within the hospital corridor (see image 4.1). For the redness of the extinguisher I would argue is implemented as a chromatic catalyst to maintain the spatial and temporal narrative logic of a series of seemingly disparate scenes. Earlier in the film Netusil and his colleagues had abruptly awaken Alex from his slumbers on a barren hospital bed. As abruptly as they awake him Netusil et al subsequently leave en-route to continuing their investigation at Milena's apartment. A somewhat confused Alex briefly trails in their wake before resigning himself to pacing a hospital corridor, pausing to take a drag on his cigarette next to a bright red fire extinguisher.



Image 4.1: Colour as Connection (1).

The composition of the image, both in terms of depth of focus, long shot and colour, alludes to Alex's powerlessness and isolation in the context of the police investigation. Further it brings to the fore the redness of the fire extinguisher within the *mise-en-scene*. As Alex takes a drag on the cigarette we cut to a close up of his face in profile alongside the extinguisher (see image 4.2). Alex blinks inferring that he still has not fully recovered from being awakened so abruptly and then exhales his smoke over the extinguisher.



Image 4.2: Colour as Connection (2).

At the moment of exhalation the camera begins to zoom into the extinguisher, closer and closer until the lettering on its side becomes blurred and the screen becomes overwhelmed by the red of the extinguisher (see image 4.3).



Image 4.3: Colour as Connection (3).

This immersion of red is a connective moment, for we then find ourselves in a seemingly disparate space of the past. Milena is lying on Freud's couch that we earlier saw was located within Alex's university department. However though we have shifted both temporally and spatially within the narrative the unifying element between the two spaces is that of the colour red. For red is notably present within the scene, being manifest on Milena's lipstick, a necklace she is wearing, her dress and even the dark ruby red of the couch (see image 4.4). Colour therefore can be seen to function as a means of connecting present to past via a strategy based on aesthetic relations. That colour functions to maintain a sense of continuity, though significantly not of the classical cause and effect narrative structure so familiar within the thriller/investigative genre. In some respects colour becomes a narrator. Much as film-noir is defined by a voice that denotes authority in retelling the narrative through flashback; so colour functions in some respects as a chromatic voice-over that links scenes together.

We can also propose that the scenes are connected, through red, because as it develops what becomes apparent is that this memory of Milena is one that Alex recalls as it

enables him to process the ramifications of the developing police investigation. For the memory of Milena on Freud's couch can be read as a response to the investigation. Whilst they lie embraced on the couch Milena's questioning look and then pondering 'is there any hope for us?' can be seen as representing Alex's own concerns over the threat of Netusil discovering the truth of the previous night's events. That Alex's hopes and dreams, both romantic and professional, will be dashed.



Image 4.4: Connecting Space and Time Through Colour.

Hence the naturalness of connection that Lawson alluded to is evident here, for though neither space are naturally connected, the use of colour offers up a feeling of subjectivity and memory that does not demand any further signification. That the camera's falling into red, which is then followed by a composition dominated by red tones and hues, functions to locate the spectator aesthetically. This connective strategy continues on further into the sequence. For Alex responds to Milena's question by embracing her, kissing her neck and uttering the word 'yes' over and over. We then cut to a space that seemingly disconnects us from again the narrative, for we move from Freud's couch to the table of the operating theatre, with an injection being administered to Milena's comatose form. The body that was lying on Freud's couch in the past has now been transformed into the Milena of the present (see image 4.5). However once again colour functions as a means of maintaining a sense of narrative logic, both spatial and temporal. This time the red blood that stains the white dressing around Milena's throat echoes back to the red necklace in the previous scene. The Milena that Alex was

kissing the neck of a moment ago becomes the Milena whose neck is now the conduit through which she survives. This return to the hospital signals the end of this particular chromatic chain for it is followed by a subsequent elliptical return to Netusil and his colleagues who we now see exiting the hospital en-route to Milena's apartment.

Thus colour, alongside composition and shot choice, has been central to constructing a moment of reflection in which Alex's concerns over both Milena and the police manifest. In which the epicentre of the investigation being located around Milena's body is reaffirmed, and the progression of the narrative through the investigation is continued. Through the zoom into the redness of the extinguisher *Bad Timing* constructs a chain of interlinking elements that connect those four seemingly disparate spaces, of corridor, couch, theatre and hospital, and also past and present, together.

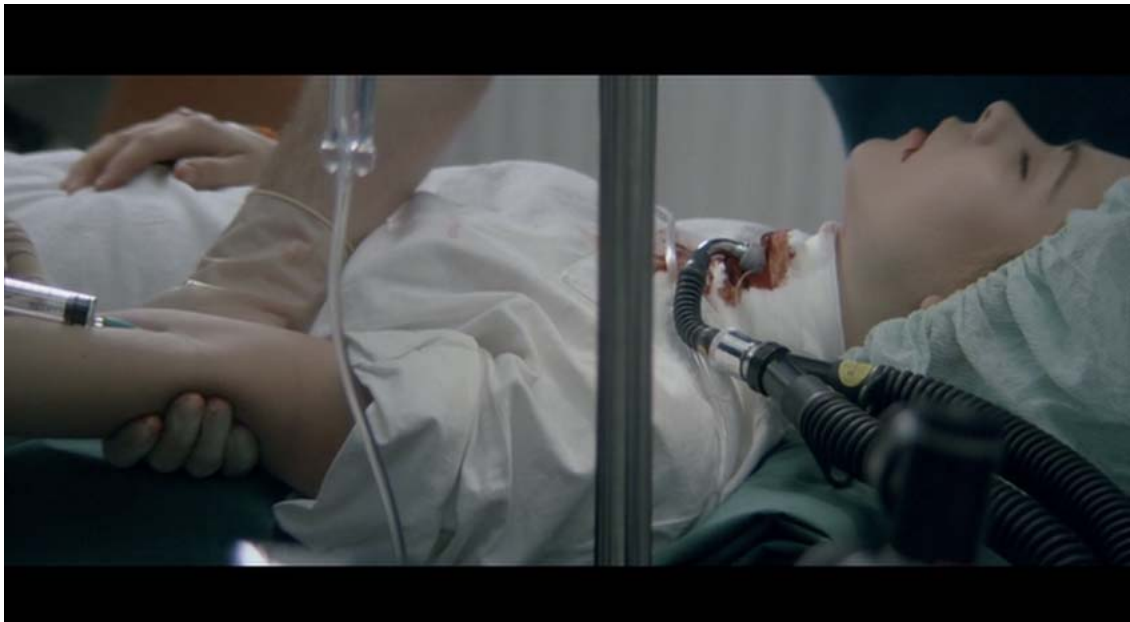


Image 4.5: Redness within the Space of the Theatre.

This connective chromatic strategy reoccurs later in the film and again is associated with both Netusil's investigation and Milena. The sequence begins with Alex, in his full academic regalia of tweed suit, shirt and tie, engaged in doing press ups in Milena's apartment. The floor around him is littered with Milena's clothing and other detritus. Alex rises from his exertions, adjusts his tie, and walks to the kitchen area in which Milena is cooking. The composition of space, in particular the light fixture dangling from the ceiling, alludes to the feeling of claustrophobia that Alex is experiencing within this dishevelled domestic space (see image 4.6). Milena seems somewhat

ambivalent to Alex's growing sense of frustration, demonstrating her boredom with his behaviour by drinking from the wine bottle that she is using as an ingredient in her cooking.

Frustrated by Milena's general ambivalence Alex expresses his dismay at the state of the flat, that the mess is leaving him literally "unable to find anything". A shot-reverse-shot sequence then occurs, as Alex intimating his disdain at Milena's life style points out that Milena's slovenly attitude is resulting in "my place becoming like your place". As he completes the sentence the camera zooms in past his left shoulder to the orange lamp in the background. Like the fire extinguisher before, this moment of movement and colour acts as a connection from one space to another. This time the connection returns us to the present and to Netusil arriving at Milena's flat. The coloured neon star that is located on the outside of Milena's building draws the camera down to the arrival of the police car below. After a brief discussion over Alex's evidence concerning the timing of events that have become questionable due to the late radio station that Alex's car is tuned to, they enter the building. Climbing the stairs Netusil enters Milena's apartment to be confronted by the crime scene, one that is markedly cluttered and dishevelled with clothes, bed linen and paraphernalia strewn throughout the space.

Alongside the sound of a telephone ringing the camera suddenly rotates 360 degrees coming to rest looking back at the door. Instead of Netusil however, we now see it is Alex who is entering the room; the movement of camera and sound has displaced the spectator again into a different time. We are back in the past seemingly, but importantly a moment tinged with ambiguity for it could be either the past of Alex's memories or Netusil's forensic reconstruction of a point in Alex and Milena's relationship. The orange of the lamp that set off this chain then re-manifests on the body of Milena. Clad in an orange dress Milena excitedly beckons Alex into the flat that was in the previous sequence cluttered and distasteful, now transformed into an ordered space. We will return to this particular scene later in my discussion of *The Kiss* by Klimt, but for the moment it is notable that colour is once again an element that is used to connect. As red did before so to does orange function as a means of creating narrative and spatial continuity. The sequence ends as it began in some respects, with the camera reprising its 360-degree pivot, returning the narrative flow back to Netusil with him now entering the crime scene. Memory or imagining, we are never fully sure, but colour, along with movement and sound, acts as a chromatic anchoring of logic. As Tony Lawson

inferred, colour becomes a connective strategy that bridges both past and present, real and imagined, and creates a logical flow that we the spectator knowingly, or unknowingly, follow.



Image 4.6: The Dishevelled Domestic Space of the Feminine (note lit orange lamp behind plant).

Colour however does not only acts as a means of connection, for it also has particular narrative and thematic relevance in the context of space and identity. A notable example is the intercutting between Milena's suicide attempt and Alex's listening to her drugged message on his answer-phone. Milena, clad in a purple silk nightdress and guzzling down vodka from a bottle, is bathed in a warm orange light. This combination of light and silk, of chromatics and intoxication, is in stark contrast to the near monochromatic space of Alex's office. For that space is one dominated by a series of blacks, browns and whites, and populated by books and glass. The use of colour and lighting, in conjunction with performance infers early on in the film the tension between what is seemingly rational masculinity (of which the psychologist is the embodiment of) and irrational, impulsive even, femininity. Colour is marked through this chromatic differentiation between the spaces as being associated primarily with femininity in contrast to the achromatic masculine.

However colour is not only associated with Milena's domestic space. For another space that is marked with a noticeable implementation of colour is the border between Austria and what was then Czechoslovakia. This border space functions as a spatial and

chromatic *mise-en-abyme*, reflecting the tensions of possession within the interconnected relationships of Alex and Milena, and also Milena and Stefan.

How does colour alongside this border space function in this context? Bridging the Danube, the border is marked by Bratislavian buildings and barriers at one end, and its Austrian counterpart at the other. The road space in-between these two barriers is somewhat a no-(wo)mans-land. A space of identity and transience, that functions to divide (separates state from state), demarcate (through barriers and signs), and signify identity (flags, national insignias, officials and passports). In turn this theme of division is attributable to the intertwined relationships between Alex and Stefan, with both connected by the undefined Milena (much as the space between borders is somewhat both known and unknowable). The border space occurs twice in the film, each time acting as a signifier to the beginning and end of a relationship (as it functions as a beginning and end of national space). In the first instance Stefan drives Milena through the Bratislavian border (notably Stefan himself does *not* enter Austria) before they bid farewell in this space between borders. Similarly when Milena decides to move in with Alex, she firstly goes to see Stefan for one final time together. Returning to Vienna she is met by Alex on the Austrian side of the border. Alex however is angered by the fact that firstly Milena is a day later than he anticipated and secondly that she is dropped off at the border by an unknown male, whose presence heightens his own sense of paranoia about Milena's fidelity in their relationship. Alex's frustration at his own inability to control Milena leads them inevitably into arguing. An argument that Milena decides to bring to an end by turning back and walking into the no-mans-land of the border space. As she walks away Alex shouts after her "where are you going", Milena curtly responds with one word, "nowhere".



Image 4.7: The Colours of Nowhere.

This space of nowhere as well as reflecting the power hierarchy between lovers is one that has within its composition a connective use of colour. To elaborate, the dominant aesthetics of the buildings and bridge that comprise this border crossing are a series of subdued tones of browns, whites and greys. The building, barriers and signs are then accentuated by a warning combination of red and white, for example the barriers that divide and the corners of the buildings (see image 4.7). Similarly Milena's costume is one comprised of similar tones and hues, she is wearing a grey fur coat, red skirt and red shoes that all connect her through colour to this space. As De Lauretis notes the borders can be positioned as representing the 'potentially conflictual copresence of different cultures', being that of male and female in this context. That this space of nowhere, of feminine desires, within the film is marked by discourses of 'negativity' (Ibid: 99). Thus chromatically Milena is positioned as being a body associated with this sense of nowhere, a femininity that is somewhat unknowable. Not only for Alex, who Milena resists by retreating back into a space that he cannot follow, but further the spectator who only understands Milena through the memories that Alex constructs.

Once again a carefully choreographed use of colour within the composition of the image is utilised to connect seemingly disparate scenes. For the scene that then follows is a close-up of Milena being operated on. The red and white motif of the border space is carried over into this space through the combination of white bandages and red blood (see image 4.8). Milena in the anesthetize space of the operating theatre is, like the border over the bridge, marked through colour as being a nowhere space. A liminal space positioned between life and death, between subject and object, between victim

and survivor. Colour once again infers a sense of relation, from the Milena who could not stand Alex's accusing behaviour at the border, to a future Milena who has later taken her own life because of Alex's developing paranoia and megalomania.



Image 4.8: Red and White in the Theatre.

Therefore we can begin to see that colour though inherently bound by notions of verisimilitude within *Bad Timing* is still very much an active element within both *mise-en-scene* and narrative. That though seemingly lacking the avant-garde qualities that so defined it within *Performance* and *Don't Look Now* what is occurring is still as provocative and stimulating, albeit restrained. A complex and delicate use of colour that is as innovative as the more expressionistic aspects found within Roeg's other work.

So far my consideration of colour has primarily focussed on the way it connects space, time and body together, and I want to continue this theme of colour as connection into the next part of my analysis. In particular I want to shift the focus onto the way in which colour connects film to painting, specifically the artworks of Gustav Klimt which populate the film. For, as I will go onto discuss there resides within *Bad Timing* a connection between Milena and Madame Bloch-Bauer, the mistress and muse of Gustav Klimt. Before we fully enter the discussion of Roeg's play between paint and celluloid it should be briefly acknowledged that the relationship painting and cinema, between frames of stasis and frames of movement, has been the subject of fascination and

irritation, to theorists, critics and filmmakers alike.

Bazin noted that the synergisation between painting and cinema was one fraught with complications, ideological implications, and finally rejection:

Films about paintings, at least those that use them to create something of which is cinematic, meet with an identical objection from painters and art critics alike [...] that however you look at it the film is not true to the painting. Its dramatic and logical unity establishes relationships that are chronologically false and otherwise fictitious, between paintings often widely separated both in time and spirit [...] Even should the filmmaker wish to conform to the facts of art history, the instrument he uses would still be aesthetically at odds with them. As a filmmaker he fragments what is by essence a synthesis while himself working toward a new synthesis never envisioned by the painter.

(Bazin 2003: 221)

Roeg's synthesis of celluloid, body and painting, though not one that is focussed on painting as a subject, but does intersect painting as a discourse, is one that can be read as the culmination of Roeg's continual implementation of artwork within his first decade as a director. From *Performance* that acknowledged artists such as Bacon and Pollock in its compositional strategy; *Walkabout's* fascination with aboriginal art and its relationship to the body; *Don't Look Now's* integration of Renaissance techniques of depth and perception (*Quattro cento*) that leads the spectator's eye through the implementation of red; to *The Man Who Fell to Earth* that implements Brueghel's *Landscape with the fall of Icarus* within the *mise-en-scene* to pictorially reflects the rise and fall narrative trajectory of the alien visitor Newton (played by David Bowie), Roeg has consistently intersected one art form with the other. *Bad Timing* takes this preoccupation one step further, not only in terms of aesthetic and compositional similarity, but also one that reflects and informs and the narrative and themes of the film. However, as Arnheim rightly points out there is an implicit contradiction if one attempts to trace the filmic image back to the 'static' for it is of course film's nature of movement, of temporality, that would seemingly render such an approach meaningless (Arnheim 2003: 151). Instead what I intend to demonstrate is that Roeg uses the art of Klimt on many different levels to evoke thematic and narrative preoccupations; to inform the film's aesthetic; and finally to reflect the questions surrounding femininity within the film.

I am not the first to consider the way in which Roeg uses Klimt's work within the film, for example Harlan Kennedy's concludes that Klimt's work functions as a:

[...] taking-off point for the film's style, the painting of his pupil Egon Schiele add force and meaning to its content. Schiele's swirling expressionist couples, bound in a morbid frenzy of lovemaking, were an offspring of art nouveau, and it is no accident that Schiele's work is constantly glimpsed in the background of Roeg's Vienna-set meditation of love and death.

(Kennedy 1980: 25)

However, whilst I concur with Kennedy that there is a playing with compositional and chromatic similarity between the two differing art forms (an interplay that will be discussed in-depth in the following sections), I would first want to consider the idea that through Klimt and Schiele's artwork Roeg adopts a similar strategy to that found in his 1973 cult horror *Don't Look Now*. As discussed in the previous case study *Don't Look Now* provides a condensed version of its entire narrative in its opening minutes through a *tour-de-force* of editing, colour and image. *Bad Timing*'s implementation of Klimt and Schiele in its opening sequence adopts a similar narrative and stylistic strategy. For far from what Salwolke sees as a prologue that 'designed more to confuse than to enlighten' (Salwolke 1993: 76), I would argue that the intersection of paint and celluloid is a rich discourse that reflects questions of gender, representations of power and ideology of the image itself.

Frames within the Frame: Gallery, Gaze and Narrative

De Lauretis positions the complex interplay of narrative and the act of looking within the film as being concerned 'less with vision than with narrative ... less on the problem of seeing as such than on the problem of seeing as understanding, events, behaviors and motivations. (de Lauretis 1984: 89) Through the interplay of artwork and celluloid, of character and portrait subject, what is brought to the fore is a matrix of looking and looked-at-ness, one that reflects back the gaze of the onlooker, those being both Milena and Alex in this context, and in turn informs the spectator of their hidden dreams, desires and wants.

In some respects the focus on the close-up of *The Kiss* is to deny reality, to deny context. Instead we are offered metaphor, allegory, representation but not reality. As

Arnheim notes 'a film style that eliminates everything naturalistic from the very beginning [thus shifts] the nature of the entire film to a different plane' (Arnheim 2003: 153). The nature of the film nearly shifted to another plane, and in reality *Bad Timing* is a film located on a different plane, not reality but memory, not representation but interpretation, the recollections of the masculine, his construction of the feminine.

The opening sequence of *Bad Timing* is set in the *Österreichische Galerie* in Vienna, a white walled space in which hangs the works of Klimt and Schiele. Alex and Milena wander this space both together and alone, interacting with the artwork through contemplation. John Izod in his consideration of the sequence (one of the few to consider Klimt's artistic presence in the film being worthy of mention) surprisingly perceives this moment of interaction between artwork, Alex and Milena as having no 'direct dramatic connection' that it is in fact 'the isolation of this quiet opening moment [that] gives it an emblematic quality' (Izod 1992: 105).

However what Izod overlooks is the way in which the images are presented, who they are presented to, and the order of presentation. *Bad Timing* opens with a close-up of the faces and hands of the couple in Gustav Klimt's iconic 1907 work *The Kiss*. I will go onto discuss the implications of this shot in the next section, but, suffice to say in the context of art as narrative, what is brought directly to the fore is an image of the heterosexual couple seemingly caught up in a moment of passion, Klimt's apparent romantic composition of gender unification alluding to the potential for a similar narrative trajectory within the film between Alex and Milena. One that we assume will eventually be completed by the film's adherence to the classical and traditional romantic narrative trajectory of unification through marriage between the two participants.

The film then cuts from *The Kiss* into a series of shots, differing from medium to long-shot, of static and tracking, that follow Alex and Milena as they contemplate quietly two further Klimt artworks those of *Judith I* (1901) and *Adele Bloch-Bauer* (1907), before returning to *The Kiss* which dissolves into Egon Schiele's *Death and the Maiden* (1912). The difference with the first pair of paintings is that they are intimately connected to the protagonists individually, with Milena gazing at *Adele* and Alex *Judith*, the delineation of artwork and individual giving significance to their own consideration of the function of femininity and its relationship to masculinity. The

pictorial montage moving through images of unification to that of bodies marked by a sense of castration and commodity. The final dissolve, from Klimt to Schiele, *The Kiss* to *Death and the Maiden*, from potential to death, hints at the fatalistic rupture that will destroy the romance between the two protagonists.

In the gap between artwork, character and spectator emerges a series of questions and representations that produces an aesthetic cartography that reflects the problematic discourses that surround the question of Milena and her identity. In particular Alex's own perceptions of what he considers to be femininity, love and desire. In other words the material intertextuality between oil, gold and celluloid leads to a complex surface of power relations, one that positions, as we will go onto discuss, femininity as both sexual and status object. To explore this idea further, and the way in which the art within the film reflects the preoccupations played out in celluloid, I now want to consider the interconnection between celluloid and film, starting with the opening image, and the opening artwork from the film, that of Gustav Klimt's *The Kiss*.

***The Kiss* (1907)**

In a world ordered by sexual imbalance, pleasure in looking has been split between active/male and passive/female.

(Mulvey 1975: 750)

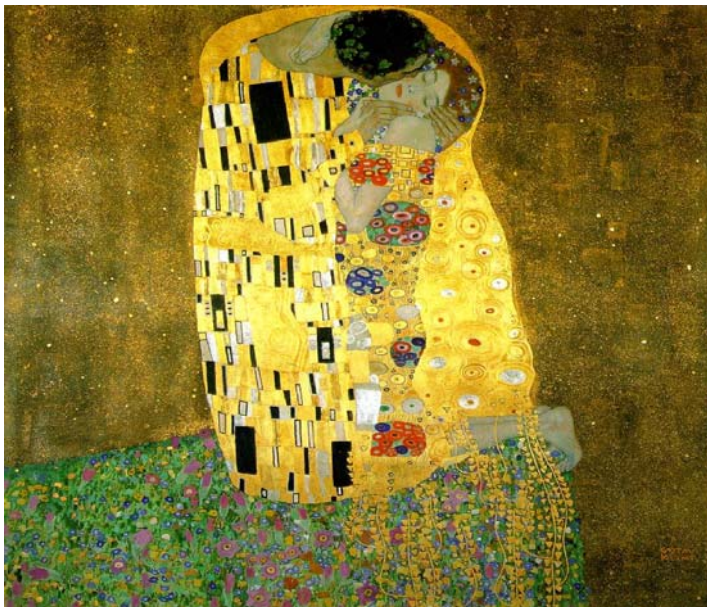


Image 4.9: *The Kiss* (1907-08), Oil and gold leaf on canvas, 180 cm × 180 cm (70.9 in × 70.9 in)

As I have already mentioned, *Bad Timing* commences with a sequence set in the *Österreichische Galerie* in Vienna, the first shot though, not one of formalistic exposition that privileges Alex and Milena, is instead a painterly ode to romance and heterosexual unification, in the form of a close-up of Klimt's 1907-08 painting *The Kiss* (see image 4.9), a defining artwork within the artist's "golden period". Roeg's framing of Klimt's text is one of deconstruction, through the close-up composition. This is later reversed in the sequence when *The Kiss* is displayed in its entirety, though at a distance, captured in a long shot with Milena gazing at the painting, whilst a seemingly distracted or impatient Alex paces in the foreground before leaving the shot. This transition from close up, one of passion and surrender, that turns into one of distance, compositionally replicates the trajectory of Alex and Melina's five month relationship, one that commences as shared desire and energy, but through Alex's paranoia, becomes one of distance, isolation and suspicion.

It seems appropriate at this juncture to briefly consider Rudolf Arnheim's triple values, the way in which he defines how the image relates to the real. These are: that of representational value (one which represents concrete objects); symbolic value (one which represents abstract things); and finally sign value (an image is a sign when it represents a content which is not represented by its visible characteristics). In terms of Arnheim's matrix, it would seem evident that rather than simply being one of the three, *The Kiss*, possess various degrees and characteristics of all three. For example it *represents* a couple in a romantic clinch, it's composition largely *symbolic*, a eulogy to heterosexuality (although its implementation of colour, as I will discuss, has gender implications). Finally the position of the portrait in the gallery is one that *signifies* the cultural and economic value of the object, and thus in turn, the masculine privileging of reality. One that resonates with Alex's own self perceived mastery of his and Milena's relationship.

Consequently one possible interpretation of the interplay between portrait and celluloid is one that depicts the narrative trajectory of Alex and Milena's relationship. Namely *The Kiss* becomes a metaphor and an allegory for Alex and Milena's relationship. A metaphor of gold leaf and oil that aesthetically reflects the optimistic beginnings of the affair, and later in the sequence, its destructive ending, alluded to by the merging dissolve from *The Kiss* to *Death and the Maiden*.

An alternative approach to that of simply noting narrative correspondence is to consider the lingering reciprocity between composition, body and colour. A synthesis of paint

and celluloid that evokes the film's thematic preoccupations in particular those surrounding questions of gender, relationships and power. For example, in terms of composition, the opening shot on Klimt's artwork frames the painting by focusing in on the face and hands of the couple, an image that seemingly offers a classical representation of romance. The couple united, lost within the passion of their embrace, as Frank Whitford in his analysis of *The Kiss* comments 'the man and woman have sunk to their knees and the woman's ecstasy and the tenderness of the moment are revealed in her face and the positioning of the hands' (Whitford 1990: 117). For a brief moment at least, before the spectator is violently wrenched from the sedate silence of the gallery and thrust into the confines of the ambulance screaming its way, with Milena its comatose passenger, towards the hospital, we are seemingly offered a sense of romance, one untainted by the reality of life, sex and gender, captured and presented for both character and spectator appreciation.



Image 4.10: The Opening Shot from *Bad Timing*.

However, this idealistic representation for Whitford that offers up a pictorial stasis of unification, unity and equality between the genders is not the only reading that warrants consideration, for darker and more sinister discourses can be inferred to exist within Klimt's composition of the couple. The opening shot, through the framing of the artwork via a close-up, deliberately excludes the contradictory elements that counterbalance this moment of romance (see image 4.10). It is notable for example that the couple are depicted as positioned precariously close to a cliff edge, the male's

dominating presence rendered as one whose force could take both of them beyond the edge, and thus whose desire can be both passion and obsession, the latter becoming the threat that resides at the heart of the relationship, one that can destabilize the couple. In particular it is the writing of Gottfried Friedl, who argues that the male is standing, unlike Whitford who perceives both sexes as kneeling, that brings to the fore the negative potential within *The Kiss*, as Friedl argues:

The halo which surrounds the two lovers [...] is defined by the man, whose back determines the line of its contours [...] all the energy of the motion in the picture comes down from him. He is the one who grasps hold of the woman's head and turns it towards himself so that he can kiss her cheek. The woman [...] is depicted as passive. Kneeling before the man, she clearly assumes a posture of submission.

(Friedl 1989: 117-8)

In turn this dominating masculine presence, invokes a classical binary of male/female with the standing and dominating presence of the male juxtaposed by the representation of femininity as a subservient, near acquiescent form, manifest through her body depicted as kneeling, the male's hands around her head contorting her to facilitate the kiss. A manhandling of femininity that Alex will reenact when he disrobes and contorts Milena's comatose form in his own desire for pleasure and control. Thus *The Kiss* far from being an idealistic, utopian even, representation of the relationship between the sexes, can be interpreted as depicting the 'idea of reconciling the sexes and of neutralizing their differences inevitably becomes dominated by the male' (Ibid: 118). Alex attempts to neutralize the differences, not only of gender but also between his conception of what Milena should be, in comparison to what she is, by a reliance on his own sense of rationality and sense of detachment.

Like the golden halo that reaches across from the male to the female, so Alex's voyeuristic observation of Milena, his demands for knowledge, and his desire for her to submit to his will, his projection of her, becomes an all-encompassing and constricting force within their relationship. It is worth pausing to consider for a moment the interconnection between the representation of gender in both film and painting. For Friedl notes that 'the indeterminate location of the scene removes the lovers into a homogenous cosmos that is close to nature but without space or time, far from all definite historical or social reality' (Ibid: 115). The representation of the couple exists outside of time, space and thus one can infer society, same as the Milena that we

witness, is a Milena outside of time and space, either the cipher of Alex's memory, or the somnolent body being torn apart by surgeons, her unconscious body outside of comprehension and thus outside of time. Thus Milena is seemingly always a body positioned as one defined by patriarchal discourses, Alex's recollections, Netusil's imagined reconstructions, or the surgeon's corporeal reconstruction.

The film appears to propose a construction of femininity through subordination to the masculine that is similar to that of Klimt's kissing couple, for as Fliedl notes the composition of *The Kiss* is one of merging 'the two figures into one large shape' (Ibid: 118). A composition that endeavors 'to neutralize the difference between the sexes' through a phallic manifestation, the golden robe, 'which defines the two people and their sexes. The utopian idea of reconciling the sexes and of neutralizing their difference inevitably becomes dominated by the male' (Ibid: 118).

Resultantly, Alex's perception of their romance is not one of reconciliation but ownership, acquired through demands that Milena adopt a more submissive and monogamous attitude, to be compliant whenever he wants sex, to embrace the domestic, and most importantly to reveal the men of her past. Attempts at domination that Milena tries to accommodate, for example her tidying of her domestic space, changing even her purple sheets, from colour to monochromatic, to Alex's 'favourite' white. However Alex's draconian and dominating behavior proves too much, and Milena gradually begins to resist and challenge Alex's passive aggressive behavior, a behavior that Alex defines as natural, littered with Freudianism's and observations. Milena's rejections and rebuttals in turn leads to Alex's behaviour becoming increasingly erratic and paranoid, behaviour that subsequently drives Milena towards her suicide attempt.

As discussed in the introduction of this chapter, Alex's first encounter with Milena is one that is defined by Alex's preoccupation with both fantasy and perfection, for Fliedl *The Kiss* exemplifies such a tension between genders, dreams and reality, arguing that:

The encapsulation of the two lovers as well as the averted face of the man reinforce the impression of isolation and distance from us. The two sexes are reduced to their biological difference, their 'pure' nature. Because of the isolation of the embracing couple as well as the pure but unreal cosmic space around them, the promise of happiness in this picture also refers to nature itself. Happiness is only conceivable outside social reality. Non-violent relationships between the sexes and towards nature is only imaginable in the world of dreams.

In some part, the unpleasure that de Lauretis proposes, forces a distance between spectator and couple, one compounded by the temporal and narrative play of the text, in turn Alex and Milena are themselves caught up in a series of spaces that could be connoted as being 'unreal [and] cosmic'. For both are émigré, exiles, both American but now living in an unknown land (the stranger in a strange land being a recurring motif in Roeg's work). Further, the flashback narrative obliges us to accept that the Milena we are presented with is only ever one of 'dreams'; a recollection, a fragment of Alex's memory that is brought into the present by the interrogational drive of the film. Thus the happiness that Alex and Milena both desire, a happiness that they both importantly envisage from contradictory positions, is one that is unattainable in the reality of life itself, for whereas for Alex the notion of a Milena of submission is one that is central to their relationship, for Milena the notion of containment through monogamy is one that she finds unsatisfactory, due to its positioning of femininity as subordinate and other to the husband (as in the taking of names etc implies).

The image of the woman has, as it were, been written into that of the man and subjected to the principle of masculinity. In turn Alex desires to make Milena his object, through sex, marriage and domesticity, even going as far as to attempt to relocate them both to his naturalized, homeland of New York (a space in which, one assumes, Alex feels he can fully express both himself and his desires). In turn gender, and its function, within *Bad Timing* is one informed, and also constructed through Klimt's aesthetic within *The Kiss*. This act of construction of course has ideological implications, for in the process of constructing that self, the other, the I, finds that it is constituted by what Butler terms 'the spectre of [...] impossibility' (Butler 1993: xi), that which forms the 'constitutive outside' and defines the self. It may seem strong to align Milena as a spectre, but in the construction of time and body in the film Milena is not simply that which is opposite to Alex, but she is I would argue positioned as other, as Butler discusses:

[The] exclusionary matrix by which subjects are formed thus requires the simultaneous production of a domain of abject beings, those who are not yet 'subjects'. The abject designates here precisely those 'unlivable' and 'uninhabitable' zones of social life which are nevertheless densely populated by those who do not enjoy the status of subject, but whose living under the sign of the 'unlivable' is required to circumscribe the domain of the subject. This zone of uninhabitability will constitute that site of dreaded identification against which – and by virtue of which – the domain of the

subject will circumscribe its own claim to autonomy and to life. In this sense, then, the subject is constituted through the force of exclusion and abjection, one which produces a constitutive outside to the subject, an abjected outside, which is, after all, 'inside the subject as its own founding repudiation.

(Ibid: 3)

Thus if Alex (alongside Netusil and Stefan) is sited as the normative, bodies which inhabit the livable (as in the present) then in turn Milena becomes that which inhabits the unlivable (for Milena, as already discussed is a body that exists outside of time). Alex in turn constructs his own sense of self through a repudiation of Milena, by forcing her being to reflect his own sense of self. He argues for his own rationality (implied his social status of doctor) and sense of intellectual capability by contrasting himself to Milena's (default feminine) social position, one marked by him as irrational and instinctual. Jim Leach in his writing on *Bad Timing* and Thatcherism argues that one division that enables Alex to construct Milena as other is the binary of tidy/untidy. Leach argues that:

[...] Alex, fascinated by Milena's 'otherness', nevertheless tries to impose his own sense of order on her 'untidiness' [...] his encounter with this woman who refuses the terms of his analysis leads to the emergence of the 'untidiness' within himself [...] that he needs her 'untidiness' to justify his own sense of himself as the one who provides order [...].

(Leach 1993: 199)

In turn the femininity that inhabits Klimt's work reflects this construction of femininity, for Adele et al exist in zones that are outside context, outside space and time. Klimt's stylistics and aesthetic strategies turn femininity into an abstraction, denying any status of subject, and thus offer femininity as the body that is positioned to be read, positioned without agency. This positioning of femininity is alluded to in the promotional poster for the film, which reconstructs Milena as a Klimt model, her body intersected with the head (and thus gaze and mind) of Alex (see image 4:11).

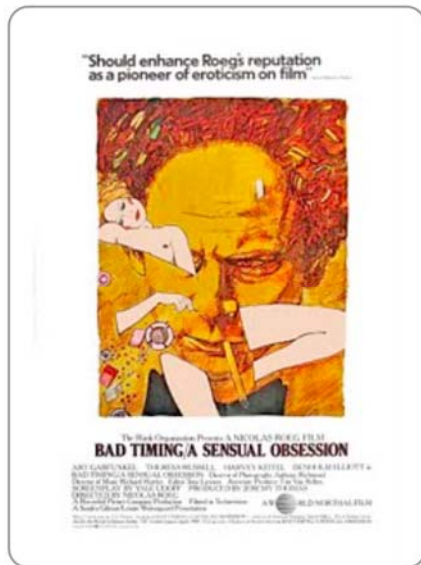


Image 4.11: Promotional Poster for *Bad Timing*.

Therefore femininity, both that of Milena and those of Klimt's models (I am aware of the irony of discussing femininity by labeling it as seemingly the property of the masculine creator), is positioned as inert tableaux that reflect back on this preoccupation of gender and ownership. For in some respects, and as will become clear as the case study develops, the artworks within the film are implemented to create identity, both masculine and feminine. With the former defined by the act of looking, whilst the female would seem to be the passive subject of her others enquiring, and knowing, gaze. Alex's notion of femininity is played out for the spectator's delectation through the artworks in the film, as we will go onto discuss later, this artistic notion of femininity in turn produces more than one singular visions, as in the case of *Adele Bloch-Bauer* and *Judith I*.

This notion of the couple both unified and divided is also played out within *Bad Timing* through the film's incorporation of *The Kiss*'s aesthetic into its chromatic strategy, what Kennedy referred to earlier, particularly that of costume.⁶⁴ If we return to the image of *The Kiss* what seems evident is that the golden garment covering two figures is a singular surface, as Fliedl argues:

The merging of the two figures into one larger shape must be understood as Klimt's endeavor to neutralize the difference between the sexes. The

⁶⁴ The 'one' unity that man so craves (so Freud and Lacan tell us).

anatomical and biological elements that determines their difference – the phallus – has been erected in the form of a monumental icon which defines the two people and their sexes. The utopian idea of reconciling the sexes and of neutralizing their difference inevitably becomes dominated by the male.

(Fliedl 1989: 118)

However this desire to neutralize the differences is fulfilled (the golden materiality binding them together), it simultaneously hints at the subversion and rupture that lingers beneath symbolization of unity. For the surface of the gold cloak is bejeweled with indicators of the individuality that lies beneath, depicted through Klimt's overlaying of coloured shapes over the gold layer of the robe. The male form is defined by rectangles of black, white and grey, contrasted by the female endowed with an abundance of differing coloured circles. The differences between the genders is played out through colour and shape, through a cosmetic layer that is both seen and unseen within the composition of the whole.

As Frank Whitford notes:

The extraordinary rich and varied ornament, some of which is in relief, is not arbitrary, nor is it intended simply to delight the eye. The predominantly rectangular, black, white and silver devices against the gold of the man's robe are intended to embody and convey masculine qualities while the brighter colours and circular motifs on the woman's dress express feminine attributes.

(Whitford 1990: 117)

In some respects Milena is the body of circularity, a body defined by the intersection of memory and pleasure, of sex and desire that, in turn, is continually revisited and redefined by her masculine other. Of course it needs to be acknowledged that Klimt was not the only artist to make such a geometrical distinction between the sexes, but the ramifications of this differentiation subsequently informs the chromatic strategy within *Bad Timing*, in particular costume. For within the film the majority of male bodies, as the male in *The Kiss*, are linked or defined by a monochromatic sensibility, clad in blacks, grays and whites, exemplified by Alex and Inspector Netusil (see image 4.13). This monochromatic strategy located around the male is juxtaposed against Milena's more colourful costumes, for example when Milena and Alex first meet (image 4.12).



Image 4.12: Divisions of costume: the colour of the feminine and the monochromatic of the masculine.

Hence a binary is introduced through colour, the masculine versus the feminine, monochromatic versus chromatic. A binary that is, as I have discussed in previous chapters, a classical discourse in and around the cultural presence of colour. To return to Batchelor's persuasive argument, colour is 'made out to be the property of some foreign body - usually the feminine [...] relegated to the realm of the superficial, the supplementary, the inessential or the cosmetic (Batchelor 2000: 22-3).

It is also worth reflecting on Goethe's discussion surrounding 'pathological colours' within his *Theory of Colours*. Goethe notes that:

[...] it is also worthy of remark, that savage nations, uneducated people, and children have a great predilection for vivid colours; that animals are excited to rage by certain colours; that people of refinement avoid vivid colours in their dress and the objects that are about them, and seem inclined to banish them altogether from their presence.

(Goethe 1970: 55)



Image 4.13: Masculinity as Monochrome.

John Izod, one of the few critics to consider the function of colour, through costume, within *Bad Timing*, also finds a synergy between Klimt's work and Milena, that:

We [the spectator], like Alex, find the first access to Milena's character is through her appearance, for in its entirety her wardrobe makes a kind of Klimtian mosaic which streams through time [...] In almost every scene she wears striking clothes which make her the centre of attention, and every time she meets Alex she appears to have on a new dress, switching between one vivid hue and another.

(Izod 1992: 109)

In some respect, Izod simply perpetuates the classical association, one raised by Neale, of the female as a source of colour, as spectacle. This binary in turn permeates the mise-en-scene of both Alex's and Milena's domestic interiority, with Alex's being one of minimalism and order, contrasted by Milena's more organic and evolving space that transforms as the film develops, becoming a physical bricolage of their relationship with objects from Morocco intersecting with Klimt's artwork. It is intriguing to note however that the print of *The Kiss* that is affixed to the wardrobe door in Milena's apartment (with clothing, like the couple in the print, being an icon of the difference between genders) is not as Izod reads it simply something that Milena has 'hung ... among the many pictures on her walls' (Ibid: 110). For, on the Criterion DVD edition of the film, amongst the scenes that, for reasons unclear, were omitted from the final cut, is a moment post the gallery visit, in which it is evident that not only does Alex purchase the print, but he is the one that hangs it in Milena's apartment. Of course Izod would not have been aware of this sequence, but this moment reaffirms that *The Kiss*

and its imagery of domination and submission is one that resonates with Alex more than Milena. In some respects it is as if *The Kiss* has been a template for Alex's notion of subordinate femininity that leads to an idealized heterosexuality. It is unsurprising therefore that it is Alex who introduces the print of *The Kiss* into Milena's apartment (notably Alex chooses to site the print on Milena's wardrobe the container for her costume facades) functions as a *mise-en-abyme* of costume and gender. Intriguingly the print is noticeably absent from the apartment in the scene prior to Alex's (induced) raping of Milena on the stairs. For Milena, in an attempt to appease Alex and restore balance to their relationship, cleans and orders her chaotic and disheveled apartment, an attempt that Alex rejects in his desire for sex not conversation. A rejection that leads Milena to offer Alex what he desires by provoking him into raping her, reducing his base desires into an act of social transgression, and thus in turn challenging Alex's self perception of being a man in control of his passions. It is as if by attempting to align herself with this representation of subordinate femininity, by restoring order to her apartment, that this idealized image for Alex is no longer needed, for Milena has become what he desires.

This chromatic balance between the genders, however, is not one that is fixed into a dyadic of colour/femininity in opposition to monochromatic/masculinity, for at moments in the film both Alex and Milena are dressed as their opposite. For example, when the couple's relationship seems to be of harmony, of equal terms, (Alex reading the poetry of Blake to Milena, or Milena dropping a drink inadvertently onto her lap in Alex's car), Alex dispenses with his monochromatic association. Colour, through his costume, accentuates his sense of contentment and relaxation, one assumes because Alex at these points feels he has full control, and thus ownership over Milena. Whereas in contrast, as paranoia and suspicion permeates the romance, the film's use of colour becomes equally sinister. For example, Alex attempts to uncover Milena's true identity through the use of the colour psychoanalytical Luscher test (a testing we will return to in the discussion around *Judith*). Colour becomes a discourse through which identity can be deconstructed, defined, and thus in turn, controlled. Alex thus attempts to co-opt colour for his own psychoanalytical intentions.

However a key point, and one that Izod fails to discuss or bring into his discussion of colour and costume, is when the aesthetic balance between the genders that originates from *The Kiss* is inverted. The moment when Milena appropriates black and white,

barring a splash of red lipstick, she becomes nearly monochromatic, offering Alex ‘the Milena you always wanted’.

Negative Milena

[monochrome] is the site of pure luminosity ... unmarked by history or humanity ... [a] search for purity ... a search for stasis, for the void.

(Wollen 2006: 200)

The moment of aesthetic inversion takes place once Milena has left Alex, the threat of control through his proposal compounded by her discovery of the orange NATO file. She calls Alex (a few days later we assume, but as with the representation of time one can never be sure) only to discover that Alex has quickly moved onto seeing another woman (she overhears Alex’s lover whilst on the phone) it is also a point at which presciently Milena taunts Alex down the phone, demanding that Alex just ‘fuck’ her ‘to death’. Alex, concerned, but also encouraged by Milena’s attempts at contact, and thus the potential for their relationship to be reconciled turns up at Milena’s apartment. Letting himself in, the normal airy, light and high ceilinged apartment is one of darkness, a dim light emanating from the numerous lit red and black candles, turning the apartment space into a mausoleum, a space in which a drunken Milena, daubed in an outfit of black and white awaits, sat in a chair that is covered by a black sheet (see image: 4.14).



Image 4.14: Welcome to the Wake.

Milena, high on her act of textile subversion, confronts Alex with a hearty roar of ‘welcome to the wake!’ As Milena arises from the chair she moves towards a

bewildered Alex, sticking her tongue out at him, and then hurling the steel chains that have been draped around her neck over Alex so that the two are joined together (just as the golden robe links the two lovers together in *The Kiss*). An act of self-subjugation, that Milena acknowledges, exclaiming ‘chains, so you can lock me up so I will forever be yours’. Milena, playing with her costume, twirling the blonde hair of the wig she is wearing, describes her transformation as ‘celebrating the death of the Milena you don’t want and the birth of the Milena you do want ...’. Milena then thrusts a cigarette case into Alex’s hands, one shaped like a giant padlock, ‘here for you the only one sir ... the only one chains ... for which you have the only key’, Milena pushing a cigarette into his mouth, though even this is inverted with the tip of the cigarette and not the filter in first. As Milena laughs at this moment of performance Alex throws the padlock/cigarette case onto the bed and begins to leave the apartment. Abruptly the control and Milena was experiencing is swiftly undercut by Alex’s refusal to engage, Milena discards the white jacket cries out to the departing Alex, ‘Linden you’ve killed me, Linden I’m dead Don’t go, help me ... I need you now’. Alex returns to the doorway, only to rebuke Milena’s pleas, that if she has so many other friends, in particular male we assume, that Milena should ‘call them ... call them now’. Milena, threatens to throw herself out of the window, a threat that Alex again coldly dismisses, simply saying ‘be my guest’. This rejection moves Milena’s from that of pleading to rage. As Alex leaves the building Milena appears on the balcony, a spurned Juliet to Alex’s distanced Romeo. Her anger now fully turned to rage by Alex’s rejection she throws bright green glass bottles towards Alex on the street below. She screams at Alex as the bottles arc in the night that ‘you’d like me to do it wouldn’t you ... admit it ... admit it ... you’d like me dead’, beating the brickwork of the balcony, ‘why ruin your neat little existence Alex huh?’. Throwing the wig to the street below Milena, nearly incoherent with rage, rants at the retreating Alex that ‘I’ll do it ... I’ll do it’, Alex gets into his car and leaves, Milena slumps across the balcony wall, her rage seemingly spent with his departure.

Intriguingly this pivotal scene represents not only the end of the relationship but also brings to the fore the sense that Milena will turn to suicide as a final act of submission/resistance, is one that has not garnered much consideration even with those critics who have considered colour in the film. For example neither de Lauretis, nor John Izod consider this moment of colour and femininity. When focus has been given, it routinely results in Milena’s actions being read as chaos and disorder, action without reason or rationality, as John Pym argues: ‘[...] a bravura climax in which a drunken Milena, a *creature of action* rather than words, dresses and makes-up as a gross parody

of the insensate woman that she believes Alex wishes her to become' [*italics my emphasis*] (Pym 1980: 112). Gordon Gow's consideration of this moment brings to the fore femininity as irrationality, for Milena according to Gow 'confronts him [Alex] in weird make-up and garb, indulging in an alcoholic tantrum' (Gow 1980: 29).

Pym's reading is correct in that Milena creates herself in the image of what she feels Alex needs her to become, a creature (to co-opt Pym's phraseology). But rather than simply one of action, or a 'gross parody' I would propose that Milena, through her cooption of black and white, both parodies and resists Alex's desire. A moment of carnivalesque resistance that quickly becomes eroded by the hegemony of Alex's patriarchy. For from the outset, like a Dorothy who never leaves Kansas, we are presented with a femininity of black and white (the only other notable colours being the red make up daubed to mouth and eyes, and the purple hair band on the wig). One that can be perceived, as Gow argues, as simply a moment of feminine irrationality, or I would suggest the last remains of her former colours, her former personality. An irrationality played out through colour, with Milena subverting the hegemonic aesthetic strategy of *The Kiss*. Though by doing so she also reaffirms the relationship between femininity, colour and culture. Consequently it can be proposed that Milena at this point of chromatic rupture both subverts and conforms.

First, it is worth considering the make-up that Milena applies to her face, for it is cloaked under a sheen of white, the red smears around eyes and mouth offering both connotations of sex (the mouth) and illness/tiredness (the eyes). A face that through the application of colour becomes closer to necrophilia rather than desire for Alex. Though of course later in the film the closeness of necrophilia will not prove such an insurmountable barrier to Alex's ardor.

Normally one associates cosmetics as a surface that makes flesh appealing, one that masks and recreates a new duplicitous surface that elicits a sense of pleasure not only for the wearer but also importantly for the observer(s). Of course Milena's cosmetic embellishment of herself is one designed to provoke a differing reaction for Alex, one that signals her true feelings, that his demands and constraints have led to her real self, her identity being 'killed'. Thus colour becomes not as Batchelor, in the context of cosmetics, a surface of 'doubt, mask [...] illusion or deception' nor one of 'seduction' (Batchelor 2000: 52). What emerges in this intersection of colour, skin, femininity and body is that of resistance. Alex is presented with a parody of femininity, a parody of his desires, a parody born from Alex's dismissal of Milena's previous attempts at

appeasement. In particular a previous scene in which Netusil imagines/constructs Milena's attempts to appease Alex through the cleaning of her apartment. Even though they both represent a moment of submission and an act of appeasement, this act of the female acquiescence to the demands of her masculine other results in the emergence of violence. Alex, who wants Milena to provide, at that moment, not domestic but sexual pleasure, becomes baffled when Milena simply wants to 'talk', a bafflement that results in Milena coercing the departing Alex into raping her on the stairs.

However I would also propose that this moment of femininity and masquerade, no matter how transient, is a moment of resistance. One that moves away from simply being 'an alcoholic tantrum', away from simply correlating femininity with childlike behavior as Goethe's colour relations argued. In particular if we pause to consider this moment as one that embodies Bakhtin's notion of the carnivalesque, the transient and celebratory behaviour within the sequence opens up a plurality of readings. Robert Stam's discussion on the carnivalesque describes it as:

Much more than the mere cessation of productive labor, carnival represented an alternative cosmovision characterized by the ludic undermining of all norms. The carnivalesque principle abolishes hierarchies, levels social classes, and creates another life free from conventional rules and restrictions. In carnival, all that is marginalized and excluded – the mad, the scandalous, the aleatory – takes over the center in a liberating explosion of otherness. The principle of material body – hunger, thirst, defecation, copulation – becomes a positively corrosive force, and festive laughter enjoys a symbolic victory over death, over all that is held sacred, over all that oppresses and restricts.

(Stam 1989: 86)

What Milena, through colour, brings to the fore is the sense of the carnival, she attempts to abolish the hierarchies that Alex has overlaid onto her, that of Klimt, of romantic narratives, of patriarchy (of cinema). Her body becomes a site of liberation, and submission, a body of thirst (the alcohol that she drinks) and madness, a body that rebukes the conventional rules and restrictions imposed by her masculine other. Thus Milena is displayed as a body in the process of becoming-carnival, in her adoption and subsequent subversion of those colours associated with rationality and thus patriarchy, she attempts to aesthetically recreate a new Milena 'free from [the] conventional rules and restrictions' that Alex has imposed upon her through their relationship. She offers up to Alex a Milena disfigured, one transformed and mutated through his paranoia. The

presence of alcohol, her masquerade through colour, the laughter and sticking out of her tongue all point to a body that is attempting to free itself of the oppression and restrictions that Alex wants to impose, through marriage and monogamy, by turning her body into a cosmetic-body of otherness, a parodic body.

One can consider Milena's implementation of colour, costume and make-up as a means of demarcating her body as outside of the gender roles, and thus in turn sex, the very thing that Alex demands she must adhere to within their relationship. For as Batchelor notes 'colour is often close to the body and never far from sexuality, be it heterosexual or homosexual. When sex comes into the story, colour tends to come with it, and when colour occurs, sex is often not too far away' (Batchelor 2000: 63). The implicit manifestation of achromatic hues and Milena's body, is a body that is both sexual (connotations of necrophilia) but one that resists the confines of normative discourse (Milena discarding the more colourful hues that have been the dominant motif of her previous costumes). As Batchelor notes 'normality is clothed in black and white; colour is added and, for better or worse, it all begins to fall apart. Colour may or may not have homoerotic content, but its association with irregularity or excess of one kind or another is quite common [...]' (Ibid: 64). Batchelor also brings to the fore a useful notion if we consider Milena's interaction with black and white, namely the idea of colour as a descent. As he explains 'the descent into colour often involves lateral as well as vertical displacement; it means being blown sideways at the same time as falling downwards' (Ibid: 41).

Milena, in her monochromatic resistance and parody affects a vertical displacement, one that moves her outside of the gender binary of *The Kiss*, that of submissive/femininity controlling/masculinity, but such a shifting, due to being outside the hierarchy and normative discourse of gender is rejected by Alex. Hence, unsurprisingly this moment of resistance is only fleeting, for just as the carnival is one of excessive jubilation but one that is finite and swiftly re-integrated back into the hegemonic normality of life and society, so too is Milena's moment of resistance quickly re-assimilated. Not only by Alex through his response of walking away, but also both by the police action that Netusil reveals (the police are called to the apartment by Milena's neighbours) and extra-diegetically by critical reception that see this moment of resistance as nothing short of childish behaviour.

There is one final aspect of Milena's (failed) resistance that needs to be considered, for she not only challenges Alex's own conception of her body, her physical and visual

manifestation but also that of the spectator's. We have been conditioned throughout the film to find pleasure in the access we have (like Alex) to her body, the glimpse of underwear, her naked breasts, the pubic hair revealed as panties are pulled aside etc. Milena's body seems to be fixed as a site of scopophilic pleasure for all gazes (particularly as the only other female representations within the film never look on Milena) for the both diegetic and non-diegetic, a body of spectacle, of sexual freedom, experimentation and desire. However this moment of black and white, this moment of resistance suddenly confronts the spectator with a negative reproduction, her sexual being still brought to the fore, but in the notion of the carnivalesque, turned abject. As if following the aesthetic heritage of black and white – that being the aesthetic of truth, in contrast to colour - a moment of truth to our own pleasure in looking is reflected back on the spectator.⁶⁵ Buscombe explains this well arguing that we, the spectator, have become economically conditioned to the value of the star, in particular the female, being one of visual and scopophilic pleasure that is both accessible and desirable. As Buscombe notes:

The feminine star, for example, whose appearance is of paramount concern, must be given undisputed priority as to the color of makeup, hair and costume which will best complement her complexion and figure. If her complexion limits the colors she can wear successfully, this in turn restricts the background colors that will complement her complexion and her costumes to best advantage.

(Buscombe 1978: 24-25)

Thus Milena's monochromatic turn is more than simply resisting Alex. By becoming a negative revision of her body, she in fact challenges our own accessibility to her body. For we still witness her breasts, white circles that seem to almost leak out from the blackness of her jumper, the red lipstick, a femme fatale icon, smeared down from her lips, the Monroe-esqe wig both privileging the icon whilst simultaneously (through Milena's angered hurling it from her head) alluding to the constructed façade that dominates the feminine form. Milena not only resists Alex, patriarchy and in turn the hegemony of heterosexuality, a resistance that proves futile, and which leads to her

⁶⁵ [...] in certain kinds of documentaries and even occasionally in features, black and white is still used as a guarantor of truth, which would not be possible unless their opposites, color, signified something other than truth.

seeking escape through self-harm, she also resists our gaze, our desires, the act of voyeurism echoed back by her transformation of denial.



Image 4.15: Milena Pleads for Alex to Remain.

Hence at this point we have chromatically both the death and subsequent resurrection of Milena, who moves from a femininity that attempts to placate, asking Alex to remain, but when her pleas for clemency are rebuked, turns to violence, hurling the green glass bottles onto the street below, the light of the rainbow outside her apartment window mirroring their flight. It is this notion of gender and power, of death and resurrection, of matrimony and violence that are the central elements to the next artwork I want to consider. An artwork that evokes not only feminine, but also masculine desires for monogamy.

A Tale of Two Femininities



Image 4.16: *Adele Bloch-Bauer* from Milena's perspective.

Two differing representations of femininity depicted as individuals stare down from the gallery walls in the opening sequence, that of *Adele Bloch-Bauer* (1907); the other, *Judith I* (1901), an earlier Klimt work. After Alex and Milena's shared viewing experience of *The Kiss*'s façade of heterosexual romantic unification, the engagement with these two artworks differs in that the experience is no longer shared, but instead is defined by isolation, with Milena shown gazing at *Adele*, whereas Alex's focus is on *Judith* (see image 4.16).



Image 4.17: Alex gazing at *Judith I*.

It is this division between subject and onlooker, and the questions that subsequently emerge surrounding the complexities of femininity and representation within the film that is the focus of this section. For what results from the division between the two lovers is a subtle *mise-en-abyme* that situates, and accentuates, Alex and Milena's differing conceptions of femininities socio-cultural status. For as I will go onto demonstrate, the interaction between Milena/*Adele* and Alex/*Judith*, this tension between celluloid and painted body, results in two differing representations of femininity emerging. In particular this tension offers *Adele* as a body defined by connotations of femininity as commodity, whereas *Judith* elicits a body seemingly empowered by feminine sexuality.

What is implicitly raised from the composition and editing of the sequence is that it is the relationship between onlooker and object (a relationship mirrored by the spectator in the auditorium) that is of central importance. The act of separating Alex and Milena, and in turn associating them with a particular artwork, has ideological implications. For Alex and Milena's separate engagement with these Klimt texts, it can be argued, reflect back particular questions of femininity pertinent to the individual observer.

It is worth noting at this moment that these representations of femininity are, like Milena, ones whose resistance to the gaze is problematic at best, absent at worst. As Fliedl argues, 'contrary to popular belief, [Klimt] did not want to achieve emancipation through art. He aestheticized the problems by shifting them from reality into allegory, and encoding them, as it were, out of recognition' (Fliedl 1989: 141). Ironically, Klimt's strategy of shifting femininity into allegory is one replicated by both Alex and Netusil: Alex through his reduction of Milena to an object that reflect his own desires; Netusil turning Milena into an imaginary cipher when he visualizes a crime scene. Resultantly neither of these male voyeurs ever perceives the real Milena, she is only ever a surface that reflects back their own perceptions, their own preoccupations, a femininity constructed through a bricolage of facts, photographs, recollections and fantasies.

This act of looking and perception is one that Alex raises in his lecture to his students, he plays a complex game playing on the tension between image, gaze and word. For Alex projects in front, and behind his students, a series of images, from a child looking on at his parent's lovemaking, to a series of historical voyeurs (Stalin, J Edgar Hoover included). As Alex describes the image he moves the projector onto the next slide,

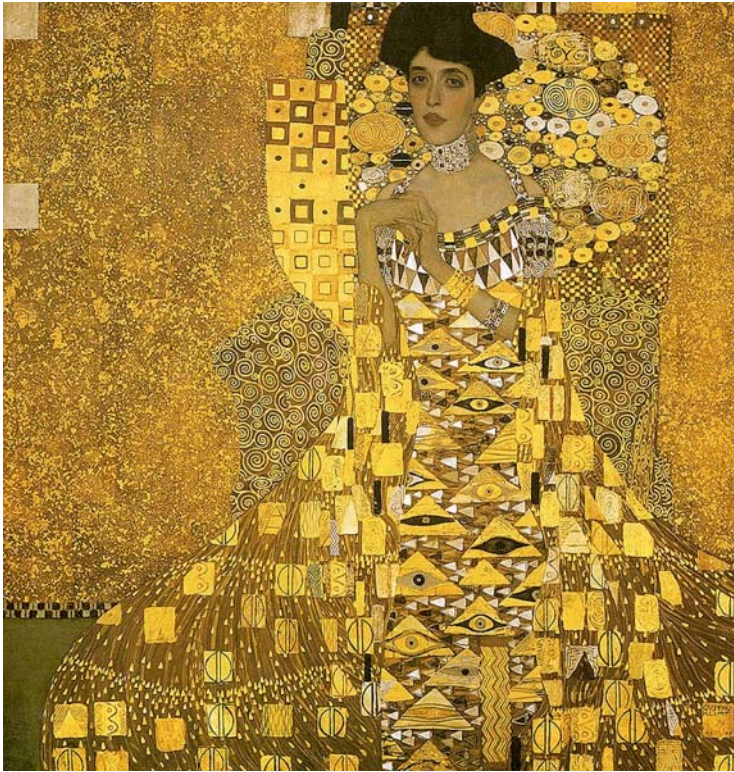
making his students turn, move and misrecognise the image. This deconstruction of the act of looking however, finds Alex himself guilty of voyeuristic complacency, particularly in terms of understanding Milena, as I shall now explain below.

Milena's doubled nature (as in her being an object created by either Netusil or Alex) is one replicated in the production history behind these dyadic portraits. For importantly both *Adele* and *Judith*, though separated by six years, presents the spectator with differing representations of the same model, Adele Bloch-Bauer (see images 4.17 & 4.18); wife of a Viennese banker and industrialist, who according to some sources was Klimt's long-term mistress. Intriguingly the artworks shared corporeal inspiration was not, at the time, public knowledge. Allegedly even Bloch-Bauer's husband did not recognize his wife in *Judith*, even though she is adorned with a distinctive choker (a choker also present in *Adele*) that was according to Frank Whitford 'a present from her husband' (Whitford 1990: 12).

This connection between throat and ownership, a collar that denotes matrimony and wealth, chimes with *Bad Timing*'s recurring visual and thematic motif located around the female throat (the unicorn tethered by the tree, and the tracheotomy performed on Milena being two notable examples). In the context of Klimt's females and their intersection with Milena the choker can be read as a signifier for male ownership, denoting the female as a social commodity. A commodity whose social function, a function that drives Alex's desires in the film, is simply one that reaffirms the patriarchal line (as in reproduction) through the suppression of their own identity (for example the traditional taking of the husband's name). Hence in the context of Adele Bloch-Bauer the enclosing of the throat can be considered a substitute for the wedding band, that hegemonic symbol of fidelity and heterosexuality, denoting her husband's claim to ownership, through name and ornamentation. What occurs is a symbiosis of colour and ornamentation for as Frank Whitford argues:

The painting creates an impression of wealth, influence and sensuality by means of its rich and polished surface. Klimt shows Adele Bloch-Bauer *not as she really was, nor even as she might have wished herself to be, but rather as her husband (who commissioned the painting) desired her to be seen by others*. The portrait is adorned with ornament for much the same reason that she wore the gowns, furs and jewelry her husband gave her - not only to embrace her beauty but also to exhibit his taste and affluence: the painting, after all, was hung in a prominent position in the sitter's home, where it proclaimed her husband's artistic discernment and status.

(Whitford 1990: 9-10) [Italics my emphasis]



**Image 4.18: *Adele Bloch Bauer* (1907),
Oil and gold leaf on canvas.**

In contrast the intersection of Milena with the portrait of *Adele* offers a poignant discourse on femininity as object, as commodity. One aspect reflected within the *mise-en-scene* is the recurring motif of brightly coloured and ornate brooches that Milena wears, a disembodied gold hand with red nails, a gold Kingfisher, and a snake amongst others. Fliedl links the prominence of ornamentation in Klimt's work to the tension between body, space and identity arguing that:

[...] the spatial definition of a location has been replaced by the heraldic integration of the figure into the surface of the picture. Merging into complex ornamental areas, the women are virtually banished to the painting's background – from which naturalistic depictions of the subject's face, features and hands protrude. As a result of this pronounced difference between naturalistic and decorative two-dimensional elements. Klimt emphasized a woman's gestures and features and therefore also her expression, character and the significance of her personality. On the other hand, however, these parts of the body also appear like fragments or iconic elements, oddly detached from the rest of the body [...] the increasing use

of ornaments in Klimt's portraits was gradual development. The ladies portrayed became more and more 'disembodied'. Unlike his other, 'anonymous' ladies portraits, it is not the entire body which is given erotic significance, but the eroticism is shifted onto the ornaments [...] Furthermore, the ornaments add an element of material luxury and preciousness to the characters [...] Their ornamental garments [...] a reflection of their social prestige.

(Fliedl 1989: 213-14)

This ornamenting strategy is also prominent within *Bad Timing*, though not simply as an erotically charged extrusion. A notable example occurs when Milena parts from Stefan, a parting that takes place in the non-space of the border bridge that crosses the Danube, a central component of their final exchange is a gold hand attached to Milena's jacket (see images 4.19 & 4.20).



Image 4.19: Border Farewell (1).



Image 4.100: Border Farewell (2).

This item of jewellery stands out on the black background of Milena's coat; a close-up reveals the red nails, green wedding ring and matching watch. An elegant hand of femininity that stands as a memento of her and Stefan's relationship, one marked by notions of marriage. Stefan gently caresses the hand for a moment, lost in thought, at this moment this ornate disembodied left hand acts as a memory of matrimony of a relationship over, one assumes an artifact of her past relationship with Stefan, replete with a green jeweled ring. When Stefan removes the ring from Milena, it is not from the left, but from the right, even their sense of state sanctioned marriage is one resisted by Milena, who takes the ring back from Stefan before their final parting.

Milena thus in turn, through her connection with *Adele*, is aligned with a female body constructed for male gratification, both for her husband and also for Klimt whose technique when painting his models, was first to capture them nude, and then overlay their bodies with his gold and colours. *Adele* brings to the fore the idea that Milena's true self is one that can never be ascertained, one concealed beneath a screen of colour, and indeed in *Bad Timing* Milena's presence is one that is negotiated primarily through the gaze and the memory of the patriarch. Her presence is always informed through the patriarchal gaze. Thus both spectator and characters never see the 'real' Milena, only the one that has been reduced to allegory, to object.

It is worth noting that Klimt painted Adele Bloch-Bauer once more in 1912, a painting that differed greatly in style and tone, as Whitford argues:

The later Bloch-Bauer portrait is of a real human being, of a recognizable social type and even of a complex personality. The sense of confrontation with a real person which this portrait provides is almost unique in Klimt's work [...].

(Whitford 1990: 150)

So this absent portrait, one that does not feature in the film, gives us a 'real human being' but is irrelevant and hence omitted in terms of *Bad Timing*'s thematic preoccupations, for it is not a real human being that Alex or Netusil want, but instead a femininity that reflects their own desires. Adele is femininity as commodity, femininity as object, femininity as complicit and complacent. For Milena she represents all that she does not want to be, wife, lover, object, trophy, and all that Alex desires her to be. In some respects, at points, Milena becomes Adele, a notable example being the sequence in which Milena tidies the flat, her red dress the only notable manifestation of colour. In the sequence it is noticeable that the print of *The Kiss* that Alex had hung up is now absent, as if it was no longer relevant due to Milena's desire to acquiesce to Alex's demands (she reinvents her flat as a space that she thinks Alex desires, tidying the kitchen – the epicentre of domesticity – and replacing her purple sheets with Alex's 'favourite' notably white).

However Alex desires nothing more than sex, rejecting Milena's desire for conversation (an act of discourse that would afford a sense of equality to the relationship rather than her acquiescing to his demands). One could say that Alex desires *Judith*, not the complacency of *Adele* but a femininity that will offer sex as and when he desires (though as I will go onto discuss *Judith* is not without threat). Intriguingly of course this entire sequence is borne from the imagined gaze of Netusil, and thus at this moment Milena is both *Adele* femininity as conformity, as submissive, and allegory, femininity as imagined corporeality.



**Image 4.21: *Judith I* (1901),
Oil and gold leaf on canvas,
84 x 42 cm.**

In contrast to the demur aesthetic and representation of *Adele*, *Judith I* (alternatively known as *Judith & Holofernes*) is a body of femininity that seems to offer both sex and death. For example *Judith* has been described as a ‘femme fatale’ (Fliedl 1989: 140), an ‘active heroine [...] overwhelmed by erotic feelings [...] and [thus] dangerously unpredictable’ (Ibid: 140).

This sense of irrationality is one manifest in the painting’s depiction of Judith. According to the biblical tale, Judith saves her city of Meselieh, which was under siege by Holofernes’ army. Judith, allegedly a beautiful Hebrew widow, enters Holofernes’ camp, and whilst he is incapacitated through drink, seduces and then beheads him. She returns to the city with her trophy and her people are able to resist their enemy.

Judith is a femininity that is one whose beauty leads to the masculine losing their sense of rationality (as Alex does in his pursuit of Milena) and further is one that represents

that ultimate psychoanalytical construct of femininity, castration, as a means to resist. This juxtaposition of Alex, a lecturer in psychoanalysis, with this portrait, establishes the stereotypical Freudian perception of femininity as threat, one whose power lingers in her sexuality, and hence must be controlled, contained. *Judith* becomes the template for Alex's perception of Milena, femininity and in turn the power relationship between the sexes, one that is based on negating woman as a source of the sexual and castrating threat.

Thus the play between *Adele*/Milena and *Judith*/Alex is as much about perception, fear and of course the construction of femininity as it is a moment of 'contemplation' (Izod 1992: 105). Through the juxtaposition of gaze and the recreation of femininity there emerges a complex flow of connections, assumptions and fears that connect to the film's thematic preoccupations. Connections and flows that as the first discussion in this case study sought to explore is played out not only through theme and narrative but also colour, space and time.

Conclusion

The introduction to this thesis commenced with a quote from Roeg, that one should abandon all ‘preconceptions’ when entering the cinema (Hacker and Price 1991: 353). In some respect this thesis has endeavoured to meet such demands, to abandon my own theoretical and intellectual preconceptions of film and theory, in fact to abandon my own preconceptions of Roeg as an auteur. Consequently, this thesis can be conceived as a map of a journey, one defined by shifting discourses and plurality, one that envisages colour not as a singular quality (of semiotic similitude) but that of multiplicity.

Importantly what has occurred through colour, my own personal plunge into the chromatic, is that the thesis that has emerged, is one far removed from its original conception. For the initial impetus behind this thesis was simply to reassess Roeg through those very familiar elements that have permeated the majority of past writing on his films, questions of time, editing and elliptical narrative. Though such work, I feel, still needs to be addressed (for Roeg’s career demands further reconsideration) what my own focus on colour has enabled is a discussion of the auteur without the auteur. In other words, notions of chronology, of artistic evolution, of context and career have been rendered somewhat irrelevant through a focus on the image itself.⁶⁶ Instead what has emerged is a body of work that has evolved into (I hope) a far more complex and provocative argument than simply one beholden to question of intent and design.

Admittedly, one accusation that could be levelled at this thesis is that it feels like a bridge that never quite spanned the chasm between its two differing concerns, that of the director and the aesthetic. That neither is fully discussed, that neither is fully covered. However, as I argued in the introduction, and as I hope became evident in the case-studies as they developed, to have embarked on a full discussion of Roeg’s career whilst engaging with the questions surrounding film colour would have resulted in nothing more than a thesis of empirical nature, the classic ‘and then’ process of analysis. The resultant thesis defined discourses by auteurist intent, I would argue, would have added little to the writing on Roeg that already exists, and in fact, would have been to the detriment of both subjects. As for colour, to embark on a full discussion of its role within film and film theory would be outside the scope of a thesis.

Hence looking at colour through Roeg, as much as I look at Roeg through colour, has enabled me to discuss both without becoming overwhelmed by the scale of the project. What this thesis has attempted to consider is the potential within colour. Not simply by focussing on queries of hues and tones, questions of labelling and defining, but how colour, this seemingly natural and ever present discourse, can potentially be discussed. Where colour can take an approach to a film, an auteur, a moment in cinema, and what colour can enable a theorist to say. In other words colour becomes, paradoxically a language, a means of utterance, colour enables me to talk through the image.

In fact, through the three case studies what I have attempted to bring to the fore is the complexity and intellectual potential of colour as a discourse within film theory. Whether it be colour as a discourse of violence, masculinity, the body, a moment of synaesthesia or painting, what I hope has been demonstrated is that film colour is a presence that is never passive, inert, nor innocent. In fact, one outcome of this thesis is simply the finding that colour is a complex form, one that resists the roles and definitions that make other elements of film (editing, costume and setting for example) simpler to engage with, but if one is prepared to plunge headlong in, can move analysis on a film or an image towards productive areas. Donald Judd in his writing on the relationship between artists and their implementation and interaction with colour wrote the following, that:

A basic problem for artists at the beginning is that while colour is crucial in their work, its development being a force, the information about colour is extensive and occurs in many forms, partly technical and partly philosophical. The technical information is irrelevant and uninteresting until it is needed. The philosophy seldom fits.

(Judd 1994: 22)

As this thesis has developed I found myself in a similar position to that of Judd's artist, omitting in-depth consideration of the technical, ignoring the discussions of the chemical nature of differing film stocks, the function of lens and the wavelengths of light, and indeed have found myself drawn into discourses of colour that are on the edge of more traditional philosophical engagement. In fact what has happened in this journey through colour is something that I was not expecting to happen, that is a

moment of personal theoretical liberation.⁶⁷ That beyond simply discovering that colour is a provocative and productive means of re-evaluating Roeg's most critically and theoretically acclaimed works (beyond simply a regurgitation of those traditional, and familiar, signifiers of his work e.g. editing, narrative and thematic and visual motifs) that through colour my own engagement with film has enabled me to rediscover the intellectual complexity of the image. Importantly colour, for all its complexities, reflected back a theoretical mirror in which I found that, for me personally, theory should not be the concern. That, by focusing in on this one element of the *mise-en-scene*, a focus on what some theorists would deem unworthy of intellectual consideration, is not a retrogressive step, but a step forward for film theory.

Recently I have come to the conclusion that film theory seems to have become bored of the image, bored of talking about the film itself. Increasingly theoretical focus has positioned the film as a catalyst for discussions of other more socio-cultural and philosophical relevance. Talking about the image itself seems to have become increasingly unfashionable in this decade of multimedia, transnationalism, and empiricism. That, in some respects, the image is positioned as being best for those starting out in film theory, appropriate only to those who have a basic level of understanding.

This thesis is a response then to the denigration of the image. For me the image is the film, the image is the foundation of film theory, this thesis, as much as it was about Roeg and not about Roeg, about colour and not about colour, is about one thing, a return to the image itself. Not a return of neo-formalist writing, nor the current trend that permeates some film theory of simply describing, that moment in which you want to ask simply, so what? This thesis was about my own fascination with the image, with this neglected discourse hidden within the *mise-en-scene*, one instead of a reductive strategy, is in fact a moment of liberation, a moment of return to the image itself. A moment that I hope both my subjects understand is beneficial to both. As David Batchelor noted towards the end of *Chromophobia* 'an inquiry into colour can take you just about anywhere' (Batchelor 2000: 124). So this thesis feels like I have wandered an intellectual labyrinth, following the crumbs of both colour and Roeg, exploring dead

⁶⁷ As Henri Matisse found 'colour, above all, and perhaps even more than drawing, is a means of liberation' (Matisse 1945: 65).

ends and new avenues, and yet with no sign of an exit. As Socrates once noted, and a piece of writing I feel that captures succinctly this journey:

Then it seemed like falling into a labyrinth: we thought we were at the finish, but our way bent round and we found ourselves as it were back at the beginning, and just as far from that which we were seeking at first.

Socrates (quoted in Kerényi 1976: 92)

In some respects I have found myself back at the beginning of this journey. That by thinking through colour has led to my consumption of film akin to a labyrinth. A chromatic labyrinth that offers up endless possibilities and paths to explore, but does not obscure the focus of the work itself, that is the image.

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