The Repetition of Difference: Marginality and the Films of Hal Hartley

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But you know, everyone really only makes one film in his life, and then he breaks it up into fragments and makes it again with just a few little variations each time.

Jean Renoir[1]

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[1]From preface to *Flirt* screenplay (Hartley 1996: vii).

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ABSTRACT

THE REPETITION OF DIFFERENCE: MARGINALITY AND THE FILMS OF HAL HARTLEY

Hal Hartley is prominent within the recent rise of the independent film-making movement in America. This thesis is centred around the issues of repetition, difference and marginality which characterise his films. Marginality inhabits Hartley's position as an American independent who makes a European art-house style of film. He is an *auteur* who articulates his influences through his reference to Godard. Marginality is also the dominant characteristic of those who people Hartley's films. Difference, which is marginality pushed to its greatest extent, is further imposed upon Hartley's characters. It is interposed through Hartley's concern with repetition, in which the degree of formal repetition becomes so high that difference is forefronted. This thesis asserts that the essential difference in Hartley's films lies in gender.

After an introduction which engages with the issues highlighted above, Chapter I contains a literature review which serves both to delineate critical opinions on Hartley, and to demonstrate the lack of sustained material which this thesis hopes to go some way towards redressing. Chapter II's taxonomy emphasises the consistency of Hartley's concern with repetition. It establishes both the formal repetition, linear and cyclical, which structures Hartley's films, and the behavioural repetition which his characters exhibit. Chapter III extends the taxonomy by applying theories of repetition to *Trust*. It uses Deleuze to engage with the tensions between the linear and cyclical modes of formal repetition in the film. An analogy with minimalism introduces difference into this repetition. Finally, the chapter examines Matthew's marginality and crisis of masculinity, embodied within the compulsion to repeat passive behaviour, in light of Freud's theories on repetition.

Chapter IV extends male marginality into the interrogation of Thomas' criminality in *Amateur*. It is a criminality largely instituted through parodic generic

reference. Thomas' amnesia does not allow him either to repent or to escape the reputation through which his criminality is perpetuated. Religion, notably the figure of Redeemer, is introduced as a means to bring about Thomas' redemption. The film's engagement with the resonances of pornography problematises both the Redeemer, Isabelle (who is both Virgin and Whore) and wider gender issues. Chapter V extends the concern with pornography, which defiles the ecstatic experience of writing characteristic of *Henry Fool*'s shamanic figures. The film questions Henry's status as a criminal who refuses to repent. The blurring of legal and moral judgement in the film suggests an analogy with the genre of a morality play. Without repentance, redemption occurs though forgiveness and trust. The pornographic, which in invoked but never seen, serves to interrogate gender positioning in relation to it.

Chapter VI examines female agency, with *The Unbelievable Truth*'s Audry ostensibly exerting control over her commodification. Audry is not as able to control her commodification as much as the film suggests. She loses her ideals through the sale of images of herself. The film attempts a Godardian engagement with the problem of the commodified female image. It does so without showing the images of Audry, resisting their inherently exploitative nature and not allowing them to become pornographic by eliciting viewing pleasure. Yet by not showing these images, Hartley increases their coding as objects of desire. He does not escape the problems of the *auteur* using female images. Chapter VII concerns *Simple Men*, a film which seeks to make reparation for the exploitative use of women by placing women as the film's necessary centre. However, in alluding to male-centred genres, Hartley's film displaces women into the margins of male scenarios, reducing them both to function and difference in relation to men. Rather than the problems of femininity, the film engages with the troubled masculinities which its genre invokes.

Chapter VIII reprises repetition in light of Hartley's wider questioning of gender. Applying formal and behavioural theories of repetition to *Flirt*, the chapter asks: What is the difference in Hartley's repetitions? Since *Flirt*'s repetitions involve the gendering of masochism as female, and mark femininity as the essential difference, it can retrospectively be asserted that it is gender that is the key difference,

the ultimately signified, of Hartley's repetitions. It is with this that the thesis concludes by drawing together the central themes of Hartley's films. These include male marginality, and its association with troubled masculinities, and the problematic associations of pornography with the objectification and commodification of women. Although marginality extends across gender boundaries within Hartley's films, it is ultimately women who are more fundamentally marginalised by them. This is brought about through the association of the difference which inhabits repetition with femininity.

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

Arguably the most significant cinematic phenomenon in America in the 1990s has been the rise of the independent film-making movement. Hal Hartley, himself prominent within the most recent re-incarnation of this movement in American cinema, has identified a cycle in the attention given to American independent film (notably the critical acknowledgement of film-makers such as Jim Jarmusch and Spike Lee in the 1980s, and Scorsese and Copolla in the 1970s) (Fried 1993: 38-40). It is indeed the case that it is between the 'genius above' and the 'fools below' that Hartley toils (Bailey 1996). Recent books on independent cinema[1] recognise both Hartley's importance and his singularity: 'none of them [independent film-makers] so embodies the spirit of contemporary indie film-making in America as Hal Hartley' (Andrew 1998: 279). Hartley's independence is defined by more than just budget, evident in the fact that he made his first feature for a reputed $75,000 and *Simple Men* for $2 million without any violent shift in his vision. Rather, his independence is a matter of style, aesthetic and an autonomy which he places above the need for conditional funding.

It is this autonomy which has led to Hartley falling within the definition of *auteurism* which articulates his relationship with European art-house cinema. Pierson refers to Hartley's 'European-style *auteur* career' as a 'variation on the Jarmusch model, only faster' (Pierson 1996: 202). Hartley's films have much in common with the art-house style to which they aspire. This aspiration is articulated in Hartley's allusive relationship with Godard, who, as will be seen, persists as a point of reference in Hartley's work. Hartley's tendency towards citing Godard is emblematic within an interview in which Hartley probes Godard about the nature and future of film-making.

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[1] Hartley is cited in Pierson's 'Guided tour across a decade of independent American cinema' (Pierson 1995), which takes an institutional look at the problems of finance and production for independent film-makers. He is given his own chapter in Andrew's book on 'maverick' film-makers (Andrew 1998: 279-312). Further, he will be featured both in Hillier's forthcoming BFI reader on independent cinema, and in the chapter which I have been asked to contribute to the Yvonne Tasker (ed.) Routledge volume: *Fifty Key Contemporary Filmmakers*.

Aesthetic dependence is asserted within the preface as being as important as the 'drive for independence' (Bowen 1994: 14). More widely, Hartley evokes the European aesthetic in making films in which its characteristic loose causality, the problems of communication, the portrayal of interpersonal relationships, chance encounters and existential angst are writ large (Bordwell 1985: 205-233). Both his style, and way of questioning the nature of cinema through creating it, is film-making in the mode of the Godardian *auteurism* through which Hartley's allusive engagement with art-house cinema is articulated. Although Hartley's status as an independent informs the marginality with which he is concerned, he will be considered as not so much an American independent film-maker as an *auteur*

In being an American independent who invokes a European art-house aesthetic Hartley is doubly marginalised, not least in relation to the studio system from which, in deference to the autonomy which perpetuates an untainted vision, Hartley remains decidedly separate. His own marginality as a film-maker is reflected in his concern with the marginal character whose age, intellect, gender and positioning in relation both to society, and the laws upon which it is founded, brings about marginalisation. The resonances of this marginality are many, involving the establishment of tensions within the films. Marginality can be suggestive of the positive, such as questioning blind conformity, having a contemplative nature, and searching for self-discovery. Yet marginality is also a position of exclusion from society, or displacement into its periphery. The central tension is thus between notions of rejection of (an active position) and rejection by (a passive position). For Hartley himself, marginality affords a positioning in relation to society, a vantage point which allows for a commentary on that society to be effected. This thesis will in part explore the question of whether this positive perception of marginality can be extended to his characters' experiences of it.

Marginality can further be extended into the notion of difference which is marginality pushed to its furthest point, marginality more fully asserted. Beyond marginality stands the repetition and difference discourse in which Hartley participates, and which marginality inhabits. Repetition, which will be seen to be

central to Hartley's films, embodies many facets. The allusive quality in Hartley's work could be reduced to repetition, notably of the style of art-house cinema which Godard personifies for Hartley. In using a shifting repertory including Martin Donovan, Adrienne Shelly, Robert Burke, Elina Löwensohn, Karen Sillas and Bill Sage, Hartley repeats actors. Hartley also populates his films with recurring types such as the marginal or criminal personality, using recurrent names such as Ned and Bill. There is even a literal repetition of characters, since Vic and Mike appear both in *The Unbelievable Truth* and *Simple Men*. The consistency of Hartley's concerns which will be demonstrated brings about a repetition of themes from one film to the next. These themes include the problem of the use of the female image, the fluidity of identity and the difficulty of defining characters (as criminal), the impact of one person upon another, redemptive and life-changing.[2] More than this, repetition is a formal device utilised by Hartley both to distance and engender empathy. Since difference inhabits repetition, the interrogation of modes of difference, and, more specifically, the question: 'What is the difference?' will inform much of the thesis.

The issue of repetition serves to indicate the necessary melding of paradigms in which the thesis will participate. This is because repetition has two distinct facets: the formal and the behavioural, which a juxtaposition of theories will edify. Both philosophical and psychoanalytic approaches to film will be used. Deleuze will serve to illuminate the philosophical / structural aspects of the films. Psychoanalytic theory from Freud, through Mulvey, to the more recent work of Rodowick and Doane will be reprised in order better to understand behavioural repetition. The unorthodox compounding of contradictory paradigms is here excused by the assertion that theory is to be used in order to illuminate the films rather than the films be used to illustrate the application of theory. A promiscuous approach, it is hoped that the tension between paradigms, rather than problematising the thesis, will assist in revealing the tensions which are inherent to Hartley's films, and enlighten not only through their application but due to their intrinsic conflicts.

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[2]This is what one could call the Newtonian impact of one person either upon another, or upon a community. It will be seen that, in states of physical or literal transition, the characters who constitute moving bodies in Hartley's films bring about change in the lives of the people they encounter.

Although the thesis will treat each film as a distinct unit, placing it within its own chapter,[3] it will not be structured along chronological lines. It will resist the temptation to view the early, Long Island films (*The Unbelievable Truth*, *Trust* and *Simple Men*) as a trilogy, with *Amateur* marking a point of departure into urban New York whose trajectory has been followed in the globalisation of later films.[4] Rather, a more organic approach to the ordering of the films will be taken which places thematic concerns above chronology. It is not the intention to deny the sense of progression and increasing maturity which is clearly present in Hartley's films, but to recognise the consistency of his overall vision. This coherence is evident in the fact that the marginality of characters with which he is concerned is not undermined but merely displaced by Hartley's move from suburbia. His style has been consistent, with Hartley's films constituting a genre unto themselves (Hanks 1997).

It is this congruity of style and theme which allows for a non-chronological approach to be supported. The structure of the thesis hopes to establish new relationships between films that would not otherwise be placed together; new associations, new formulations of meaning, new perceptual relationships, resonances and dissonances which arise out of distemporal juxtapositions. This is particularly brought about through the coupling of films according to their differing treatments of consistent themes: *Amateur* with *Henry Fool*, *Simple Men* with *The Unbelievable Truth* and, at either end of the thesis, *Trust* with *Flirt*.

The first chapter of the thesis contains a literature review which will establish the context of critical opinion in relation to Hartley. In response to the lack of

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[3] A note on the shorts: rather than give Hartley's short films their own chapter(s), they will be integrated as appropriate into the discourses that are set up around the features. Although usefully crystallising Hartley's style (the Godardian allusion, the concern with interpersonal relationships) they do not constitute a coherent unit which warrants placing them in a separate chapter. It should also be noted that it was not possible to gain access to Hartley's early shorts, filmed either during or shortly after film school, namely *Kid*, *The Cartographer's Girlfriend* and *Dogs*. Although included in the filmography, they will not otherwise be referred to for this reason.
[4] *Flirt* is set in New York, Berlin and Tokyo, and *Monster*, which Hartley is shooting at the time of writing, is partially being filmed in Iceland.

sustained academic writing about his films, the literature review will necessarily adopt an egalitarian approach to the available material, an inclusive policy which recognises the problem of making discriminatory value judgements on the worth of sources. It will serve not only to give a useful overview of matters of Hartley's genre, style and characterisation, but to highlight this deficit of sustained writing, a lack which this thesis hopes to go some way towards redressing by setting up a discourse around Hartley's films.

Chapter II, a taxonomy of repetitions, will serve to establish the theme of repetition with which chapters III and VIII (discussing *Trust* and *Flirt* respectively) are explicitly concerned. In listing and categorising incidences of repetition within Hartley's films it will be fairly rudimentary, but will be useful in setting up key notions such as the tensions between repetition's linear and cyclical forms, and formal and behavioural modes of repetition. It will also recognise the humour which is integral to Hartley's work.

Springing from the taxonomy, Chapter III will attach theoretical discourse to the bare repetition with which the taxonomy is concerned, applying philosophical as well as psychoanalytic approaches to the repetition which inhabits *Trust*. Both formal and behavioural, the key to *Trust*'s repetitions will be seen to lie within the compulsion to repeat which Matthew and his father embody. The way in which these repetitions articulate Matthew's marginality and reveal the crisis of his masculinity will be explored.

Chapter IV extends the marginality which characterises Matthew's emasculation into the questioning of the criminality of Thomas in *Amateur*. A gangster / thriller, *Amateur* at once utilises and subverts the genre. The film asks to what extent Thomas has been redeemed by an amnesia which at once renders him, under the influence of Isabelle, 'good', and yet prevents him repenting of that which he cannot remember. The subtext of Catholicism which informs Hartley's films is here embodied within the former nun Isabelle, and the chapter will ask if her ability to effect a redemption for Thomas is undermined by her assumption of the clothing of

the symbolic whore. The theme of pornography within *Amateur* establishes a discourse surrounding the exploitative use of images of women, as well as asserting the marginality of the men who are associated with its production and sale.

Chapter V will take as its focus *Henry Fool*, *Amateur*'s correlate, a film which extends the discourses surrounding criminality, redemption and pornography. The film is concerned with two male protagonists: the shamanic Henry, and Simon, a garbage man. Henry has an impact upon the microcosmic society into which he gradually becomes assimilated, notably on Simon, whose crisis of articulation Henry resolves in encouraging him to write. It will be seen that the interchange of Henry's character with that of Simon is of import. Unlike *Amateur*'s Thomas, who is unable truly to repent of his past, Henry actively refuses to repent. Nonetheless, the film tries to induce his redemption, invoking the resonances of the *Confession* which Henry has written. Whilst Henry's writing is unsuccessful, Simon wins a Nobel Prize for a work which is at once lauded for its greatness and reviled as pornography. Once again, pornography is invoked as a medium through which the discourses surrounding gender positioning in relation to it can be articulated, as the film posits female acceptance of Simon's work.

Chapter VI will address *The Unbelievable Truth*. It will be seen that the film turns its female protagonist Audry into a site of fiscal exchange, her body becoming a commodity as she enters into a modelling career. By engaging with the problematic associations of the commodified female image, the film refers explicitly to the similar discourse which Godard has established. The film is apparently positive in its portrayal of women. Audry gains financial reward through modelling, assuming greater control over her life. However, it will be asserted that *The Unbelievable Truth* concedes that the resonances of Audry's commodification are more problematic than this allows. Nonetheless, a false relationship between complicity and control is established, with Audry ultimately being marginalised and rendered powerless by her sale of her image.

Leading on from this, Chapter VII will address the way in which *Simple Men* attempts to redress this objectifying use of women by exhibiting benevolence in its portrayal of them. The film sets up a highly self-conscious discussion around Madonna in which the female characters promote her strength, and the males exhibit an enlightened awareness of the problematic associations of her commodification. Yet, in placing the film within male centred genres, turning women into signifiers in male scenarios, the film defeats its purpose. It is apparently positive in its portrayal of women, asserting the narrative strength of Kate, and the iconic strength of Elina. However, the film reduces these women both to function and disruption in relation to the quest narratives and buddy dynamic in which *Simple Men* indulges. More than this marginalisation of the women through the displacement of focus onto the men, *Simple Men* continues the discourse of male marginality which its generic points of reference (the road movie, the Western) establish, extending the emblematic 'trouble' of the film into both gender and genre.

Chapter VIII, which takes *Flirt* as its focus, rounds off the thesis by returning to the issue of repetition. The reprisal of the theme of repetition which this chapter constitutes allows for a reconsideration of the repetition which is key to Hartley's films in light of the wider discourses in which the films participate, and which previous chapters highlighted. The film in which Hartley's concern with repetition reaches its climax, *Flirt*'s degree of repetition is so high that the difference which *Trust* formally gestures towards is here forefronted. And it is through this difference that the culmination of Hartley's interest in gender, and other modes of marginality is articulated.

Repetition will thus be the central motif of the thesis, through which the notions of difference and marginality will be explored. It will be discovered that the differences which inhabit the repetitions are of greatest import. It is hoped that this thesis will, in adopting a more organic approach to the films than a chronological one, demonstrate the consistency of Hartley's vision, his continued interest in the questioning of the way in which an *auteur* uses women, his interest in gender, his stylistic quirkiness, and the humour which belies his more serious interrogation of his

status as a film-maker. And it is this status as constructed through critical opinion to which the thesis will now turn.

CHAPTER I

HAL HARTLEY: LITERATURE REVIEW

Hal Hartley: Critical Opinion of the Film-maker

Hal Hartley is a prominent figure within the independent film-making movement in America. The critical recognition he has received, principally within film journals and on the internet, contrasts sharply with the lack of sustained academic research into his films. Nonetheless, there is a proliferation of resources which serve to illuminate the status which Hartley holds. It is these articles, variously taking as their focus either Hartley's general film-making practice or his films in particular, which this review will explore.

General reviews of Hal Hartley's work, striving to establish his place within American cinema, tend to make reference (either explicit or implicit) to the American *auteur* theory championed by Andrew Sarris.[5] It should perhaps be noted that an ironic symmetry exists between critics' failure to acknowledge the debt owed by American *auteurism* to the European *politique des auteurs*, and their neglect of the influence exerted by European art-house cinema over Hartley's style of film. A tension also exists within critical definition of Hartley as an independent, signalling problems of authorial and institutional subjectivity which beg for examination. The general reviews under consideration below exemplify some of these occasionally conflicting reviews of Hartley's film-making. They also begin to discuss issues of genre, style and characterisation which will be central to further discussion of Hartley's films.

The *auteurist* view of Hartley is manifest in Andrew Sarris' article on the film-maker (Sarris 1993: 66-68). He indulges in a flick through his 'portfolio' (66) of

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[5]See Pam Cook (Cook 1985: 137), for an account of Sarris' role in the establishment of the American *auteur* theory.

auteurs, before granting Hartley ascension into that realm. Sarris displaces our attention away from Hartley's position as an independent, deeming 'the rhetoric of independence and integrity' to be evidence of a 'hopelessly middle-brow movie mentality' (66). Hartley is thus to be defined by the new-found *auteurist* status with which Sarris invests him. Hence within the article, Sarris, championing the cult of the *auteur*, makes an obligatory if insubstantial allusion to Hartley's 'Godardian' pomposity in interviews (67). In terms of the films themselves, Sarris talks of the way in which 'the same intensity of feeling, the same controlled irony and the same degree of romantic aspiration has been confirmed and reconfirmed' in Hartley's films (68). Despite listing perceived faults, referring to what he sees as Hartley's 'messy' work, his 'self-consciousness, flippancy, intellectual snobbery, campy contrivances [and] perpetual paranoia' (68), Sarris makes high claims for Hartley, whom he declares: 'has zeroed in on what is most important in life and in the cinema. He has gone beyond the minutiae of superficial Freudianism to scale the majestic heights of classical romance with a modern idiom' (68).

Conversely John Fried, in 'Rise of an Indie: An Interview with Hal Hartley' (Fried 1993: 38-40), seeks to emphasise Hartley's leading position within the rejuvenated independent film-making movement in the America of the 1990s. The piece, consisting of a discussion between Fried and Hartley, gives recognition to the commercial appeal of creative and interesting low-budget films, as well as to the potential conflict between higher budgets and a constancy of focus on the part of a film-maker. Fried seems to refer to this problematic tension when he places Hartley's films within a genre amalgamating both 'comic cynicism' and a 'relentless pursuit of truth' (38). Further, Fried identifies within Hartley's films characters who are plagued both by 'their own existential angst' and, in an emphasis upon the element of social satire within Hartley's films, by the 'banality of suburban life' (38). The 'unconventional use of a film's formal elements', 'carefully crafted dialog' (sic)[6] and 'host of ironic poses' (including gesture, deadpan monologue and dance) which

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[6]Where quotations from American sources are used throughout the thesis, they will similarly be represented in their original, American form. They will not, subsequently, be referenced.

characterise Hartley's films are referred to (38). However, for Fried it is an 'undeniable gift for creating humor and credibility out of such candour that gives his films the Hartley 'touch'' (38). It is this gift which, in concurrence with Sarris' assertion of *auteurism* over other directorial aspirations, Fried credits with the 'launch' of Hartley to *auteur* status (38), albeit within the independent context.

A further account of Hartley's style of film-making sees it described by Kent Jones as 'self-regarding cinema, with its carefully guarded, precious box of tricks' (Jones 1996: 68-72). Yet despite this, Jones' account of Hartley's film-making does not specifically refer to *auteurism*, nor for that matter to Hartley's position as an independent. Rather, the paradigm within which Jones attempts to place Hartley is that of the New Wave of visual art in the 1970s and 1980s. Jones refers to Hartley's 'pictorial formalism' (72) and 'geometrically precise' visuals (68), paradoxically identifying in Hartley's visual style both a 'rigorous calculation' (72) in which even emotions are subject to the overall structural design, and an 'excessive, untended layering of effects' (72). Jones seeks to expand upon the Godard link which other critics have already referred to by perceiving there to be a tension between Hartley's verbal and visual style. He writes of Hartley's 'woeful' and 'arch' aphoristic dialogue (68) and his 'almost autistic' obsession with human action, and its 'meaningless, poignantly hierarchical gestures' (72). According to Jones, Hartley is obsessed with 'pinning down the details and rhythms of middle-class life' (68). Hence Hartley's emphasis on the environments which his characters inhabit such as the 'oddly temporary refuges' (68) of kitchens and bathrooms and the interestingly placed bench which serves as *Trust*'s 'makeshift confessional' (68). Yet, curiously, Jones sees Hartley as being outside this middle class world. This is despite the fact that Hartley set his first two films in his native suburban environment of Lyndenhurst, Long Island. Jones mistakes Hartley's use of distanciation for 'studied *im*personality' (68, my emphasis) and implicitly invests him with the 'reflexively aggressive' (68) behaviour assigned to his characters.

Opinions as to how to discuss or define Hartley's general aesthetic are thus varied. Sarris deems it necessary to reject the placing of Hartley within the cultural

specificity of American independent cinema, favouring instead an *auteurist* view of the director. Fried allows Hartley to be defined by his leading position within independent cinema, and yet recognises what it is to secure *auteur* status in critical opinion. Jones, refusing to define Hartley by the *auteurism* to which his 'box of tricks' seems to refer, appears to flounder for definition before anachronistically placing Hartley within the New Wave of visual art in the 1970s and 1980s.

Definition by Genre

The challenge of definition which Hartley's general film-making aesthetic constitutes for critics is similarly extended to those reviewers who concern themselves with issues of style, characterisation and genre within specific films. The general evasion of genre which Sarris, Fried and Jones identify in Hartley's films continues as a site of contention as critics seek to interpolate Hartley's canon into existing, themselves problematic, genre boundaries. Categories such as romance, comedy and satiric suburban drama have been applied to Hartley's films, with perhaps the most consistently identified of these being comedy.

Romance

Despite the tendency which critics exhibit towards focusing upon the comic possibilities of Hartley's films, romance would initially appear to be the most obvious genre by which to define them. This is a set of films whose narratives generally concern the tentative development of relationships between their respective protagonists, as well as a search for the definition of love itself. The interactions between Maria and Matthew in *Trust*, Audry and Josh in *The Unbelievable Truth* and Isabelle and Thomas in *Amateur* exemplify this. It has been said of Hartley that 'what gives his films their appeal is not their artsy, smart, ironic exteriors, but the big, slushy heart pumping away underneath' (Hanks 1997).[7] Nonetheless, reviewers of *The*

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[7]Reviews sourced from the internet will not be referenced with page numbers, since they are not presented in that format. Those to which this applies are marked in the Bibliography.

Unbelievable Truth have emphasised the pragmatic way in which relationships are 'negotiated' (Moore 1991) as well as their more idealistic aspect. The film, it has been asserted, 'is at heart a love story whose lightness of touch betrays its more serious themes' (Moore 1991). It is this pragmatism rather than idealism that Hartley developed into the sort of 'paralysed romanticism' (Hoberman 1998) by which *Henry Fool* was later to be characterised.

Macnab, mirroring the character Bill McCabe who finds love within *Simple Men* despite his emphatic rejection of it, has elected to find romance in a film whose central maxim is that: 'there's no such thing as adventure and romance. There's only trouble and desire' (Macnab 1992: 47-48). Macnab justifiably argues that: 'contrary to McCabe's assertion, there is romance and adventure aplenty to be found in trouble and desire, and it is this Hartley seeks to harness in *Simple Men*' (48). This romance is similarly present in *Flirt*, despite the fact that it is a film whose very name is suggestive of an anti-romantic sentiment. Flirtation is defined within the film as 'a chaste, amorous relationship generally devoid of deep feelings' (Hartley 1996: 46). Yet *Flirt* displays a surprising tendency towards a romantic sensibility: 'What starts out looking like a rather cool intellectual exercise in playful formalism turns out to be a witty, astute and touching study of love, trust and emotional security' (Anon 1997a).

Although, contrary to generic convention, this is 'romance without commitment', 'romance that never quite comes to anything' (Hanks 1997), *Flirt*'s exact repetition of dialogue provides an 'absurdist twist' not only on the 'romantic notion of lovers who share a 'common language', but also on the way that true communication has been rendered impossible (Hoffman 1996). Unlike Hartley's short film *Surviving Desire*, whose courting scenes 'resemble out-takes from *Breakfast at Tiffany's*' (Anon 1994: 59), *Flirt* constitutes a commentary on the 'uneasy comings and goings of modern love' (Holden 1995) in the mode of more recent romance films.

In his discussion of *Trust*, Douglas Bauer (1994) places the film within the literary convention of an albeit contemporary courtly love. Sarris similarly identifies the temporal oddities of Hartley's particular form of romance by describing *Trust* as

'Classical romance with a modern idiom' (Sarris 1993: 68). Travers continues along the vein by defining *Trust* as a 'dysfunctional *Romeo and Juliet* for the nineties'. He finds the relationship between *Trust*'s Maria and Matthew to be both 'credible' and 'touching', yet, crucially, devoid of love itself: 'What they have is trust, something they try to convince themselves is better than love' (Travers 1991). Molly Haskell, on the contrary, finds within this: 'lyrical love story [...] one of the most captivating pairs of lovers in recent movie history [...] a riveting and profound portrait of [...] the desperate web of ambivalence in which we're caught the moment we love another person' (Haskell 1992). For Haskell, the love story with which *Trust* is concerned is not only captivating, but also harrowing. She negates the comic aspect which Terrence Rafferty includes within his definition of *Trust* as 'romantic comedy' (Rafferty 1991). Travers conversely emphasises the bathetic, comic aspect of Hartley's 'romances' in his discussion of *The Unbelievable Truth*: 'None of that love-is-the-answer pabulum for Hartley. Even when Audry and Josh finally do acknowledge their feelings, she keeps her eyes peeled for bombs, and he tells her, 'I don't trust anybody' (Travers 1990).

Comedy

Much like romance, comedy is a genre central to critical experience of these films, so central that even a reviewer who disagrees with such a definition feels it necessary to argue against it. Haskell is almost unique in refusing to define *Trust* as a comedy. She concedes that the film has: 'moments of high lunatic humor', but argues that 'it is not (critical encomia to the contrary) a comedy' (Haskell 1992). Disagreement with Haskell is unanimous. *Trust* has variously been described as 'splendidly odd-ball and beautifully observed black comedy' (Anon 1991a: 59), 'comedy with dark overtones' (Schwartzberg 1990), 'bleak, off-center comedy' (Rich 1990), and an 'existentialist comedy of manners' (Rafferty 1991).

Hartley's other films have amassed similar lists of comedy superlatives. *The Unbelievable Truth* is an 'unwieldy but wildly hilarious black comedy' (Travers 1990), 'literate, funny and charming' (Moore 1991), and 'a delightfully funny black comedy'

(Anon 1991b) which displays the 'exuberance of fresh comic thinking' (Travers 1990). *Simple Men* is an 'off-beat comedy' (Anon 1992a) with 'lemon-drop-dry humour' (Romney 1992) and stock comic characters (Macnab 1992: 48), a film which is 'never blatantly farcical' but rather witty in 'an Ionesco-like way' (Kauffmann 1992). *Amateur* is credited with pushing Hartley's 'spiky' humour to the fore (McCarthy 1994), hence talk of 'dark' and 'cruel' (Anon 1995a) humour within the film. Others choose to dwell upon the absurd[8] and surreal (McCarthy 1994) elements to *Amateur*'s comedy.

Similarly dark is *Henry Fool*, which is described as a 'black comedy' (Stone 1998) as well as a: 'comic satire that brilliantly captures a poet in motion' (Rozen and Gliatto 1998). *Surviving Desire's* humour: 'veers mightily close to Woody Allen' (Anon 1994), whilst *Flirt*, with an almost wilful lack of understanding on the part of the critic, is described as: 'a comedy, and a light one *even for Hartley*' (Taubin 1996, my emphasis). *The Daily Mail*'s critic describes *Flirt* in similar terms: 'The film is airy, inconsequential and occasionally amusing - rather like flirting ought to be' (Anon 1997b). Hartley himself is at once a 'gifted comic mannerist' (Travers 1991), and somebody whose 'attempts' at dark humour (Anon 1991c), however (implicitly un)successful, nonetheless seek to place him within the comic genre.

Suburban Satire

Hartley's films do not, however, fit comfortably into one genre. James talks of Hartley's films (*The Unbelievable Truth*, *Trust* and *Simple Men* in particular) involving: 'hermetic family relations, with larger issues as comic backdrops' (James 1994). The New Republic's critic similarly counterpoints those 'attempts' at dark humour within *Trust* with 'grim white suburban drama' (Anon 1991c), identifying another trend in definitions of Hartley's films: that of suburban satire. Rich links comedy and social commentary contrapuntally within *Trust*, calling it a 'comedy about dysfunctional families in working class suburbia' (Rich 1990). Travers talks of

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[8]McCarthy (1994) and Welsh and Brabetz (1995) both talk of *Amateur*'s absurdist humour.

Hartley's tendency to write and direct 'comedies that speak eloquently about the dislocation in American life' (Travers 1992), whilst Romney refers to *Simple Men*, a film set 'against a background of workaday family angst', as: 'a quizzical distancing from but also revelling in the absurdities of small-town American life' (Romney 1992). Implicit is the suggestion that there is a satirical aspect to the film's narrative concerns. Similarly concerned with the minutiae of the sector of society with which Hartley often concerns himself is *Henry Fool*, which is described as 'a postmodern view of suburban white trash in the US of A, deadpan and elliptical and achingly cool' (Williams 1998).

Fried, speaking more generally about Hartley's films, talks of the way in which his characters are universally plagued by the 'banality of suburban life', living in 'bleak, alienating worlds' (Fried 1993: 38). The brand of satire, although societal (Schwartzberg 1990) and hierarchical (Jones 1996: 72), is centred around the domestic rather than the political aspect of suburban society, a 'world of crumbling values' (Anon 1991a: 59) in which the concerns are familial (Haskell 1992) and issues of marriage and parenthood (Strick 1991: 53) are forefronted. Such satirical tendencies are similarly identified in *The Unbelievable Truth*, which displays a 'rigorous social conscience' (Travers 1990), and *Amateur*, which can be read as a 'wry look at the social role people play and the "real" characters hidden beneath them' (James 1994).

The Genre Alternatives

Critics are therefore agreed on the inability to confine Hartley's films within strict genre boundaries, identifying overlaps between the romantic, comic and satiric aspects of Hartley's work. Furthermore, there exists a proliferation of alternative categories into which critics have placed Hartley's films. *The Unbelievable Truth* has been described as a 'tall story' (Travers 1990). *Simple Men* has been defined as a 'comic strip' (Macnab 1992: 47), a 'classic novella' (McCarthy 1992), a 'mathematical analysis of the premises of road romance' in which we see 'precious little road' (Romney 1992), and as a 'Western' (McCarthy 1992) which embodies not only a 'nod

to the idea of European strangeness' (Kauffmann 1992), but also, apparently, an 'engagement' (as opposed to a brief flirtation) with the 'sexual politics of tough guy cinema' (Romney 1992). *Amateur*'s genre has variously been described as a melodrama (Kemp 1995: 42), a 'perverse' comedy-drama (Flatley 1995), a thriller (Travers 1995), a detective story (Anon 1995b), a 'neo-noir attempt at pulpier fiction' (Welsh and Brabetz 1995), an 'inaction action movie' (Rainer 1995), and a 'stylised parody of the self-discovery quest' (Anon 1995b).

Flirt has been undermined as a 'bagatelle' (Anon 1997c), '*Night on Earth* meets a promotional video from Relate' (Hemblade 1997), and an attempt at a 'sly postmodern examination of narrative expectations' which, in practice, 'reduces cinema to algebra' (Gilbey 1997). Yet it has also been lauded as a 'relief from the assembly-line movies of Hollywood and the violently derivative genre flicks cranked out by so many young film school grads' (Hoffman 1996). *Henry Fool* is variously described as a 'raw, patently unrealistic allegory' (Holden 1998), an 'antic melodrama' (Hoberman 1998), a 'near mini-epic on a New Jersey blue-collar family' (Elley 1997), and 'equal parts itinerant fable, salute to poetry, cultural critique, political satire, sly wink at book publishing, pedophiliac melodrama ... and ode to bull' (Stone 1998). To avoid the confusion surrounding this issue, Hartley has even been invested with the creation of his own particular genre, since 'the central pleasure of watching a Hartley film is pretty much the pleasure you get from any genre: unpredictability kept within strict bounds' (Hanks 1997). Despite the prolific attempts to define the genres of Hartley's films, there is little attempt to discuss the effect of the deconstruction and amalgamation of genre which these films institute, or the relationship between Hartley's choice of genre and the art-house or independent traditions in which he seeks to place himself.

Style

Points of Reference

The reviews of Hartley's films similarly struggle to define what constitutes their style,

perhaps because they frequently fail to identify the stylistic link between Hartley and the European art-house tradition. It is perhaps a little obvious to state that Hartley's style is allusive. He readily acknowledges a debt to Godard which critics seem unable to expand beyond the superficial.[9] Nonetheless, the list of intertextual reference points with which Hartley has been invested is bewildering. A (far from exhaustive) list would include Peter Greenaway, Wim Wenders, David Lynch, Jim Jarmusch and Steven Soderbergh (Peachment 1991), Stacy Cochran (Fried 1993: 40), John Huston, Murnau, and Robert Altman (Muir 1993), Harold Pinter and David Mamet (Bauer 1994), Krzysztof Kieslowski (Hanson 1995), Robert Bresson and Howard Hawkes (Sterritt 1995), Alan Rudolph (Klawans 1991), Robert Frank, and a reference to the horror classic, 'Carnival of Souls' (Rafferty 1991). Equally bewildering is the failure, without exception, to develop these references beyond the superficial. This suggests that, rather than the content or context of Hartley's films, what is being demonstrated is partly the extent of respective critical vocabularies, and partly the postmodern discourse's attachment to intertextuality.

Perhaps these critics are recognising that the tendency of the art-house cinema which Hartley's films evoke is towards 'explicit allusion and citation' (Bordwell 1985: 232). This allusion is occasionally *too* explicit for the critical palate. Notably, Hartley's short film *Ambition* has been criticised for its tributes to Godard and Buñuel: 'shock tactics and surrealism do not suit him - his own twist on reality is skewed and satisfying enough to make it frustrating when he falls back onto other people's' (Thompson 1994). More astute is Rafferty's willingness to allow Hartley both stylistic interchange and individuality, evident in his recognition of the importance of identifying within this plethora of subtly intertextual references a resulting originality: 'Hartley mixes his disparate influences in an unmistakably personal way: no one else could have precisely this collection of stray notions in his head. Hartley's style is at once self-conscious and bizarrely innocent - allusive but never academic' (Rafferty 1995).

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[9]Amongst a wealth of references made to Godard are those in the work of Sarris (1993), Jones (1996), Strick (1991), and Rafferty (1991).

More remarkably, reviewers of *Amateur* seem able to enlarge upon their recognition of Hartley's allusion to the European aesthetic. The 'ironic Godardian quotation marks' (Rafferty 1995) around *Amateur*'s violence are commented upon, as are the film's *'Nouvelle Vague* rhythms' (Anderson 1995). Further, *Amateur*, with its concern with the 'moral particulars of exploitation' and the 'dark caverns of the mind', demonstrates the influence that European artists have had on Hartley; an influence which is vaguely described as being 'evident in all his work' (Anon 1995a). Only one critic seeks to take this stylistic point of reference further by identifying the consequence of *Amateur*'s tendency to somersault between 'New Wave veneration (of Hollywood) and American emulation (of Godard, among others)': the film serves to deflate both (Anderson 1995). *Flirt*'s reference to European cinema is similarly noted by critics: 'Somewhere between the genius above him [Godard] and the fools below, Hartley toils' (Bailey 1996). *Simple Men*'s style constitutes an 'accretion of *auteur* tics' (Romney 1992), a synopsis which, as will be seen, is pointed in a sense other than that which the critic intended.

Sound

One of the more interesting of the stylistic reference points identified by critics is that which could be described as Hartley's Pinteresque italicisation of dialogue. Hartley's dialogue, and the way in which his actors deliver it, is one of the defining aspects of his style, and one of the greatest points of contention for critics. The phrase 'dead-pan' is often cited in order to describe the manner of enunciation.[10] Rich, discussing *Trust*, talks of the effect of this type of dialogue on the characters' emotional intercourse: they 'grope for communication in fragmentary deadpan exchanges dripping with corrosive irony' (Rich 1990). Jones alone finds this verbal style 'too arch by half' (Jones 1996: 68), seeming to interpret an emblematic commentary on the difficulty of communication as a curiously un-involving mixture of self-awareness and deliberate indifference.

Beyond the performative impact upon dialogue stands the nature of the words

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[10]Notably in the writing of Strick (1991), Klawans (1991), and Pitman (1992).

themselves, and the aphorisms which serve as a Hartley trademark have proved similarly contentious. Some assert that *Simple Men*'s dialogue is 'witty and resonant' (Travers 1992), and find 'a volubly articulate character in [the eponymous] Henry [*Fool*]' (Sarris 1998). The 'love of the power of words' (Elley 1997) which led to the Cannes Best Screenplay Award for *Henry Fool* is, for one critic at least, apparent in the film in which 'characters often don't talk, they declaim' (Kaltenbach 1998). Conversely, when Jones emphasises the aphoristic quality of Hartley's verbal style, he scathingly claims that it 'has the ring of someone exploring words who doesn't use them with the greatest facility' (Jones 1996: 72). Another critic experiences a 'Hemingwayesque obliqueness and understatement' (McCarthy 1992). Romney (1992) describes the non-naturalistic dialogue as 'frosty', whilst Macnab refers to characters who 'lurch around laconically making gnomic remarks which seek' [with an inevitable lack of success] 'to explain the universe in a nutshell.' Macnab finds Hartley's 'determination to make his characters say something witty or profound whenever they draw breath' to be 'wearing', ungenerously likening them to 'self-righteous undergraduates' (Macnab 1992). It has been said of *Henry Fool*'s characters that they are capable of dispensing 'meaningless aphorisms like a vending machine' (Williams 1998), and, more widely, 'for reticence, we get vacuity. For nuggets of suggestive dialogue, we get aridity. For simplicity, we get revue-sketch shorthand' (Kauffmann 1995).

Perhaps because of the striking nature of Hartley's dialogue, other aspects of his audible style frequently pass unnoticed, such as the disarmingly simple music which he makes under the pseudonym Ned Rifle. This, although a characteristic of Hartley, is used in a typically Godardian manner, swelling subjectively to drown out dialogue and both striking up and abruptly ceasing in ironically empathetic mode. There are a few exceptions to this omission. It should be noted that *Surviving Desire*'s 'resonant score' (Thompson 1994), and the general use within Hartley's short films of musical motifs to 'mirror the characters' lack of direction' (Anon 1994: 59) have elicited commentary. The Short *The Book of Life* has been described, with its inclusion of tracks by P.J. Harvey and David Byrne amongst others, as a film in which 'not only the music but abstract sounds are imaginatively used to give events a

familiar yet otherworldly feel' (Young 1998). The famous Godardian tension between sound and image is dutifully transferred by Jones to Hartley: 'the verbal and visual [within Hartley's films] don't often work in concert, or even contrapuntally - they're usually at war' (Jones 1996: 72).

Image

For one critic at least, it is *Flirt* which stands as a point of transition for Hartley, who is now a film-maker who 'thinks in terms of images first', and whose films are 'no longer driven by dialogue' (Hanks 1997). These images are seen as powerful and expressive: 'the camera's every move, placement and composition seem a precise yet fluid expression of Hartley's every feeling and perception' (Thomas 1996). Others are more caustic in their commentary: *Flirt* is reductively described as a 'perfunctory exercise in style' (G.P. 1997), a 'decline into modish minimalism' (Anon 1997d), and an 'echo chamber of a movie' (Hoffman 1996) with all the 'redundant pretension' of 'stone soup' (Atkinson 1996). Although some have seen *Flirt* as being 'singular, crisp and playful' (Hoffman 1996) with 'a terrifically clean, spare look' (Thomas 1996), it is the case for others who comment upon the relationship between *Flirt* and modes of visual representation that: 'After years of flirting with formalism, Hartley has finally made a movie that can be described entirely in diagrams' (Bailey 1996). *The Book of Life*, which has a similarly pictorial quality, which has been described more sensitively as a 'kind of kinetic painting' (Brown 1998).

This concern with the visual did, however, characterise Hartley in films before *Flirt*. Critical opinion dwells upon the visual quality of *Trust*, in which both a 'striking compositional gift' and 'obsessive pictorial concern' are evident, yet a balance is achieved in that Hartley 'does not present the images so preciously that the viewer must stop watching to admire them' (Bauer 1994). Hartley's visual style is characterised by this deliberate, considered quality, by the choreography of movement (which is ignored by critics) as well as within the recognised use of close-ups against simple backgrounds (Strick 1991: 53), of framing (Kauffmann 1992), and of shallow space (Jones 1996: 68). Jones identifies in *Trust* an 'almost autistic obsession with

human action' (72) which is 'geared to emotional specifics' (72). On a more structural note, he refers to the use of cross-cut images with strong links from one image to another (68,72). Pitman describes this tight structural design as 'admirable architecture' (Pitman 1992), and Haskell develops this in a commentary on the parallel syntagma with which the opening sequence of *Trust* is concerned: the film's 'ironic symmetry' of suffocating single-parent homes (Haskell 1992).

Simple Men's visual characteristics are similarly commented upon by critics, who refer to the film's 'crisp photography' (Macnab 1992), 'acute visual framing' (Romney 1992), and 'vivid colour schemes' (McCarthy 1992). Hartley's 'brash ingenuity in tackling the necessary economies of low budget cinema' (Romney 1992) extends to his use of the camera: 'beautifully precise, delicately controlled' shots and tableaux which are 'like a frieze with a humane element' (Kauffmann 1992). Kauffmann positively gushes over Hartley's use of the house in which the film's climax takes place: 'A shot from one bedroom into another in an old house gleams with the excitement of discovering fluidity in straight lines' (Kauffmann 1992).

Amateur's visual style excites a praise that is widely asserted. Hartley's obsessions are now 'shinier and fresher' (Rafferty 1995), his camera 'moves more subtly, without such obvious headstands and distortions' (Anon 1995b). His technique is now 'so refined and precise that he easily achieves his desired effects; the artistic layering of stylisation in performance, timing and visuals pulls the action sufficiently away from reality to induce one to accept the strange string of events' (McCarthy 1994) of which *Amateur* is composed. Similarly accomplished in its visual qualities is *Henry Fool*, which 'shows off such fine compositional sense that there's not a paint streak on a wall that doesn't tie in with some other part of the frame. There are no casual details and absolutely no clutter' (Maslin 1998).

In terms of *The Unbelievable Truth*, the lighting seems to be the stylistic attribute most emphasised by critics: 'Set in the blank, white light of his home town of Lyndenhurst, Long Island ... [Hartley's] bleached takes and peculiar angles add to the strangeness of his hypernormal setting' (Moore 1991). Indeed, for the *Sight and Sound*

reviewer, it is the 'handsome' lighting alone which elicits comment in an otherwise summational review (Anon 1992b: 69). The effect of the film-maker's choice of lighting is similarly commented upon by reviews of *Amateur*, who talk not only of the darkness and extreme contrast ranges which characterise the film (Comer 1995), but also of the 'bluish cast that makes the ordinary look mysterious' (James 1994).

Formal Structure

From those critics who dwell upon the structural aspect of Hartley's films, *Simple Men* elicits a varied response, from McCarthy's praise of the 'deceptive simplicity' of the film's 'precise editing rhythms' (McCarthy, 1992), to Kauffmann's depreciative commentary on Hartley's emphasis on 'patterns rather than passions' (Kauffmann 1992). Indeed, *Simple Men* has been described as a collection of 'set-pieces' rather than a coherent narrative: 'It is difficult to see his screenplay as much more than a framework, drawn from pertinent subjects, on which to build a film' (Kauffmann 1992). Inevitably, critics similarly choose to focus upon *Flirt*'s distinctive structure of a thrice repeated narrative: 'In *Flirt*', argues *The Guardian*'s critic in his piece on the 'almost film of the week', Hartley has 'come up with a new angle on his repetitive compulsion: here he actually makes the same film three times' (Anon 1997e). Others do not find *Flirt*'s structure to be evidence of a repetitive compulsion, but rather an exercise in self-reflexivity: '*Flirt* uses a repetitive three part structure to comment on relationships, language, and finally, itself' (Gilbey 1997).

The style of Hartley's films as identified by critical opinion is thus allusive, with verbal delivery characterised by dead-pan exchanges and aphorism. *Trust*'s visual style consists of an emphasis on close-up, framing, deliberate character movement and shallow space. Its cross-cut images adhere to a tight structural design in which there is no freedom of movement between shots, and an ironic symmetry is constructed to emphasise the parallel syntagmas of Maria and Matthew's lives. Although *Simple Men*'s precise and deliberately controlled visuals are a site for comment, it is the film's dialogue which is its most contentious aspect. The film could, if critical opinion is to be believed, be described merely as a wearing sequence of gnomic remarks. For

Moore (1991), it is the lighting and attention to visual detail in *The Unbelievable Truth* which is worthy of comment for making 'the most normal of events seem unreal'. And although *Amateur*'s lighting is also distinguished, it is for its deflation of both the American and European style of film-making that the film is most remarkable. *Flirt* is seen as a new departure for Hartley, from a dialogue to an image-driven style.

Characterisation

Hartley's films are notable for their distinctive characterisation. Fried talks generally of the 'young characters plagued by their own existential angst' who appear in Hartley's films (Fried 1993: 38), Jones of their 'precise sense of behavior - reflexively aggressive' (Jones 1996: 68). Sarris identifies an 'intensity of feeling' (Sarris 1993: 68) which conflicts with Hogue's emphasis upon the satiric nature of Hartley's depiction of 'young people who are at once pretentious and self-mocking, full of themselves and floundering', and 'pseudo' (as opposed, one assumes, to 'real') intellectuals (Hogue 1993: 69).

Accounts of *Trust*'s protagonists stress the reflexive quality of the characters. Matthew (Martin Donovan) is described as an 'introvert' (Anon 1993: 70) and a 'bookish enragé' (Klawans 1991). Maria (Adrienne Shelly) is characterised as a 'teen-age girl who doesn't like school but reads constantly' (Rafferty 1991). Rafferty further emphasises the notion of identity as a work in progress, the way in which Maria's initial (self) image is constructed only to be dismantled, and Matthew is 'beaten down and dispirited', yet retains 'an edge to his despair - traces of anger and humor' (Rafferty 1991). Reviewers of *The Unbelievable Truth*, however, seek to dwell upon the actions of the characters, such as Audry's career as a 'scantily-clad' model (Travers 1990) and Josh's former, murderous activities. Josh and Audry's contradictions also constitute a site for comment: Audry's vulnerability of appearance yet determination of action, the mild-mannered Josh personifying the 'nicest mass murderer you'd ever want to meet' (Anon 1991b).

Much is made of the dysfunctional nature of *Trust*'s characters.[11] They are described as 'damaged' 'misfit[s]' (Rich 1990 and Anon 1991a: 59 respectively) who are subject to 'obsessions, stubborn neuroses, spectacular personality disorders [and] persistent low-grade anomie' (Rafferty 1991). The parental characters are oppressive defenders of their way of life, trying to 'bully and manipulate their kids into being more like them' (Rafferty 1991). It is this tendency which Audry's father exhibits in *The Unbelievable Truth* by having 'taught her to run her life like a business' (Travers 1990), yet expressing consternation at the nature of her modelling.

Discussion of *Simple Men*'s characters centres on their adherence to conventions. The film is populated by a 'stock company of cagey women and forlorn men' (Corliss 1992) and 'straightforward' heroes who hold 'commonsense philosophies and who believe that life can be boiled down to one or two home truths' (Macnab 1992). These are 'latter-day searchers' who subscribe to the 'old Lawrentian cliché of women as the site of mystery to deflect the boys' quest' (Macnab 1992: 48). The characters are 'comically stylised', a 'miscellany of lost souls, irascible villains who turn out to be lost souls, and amiable schmucks' (Romney 1992).

Amateur's protagonists are largely characterised by their inability to fulfil their societal roles: 'it's a running gag in the film that most of the people seem hopelessly unsuited to what they do' (Kemp 1995). As the film progresses, the characters shed their outdated roles, exemplified in the Nun's discovery of romantic desire (James 1994). Their subtle trade of identities begins and 'we begin to see the real identities of people who have been wearing masks all their lives' (Anon 1995a). *Amateur* embodies its share of 'quirky cameos' (Kemp 1995) and 'odd character detailing' (McCarthy 1994), yet it is distinguished by its particularly violent and brutal characters, with the most violent and brutal, with typical Hartley irony, being accountants (Welsh and Brabetz 1995). And although *Amateur*'s characters have been described as 'indelible' (McCarthy 1994), they nonetheless have only a 'tentative, fingertip attitude, as though testing out reality to see if it will bear their weight' (Kemp 1995).

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[11]Amongst uses of the term are those in Rich (1990) and Travers (1991).

Flirt's characters are given less critical attention that those of Hartley's other films. Their traits are mocked or dismissed. They are 'a flimsy farrago of hip non-characters posing in various trendy locations' (Anon 1997d) and 'the world's most angst ridden hipsters' (Anon 1997e) who fail to depart from Hartley's previous creations: here is 'the usual crew of love-lorn lunks and stilletto-cheeked waifs' (Anon 1997e). In the eyes of the reviewers, *Flirt* is therefore nothing but a 'crash course in Hartley's universe of out-of-synch characters bouncing off one another' (Elley 1995). In what has been referred to as Hartley's first image driven film, none of the characters receive the distinction of being singled out by critical opinion.

More distinct are the protagonists of *Henry Fool* who, although dismissed by one critic as 'cartoon characterisations' (Hoberman 1998), have been credited by others with being of an interest which their surface belies. Hence 'by a nice paradox, Simon's blankness is shown to have concealed the true emergence of character' (Williams 1998). Collectively, *Henry Fool*'s characters constitute a 'portrait of how the unlikeliest people can reinvent themselves' (Elley 1997).

Hartley's short films (*Ambition*, *Theory of Achievement*, *Surviving Desire*, *The Book of Life*) similarly elicit a more tangible response. Here are 'complex characters endlessly deliberating existence ... and having flashes of self-awareness' (Anon 1994: 59). There is criticism of *Theory of Achievement*'s characterisation: 'the sudden flashes of self-awareness with which his characters are always illuminated seem to be merging together into a [...] wash of generational generalisations' (Thompson 1994: 64). Yet *Surviving Desire*'s Mary B. Ward is at least memorable for her portrayal of 'existential waifdom' (Leonard 1992) within a film which 'depicts people lost in existential black holes who, by virtue of their endless quest for answers, end up appearing all the more sane' (Bernstein 1992). *The Book of Life*'s characters are appropriately reduced to type by Romney (1997): the 'charismatic, careworn' Jesus (Martin Donovan), the 'shambling lounge-lizard' Satan (Thomas J. Ryan), the waitress who is the 'one Good Soul in New York' (Miho Nikaido).

Surprisingly within characterisation trends which dwell upon a dysfunctional inability to function or communicate effectively within society, which emphasises introversion, angst and the search for identity, critics identify a hopeful note to Hartley's films. In terms of *Trust*, this can be highly tentative, such as the edge which anger or humour give to Matthew's despair (Rafferty 1991), or more assertive, such as the (admittedly problematically unconvincing) notion of surviving the grenade to start anew (Strick 1991: 53). The search for definition of self, of trust, and of love, is suggestive of a 'romantic aspiration' (Sarris 1993: 68) on the part of the characters as well as of Hartley himself. There is the highly positive 'amazing bloom of imagination' (Rafferty 1991) which both Hartley himself and his characters could be said to exhibit, and which extends into the 'raw, credulous optimism' of *Simple Men*'s characters (Macnab 1992).

For *The Unbelievable Truth*, mention of 'freshness' and 'exuberance' (Travers 1990), 'lightness of touch' (Moore 1991), and 'giddy confidence' (Anon 1991b) is suggestive of a positivity which belies the more serious thematic concerns of the film. Hartley has further said of *Amateur*'s characters that they are 'people who refuse to be owned, people who lose material possessions and, because of that, become free' (Comer 1995), which is highly suggestive of positivity. *Surviving Desire*'s characters may only have their 'charming pretension' (Leonard 1992), borne out of existential ponderings, to recommend them, but at least they have the distinction of drawing a critical opinion which is not dismissive of them either as hip non-characters, or repetition of what has come before, as is the case with regard to *Flirt*.

Conclusion

Genre

Existing writing on Hal Hartley thus raises several useful issues, albeit some by omission. The collective difficulty in establishing these films' genres is clear, with romance, comedy and suburban satire being the most common categories suggested. Comedy gains the distinction of being both the most prolific and the most polemical

of those genre categories proffered and negated by critics. This struggle for definition points to a wider problem which it is important to acknowledge. Genre classifications have never been fixed, nor is any general consensus immutable. However, rather than dwell upon the limiting question of whether these films are more romantic / comedy than suburban satire, the focus of this thesis will be directed at the purpose and effect of Hartley's *deliberate amalgamation* of genre (the road movie and Western in *Simple Men* for example), a deconstruction of genre which mirrors that of Godard's films.

Style

Hartley's style similarly constitutes a problem for critics, particularly in terms of the often exuberant, yet consistently superficial list of intertextual references with which his films have been invested. The deficiency of these critics lies in their failure to develop their references beyond the superficial. In particular, the opportunity to identify the way in which Hartley's tendency towards allusion and citation feeds into the wider issue of repetition is missed. Rather than take on the task of following through each point of reference, this consideration will adopt a much narrower focus. The intended result will be that useful meaning be derived from Hartley's deliberate use of intertextual reference. In particular, the Godardian references identified by critics will be viewed more expansively in order to elucidate aspects of Hartley's style: the distanciation which is more than a studied impersonality, the efficacy of film as suburban satire as illustrated, for example, through the relationship between *Weekend* (Godard, 1967) and *The Unbelievable Truth* (Hartley, 1989). On a wider note, those distinctive aspects of Hartley's visual style which critics readily identify but fail to expand upon, such as his deliberate use of framing and manipulation of aspects of mise en scène, will be examined in terms of their allusion to a European film aesthetic.

Characterisation

Hartley's prevailing characterisations, notably his tendency to people his films with introspective protagonists who function with difficulty within the constraints of

society, is widely commented upon by critics. These are characters who are damaged, introverted, obsessive, 'reflexively aggressive' (Jones 1996: 68) and bookish. They have been rendered dysfunctional through the impact of others upon them, both in terms of the macrocosm of a wider society, and within the microcosmic society of 'the family' in which parents figure prominently within the damaging behavioural patterns of the earlier films. This notion of 'not fitting into' is constructed in *Trust* through an emphasis on uniform/ity, in *Amateur* by the comic unsuitability that each character exhibits in relation to their role. Yet it will be examined more conceptually throughout the thesis, which will assert marginality as a key theme of Hartley's films.

Marginality

Existing writing on Hal Hartley fails explicitly to identify the issue of marginality which is central both to Hartley as a film-maker and to the characters which his films seek to portray. Hartley's protagonists are marginal because of their position on the periphery of the society which they inhabit. Similarly, Hal Hartley's general film-making practice places him on the fringe of cinematic conventions. This is both because of his position as an independent within American cinema, and because he invokes a frame of reference central to a European rather than an American style of film-making. In terms of the films themselves, not only do they reflect European art-house characterisation trends, visual style and deconstruction of genre, but Hartley's aesthetic, with its low budget and *auteurist* approach, articulates a relationship between independent American and Hollywood film-making. Marginality will be thus adopted as the key to the cross-cultural context of Hartley's films, as well as to the aspects of genre, style and characterisation which will be integrated into the subsequent chapters of the thesis.

CHAPTER II

HARTLEY'S REPETITIONS: A TAXONOMY

Why Repetition?

The literature review concerned itself both with Hal Hartley's self-acknowledged stylistic and thematic debt to Godard, and with aspects of his own style of film-making, personal and distinct. What this chapter seeks to examine is that which these two former considerations have in common: their embodiment of issues of repetition. Repetition presents itself in many aspects of Hartley's films, not least within the 'repeating' of Godard's stylistic and thematic concerns. Although not specifically addressed here, this allusion to Godard will elicit commentary throughout the thesis. More pertinent to the present consideration is the way in which repetition is manifest in Hartley's own homogeneity of style. One of the pleasures inherent in the experience of watching Hal Hartley films lies in anticipating those same elemental bursts of choreography, the dead-pan delivery of aphoristic dialogue, and the film-maker's ability to discover yet another flat space in which his characters should fall.

It is not, however, within the confines of homogeneity that much of Hartley's use of repetition falls. Repetition is a formal device frequently and deliberately utilised by Hartley. It is this notion of frequency from which the taxonomy which follows arises. This is because it is only through listing incidences of repetition in Hartley's films that it becomes obvious just how consistent a concern repetition is within them. The impact of this approach is twofold. It both establishes the importance of repetition to Hartley, and attempts an identification (if not an exposition) of 'trends' within Hartley's use of repetition. A more sustained discussion of these trends will be left to Chapters III and VIII of the thesis. For now, it is the question of whether repetition is there simply to engender such effects as self-reflexivity, distanciation, even humour, which this chapter seeks to explore.

The Taxonomy

Section 1: Repetition as Humour

Hal Hartley indulges in the occasional foray into slapstick within his films, exemplified by the frequency with which his characters fall down in flat spaces. Yet much of his humour lies in the verbal rather than the visceral. As such, it would be pertinent to explore the repetition of dialogue as a possible source of humour in Hartley's work. The misogynistic attitude which Bill adopts within *Simple Men* is implicated in such a humorous repetition. His statement of intent, largely resulting from his betrayal at the hands of Vera, is vehement in the degree of the hatred of women which it expresses:

> BILL: Tomorrow. The first good-looking woman I see ... I'm
>
> *not* gonna fall in love with her. That'll show her! (*He*
>
> *paces*) Yeah. The first good-looking ... *blonde* woman I
>
> see. I'm gonna make her fall in love with *me*. I'll do
>
> everything right. Be a little aloof at first. Mysterious. Seem
>
> sort of ... thoughtful and deep. But possibly a bit dangerous
>
> too. Flatter her in little ways. But be modest myself. They
>
> all fall for that shit. Make her fall hopelessly in love with
>
> me. (*He stops, thinks, and takes a hit off the scotch, then*
>
> ...) Yup. Mysterious. Thoughtful. Deep but modest. And
>
> then I'm gonna fuck her.
>
> (DENNIS *opens his eyes and slowly looks up and watches*
>
> BILL *as he moves to his seat once again.*)
>
> But I'm not gonna care about her. To me she's gonna be
>
> another piece of ass. Somebody else's little girl who I'm
>
> gonna treat like dirt and make her beg for it too. (*Almost*
>
> *drinks again, but* ...) I'm just gonna use her up. Have my
>
> way with her. Like a toy, a plaything. (*Drinks* ...) And
>
> when I'm done I'm just gonna throw her away.

(He trails off and remains staring off into the night.)

(Hartley 1992a: 20)

When Kate, the woman Bill is seeking to seduce, reiterates aspects of Bill's statement of intent later in the film, the repetition engenders comedy:

KATE: So tell me about yourself.

> *(He looks at her and smiles. He tries to think of*
>
> *what to say, but then ...)*

BILL: Oh, there's nothing to tell.

KATE: That sounds mysterious.

> *(This bothers* BILL, *reminding him of his speech*
>
> *the night before. He stops and looks at her.)*

BILL: *(Honestly)* I don't mean to sound that way.

KATE: You seem like a man with a lot of experience.

BILL: Do I?

KATE: Yes.

BILL: How.

KATE: Somehow very thoughtful, deep.

BILL: Do you have a cigarette?

KATE: No, I don't smoke.

BILL: I'm not deep and it's not that I'm so very thoughtful

  either, it's just, you know, I'm tired.

KATE: You're being modest.

(Hartley 1992a: 41)

Paradoxically, the humour of this repetition lies precisely in that which undermines it as true repetition. Kate is 'repeating' Bill's 'statement of intent', something which she could not possibly have been party to. Yet Kate's discovery within Bill of those very qualities which he isolates as the essentials of a calculated seduction patently *is* repetition, and repetition with its ironic subtext arising from our growing awareness of the genuine nature of Bill's feelings for Kate. Her unwitting

repetition thus serves as an unwelcome reminder to Bill of his earlier, adamantly misogynistic words. The discomfort which this reminder produces in Bill, in so succinctly and visibly deflating him, is a perfect example both of Hartley's taste for dry humour, and of a concern with gender politics which will become more apparent in subsequent chapters.

Hartley's repetition of dialogue is similarly used to comic effect in *Amateur's* play on the gloriously unsuitable term 'floppy discs'. The first incidence of the discussion of it as a generic term occurs in a conversation between Sofia and Edward. Seated in the café, discussing Thomas' pre-amnesia attempt to blackmail Jacques, Edward tells Sofia of the nature of the documents involved in the blackmail. They are contained on floppy discs. The uncomprehending Sofia, presented with a disc as an example, questions the validity of the definition:

> SOFIA: This is what you call a floppy disc?
> EDWARD: Yeah.
> SOFIA: But it's square.
> EDWARD: Yeah, yeah, I know, but they call them floppy
> discs.
> SOFIA: It's not floppy either. It's stiff.
>
> (Hartley 1994: 16)

This quibbling over semantics is repeated later in the film in a conversation between Thomas and Isabelle, who now has possession of the discs in question:

> THOMAS: ... What the fuck are these?
> ISABELLE: Floppy discs.
> THOMAS: Floppy what?
> ISABELLE: (*Annoyed*) Discs!
> THOMAS: But they're square.
> ISABELLE: (*Concentrating*) SHHH!!!!!

> THOMAS: (*To himself*) And they're not floppy either,
>
> they're stiff.
>
> (Hartley 1994: 57)

Both this, and *Simple Men*'s humorous repetition of Bill's misogyny, similarly produce a comic effect. Yet this example differs in one essential way. In *Amateur*'s discussion of the term 'floppy disc', the humour is not *dependant upon* the repetition. Rather, the repetition is a form of comedic rhetoric, a repetition of that which was amusing in its own right in order to both indulge in and reinforce the achievement of the word-play as a source of humour. Again, the success of the comedy lies in deflation, in this case both of the thriller genre (the discs are implicated in high level government corruption) and of its inherent masculinity (the play on 'floppy' and 'stiff').

A further example of repetition's comic possibilities lies within *The Unbelievable Truth*. Unlike the former episodes, this incidence of repetition lies within the confines of a single conversation. Todd Whitbread, a photographer whom we have witnessed approaching women in a local diner, uses Audry's unwitting father Vic as mediator by seducing him with talk of Audry's earning potential as a model. Todd's pitch to Audry herself is both unimaginative and repetitive:

> TODD: Like your father was saying, Audry, I'm a commercial
>
> photographer. And I do mostly Christenings and weddings,
>
> that kind of thing, but I got a couple of those spreads in a
>
> couple of magazines. Well anyway, like I was saying to
>
> your father, you know, you really got a look. See you have
>
> what they call poise. A real presence. Poise. That's what
>
> you have. Poise. And that's a valuable thing.
>
> VIC: Poise.
>
> [....]
>
> TODD: There's a lot of money to be made in modelling.

Especially for a girl like you who's got great .... poise.[12]

The real humour of the dialogue lies in the pause between 'great' and 'poise' in the final sentence, a pause that is at once expressive and suggestive. It is clear that Todd's admiration for Audry lies in areas other than her 'poise'. The earlier repetitions of the phrase within Todd's pitch thus serve to prefigure and dramatise his final use of it, thus making 'great .... poise' a climactic comic release to which the former repetitions have been building. The humour in this instance is directed at the notion of the body as commodity with which *The Unbelievable Truth* concerns itself, reinforcing the notion of repetition-as-function of which the earlier examples are suggestive.

Section 2: The Formal Repetition of Dialogue

Thus we have seen that Hartley's use of dialogue repetition can be humorous, whilst at the same time having the secondary purpose of providing a medium through which the film-maker can question such issues as gender politics. Yet to dwell upon such a comic effect is to detract from what is largely a more formal interest in repetition on Hartley's part. Repetition is inevitably central to any concern with Hartley's approach to form, if not for the frequency with which he uses repetition as a device throughout his films, then for the remarkable fact of his decision to compose *Flirt* of three shorts with ostensibly identical scripts. Formal repetition elevates the repetition itself (rather than the humour derived from it) to the position of supremacy. More than this, the way in which Hartley's films engage with both linear and cyclical repetitions within their patterns of dialogue repetition needs to be considered in view of the interplay between the linear and cyclical which, as will be discussed in subsequent chapters, characterises theoretical discussions of repetition.

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[12]Since *The Unbelievable Truth*, *Ambition* (Short) and *Theory of Achievement* (Short) have not been published in screenplay form, all quotations from *The Unbelievable Truth*, *Ambition* and *Theory of Achievement* have been taken from the films themselves, and will not subsequently be referenced.

2a: Linear Dialogue Repetition

Linear repetitions can be identified by virtue of their being marked by a sense of progression from one distinct incidence to the next. They are repetitions which, whether displaced into discrete segments of the film or confined within a single sequence, remain well defined as they advance. What could be described as Hartley's linear repetitions fall into two categories: literal repetitions and developmental repetitions.

i) Literal repetitions

Literal repetitions are linear because they pass through exact repetitions in an unmodified form. This form of repetition can be represented as: 'A,B', and is characterised both by characters repeating what they themselves have said, and by characters repeating what they have heard or read. Perhaps the most literal repetitions in *Simple Men* are the latter, those imitative ones in which individuals repeat the words of others. The most immediate of these occurs within the scene concerned with the repetition of a tract on the deck of the *Tara*:

> ELINA, DENNIS, *and* MARTIN *repeat after* DAD *as he*
> *reads aloud from a book entitled* Anarchy.

> DAD: We do not know when the revolution will triumph.
> -But we know that the revolution is with us.
> -And there is no doubt that if the revolution is
> crushed,
> -it will be crushed because, on this occasion, we
> have been defeated;
> -and never because we believed it useful to
> compromise.
>
> (Hartley 1992a: 73)

In an allusion to Godard's use of Maoist tracts in *La Chinoise* (1967), Elina, Dennis and Martin parrot Dennis' father in unison, punctuating each of the above phrases with their identical response as he recites from *Anarchy*. The absolute correspondence between the original and the repetition is ostensibly suggestive of the 'oneness' of the ideals of the characters involved. This is made problematic by Martin's participation in the repetition. A character who lacks the intellect to follow an earlier conversation about the exploitation of sexuality in the music industry, Martin connotes the limitations of what one might assume to be repetition without understanding, repetition for its own sake. In this instance, repetition becomes a mode of assimilation into the homogeneity of a particular social grouping. His is an expression of acquiescence as a means of belonging, rather than an assertion of understanding and agreement with a prescribed ideology.

A further example of literal linear repetition is that of Jude's repetition of Dostoevsky in *Surviving Desire*. So absorbed and yet bewildered by the paragraph that he has impelled the class to dwell upon it for a 'month and a half', Jude not only repeats Dostoevsky's words himself, but asks one of his students to do the same. Ignoring interruptions by the class, Jude recites from the text:

> I believe you are sincere ... and good at heart. If you do not
> attain happiness ... always remember that you are on the right
> road ... try not to leave it. Above all, avoid falsehood ... every
> kind of falsehood ... especially falseness to yourself ... Watch
> over your own deceitfulness ... look into it at every hour ...
> every minute ... Avoid being scornful ... both to others and to
> yourself ... What seems bad to you within yourself ... will
> grow purer ... by the very fact of you observing it ... Avoid
> fear ... though fear is only the consequence ... of every sort of
> falsehood ... Never be frightened at your own faintheartedness
> at attaining love. And don't be frightened overmuch at your
> own evil actions ... I am sorry I can say nothing more
> consoling to you ... For love in action is a harsh and dreadful

> thing compared to love in dreams. Love in dreams is greedy
> for immediate action ... rapidly performed ... and so everyone
> can see. Men will even give their lives if only the ordeal does
> not last too long, but is soon over ... with all looking on and
> applauding ... as if on a stage. But active love ... active love ...
> is labour ... and fortitude.
>
> (Hartley 1992b: 225-6)

These repetitions occur both in full when Jude asks Tom similarly to repeat the entire paragraph in class, and in part when Jude repeats excerpts from the paragraph in the course of his relationship with Sofie. They are linear because they are unmarked by progression. Jude, upon relinquishing the paragraph during the closing sequences of the film, finds that he has nothing more to say and therefore dismisses his equally uncomprehending class. His almost autistic obsession with Dostoevsky has yielded scant enlightenment either for student or teacher.

Characters who repeat their own words can similarly participate in linear repetitions. Jude in *Surviving Desire* is one of these characters, a fact which Sofie playfully mocks:

> JUDE: Can I see you tonight?
> SOFIE: Perhaps.
> JUDE: What's that supposed to mean?
> SOFIE: It's what *you* always say.
> JUDE: Is it?
> SOFIE: Yes. 'Perhaps'.
>
> (Hartley 1992b: 241)

Sofie's acute observation is borne out in the film as a whole, as Jude himself frequently falls into the repetition of 'perhaps'. Hence Jude's response to Henry's suggestion that you cannot beat up students for not liking Dostoevsky is 'perhaps' (228). Henry's opinion that Jude is doomed as a result of his feelings for Sofie is

similarly acknowledged with a 'perhaps' (231). Even Sofie's own speculation concerning the impact of future rejection on Jude is met with a dismissive 'perhaps', although Jude's motivation for halting Sofie's self-indulgent monologue is clear:

> SOFIE: If you never see me again after tonight will you be
> sad?
>
> JUDE: Don't worry about it.
>
> *(She sits with him.)*
>
> SOFIE: Yes, but will, you know, will you be *(Pause)*
> tortured by the memory of having been with me?
> Of having caressed me?
>
> *(She looks away. JUDE stares at her.)*
>
> Will you wonder if I'm with other men? Will you
> be jealous? Will you become obsessed? Will you
> carry your disappointment around with you for
> ever?
>
> *(He rolls his eyes and walks into the kitchen for a*
> *beer.)*
>
> Will you be maudlin and anti-social? Will you get
> into fights? Will you expect other women to be
> somehow more like me? The way I wear my hair?
> My mouth? My eyes? Will you? Will you be like
> that, you think?
>
> *(JUDE doesn't answer right away. He stares at her,*
> *captivated, as her tights flutter past him to the*
> *floor. Then ...)*
>
> JUDE: Perhaps.
>
> (Hartley 1992b: 248)

The repetition of 'perhaps' is linear because it is unmodified. Sofie's assessment that Jude uses 'perhaps' when he doesn't want to admit that he is wrong is consistent within each of these examples. Despite Jude's antipathy for his students, he could not

rationally defend the use of violence against those who lack literary sensibilities. In terms of his feelings for Sofie, Jude does indeed react badly to her subsequent, dismissive behaviour. He would not wish to acknowledge the possibility of such a reaction before making love to her for fear of preventing the act from taking place.

Marking a transition to developmental repetition is the repetition of the adage: 'Be good to her and she'll be good to you' within *Simple Men*. The phrase first occurs during the robbery which opens the film. As Bill takes the medallion bearing a picture of the Virgin Mary from around the neck of the guard, the handcuffed man says of the Virgin: 'Be good to her and she'll be good to you' (Hartley 1992a: 4). When moments later Bill finds that he has been double-crossed by his accomplices, the guard repeats his maxim as Vera and Frank move off in the truck (5). The final repetition of the phrase involves a displacement of the subjective pronoun ('She' as the Virgin Mary) onto women in general. Attempting a seduction, Bill, in a sort of verbal pass-the-parcel, recapitulates the borrowed phrase 'Be good to her and she'll be good to you' to Kate (63).

The repetition of the phrase is a form of rhetoric, designed to emphasise the film's themes, such as religion, a Godardian contemplation of women, the nature of criminality. This is a literal, linear repetition in that the phrase itself remains unchanged throughout its repetitions. Yet there is also a sense in which the repetition becomes developmental in its final repetition. This is both because the subtle shift of the subjective pronoun alters the *sense* of the phrase if not the phrase itself, and because the final repetition marks a new realisation on the part of the formerly misogynistic Bill. He recognises that selfless love is more likely to lead to permanence than the sort of love which we assume earlier impelled Vera to leave him.

A similar displacement occurs within *Henry Fool*, in which Pearl repeats the phrase: 'You want some?'. Almost identical in age to Susan, the girl with whom Henry had been caught in an act of statutory rape, Pearl uses the phrase to obtain help from Henry. Like the previous example from *Simple Men*, the phrase is thrice repeated, although in this case each time by the same person. The first time Pearl says: 'You

want some?', it serves a question directed at Henry (Hartley 1998: 133). Despite Pearl's provocative and drunken state, the 'some' in question is the cheap alcohol that she is drinking, and which she offers to Henry. The second repetition of the phrase, although identical in form, has an alternative meaning: it is a phrase which her stepfather, Warren, uses as part of his abuse (133). The 'some' has become the threatened physical or, implicitly, sexual abuse with which her father taunts Pearl. The final repetition of the phrase involves a further shift in meaning. Pearl is now saying: 'You want some?' to Henry in an attempt to secure his assistance (134). The 'some' has become entirely sexual, as Pearl offers herself to Henry and asks that he kill Warren in return. Again, although ostensibly literal and linear (the phrase passes through three identical repetitions), it is essentially developmental. This is not only because of the subtle changes in the meaning of the word 'some', but because it demonstrates the fact that Henry is not prepared to take advantage of Pearl. He helps her and confronts Warren without the need for this incentive.

ii) Developmental Repetitions

As the above examples suggest, developmental repetition, although similarly following a linear form, deviates from that of literal repetition because it culminates in a new understanding. Such a repetition can be expressed as: 'A,B, leading to realisation C'. An example of this can be seen in *Amateur*, in which Isabelle repeats her feeling that she has been placed by God's will in a position to save Sofia. Seeing the image of Sofia on the video Thomas has rented, Isabelle's response is immediate:

> ISABELLE: This is it.
> THOMAS: This is what?
> ISABELLE: This is the thing I'm supposed to do.
> THOMAS: I'm not sure I understand.
> ISABELLE: This is it. This is the sign. This girl.
> (Hartley 1994: 38)

This sentiment is reiterated in the house later in the film when Isabelle has possession

of the floppy discs, and Sofia is asleep upstairs:

> ISABELLE: This is it. Whatever it is I'm supposed to do,
>
> this is it.
>
> (*Thomas holds her even tighter, then lets her go and sits*
> *down on the stairs.*)
>
> THOMAS: Isabelle, I don't think this is divine
>
> intervention.
>
> ISABELLE: You don't?
>
> THOMAS: No. It's not a miracle. And it's not God's will.
>
> You know what I think this is? This - I think - is
>
> just really ... bad ... luck. And it's got nothing to
>
> do with you. (*She sits down beside him.*) So
>
> you shouldn't get anymore involved than you
>
> already are.
>
> ISABELLE: (*Insists*) I know I was meant to find this girl
>
> and to help her.
>
> (*She leans her head on his shoulder.*)
>
> THOMAS: (*Stops, sighs.*) You do, huh?
>
> ISABELLE: Yes. I think maybe I'm supposed to save her
>
> from you.
>
> (Hartley 1994: 57-8)

The progression from the original to the repetition is essentially linear, yet it is also developmental because it contains the new realisation that Isabelle is to save Sofia from Thomas. Thus the repetition moves from 'A' (This is the thing I'm supposed to do) through 'B' (Whatever it is I'm supposed to do, this is it) to 'realisation C' (I think maybe I'm supposed to save her from you). Hartley is thus using repetition as a medium through which his characters can both contemplate their earlier actions and reactions, and gain new insights.

A similarly developmental mode of linear repetition occurs in *Surviving*

Desire within the sub-plot concerning Katie and her search for a suitor. Throughout the film, Katie stands on the street, indiscriminately asking of passers-by: 'marry me?'. The repetition becomes developmental when, in an amusing microcosm of marriage, a drunken Henry agrees to take Katie for his wife. As soon as he has given Katie his college ring as a symbol of their engagement, the couple begin to argue:

KATIE: It's just perfect, Henry. Thank you.

HENRY: It's worth it to see you smile like that, Katie.

KATIE: So, do you have a job?

(HENRY *hems and haws, then ...*)

HENRY: A job? Well, no. Not at the moment. I've been
    working on my PhD.

KATIE: You're a doctor?

HENRY: Of theology. Almost.

KATIE: What will you do when you get out of school?

HENRY: I don't know. I've been in school all my life. I
    don't know how to do anything.

(*She steps away and folds her arms, indignant.*)

KATIE: Well, I hope you don't expect me to go out and
    support you.

(HENRY *throws up his hands and shouts.*)

HENRY: Already with the nagging! (*Turns away and
    hangs his head.*) What a tortuous path I've made
    for myself, shackling myself to you!

(KATIE *falls against the building and sobs.*)

KATIE: Oh, I'm so afraid I've made a mistake!

(*Now he feels guilty. So he goes on over and
    embraces her.*)

HENRY: Don't be so upset, Katie. All newlyweds have
    these little battles. We'll survive.

(Hartley 1992b: 251)

The repetition develops even further when, similarly propositioned by Jude after Sofie has rejected him, Katie comes to the new realisation that it is not necessarily marriage itself that she wants, but rather the feeling that she could marry if she wished it. Hence when an inversion occurs within the repetition and Jude asks her to marry him rather than she asking him, Katie demurs:

> JUDE: I want you to be my wife.
>
> KATIE: What?
>
> JUDE: I mean it. Marry me. Please.
>
> > *(She just looks at him with a frown, then ...)*
>
> KATIE: Why should I marry you?
>
> [...]
>
> JUDE: I thought you wanted to get married?
>
> > *(She stares at him, then takes a few steps away,*
> >
> > *thinking hard. Finally, she clutches her ring to her*
> >
> > *chest and looks back over her shoulder at JUDE.)*
>
> KATIE: I just wanted somebody to ask.
>
> > (Hartley 1992b: 256-7)

Thus repetition once again leads to a new realisation on the part of one of Hartley's characters: 'I just wanted somebody to ask', marking it as developmental.

On a more frivolous note, a developmental repetition occurs within Hartley's short film *Theory of Achievement*. The self-definition in which the characters indulge results in a decidedly less profound realisation on their part. Alternately circling words on a piece of paper, two friends pass from defining themselves as: 'young, middle class, college educated, broke', through: 'young, middle class, *white*, college educated, *unskilled*, broke', to: 'young, middle class, white, college educated, unskilled, broke, *drunk*.' Each of the repetitions affords a more expansive explication which develops the self-image of the characters. It is unfortunate for them that the conclusion of the increasingly abject list is the disheartening yet humorous admission that they are not only unskilled and broke, but also too drunk to do anything about it.

2b: Cyclical Dialogue Repetition

Standing opposed to this linearity is the notion of a cyclical repetition within Hartley's films. This is a mode of repetition in which one gets a sense of the dialogue moving full circle, rather than being marked by progression. Once again there is a sub-division. One can distinguish between those repetitions which come full circle, and those repetitions which perpetuate as a continual return.

i) Full Circle Repetition

Repetitions which move full circle can be expressed as: 'A,B,A', returning to the instigative repetition and then halting with a mere hint at, rather than indulgence in, the sort of continual repetition which is described in section ii) below. An example of the full circle mode of repetition occurs within the 'I don't drive' conversation in *The Unbelievable Truth*, in which the laconic Josh proves unable to persuade his host driver, Otis, of his refusal to drive:

> OTIS: (*Swigging from a bottle*) I'm wired. Do you want to
> drive?
> JOSH: I don't drive.
> OTIS: What do you mean, you don't drive?
> JOSH: I don't have a licence.
> OTIS: What, are you a priest or something?
> JOSH: I'm a mechanic.
> OTIS: Yeah, that's what I thought. So how about it?
> JOSH: How about what?
> OTIS: Do you want to drive?
> JOSH: I don't drive.

The conversation thus comes full circle and, unlike developmental repetition, is marked by a distinct *lack* of progression. The difficulty of communication is evoked

though such a repetition of dialogue. The two men are effectively going round in circles, evident in the fact that the conversation could easily repeat itself with an equal lack of resolution.

ii) The Repetition of Continual Return

The dominant mode of cyclical repetition in Hartley's films is, however, the repetition of continual return. This mode of repetition can usefully be delineated as: 'A,B,C,A,B,C, etc.'. It is characterised by a repetition which self-perpetuates until actively broken. An example of such a repetition lies in the conversation between the protagonist Josh and the waitress Jane in a diner in *The Unbelievable Truth*:

> JANE: I know what you need.
>
> JOSH: Excuse me?
>
> JANE: You need a woman.
>
> JOSH: Oh?
>
> JANE: That girl is crazy.
>
> JOSH: I know, but I like her.
>
> JANE: Yeah, but she's leaving town.
>
> JOSH: So I've heard.
>
> JANE: So come on, what do you say? I know what you
>
>   need.
>
> JOSH: Excuse me?
>
> JANE: You need a woman.
>
> JOSH: Oh?
>
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> JOSH: Excuse me?

JANE: You need a woman.

JOSH: Oh?

JANE: That girl is crazy.

JOSH: I know, but I like her.

JANE: But she's leaving town.

JOSH: So I've heard.

JANE: So come on, what do you say? I know what you
    need.

JOSH: Excuse me?

JANE: That girl's crazy!

The conversation is cyclical because it moves through three identical repetitions (excepting variations in the tone of voice), with deviation from the like only occurring at the end of this essentially uncommunicative conversation. It is an obvious formal exercise on Hartley's part, constituting a mode of self-reflexivity and distanciation worthy of an *auteurist* film-maker.

Another such example of continual cyclical repetition occurs in the short film, *Ambition*, which fades into a seemingly perpetual repetition of whispered dialogue:

Dwell on uncomplicated beauty: the landscape, the sun on your face. Nothing touches you. Keep the image of your death cheerfully before you at all times, in perspective. Seek to comfort and clarify, not to obscure or mystify. Your aspirations are pointless. Your ambition has come to nothing. Dwell on uncomplicated beauty: the landscape, the sun on your face. Nothing touches you. Keep the image of your death cheerfully before you at all times ... (*continue to fade*).

The dialogue occurs within a short which concerns an artist defending his work: 'I'm good at what I do'. As such, it is patently emblematic both of the concern with surface, and of the eponymous ambition which the artist exhibits. Yet the repetition, within a

highly mannered piece of film-making, is also a formal experimentation, a mode of distanciation akin to the stylised use of violence which strongly characterises the film.

Section 3: The Repetition of Sound

It has been seen that Hartley experiments with formal repetition within the dialogue of his films. Yet there are further aspects of Hartley's use of sound in which such formal repetition occurs. It is useful to extend the discussion of dialogue into a consideration of other aspects of soundtrack, including a consideration of music both diegetic and non-diegetic, and of other aspects of sound.

3a): The Play on Diegetic Sound

The incidence of sound most exploitative of repetition within Hartley's films occurs within *The Unbelievable Truth*. Audry's obsession with the destruction of the world through a nuclear holocaust is both displaced into and reinforced by the sound of the film. Hence, within the formative stages of the film's narrative, Audry is seen waking in the morning and yawning expansively with a wide gesturing of her arms. It is if her body is a medium for the explosion: the accompanying softly sounded 'boom', prefigured by the ominous ticking of her alarm clock, appears to burst forth from her. Later that morning, in a conversation with her boyfriend, Audry thinks she hears bombs. Although any such sound is undetectable at this point, it is a sound which is finally repeated at the end of the film. While Audry and Josh are involved in a climactic embrace, what Audry herself identifies as the sound of distant bombs is faintly audible.

A further repetitive play on sound occurs within *The Unbelievable Truth* when Audry, seated at the breakfast table, undertakes a conversation with her parents. They are each in their different way pressuring her to go to college. Her father seeks to force her not to go to the expensive Harvard, later negotiating a donation to Audry's favourite charity in order to persuade her to study communications rather than literature, at a less expensive college. Her mother is proud of Audry getting into such

a prestigious establishment, and wants her to go. Audry, on the other hand, believes that there is little point in going to college. She is sure of the destruction of the world, listing causes of death in the event of nuclear disaster. The voices of Audry's parents fade subjectively, the words blurring into repetition as they echo around her. This distortion of sound is accompanied by a simple, itself repetitive, musical refrain which serves to emphasise the repetition of the words, and which is strongly characteristic of Hartley's general use of music.

3b): Music

Music is a highly repetitive form in any case: witness the 'verse - chorus - verse - chorus' format of the majority of popular music. Yet Hartley pushes the boundaries of this intrinsic quality, exploiting within his particular repetition of sound the *degree* of repetition which music can exhibit. Much of the music which accompanies Hartley's films is self-penned under the pseudonym Ned Rifle. *Henry Fool*, in which Hartley finally acknowledges himself in this aspect of the credits, stands as an exception. Thus the nature of the music can be ascribed to a continuation of Hartley's thematic and structural concerns. Hartley's music echoes the general sparsity of his film-making style, such as simple formal compositions, abstemious mise en scène, a lack of superfluous dialogue. Suggesting a comparison with minimalism which is drawn in Chapter III, Hartley's non-diegetic music is uncomplicated and, often, difficult to distinguish from one film to the next. The general tendency is for a simple motif to be repeated throughout rather than elaborated upon.

A notable exception to this is the 'Let Me Win Lotto' refrain which appears within the short film *Theory of Achievement*. This song falls firmly within the parameters of popular music as a highly repetitive form, following the conventional verse-chorus-verse pattern. Hence within the film's diegesis, a man, accompanying himself on the accordion, sings three identically scored verses. These respectively concern the rising lottery jackpot, his loss of savings and family due to playing the lottery, and his confidence in his new system. They are interspersed by the inevitable repetition of the pleading chorus:

> Please let my numbers all come out this one time, I've got a
>
> feeling they're right, quit my job, take a vacation of sixty-four
>
> nations, let me win lotto tonight.

This song becomes, for the individual within the film who sings it, a mode through which emphatically to express the collective aspirations of these college educated, unskilled and broke individuals. Although the lyrics of each respective verse demonstrate the consequences of his desire to win, it is the repetition of the chorus which is most indicative both of his pleading desperation and of his hope.

Section 4: Visual Repetition

Hartley's exploration of the possibilities of repetition is not, however, limited to sound, whether of dialogue or of music. Formal repetition also occurs within the visuals of his films. Instances of visual repetition fall into two main categories: repetition within a single image, and linear visual repetition, in which one image prefigures another, often, although not necessarily, within the same film.

4a): Linear Visual Repetition

Linear repetition, discussed as a structural issue above, moves into the realm of the visual within the contagion of shoves which occurs in the final house in *The Unbelievable Truth*. The bursts of physical aggression occur within the context of a sequence of highly choreographed movement as each of the characters prowls around the intersecting spaces looking for each other. The shoves themselves, which take place within the confines of the entrance to Josh's house, are patterned upon linear repetition as Mike shoves Josh, Mike shoves Vic and Audry shoves Vic. The repetition which this constitutes is linear rather than cyclical for, in order to be cyclical, it would have been necessary for the shoves to perpetuate in *The Blue Room*[13]

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[13]*The Blue Room* is a David Hare play, adapted from a play by Arthur Schnitzler. Staged in London in November 1998 by Sam Mendes, it is a play in which two actors

mode as each impacts upon the next. In this form, it would have been the case that Mike shoved Josh, Josh shoved Vic, Vic shoved Mike.

Similarly linear visual repetitions occur within *Trust*, in which the images of uniform/ity early in the film such as the football players, nurses, factory workers and waitresses prefigure the startling and itself repetitive image of a multiplicity of identically dressed, pipe smoking commuters. This image is vital because it drives the kidnapped baby sub-plot. It is through identifying which of these men Rachel was describing in her park-bench disclosure that Maria comes back into contact with Rachel, the baby's kidnapper. Further, the images within *Trust* of the bucket and sponge with which Matthew cleans the bathroom are subject to visual repetition. During each round of cleaning, an identical overhead shot of the water-filled bucket and wrung-out sponge is repeated within each (itself repetitive) montage of Matthew cleaning the sink, the bath, the toilet, the floor. This visual repetition serves to emphasise the degree of compulsion to which Matthew is being subjected, an issue which is further developed in Chapter III.

Conversely, the visual of Kurt lying in the street in *Amateur* constitutes repetition. It refers back to its originator within *Amateur* in a linear configuration, repeating the image of Thomas lying in the very same street with which the film opens. More than this, it constitutes an intertextual reference to *Surviving Desire*, a film whose final images concern a despairing Jude similarly lying in the gutter. This visual intertextuality is reinforced by Hartley's penchant for re-using actors. Rather than disparate images of the respective characters Thomas and Jude lying in the street, one actually sees a duplicate image of a prostrate Martin Donovan.

4b): Repetition Within the Image

Images do not, however, need either to look back on or to prefigure other images

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play a succession of characters who each become involved with the next (A with B, B with C etc.) until the action moves full circle and the final character encounters the first.

within a linear pattern in order to be subject to repetition. There are, in Hartley's films, instances of repetition within a single image. The most striking of these occurs within *Amateur*. The image in question comes immediately after Isabelle and Sofia first see each other by chance in a cinema. It occurs as Sofia, now outside the cinema, tries to get through to somebody on the telephone. The spectator's attention is subtly drawn by a slow pan which halts as Isabelle moves into the frame. In a momentary iconic repetition Isabelle (her hair tied up so that it appears to be bobbed like Sofia's) and Sofia each look at their counterpart before Isabelle moves off. The image is like a visual stutter, a repetition of like images within a single image. This twinning of Isabelle and Sofia though the image explains the immediacy of Isabelle's reaction when she sees the freeze-frame of Sofia on the video which Thomas brings into her apartment. She decides that God has sent her to save Sofia.

An almost identical visual repetition occurs in the Tokyo section of *Flirt*, in which the faces of Yuki and Miho are frequently juxtaposed in order to emphasise their similar position. They are each Ozu's 'alternatives', being wife and lover respectively. The repetition is initially expressed through dance, as they are manipulated by the male dancers so that, echoing each others' movements, they embrace each other. It is ratified in their subsequent encounter within the school, in which there occurs a shot of their two faces, held in close-up, paired by the image.

A similar encapsulation of visual repetition within a single image occurs in *The Unbelievable Truth*. Audry, who is, within the film's narrative, a photographic model, is juxtaposed with a pin-up of a model hanging on the wall of the garage. The image moves into repetition because of the fact that both women are pictured holding tools. As such, this repetition within the image serves to draw the attention of the spectator to the issue of the use of the human body as a commodity. It is this with which the film, and consequently Chapter VI, concerns itself.

Section 5: Behavioural Repetition

It has thus been seen that the issue of the linear and the cyclical constitutes the

prominent tension within formal repetition. However, a further type of repetition exists in Hartley's films, distinct from the formal repetition with which this taxonomy has so far concerned itself. It can be essentially described as behavioural, and it concerns characters repeating, and often deconstructing, the 'roles' which society imposes upon the individual, and those formations of habit which often plunge us unwittingly into the realm of repetition and compulsion.

5a): Repetition as Role-Play

Behavioural repetition highlights the performative nature of our patterns of behaviour, patterns which are often imposed upon us by the societal 'norm' into which we fall. Once again there are sub-categories within this mode of repetition: the repetition of extrinsic societal roles, and the inversion of such roles through repetition.

i) The Repetition of Extrinsic Societal Roles

The first example of this mode of repetition exists within the exploration of the role of 'the parent' in the film *Trust*. The repetition which Matthew's father and Maria's mother exhibit is of stereotypically parental traits. Hence Jean seeks to perpetuate Maria's childhood by brushing her daughter's hair repetitively. Jim, with typically paternalistic pride, angrily defends his absent son from the notion that he could have been fired from a small television repair outlet: 'Nobody in their right mind would fire Matthew ... Matthew's a genius' (Hartley 1992a: 146). The sentiment of 'did you eat yet?' which each parent in turn demands of their child (98, 126) constitutes not only a literal repetition of dialogue, but a repetition of typical parental behaviour. It betrays a sort of parenting-by-rote which, juxtaposed with otherwise malevolent behaviour, seems little more than role playing. Hence the easy interaction with other people's children which Matthew's father, Jim, exhibits is a poignant contrast to the lack of communication and abusive relationship of which their own family unit is composed. The juxtaposition of Jean's malicious impulses and the behaviour more befitting a parent is more literal. Standing with a knife in her hand, Jean addresses Maria: 'I'm never going to forgive you / As long as I live I'm gonna work your fingers to the bone

/ Did you eat anything today? / Sit down. I'll fix you something' (126).

The counterpoint to this is the stereotypical behaviour which both Matthew and Maria exhibit within *Trust*. Maria's repetition is of the role of The Teenager, a role which, at the start of the film at least, she fulfils with relish. Hence the clash of lurid clothing, the gum-chewing, cigarette-smoking note of parental defiance, the easy consumerism of a teenager let loose with their parent's credit card. Even Maria's pregnancy itself, in an age of ever-rising teenage pregnancy statistics, could be viewed as an embodiment of teenage stereotypes. Matthew, less obviously 'teenage' than Maria, is nonetheless a 'type', reflecting the same angst that, founded in the desperate anguish of James Dean in the polemical *Rebel Without a Cause* (1955), has proved to be a consistent concern in American cinema. Donovan's performance also recalls Judd Nelson's delineation of the bewildered defiance of a teenager abused by his father in John Hughes' 1985 film *The Breakfast Club*.

A similar repetition of, and questioning of, imposed 'roles' exists within the continual and mistaken assumption that Josh is a priest which occurs in *The Unbelievable Truth*. Josh is variously asked if he is a priest by both drivers with whom he hitchhikes at the start of the film, by Emmet, and by the beggar he encounters outside Audry's New York apartment. He is described as a priest by Mike, who tells Vic: 'He's like a priest or something'. Vic replies: 'Oh, Mike, no man is like a priest. Priests aren't even like priests when it comes to women'. He is also, implicitly, described as a priest by Audry when she describes Josh as 'poor ... he had no possessions ... and he was entirely dressed in black'. Josh even incidentally embodies priest-like traits. Aside from his mode of dress, he is celibate, a state which, initially suggested by his rejection of Audry's sexual advances, is confirmed in a conversation with Mike:

> MIKE: You got a main squeeze?
> JOSH: No.
> MIKE: Ever?
> JOSH: No.

MIKE: Phew! Ouch!

Audry even suggests that Josh *should* be referred to as priest. It is a notion which Josh does not entirely reject:

> JOSH: You can call me anything you like but you don't
> have to call me mister.
> AUDRY: I think I'll call you reverend.
> JOSH: Oh, like a priest?
> AUDRY: Don't you like it?
> JOSH: Well, I admire people who are dedicated to things.

Josh's not unwilling assumption of the role of priest within *The Unbelievable Truth* signals the performative nature of the roles which society imposes upon us, and prefigures the development of this notion into the exploration of gender with which *Flirt*'s repetitions are concerned.

ii) The Inversion of Role Through Repetition

Such a play on roles is instigated through the second mode of 'repetition as role play' within Hartley's films: the use of repetition as a means of *inverting* roles. The principal example of this in Hartley's work lies within *Trust*, in which such an inversion is afforded through the recapitulation of an earlier discussion between Matthew and Maria. The two discuss why they are together in a conversation which doubly prefigures the film's climax as Maria, grenade in hand, asks Matthew how it works and mouths a prophetic 'boom':

> MARIA: Why do you do this?
> MATTHEW: Do what?
> MARIA: Why do you hang around here and look after me
> like this?
> MATTHEW: Somebody has to.

MARIA: Why you?

<div align="right">(Hartley 1992a: 138-9)</div>

The film's final dialogue, although embodying a reversal both of role and tense, is nonetheless an obvious repetition of this earlier conversation:

MATTHEW: Why have you done this?

MARIA: Done what?

MATTHEW: Why do you put up with me like this?

MARIA: Somebody had to.

MATTHEW: But why you?

MARIA: I just happened to be here.

<div align="right">(Hartley 1992a: 178)</div>

As is often the case, the interest of the repetition lies in the most significant difference between the two, which is the inclusion in the latter conversation of an answer to the question at hand. In reversing the order of speech within the repetition, in the inversion of role through repetition, the newly enlightened Maria is afforded the opportunity of answering what was, after all, originally *her* question. The film's closing sentiment, 'I just happened to be here', is a fundamental recognition by Maria's character of the film's central, Newtonian themes, namely the function of chance in the creation of relationships, and in the institution of personal change through our encounters with others. It is through this use of difference within repetition that Hartley draws our attention to Maria's development. Her self-awareness comes when she begins not only to question, but to find the answers for herself.

A similar inversion occurs in the sequence of *Surviving Desire* where Jude confronts Sofie after she has denied that they spent the night together. Jude uses Sofie's own words, intended to hurt him, to deflate her:

JUDE: What are you writing?

(She glares at him for a second, furious and

terribly conscious of the other people sitting
around. Finally, she pulls up her book and looks at
what she has written.)

SOFIE: It's part of a story.

JUDE: Can I hear it?

SOFIE: (*Reads*) He is desperate. And his frustration
mounts to overflowing before giving way to his
final and audacious mistake. Finally he caves in,
gives up and takes what is offered. Because he
knows he can. Because he knows he wants. He
lacks faith and therefore patience. The giving of
himself has left him empty and old before his time.
(*She looks at him, defiantly. He nods, smokes, looks*
away, thinks, then ...)

JUDE: Interesting, but I think it should be a woman.
(*She still just watches him, but then what he has*
said sinks in. She looks down at the page. He
waits.)
What do you think?
(*She looks up at him again, uneasy. She returns to*
the page and reads.)

SOFIE: (*Reads*) She is desperate. And her frustration
mounts to overflowing before giving way to her
final and audacious mistake. Finally, she caves in,
gives up, and takes what is offered. Because she
knows she can. Because she knows she wants. She
lacks faith and therefore patience. The giving of
herself has left her empty and old before her
time.

JUDE: I like that better.

(Hartley 1992b: 255-6)

Once again, the inversion is not only literal (he becomes she), but also symbolic. A complete reversal of the balance of power within the relationship is instituted by the subtlest of semantic shifts. Sofie's ostensible control of the situation, a control accomplished by her denial of Jude, and a control in whose extent she confidently believes, is at once negated by the role reversal. This control is of course illusory. Sofie is only afforded her initial, short-lived triumph over Jude (describing him as desperate) because Jude impels her to read her work to him. Yet the absolute reversal of their roles, from subordination to mastery and vice versa, is afforded by the linguistic difference within the repetition of Sofie's work. Sofie's attempt to restore the equilibrium by rebuffing Jude's offer of comfort fails to rescind the inversion.

5b): Repetition and Habit

A final example of behavioural repetition within Hartley's films is that of habit. This is if indeed behaviour borne of habit can be defined as pure repetition. Hence Isabelle's unfailing tendency within *Amateur*'s narrative to sit in the same coffee house in order to write could be described as repetition. The waitress, disputing whether Isabelle did indeed buy a muffin that morning, says to Isabelle: 'You buy one or two cups of coffee and you sit there all day! Day after day! You take up space! (Hartley 1994: 2). Similarly, the life of Rachel in *Trust* is made up of habit. The woman whose 'days are like clockwork' (Hartley 1992a: 110) fills them with a pointless round of unnecessary cleaning: 'And me at home dusting a house that never gets dirty. Never gets messed up. There's no one there to mess it up. Sometimes I come home and I find myself hoping the house is a wreck. Filthy. Complete disarray.' (110). Rachel's destructive fantasies are themselves subject to repetition. Her 'sometimes' is suggestive of this desire for disarray having occurred more than once. The obvious inference to be drawn here is that Hartley is commenting not only upon the mundane nature of modern life, with its packaged 'Cape Holiday' leisure, and production line work, but also of the boredom of which many of these womens' lives are composed.

Conclusion

What then arises from this taxonomy? Ostensibly, Hartley's use of repetition is simply structural. Such an hypothesis is supported by the fact that Hartley explores the possibilities both of repetition's cyclical and linear forms within his films. Although the repetition of dialogue is dominant, Hartley also draws other aspects of his film-making style into his formal concerns, with repetition occurring both within the visual and the musical compositions of his films. The playfulness which Hartley exhibits in some of his repetitions, such as the use of 'floppy discs', is suggestive of a general position of detachment in relation to those repetitions. It is hardly incidental when one considers Hartley's Godardian references that the effect of much of this play on form is that of distanciation in the Brechtian mode. Yet there is more to Hartley's use of repetition than a merely structural analysis might suggest. His use of repetition as a means of exploring societal roles, and as a means to subvert them, is an example of this. The existence of what can be termed behavioural repetitions is suggestive of there being more to Hartley's repetitions than their bare form, pointing to notions of repetition as compulsion which inform character behaviour within Hartley's films, such as that of Matthew and his father in *Trust*.

It would thus seem pertinent to use subsequent chapters to explore the two key facets of repetition which the taxonomy brings to light, i.e. formal and behavioural repetition. It is from these that each of the two chapters which will deal explicitly with repetition, namely Chapters III and VIII, will emanate. Moving on from the rudiments of this taxonomy, these chapters will develop the question of repetition in light of theoretical approaches to it. In deference to the persistence of the two dominant modes of repetition, the formal and the behavioural, within the taxonomy, a binary approach will be taken within these chapters. This will serve usefully to integrate both psychoanalytic approaches to behavioural repetition, using Freud, Mulvey and Rodowick, and philosophical approaches to formal repetition, citing Deleuze. Although pertinent to Hartley's entire canon, these approaches will explicitly be applied to *Trust*, with which Chapter III concerns itself, and *Flirt*, a film whose chapter serves to round up the thesis. This is because these are the films which best

exemplify the way in which repetition functions within Hartley's films.

CHAPTER III

TRUST: THE COMPULSION TO REPEAT

The preceding taxonomy introduced two mains points relating to the issue of repetition. It served to illustrate the very frequency with which Hartley interpolates repetitious episodes into his films, consolidating the notion that repetition is important to Hartley's films and therefore worthy of discussion. It also identified the two main modes through which repetition is expressed, namely the use of formal repetition with which Hartley experiments, and that of the behavioural repetition with which he invests his characters. These coexist with the notion of repetition as allusion which, in highlighting Hartley's referential tendencies, the literature review in Chapter I served to illustrate. Whilst this aspect of Hartley's tendency to cite his influences will be returned to throughout the thesis in recognition of Hartley's engagement with the art-house style which Godard represents to him, it will largely be put aside here. For it will be seen that the main point of interest which *Trust*'s repetitions constitute lies within the tension between formal and behavioural modes of repetition within the film.

Specifically, Hartley's simultaneous use of these disparate forms of repetition constitutes an amalgamation of different theoretical conceptions of repetition. In particular, it invites both philosophical approaches to formal repetition, and psychoanalytic approaches to behavioural repetition. The melding of opposing disciplines which *Trust*'s repetitions is suggestive of will be extended into this chapter, in which a similarly binary approach to repetition will be adopted. It will be seen that Hartley's use of repetition in *Trust*, as in its complement *Flirt* (a film in whose chapter the issues raised here will be reprised and extended), serves as a means of articulating the conflict which it embodies, putting both the film's form, and the characters who occupy it, into crisis.

Formal Repetition

It has thus been stated that this chapter will adopt a binary approach to the repetition which inhabits *Trust*, engaging both with the formal and the behavioural modes through which Hartley's concern with repetition is articulated within the film. It is the former aspect of this, *Trust*'s use of formal repetition, with which this chapter will presently be concerned. Moving beyond the taxonomy, this more detailed exploration of the formal aspects of Hartley's use of repetition will inevitably touch upon such requisite constituents of film form as sound, both musical and linguistic, and visuals. It will also debate wider questions concerning repetition and the structure of film. The work of Gilles Deleuze will be utilised throughout in order to illuminate issues such as the interplay between the linear and the cyclical which the taxonomy brought to light, and to provide a definition of repetition which will form the basis of further discussion.

Although, unlike others of Deleuze's texts,[14] it does not deal specifically with film, Gilles Deleuze's *Difference and Repetition* (Deleuze 1994) is a useful starting point for the theorising of Hartley's repetitions, not least because it attempts an exposition of repetition. Any difficulty in discussing repetition inevitably lies within the problem of definition. Is repetition necessarily of the 'same' and, if not, what degree of 'similarity' can happily be said to fall within acceptable parameters? Deleuze's definition of repetition as a 'perfect resemblance or an extreme equality' (Deleuze 1994: 270) is more suggestive of the former. Does repetition inevitably fall into a cyclical configuration, a theory which Deleuze postulates, or is there reason to support a theory of linearity? Deleuze's talk of the 'maximum difference within repetition' (22) exemplifies the tendency towards ambiguity and paradox which is characteristic of any discussion of what is essentially an abstraction, however tangible its presence in Hartley's work.

Thus although, as has already been established, *Difference and Repetition* is

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[14]Namely *Cinema I: The Movement-Image* (Deleuze 1992) and *Cinema II: The Time-Image* (Deleuze 1989).

emphatically *not* a text about film, the application of Deleuze's theories on repetition to film becomes pertinent when one considers just how 'repetitious' an art form, with its tradition of narrative and generic homogeneity, film is. Even art-house cinema, with characteristically lax causality (Bordwell 1985: 206), is suggestive of a high degree of self-reflexivity, and of the inevitable repetition of certain themes and stylistic attributes on the part of the *auteur*. This factor, melded with a postmodern predilection for repetition through allusion and citation, tempts us to the very definition of repetition-as-generality which the literature review highlighted, and Deleuze negates (Deleuze 1994: 1). Repetition is an inescapable facet of our film-watching experience.

Hartley's use of Godard arguably falls at times within the parameters of repetition. Yet his use of repetition is much more than mere allusion. As the taxonomy identifies, repetition is a consistent formal concern whose employment is prolific and distinct within Hartley's work, and which goes beyond the simple repetition of the stylistic attributes of others. To isolate one example, can Hartley's use of repetition be reduced to his use of a Godardian jump cut to mark Matthew's alteration of demeanour as he enters his father's house in *Trust*? It is more realistic to assert that what Hartley takes from Godard is a mode of operation which employs distanciation. An inevitable and desirable consequence of episodes of repetition is the imposition of a distanced position upon the spectator. However, it is Hartley's ability to utilise repetition both to distance and yet engender empathy (such as that for Matthew in the 'Whose fault is it?' sequence which is discussed later in this chapter) and through this tension to put into crisis, that it is important to note.

Linear v Cyclical

Arguably the greatest tension within formal repetition which the taxonomy highlighted was that between the linear and the cyclical configurations into which the patterns of dialogue which structure scenes can fall. To reprise these for a moment, it was discovered that Hartley's linear repetitions take two significant forms. The literal linear repetitions included the repetition of 'Be good to her and she'll be good to you'

and of an anarchistic tract in *Simple Men*, and the repetition both of 'perhaps' and of a passage from Dostoevsky in *Surviving Desire*. Developmental linear repetition was seen to be evident within *Amateur*'s 'This is what I'm supposed to do', Katie's desire to marry in *Surviving Desire*, and the 'young, middle class, white, college educated, unskilled, broke and drunk' men in *Theory of Achievement*. The obverse of this, cyclical repetition, was seen to embody both full circle repetition, such as the 'I don't drive' of *The Unbelievable Truth*, and continual repetition, including the 'I know what you need' conversation in *The Unbelievable Truth*, and the 'Dwell on uncomplicated beauty' of *Ambition*. Yet, despite repetition's obvious ability to move between these two structuring modes, Deleuze, in *Difference and Repetition*, predicates the theory of the cyclical over the linear.

Deleuze's preference for a cyclical theory of repetition lies within the very nature of philosophy. Any ontological quest is bound to find there to be a 'profound' repetition behind the sort of 'bare' repetition which Hartley's films exhibit (Deleuze 1994: 292). Hence Deleuze universalises repetition, finding that both 'space and time are themselves repetitive milieux' (13). This dilatation of the issue of repetition into the sphere of the universal necessarily presupposes the cyclical: 'what is produced [from repetition], the absolutely new in itself, is in turn nothing but repetition: the third repetition, this time by excess, the repetition of the future as eternal return' (90). It also, significantly, points towards the role of the number *three* within the consideration of cyclical repetition. It will be seen throughout the thesis that Hartley repeatedly returns to 'three' within his films. It is, after all, the third repetition which allows the circle to be drawn. When one is limited to *two* points, any diagrammatic relationship between the two is markedly linear.

In order to substantiate his theory of the cyclical structure of repetition, Deleuze emphasises the 'persistence of the triadic structure' within dramatic tradition: 'Note that the three-stage structure of repetition is no less that of Hamlet than that of Oedipus' (92). He identifies the presence of this 'theme of the three temporal stages in most *cyclical* conceptions' (92-3, author's emphasis). Although this theory is most obviously applicable to *Flirt*'s three part structure, an issue which is developed in the

final chapter, even at its most insular level, the success of the application of this theory of 'three' to Hartley's individual repetitions is clear. Within the episodes of repetition which the taxonomy details, there is indeed a persistence of three stages of repetition. In *Simple Men*, the adage 'Be good to her and she'll be good to you' is repeated three times: twice with reference to the Virgin Mary, and once with reference to women in general. The young, unskilled and broke men in *Theory of Achievement* repeat their pitiful lament three times, albeit with increasingly abject embellishments. *The Unbelievable Truth*'s 'I know what you need' conversation passes through three unbroken repetitions. There are three shoves in the climactic sequence of *The Unbelievable Truth*, and three episodes concerning Matthew cleaning the bathroom in *Trust*.

This predication of the role of the third repetition in creating a cyclical configuration is thus one which, borne out by Hartley's films, would appear to have foundation. Yet the theory of cyclical repetition which Deleuze submits inevitably raises further questions, not least because not all of the above incidences of the use of three repetitions falls within the parameters of cyclical repetition within the taxonomy. Indeed, although consistently preferring this theory of the cyclical, Deleuze nonetheless equivocates over the nature of any perceived interrelationship between cycles. He is unable to decide between the three mutually exclusive possibilities he suggests. The first, intracyclic repetition, 'involves the manner in which the first two ages repeat one another - or rather, repeat one and the same 'thing', act or event yet to come' (93). In the second, Deleuze posits a single cyclical repetition 'in which it is supposed that, at the end of the third age and at the end of a process of dissolution, everything recommences with the first age' (93). It is, however, the final hypothesis which is of greatest interest to the present discussion, in that Deleuze's predication of the third repetition within the cycle recurs:

> The problem remains: isn't there a repetition peculiar to the
> third age, which alone merits the name of eternal return? For
> the first two ages do no more than repeat something which
> appears for itself only in the third, but in the third this 'thing'

repeats itself. The two 'significations' are already repetitive,

but the signified itself is pure repetition.

(Deleuze 1994: 93)

It would seem pertinent to apply this notion of triple cyclical repetition following a pattern of signifier, signifier, signified to an episode of repetition.

Within *Trust*, there is just such a triple repetition in which Matthew, impelled by his father's compulsion, is forced thrice to clean the bathroom. That this is an expression on Hartley's part of repetition as a damaging pattern of behaviour is discussed in the subsequent section concerning behavioural repetition. What is at issue here, however, is the formal aspect of this episode of repetition. Deleuze states, within *Difference and Repetition*, that the first of a sequence of three repetitions is 'necessarily by default', and 'as though closed upon itself' (93). Hence the first of the three repetitions of Matthew cleaning the bathroom in *Trust* is almost perfunctory, merely being referred to in dialogue rather than being active within the film space. It is 'closed' because it is an event in the past:

> DAD: ... And when are you gonna clean that bathroom,
> like I asked, huh?
> MATTHEW: (*Sincere*) But I did. I did it before I went to
> work...
> (Hartley 1992a: 98)

As Deleuze's formula suggests, the second incidence within this repetitious episode of cleaning is 'open' (Deleuze 1994: 93) rather than closed (it is open in that it occurs within the temporal present of the film space: we see it as it is happening). The characteristic 'metamorphosis' (Deleuze 1994:93) of this second repetition of cleaning is its transference from the dialogue of the instigatory repetition to the visuals of the film. Hartley now uses the device of montage to delineate Matthew's activity, contrasting the vivid colours of his tools, namely the yellow bucket and the blue lavatory flush, with the clinical whiteness of the bathroom in which he is

unnecesssarily working.

It is, however, as Deleuze suggests, the third incidence which is of most interest within this formal pattern of repetition. According to the theory of signification and repetition: 'the most important and mysterious lies in the third, which plays the role of 'signified' in relation to the other two' (93). The third cleaning sequence arises as a result of Matthew's father's increasing rage at what he mistakes as provocation on Matthew's part. He does not acknowledge the earlier cleaning sessions, but rather continues to find the cleanliness of the bathroom lacking. In certain aspects this third sequence constitutes a visual repetition of the second sequence. Identical images of the sponge, the bucket and the blue flush are used. There is, however, a significant difference within this third repetition: Matthew's failure to remember the lit cigarette which he has balanced on the rim of the sink and which, in his absence, excretes its waste onto the perfection of the white ceramic. The two former repetitions signify the latter repetition because of the importance of the final incidence of cleaning in instituting the most extreme of confrontations between Matthew and his father, i.e. the 'Whose fault is it?' sequence which is discussed in detail in the section: 'Repetition and Working Through: *Trust*'s Behavioural Repetitions', later in this chapter.

The episode of repetition which *Trust*'s bathroom cleaning sequence constitutes would thus seem to fit comfortably into the structure of two signifying and one signified thing which Deleuze posits. The lack of compliance which Jim mistakenly identifies in the two signifiers is borne out in the signified in which Matthew soils the bathroom with his cigarette. The signified then in turn becomes signifier within the wider structure of the film. This is because the bathroom cleaning sequence, in which Jim is reminded of the loss of his wife by forcing Matthew into 'women's work,' signifies the sequence in which the establishment of fault for the failure of their relationship is undertaken. It will be seen that this establishment of fault clearly itself signifies the underlying issue: Jim blames Matthew for the death of his wife.

Further, the 'signified' repetition of bathroom cleaning is a signifier within a second repetition. The images in which Matthew, seated on the lavatory lid with a burgundy towel beside him on the radiator, leaves his cigarette on the sink prefigure the presence of Maria, similarly seated and wearing the burgundy towel, in the Slaughters' bathroom. Matthew's diminutive and unconscious display of rebellion signifies the excess with which Maria disrupts the obsessively immaculate house. She generates a state of complete disarray, leaving her cigarette butt in the lavatory, spilling soup and milk on the kitchen floor. In doing so, she acts as a catalyst. It is Jim's reaction both to Maria's presence and to the disorder which she has brought into the house which prompts Matthew finally to leave his house in favour of hers. Patterns of signifiers and the signified patently structure *Trust*.

There are, however, problems with supporting this notion of the cyclical as the *only* form of repetition. As illustrated above, that Deleuze postulates the theory of the signified and signifier within a delineation of three potential modes of interrelationships between cycles firmly associates the signification theory with the cyclical. Indeed, as could be seen in *Trust*, there is such a perceptible interrelationship between patterns of signification. The cleaning incident signified by the two previous significations within *Trust* in turn signifies the wider issue upon which the relationship between Jim and Matthew is structured, i.e. the death of the wife / mother in childbirth. It is as if *Trust*'s patterns of signification are moving in ever wider concentric circles.

Yet this embodies a central problem. If it is, as is the case, even *possible* to distinguish a signifier and a signified to which the signifier leads, how can it be possible to support a theory of the cyclical, in which there is necessarily no beginning or end? The solution is clear. If there is *always* a signified, the configuration must eventually become linear because it leads inevitably to a point: the point at which the 'ultimately signified' has been reached. The very notion of the signifier and the signified negates the cyclical. Clearly Deleuze's direct association of the signified with the cyclical is impossible. An ambiguity persists.

Indeed, Deleuze himself states that: 'beyond the cycles' there stands the 'straight line of the empty form of time' (Deleuze 1994: 292). In its purest form, a cycle inherently renders repetition itself impossible:

> [When] we distinguish the first, second, third ... in their indefinite succession: it may be that this succession can be defined as a cycle, and that repetition is therefore impossible, either in an intracyclic form in which 2 repeats 1, 3 repeats 2 and so on; or in an intercyclic form in which 1' repeats 1, 2' repeats 2, 3' repeats 3. (Even if an indefinite succession of cycles is supposed, the first time will be defined as the Same or the undifferentiated, either at the origin of all cycles or in between two cycles.)
>
> (Deleuze 1994: 294)

A position which allows for the association of repetition with linearity is thus engendered by this negation of the cyclical.

Arguably the most literal repetitions in the taxonomy are linear: those incidences of characters repeating the words of others. Unlike other modes of repetition (notably developmental repetition) in which the repetition necessarily embodies a degree of difference, however small, the repetition by Jude of the passage from Dostoevsky in *Surviving Desire*, like the repetition of the anarchistic tract on the deck of the Tara in *Simple Men*, is marked by the 'perfect resemblance or ... extreme equality' (270) by which repetition in its purest state is defined. Yet Deleuze controverts the linearity both of 'brute' repetition[15] (repetition of the same) and of the possibility of establishing an order of succession in which one is originary and the other derived, one 'identity' (model) and the other 'resemblance' (copy) (125). In doing so he denies the most literal fulfilment of repetition's criterion within Hartley's films,

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[15]Deleuze, discussing the psychoanalytic approach to repetition, is dismissive of brute repetition because he finds that the consequence of brute repetition is the notion of repetition: 'conditioned by fixation or regression' (Deleuze 1994: 103).

the repetitions of the words of others, which are so marked by the absolute correspondence between 'model' (the text) and 'copy' (the spoken word). The repetition is so literal because the text itself, if not the form it takes since reading and reciting are patently not the same, remains unchanged.

Further, the recitals each fall not only into Deleuze's bare definition of repetition as a 'perfect resemblance or ... extreme equality', but into his more profound determination that not only is repetition dependent upon our ability to draw something new from it, but that we produce something new *only on condition that we repeat* (90, my emphasis). Hence Jude recites from the paragraph from Dostoevsky because it speaks to his own experiences, however incapable he is of comprehending it. He gains from it an aphorism: 'love in action is a harsh and dreadful thing compared to love in dreams' (Hartley 1992b: 226). Like a self-fulfilling prophecy, he turns this aphorism into a new experience. After he and Sofie make love she denies him. Equally the anarchists gain something new from their repetition of the tract: a feeling of absorption into the homogeneity of the group. Thus a sense of belonging, of assimilation, is derived, made more pertinent by the fact that both Martin and Elina could be characterised as misfits. Martin is marginal because he is outside the relationships between Kate and her husband, and Kate and Bill, as well as *Simple Men*'s wider social grouping. This is exemplified by his inability to involve himself in the conversation concerning the representation of women in the music industry. Whilst others discuss gender politics, he lists his favourite bands. Elina is equally lacking in integration. She is Romanian and epileptic, both of which, as Chapter VII will explore, are suggestive of her 'difference'.

It would therefore seem that repetition can be represented both by linear and by cyclical forms; that linearity is not repetition's antithesis, as Deleuze's bias towards the cyclical suggests. Rather, the linear can happily coexist with the cyclical within conceptions of formal repetition. Despite personally predicating the cyclical over the linear, Deleuze's definitions of repetition are as befitting of the linear as the cyclical. Indeed, the most literal of repetitions in Hartley's films: the repetition of the words of others, fall into a linear rather than a cyclical configuration within the films'

structures. That the most literal form of repetition (the words themselves remain unchanged even if the mode of expression alters) is linear fundamentally opposes Deleuze's assertion of the cyclical over the linear as the preferred form which repetition should take. This conclusion can be drawn from the consideration of the overall formal structure of Hartley's films, namely *Flirt*'s three episodes, the essential linearity of brute repetition within *Simple Men*, and *Trust*'s patterns of signification. There is, however, a second issue which arises from this discussion. What is the impact upon formal repetition within *Trust* when the notion of difference is inserted into the equation?

Repetition and Formal Difference

In order better to understand the way in which repetition and difference intersect, it is fruitful to draw an analogy with minimalism. This analogy, suggested by the sparsity of simple and repetitious music which prevails within Hartley's films, will serve to illuminate the nature of the impact of difference upon repetition. Further, Hartley's images, in which a characteristic simplicity of visual composition is evident, point strongly towards such an analogy. Hartley's restrained visual style is characterised by the simplicity of his compositions and the distinctive lucidity of Michael Spiller's cinematography. The choice of settings contributes to this. The impact of the balletic sequence in the empty house in which the climax of *The Unbelievable Truth* occurs is largely derived from the utter austerity of the space. Overall, the visual style of Hartley's films is loosely related to the characteristics of minimalist art, in which the work is simplified to the point where 'subtle gradations of single hues on monochrome canvases' (Struble 1995: 321) are characteristic.

Yet it is arguably the repetitive nature of Hartley's 'minimalist' music which is of greatest import. For Hartley's music, predominantly self-penned under the pseudonym Ned Rifle, is an integral part of his use of repetition. Musical minimalism concerns 'musical events' which are 'reduced to the merest gestural signatures or aphorisms' (322). Such 'criticisms' have often been levelled at Hartley. Repetition is key to minimalist music, in which the cumulative effect of the repetition of these

gestural sounds is the main interest. Philip Glass, an important figure within minimalism, prefers to have his work described as 'repetitive' and 'reductive' rather than minimalist (333).

It is thus important to note that Hartley's films are as recognisable for the stark, repetitious simplicity of the music as for any of their visual attributes. There is little tangible variation between the music used in *The Unbelievable Truth*, *Trust* and *Simple Men*, for example, music which prefers the repetition of very few notes of music to a full sound. Yet the point of comparing minimalism with Hartley's music does not so much lie in the question of the extent to which his music would stand up to the rigours of minimalism's definition, but in the recognition of what such an analogy can yield. For minimalism, like Deleuze's argument, recognises the importance of difference within repetition. Hence Glass's 'addive' rhythm, 'characterised by the continuous addition of notes and rests to the repetitive rhythmic patterns of his melodic phrases' (334), is as reliant upon *difference* as the repetition which is central to his work. Equally dependant upon the presence of difference within repetition is Steve Reich. His 'phase shifting' is a technique in which:

> Two identical musical or acoustic activities, whether recorded
> on tape or performed by musicians, are begun at the same time
> and repeated. As repetitions accumulate, the events become
> slightly disconnected in time, i.e. 'out-of-phase' with each
> other. As more time and repetitions pass, the discontinuities
> become more extreme and new perceptual relationships begin
> to emerge, seemingly at random, but always as a result of the
> continual shifting of phase relationships.
>
> (Struble 1995: 327)

Through repetition, something 'new' (difference) can be experienced.

In this way, Hartley's use of the repetition of sound, though not necessarily falling exactly within the parameters of a definition of musical minimalism, is

analogous to the work of Philip Glass and Steve Reich. All recognise the importance of difference within the use of repetition. In much the same way as minimalism uses texture and rhythm to create something new and different from the repetition of one or two notes of music, Hartley uses the essentials of repetition in order to create something different. It is, after all, the question: 'What difference is there?' that the 'contemplative soul puts to repetition, and to which it draws a response from repetition' (Deleuze 1994: 78).

This notion of the way in which difference can be drawn from the repetition of sound is also key to the issue of the impact of performance, of the spoken as opposed to the written word, on the inherent structure of dialogue within Hartley's films. The question of whether the very definition of an episode of dialogue as repetition is undermined by words being spoken in a different way or by a different character is vital to the study of formal repetition in Hartley's films. For although Hartley is often lauded for a dexterity with aphoristic dialogue[16] which renders his screenplays, almost universally available in published form, as accessible and arguably as resonant as the films themselves, one cannot underestimate performative influence over the written word. Although the taxonomy deals with the bare form of the dialogue, discussing, for example, whether the dialogue is patterned upon linear or cyclical repetition, there is more to the exploration of repetition in Hartley's films than this. In particular, the use of diction as a means to interpolate difference into the repetition is an issue worthy of exploration.

The most frivolous example in Hartley's films of the use of cadence as a means of emphasising difference occurs within the short *Theory of Achievement* in which the two men, relaying a series of terms of self-definition, mark each insertion of a new adjective with an emphatic tone of voice. Hence our attention is drawn to the specifics of the differences between the early, middle and late lists, which move from: 'young, middle class, college educated, broke', through 'young, middle class, *white*, college educated, *unskilled*, broke', to 'young, middle class, white, college educated, unskilled, broke, *drunk*.' The truthfulness of this final adjective, an adjective

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[16]*Henry Fool* won the Best Screenplay Prize at the 1998 Cannes Film Festival.

emphasised by the intonation, is further supported by the slowness of the speech.

There are, however, more profound incidences of linguistic repetition within Hartley's films. The sequence within *Trust* which the bathroom cleaning repetition signifies, namely the establishment of fault sequence, will be discussed later in this chapter in the section: 'Repetition and Working Through: *Trust*'s Behavioural Repetitions'. This is because of the pattern of behavioural repetition within the relationship between Matthew and his father which it betrays. Yet although the emotive impact of this sequence is great, it is the inflection of the language itself, as apparent in the screenplay as in the film (and thus a constituent of the film's form), which is important to the present consideration of this formal aspect of repetition. Jim's demands of Matthew are disturbing for their relentlessness: 'Well, then whose fault is it?' / 'Whose fault is it, Matthew?' / 'If it isn't my fault, whose fault is it?' (Hartley 1992a: 106). Yet it is Matthew's response which is simultaneously more affecting, and more significant within the consideration of repetition. Deleuze has said of the repetitive nature of language that:

> Cadence is only the envelope of a rhythm, and of a relation
> between rhythms. The reprise of points of inequality, of
> inflections or of rhythmic events, is more profound than the
> reproduction of ordinary homogenous elements.
>
> (Deleuze 1994: 21)

Hence although Matthew's responses to his father are ostensibly a literal repetition ('It's my fault' / 'It's my fault' / 'It's my fault'), there are actually points of inequality between the three repetitions, as can be both seen from the screenplay, and detected in Donovan's emotive performance. To repeat the quotation complete with inflections, the repetition becomes: '(*Softly*) It's my fault.' / 'It's *my* fault! / 'It's my *fault!*' (106). Thus it arises that it is the differences within the repetition which are of issue. The first, softly spoken instance embodies Matthew's alteration of demeanour in the presence of his father, the second, resignation to this assignment of blame: 'It's *my* fault'. The final repetition, with its emphasis moving onto the word *'fault'*, betrays the

real purpose of the confrontation, which is Jim's need to blame his son for the loss of his wife. This is in view of the fact that she died giving birth to Matthew. Thus it is the points of *in*equality, the varying inflections of the words, which are more profound than the homogeneity (repetition) which they present. Although Matthew's words themselves remain unchanged, there is an essential difference within each of their enunciations.

Hartley is therefore using cadence and performance as a means to emphasise his introduction of difference into the formal structure of dialogue repetition. As such, he is asserting the importance of linguistic difference to the discussion of formal repetition within *Trust*. It has been seen that Hartley uses dialogue as a means of expressing the formal interplay between repetition and difference. Where the degree of repetition is high, such as the literal triple repetition of the phrase 'It's my fault' in *Trust*, cadence introduces points of inequality through which the notion of repetition is questioned, and the issue of difference interposed.

Hartley's use of formal repetition thus embodies many facets. At its most structural lies the interplay between the linear and the cyclical which is central to philosophical approaches to repetition. Hartley simultaneously manipulates both of these in pursuit of formal experimentation. It has been asserted that repetition is ostensibly cyclical. This is indicated not only by the ontological aspect of a philosophical engagement with repetition, but by the notion of signifier, signifier, signified upon which *Trust*'s bathroom cleaning sequences are patterned. The notion of triple return, with its emphasis on *three*, is further suggestive of this. Yet the linearity which Deleuze controverts is also a legitimate repetitious form. Indeed, Deleuze himself finds that, in its purest form, the cycle renders repetition impossible. Hence, as can be seen within the taxonomy, linear configurations can similarly exhibit three repetitions. Equally, the very idea of there being an ultimately 'signified' which, in *Trust*'s case, is the assignment of blame for the death of Matthew's mother in childbirth, arguably places the theory of signification within a linear configuration in which the final, an ending, is presupposed. Indeed the most literal repetitions in Hartley's films are linear, those in which characters recite the words of others. In

deriving their own, distinct experience from repetition through encountering the ideas of others, these characters satisfy the most basic premise upon which the appeal of repetition depends: that something new be drawn from the repetition.

This notion of the drawing of something new from repetition is central to both aspects of Hartley's use of sound discussed here. It occupies the formal repetition which his music exhibits, and which is analogous to minimalist music which seeks to produce new perceptual relationships from displaced repetition. It inhabits linguistic and formal repetition, in which difference arises explicitly out of cadence variation, illustrated in Matthew's thrice declaimed assumption of fault. The final tension within formal repetition thus lies between repetition itself and the difference which inhabits it. For Deleuze, it is the 'highest object of art' to bring into play simultaneously all these repetitions'... even the 'most mechanical, the most banal, the most habitual and the most stereotyped repetition finds a place in works of art' because repetition is 'subject to the condition that a difference may be extracted from it' (Deleuze 1994: 293).

Repetition and Working Through: *Trust*'s Behavioural Repetitions

There were two main points arising from the preceding section concerning formal repetition. Questioning whether repetition is necessarily cyclical rather than linear, it was discovered that the two are not mutually exclusive. The importance of difference within formal modes of repetition was also established, a difference which was interposed through Matthew's shifting emphasis within the phrase: 'It's my fault'. However, in light of Hartley's desire for spectatorial identification, these detached considerations of the impact of Hartley's use of repetition on film form seem to miss an important point. Repetition is also key to *human behaviour* in Hartley's films, in which characters exhibit repetition not only of their extrinsic, societal roles, with the repetition of the formulaic parental 'did you eat yet' in *Trust* being emblematic of this, but also of their idiosyncratic, often compulsive behavioural patterns. It is this aspect of Hartley's use of repetition within *Trust* to which our attention will now be turned. After exploring the nature of episodes embodying behavioural repetition, applying

Freud's theories on repetition to *Trust*, the issue of difference will be returned to, asking of repetition not only: 'What is the difference?', but how this difference impacts on wider questions surrounding psychoanalytic theory and film.

Psychoanalysis is an important paradigm into which the concept of repetition can be placed, and the behavioural repetitions of Hartley's characters will be explored in light of psychoanalytic theory. Both Freud's formative essay: 'Remembering, Repeating and Working-Through' (Freud 1914), and the subsequent: 'Beyond the Pleasure Principle' (Freud 1920) in which Freud modifies his theories on repetition, will be used. Although a prolific context of behavioural repetitions was in evidence within aspects of the taxonomy, it is appropriate that the focus of this consideration will necessarily be narrowed to *Trust*. This is because *Trust* is a film which, as will be seen, is of the greatest importance to the discussion of Hartley's behavioural repetitions. Thus the repetitions within *Trust*'s 'Whose fault is it?' sequence will be explored as a means for Matthew and his father to work through their feelings of guilt and anger over the loss of their respective mother / wife. This impacts upon their masculinity, putting it into a position of crisis as they each seek to restore the figure of their loss.

Freud, in his 1914 essay: 'Remembering, Repeating and Working-Through (Further Recommendations on the Technique of Psycho-Analysis II)', talks of repetition arising from repression, with the compulsion to repeat substituting the impulse to remember. The aim of the psycho-analysis, Freud states, is: 'descriptively speaking, [...] to fill in gaps in memory; dynamically speaking, [...] to overcome resistances due to repression' (Freud 1914: 148). The patient, who inevitably does not remember that which has been repressed, expresses the forgotten experience in action (150). The compulsion to repeat which this expression-through-action becomes is the patient's way of remembering (150). Repetition is thus 'a transference of the forgotten past not only on to the doctor, but also on to all the other aspects of the current situation' (151). The greater the resistance, the 'more extensively will acting out (repetition) replace remembering' (151). Ultimately, the goal in overcoming this tendency to repeat is remembering, although, significantly, Freud states that:

There is one special class of experiences of the utmost importance for which no memory can as a rule be recovered. These are experiences which occurred in very early childhood and were not understood at the time but which were *subsequently* understood and interpreted. One [...] is obliged to believe in them on the most compelling evidence provided by the fabric of the neurosis. Moreover, we can ascertain for ourselves that the patient, after his resistances have been overcome, no longer invokes the absence of any memory of them (any sense of familiarity with them) as a ground for refusing to accept them.

(Freud 1914: 149, author's emphasis)

Repetitious behavioural patterns can thus arise from material repressed in early childhood, a notion which will be of particular importance to the discussion of *Trust*'s behavioural repetitions.

In his later work 'Beyond the Pleasure Principle' (Freud 1920), Freud develops his theories on repetition with reference to the ego. Repetition is now instituted by the ego which represses, as opposed to the unconscious. The tendency which we exhibit towards the 'pleasure principle', defined as either the 'avoidance of unpleasure' or the 'production of pleasure' (7), is overcome by this tendency to repeat. Freud discusses the case of a child who, using small objects which he would discard and then retrieve, repeatedly acted out his upsetting experiences of his mother leaving him. What Freud identifies is an 'impulse to work over in the mind some overpowering experience so as to make oneself master of it' (16). Thus 'even under the dominance of the pleasure principle, there are ways and means enough of making what is in itself unpleasurable into a subject to be recollected and worked over in the mind' (17). The individual overrides the pleasure principle through their tendency to repeat repressed (and therefore unpleasant) material as contemporary experience:

> They [the acted out experiences] are of course the activities of
> instincts intended to lead to satisfaction; but no lesson has
> been learnt from the old experience of these activities having
> led only to unpleasure. In spite of that, they are repeated,
> under pressure of a compulsion.
>
> (Freud 1920: 21)

For Freud, this 'perpetual recurrence of the same thing' is less surprising when it 'relates to *active* behaviour on the part of the person concerned' (22). This is largely due to the factor of personality: a particular character trait might be influential in the compulsion to repeat experiences. What is most impressive is a case where the subject 'appears to have a *passive* experience, over which he has no influence, but in which he meets with a repetition of the same fatality' (22). Thus, according to Freud's psychoanalytic model, repetition is behavioural, arising out of the repression of painful experience, and most impelling when it is borne of passive experience. As such, it is most stimulating when applied to Hartley's 1990 feature, *Trust*, in which damaging behavioural patterns, both within the individual and within interpersonal relationships, abound.

Arguably, *Trust*'s more compelling repetitions exist in the realm of the behavioural, rather than visual or structural aspects of the film. Certain scenes, in particular those concerning Matthew and Jim Slaughter, are provocative of profound discomfiture. Referring back to the taxonomy of repetitions, the context of behavioural repetition is well established within *Trust*. Hence the repetition which Matthew's father and Maria's mother exhibit of stereotypically parental traits, in which the parenting-by-rote of 'did you eat yet?' is juxtaposed with a degree of malevolence unbefitting a parent. Behavioural repetition is also evident in Maria's repetition of the stereotype 'teenager', in Matthew's repetition of an almost Osborneian young male angst. An important aspect of human behaviour in Hartley's films is this repetition of extrinsic, societal roles, emphasising the performative nature of our behaviour. Yet this context of behavioural repetition merely serves to direct our attention to the more extreme forms of behavioural repetition which occur within the relationship between

Matthew and his father.

In what is one of the central relationships of the film, Matthew and his father, Jim, seem to be locked into a compulsion to repeat damaging behavioural patterns. This is an expression by Hartley of repetition in the Freudian mode. The obsession Jim has with Matthew cleaning the significantly white-coloured bathroom, emblematic of the emotional sterility that marks his relationship with his son, is an important site of repetition within *Trust*. The bathroom is used by Jim as a means of imposing repetitive behaviour on Matthew: although the cleaning is carried out by Matthew, it is at his father's instigation. This is clearly Jim's compulsion, rather than Matthew's, thus placing the interest within the conflict between Freud's comparison of active and passive repetitions. The first of the three repetitions of cleaning (for there are, to hark back to Deleuze, of course three), occurs as a prelude to the film's space. It is referred to in conversation between Jim and Matthew:

DAD: ... and when are you gonna clean that bathroom, like I asked, huh?

MATTHEW: (*Sincere*) But I did. I did it before I went to work...

DAD: You call that clean?

MATTHEW: Yeah ...

DAD: Do it again!

<div align="center">(Hartley 1992a: 98)</div>

And so we witness what is actually the second of the day's cleaning sessions, with a montage of brightly coloured images of the yellow sponge and the blue flush of the lavatory jarring against the austere whiteness of the tiles. The third cleaning sequence, coming after we see Jim bursting into Matthew's room in a state of anger at what he perceives to be Matthew's lack of compliance, is an almost literal visual repetition of the second. It contains, however, a significant difference. Matthew, in an unconscious and diminutive act of rebellion against his father, forgets to pick up the lit cigarette he has left balanced on the rim of the sink.

In the 'Formal Repetition' section of this chapter, this repetition was referred to

as 'signifier, signifier, signified' according to Deleuze's theories on repetition. The two former repetitions signify the latter repetition because of the importance of the final incidence of cleaning in instituting the confrontation between Matthew and his father, the 'Whose fault is it' sequence which is discussed below. In terms of behavioural repetition, however, the importance of this sequence lies in Matthew's compliance, in the absence of the mother, with what a patriarchal society traditionally deems to be a 'female' role. This is a role which involves both cleaning and, more interestingly, subservience. It is also key to the application of Freud's ideas on repetition to *Trust*'s behavioural repetition, because it is in response to this sequence that Matthew and Jim enter into a more deep rooted repetition of blame assignment.

Whose Fault Is It?

The most disturbing confrontation between Matthew and his father thus lies within the 'establishment of fault' sequence which the bathroom cleaning sequence provokes. It is a sequence which falls firmly within the parameters of Freud's writing on repetition. In his 1914 work: 'Remembering, Repeating and Working-Through', Freud refers to the way in which the subject 'yields to the compulsion to repeat, which now replaces the impulsion to remember' (Freud 1914: 151). When the subject experiences memories that are of sufficient intensity to warrant repression, 'remembering at once gives way to acting out' (151), i.e. it propagates behavioural repetition. Without wishing to descend into the banality of psychoanalysing characters, it is important to note that Hartley establishes in *Trust* a motivation not only for the behaviour to which Jim subjects his son, but also for the guilt which marks Matthew's complicity in the repetition which follows:

> DAD: Who the hell do you think you are?
> MATTHEW: I don't think I'm anybody.
> DAD: You think you're somebody special, don't you?
> MATTHEW: Just tell me what I've done wrong.
> DAD: You think you shit ice-cream cones, is that it?
> MATTHEW: All I want to do is clean the bathroom.

> (DAD *punches him in the stomach and* MATTHEW *falls to his knees, holding his gut.* DAD *goes down on his knees, face-to-face with* MATTHEW.)

DAD: I've seen your kind. I've seen 'em all my life. You just keep taking. Taking, like everything was owed to you. Like the rest of us owed you something! You're a little kid! Gimme this! Gimme that! Other people need things too, you know, Matthew! You ever think about that? You ever think about other people? You ever think about *me!*

MATTHEW: I think about you all the time.

DAD: What!

> (*No answer. He grabs* MATTHEW *by the hair...*)

Did you say something?

MATTHEW: I don't know what you want!

DAD: I want ... a little *co-operation!*

> (DAD *releases* MATTHEW's *head.* MATTHEW *stays where he is, his face to the floor.* DAD *sits on the edge of a chair, hangs his head, and sighs.*)

I don't know, maybe it's my fault.

MATTHEW: It's not your fault.

DAD: Well, then whose fault is it?

> (MATTHEW *doesn't answer.*)

Huh!

> (MATTHEW *looks down.*)

Whose fault is it, Matthew?

> (MATTHEW *is silent.*)

If it isn't my fault, whose fault is it?

MATTHEW: (*Softly*) It's my fault.

DAD: What was that?

MATTHEW: It's *my* fault!

DAD: It's your fault.

MATTHEW: It's my *fault!*

DAD: That's real big of you Matthew. You think that *changes* anything?

(MATTHEW *says nothing.*)

(Hartley 1992a: 103-6)

It is worth dwelling for a moment on the question of just how tentative one ought to be when claiming that this sequence constitutes repetition. Clearly any such definition has its limitations. Apart from Matthew's repetitions of the phrase: 'it's my fault' (repetitions whose essential difference, instituted through variations in cadence, has already been established in this chapter within the section: 'Repetition and Formal Difference'), it is difficult to assert that this sequence constitutes repetition, beyond a fleeting return to the discussion of fault later in the film.

Yet, despite the fact that this sequence does not ostensibly constitute repetition, it is pivotal because of the notion of pattern and repetition which it betrays. The very impact of the sequence upon the spectator; an impact compounded by Martin Donovan's harrowingly subdued performance, lies in the fact that we are far from assuming that this establishment of fault is occurring for the first time. Matthew's response to his father is so punctual as to suggest a degree of automation which, in moving beyond mere habit, is strongly indicative of this as a repetition of established patterns of behaviour within their relationship: 'JIM: 'I don't know, maybe it's my fault.' / MATTHEW: *'It's not your fault'* (my emphasis).

The segment, affecting because of our assumption that Matthew has been repeatedly subjected to such behaviour throughout his childhood, is also startling both in terms of the shock of seeing Matthew so passive after his character has been constructed as strong, dangerous, even violent in the film's opening sequences, and for the way in which Matthew's spirit is ostensibly broken within it. In order to establish the root of this repetition, it is necessary to return to Freud's comments on repetition in which 'acting out' (repetition) can be substituted for recollecting painful experiences (Freud 1914: 151). Hartley makes it clear elsewhere in the narrative that Matthew's mother died giving birth to him. Thus when Matthew (supposedly) fails to perform the 'female' job of cleaning the bathroom satisfactorily, Jim is reminded of the loss of his wife. He displaces the resentment he feels towards Matthew into an episode of

repetition. Assigning blame over Matthew's perceived lack of compliance is clearly a transference of a need to blame Matthew for the loss of his wife, an impulse which Jim cannot directly express.

The 'reason' which Hartley establishes for *Jim*'s pattern of behavioural repetition is thus the death of his wife in childbirth. Yet what of Matthew's acquiescence? Freud's identification of the importance of experiences which took place in early childhood in perpetuating neurosis has already been referred to. Inevitably, when Jim suffered the loss of his wife, Matthew suffered not only the loss of his mother, but also the experience of his father laying of blame upon him. It could be argued that Matthew not only concurs with the repetition of the distress of the arguments with his father, exhibiting complicity through conceding fault, but that he actively propagates the repetition. Freud would of course state that the leaving of the cigarette in the bathroom which so incenses Jim, and which gives rise to the 'Whose fault is it?' sequence, was a deliberate, if unconscious, act.

Matthew is therefore also suffering under a compulsion to repeat unpleasant experiences. This overrides his pleasure instincts because of its failure to avoid unpleasure, yet creates another sort of pleasure. Freud talks of repetition as a means of turning a passive situation into an active one. Matthew is thus like the child repeating an unpleasant experience in play, 'because the repetition carried along with it a yield of pleasure of another sort, but none the less a direct one' (Freud 1920: 16). Matthew's involvement in the death of his mother was necessarily passive, yet he derives from the repetition of blame-assigning behavioural patterns an empowerment which allows him *actively* to take blame upon himself: 'It's my fault!', and thus gain a sense of having mastered the experience.

Repetition and Crisis: Matthew's Masculinity

This conflict between active and passive behavioural patterns, the importance of which Freud established in 'Beyond the Pleasure Principle', characterises the putting of Matthew's masculinity into crisis which occurs, largely through the use of

repetition, in *Trust*. Matthew is 'feminised' by his father's compulsions into repeatedly cleaning the house. His status of servitude is made more literal when Jim punches him into a position kneeling at his feet during the 'Whose fault is it?' sequence. Matthew reacts by desperately reasserting his masculinity. This informs his acts of physical aggression at work, including punching boxes, destroying electrical equipment and putting a colleague's head in a vice. It is also evident in his first encounter with Maria, in which he forces her to 'Say it' (Hartley 1992a: 115), making her ask for, rather than offering to her, a place to sleep. Matthew's dominant behaviour arises directly out of the pattern of behavioural repetition within his relationship with his father. He vehemently sustains a position of strength outside of the home because, on the surface at least, he can't control the situation within it.

In this, Matthew constitutes a reversal of modes of identification within the film. Hartley certainly posits spectatorial identification with Matthew in *Trust* by placing him not only as the film's protagonist, but as a sort of stand-in, an alter-ego, within the narrative. This reading is supported by Hartley's use of Martin Donovan in others of his early films. Since, as Neale argues, 'current ideologies of masculinity involve so centrally notions and attitudes to do with aggression, power, and control' (Neale 1983: 5), the presentation of Matthew as an identificatory figure is rendered problematic by his feminisation. In being so often turned towards the floor, notably when he is forced to kneel upon it by his father, his is not a look which coincides with the 'active power' of the male gaze, the recognition of a 'more perfect, more complete, more powerful ideal ego' (Mulvey 1975: 420). Rather, Matthew's subjugation to his father subverts the male as a strong figure of identification which Mulvey posits. It is the case that when Matthew exhibits more stereotypically 'male' (for male read masculine) behaviour, punching boxes, forcing Maria to 'Say it', asking Peg if she wants to 'go out back and fuck' (Hartley 1992a: 123), he becomes less sympathetic, a more problematic figure of identification. This is because his asserted strength is futile and desperate, being founded as it is upon a reaction against an emasculating father.

Matthew's need to repeat a father-child relationship, itself a reaction against the failure of his own relationship with his father, is a further source of undermining

his masculinity. In taking on the pregnant Maria, Matthew seeks to repeat a father-child relationship which has clearly given little pleasure within his own experience. It is clear that he is, as Freud has argued, repeating a painful experience as a means of gaining mastery over it. This mastery arises out of the fact that Matthew would, as father rather than child, inevitably be in a position of greater control than in the relationship with his own father. This need of Matthew's to perpetuate paternal relationships is akin to his desire to repeat the assignment of blame as an active experience. Yet the fact that the child is not Matthew's but rather that of another man undermines his masculinity. As Jim identifies in his taunt: 'You're a fool, Matthew. I've heard all about this. Everybody knows that girl's child isn't yours' (Hartley 1992a: 170), a patriarchal society has less understanding of a man who takes on another's child than for one who takes responsibility for his own. Masculinity is inextricably linked with the ability to father children, and Matthew's potency has not been proven by his willingness to marry a woman whose pregnancy was established before they even met.

The irony of this lies in the paradox that Matthew is further emasculated by Maria's decision to have an abortion, since this is a decision over which he has no control. Responding to the news with a final and desperate assertion of his masculine identity, Matthew attempts to regain authority in a situation of crisis by returning to the Ruark factory, the environment in which he is most feared. His expression of male power, both excessive and pitiful, involves exploding his father's grenade which, like a fetishised testicle, he has been carrying around with him for the duration of the film as a symbol of empowerment. Maria has aborted the child, and rejected his offer of a marriage which would, implicitly, have afforded him the chance to father his own child with her. This denies Matthew the repetition of a parent-child relationship which he seeks as a means of mastering what has only ever been a passive experience of paternity, i.e. 'child', not 'father'. That the grenade does not go off until Maria intervenes, taking the spent explosive device from his hand and tossing it away to induce the explosion, is a final emblem of the crisis of Matthew's masculinity which *Trust*'s repetitions illuminate.

Pushing the boundary of this critical interrogation of masculinity, *Trust*'s repetitions could further be said to induce a double quest for the origin implicit in a questioning of the Father and a search for the Mother. It is a quest which *Simple Men* reprises. *Trust* constitutes a questioning of the Father because Matthew not only fails in his own pursuit of fatherhood, but also uses the repetitions to undermine his own father. Not only does he leave a burning cigarette in the bathroom, but he facetiously interpolates a note of defiance into his compliance within the 'Whose fault is it?' sequence. When confronted with the question: 'You ever think about other people? You ever think about *me!*', Matthew replies mockingly: 'I think about you all the time'. Jim is in command within these earlier segments of the film, instigating the bathroom cleaning repetition and dominating the 'Whose fault is it? sequence. Yet Matthew ultimately rebels against his father's compulsions, both by leaving home and, crucially, by controlling, even inverting the situation when Jim seeks his son's return:

MATTHEW: Why don't you just say it?

DAD: Say what?

MATTHEW: That you want me to come home because you're lonely.

DAD: Bullshit.

MATTHEW: Why don't you just say you're sorry for the way things never
seem to work out between the two of us?

DAD: You're saying it's my fault?

MATTHEW: It's nobody's fault.

(Hartley 1992a: 171)

Earlier in the film, Matthew fails to respond in kind to his father's physical aggression. He merely flinches when Jim slaps his face or knocks him onto his knees. In this sequence, Matthew himself becomes the instigator of their visceral conflict when, goaded by his father, he finally succumbs to his anger and punches Jim in the stomach. Jim's identity as a Father, a highly 'masculine' individual who exerts absolute control over his household, getting his son to bend over and do the 'women's work', is ultimately deflated, both by Matthew's subtle defiance earlier in the film, and by his son's final reversal of the power within their relationship. Jim's incessant need

to blame has been negated within the final repetition of the 'Whose fault is it?' question by Matthew's mature apprehension that it is *nobody*'s fault; his commanding presence undermined by Matthew's realisation that his father is lonely.

On the other side of this questioning of the Father is a search for the Mother which is, equally, brought about through the use of repetition in *Trust*. Freud's view of repetition is that it is a means of recovering lost memories; the patient's way of remembering, even at the risk of the unpleasure which repeating painful experiences may bring. The repetitive behavioural patterns which Matthew and Jim exhibit are clearly a way for each of them to recreate the lost Mother. Hence Jim torments both himself and his son by perpetuating what we assume to be his irrational but understandable experience of losing the mother of his child, i.e. that of blaming his son for her death. He is privately proud of his son, declaring that: 'nobody in their right mind would fire Matthew', 'Matthew's a genius!' (Hartley 1992a: 146). However, when faced with Matthew, Jim suffers a compulsion to repeat his pain.

Equally, Matthew falls into repetition as a way of re-experiencing his albeit distressing single experience of his mother, an experience both of loss and of being blamed for that loss. Hence, as has already been established, Matthew readily repeats the assignation of blame to which we assume he was subjected as an infant. He does this by positively asserting that everything within his contemporary experience is his fault. Similarly, Matthew seeks in Maria, a woman who is not only pregnant, but also has as her namesake the mother of Christ, a substitute mother who maternally subjugates her own needs to his. This is exemplified in the fact that Maria gives up her bed for him and will, unlike his own mother, be around long enough to 'put up with me' (178). Through Maria, Matthew is able to re-create, to repeat, his relationship with his own mother in a more empowered way. He pursues a lasting union with Maria by proposing marriage to her. Inevitably, this repetition is more literal than Matthew anticipated. Under the mistaken impression that Matthew has slept with Peg, Maria has an abortion and tells Matthew that she does not want to get married. Yet this in itself constitutes a repetition of the loss which Matthew experienced within his relationship with his mother. It is a repetition which, although

ostensibly occurring without reference to the pleasure principle in that recalling pain brings about unpleasure, nonetheless yields a pleasure of its own (Freud 1920: 16). Repetition serves finally to satisfy Matthew's search for his Mother.

It is thus within the interplay between active and passive positions that the key to *Trust*'s behavioural repetition and compulsion lies. When Matthew's masculinity is put into crisis within the home, he vehemently asserts a position of strength, even violence, outside of it. He seeks to repeat his passive experience of father / child relationships (i.e. 'child') as an active one ('father'). Yet he is emasculated by Maria's decision to abort the child that was not even his, a decision over which he has no control and which returns him once again to a position of passivity. Following Freud's pleasure principle to the letter, Matthew actively seeks to replace the mother in whose destruction he was passively implicated, finding in Maria that which her name denotes: a woman who is mother both to him, evident in her willingness to take care of him, and to an unborn child. That his actions all come to nothing (it is Maria who takes the spent and yet unexploded grenade from his hand, appearing to induce the explosion by flinging the device across the factory) puts Matthew's masculinity firmly and finally into the position of crisis afforded by *Trust*'s repetitions.

Conclusion: The Difference with Hal Hartley's Repetitions

It was suggested at the beginning of the present chapter that the function of Hartley's repetitions is to 'put into crisis'. The 'Formal Repetition' section searched for a definition of repetition, and asked of repetition what degree of similarity is necessary for an episode to fall happily within accepted parameters. The tension between the linear and the cyclical, considered in light of Deleuze's stimulating if occasionally contradictory theory, afforded a key point of contention within the formal repetition section. Examples both of linear and cyclical repetitions within *Trust* were examined, and the fact that these forms are not mutually exclusive but rather can coexist within conceptions of repetition asserted. However, it was discovered that, rather than the conflict between the linear and the cyclical, it is the way in which difference impacts upon the very notion of repetition that constitutes the greatest 'crisis' within the

consideration of formal repetition.

Further, the issue of repetition serves to put the central questions of spectatorship into crisis. Hartley generally uses episodes of repetition in his films to distance the spectator, hence the dispassionate formal exercise that is the: 'I know what you need' conversation in *The Unbelievable Truth*.[17] Yet, in *Trust*, repetition engenders empathy. Witness the emotional destruction of *Trust*'s: 'Whose fault is it?' sequence. The compulsion to repeat which both Matthew and his father exhibit constitutes an attempt to turn passive experience into active pleasures. It evokes both the active / passive binary which Mulvey extended into film, and the way in which negative passive experiences can be converted into active pleasures with reference to Freud's pleasure principle.

Both Matthew and his father repeat blame assignment as a means of attempting to restore their figure of loss, i.e. the wife / mother who died giving birth to Matthew. Yet Matthew concurs with the assignment of blame through which this attempt manifests itself at the expense of a stable position in relation to his own masculinity. He is feminised by his father's imposition over him of a female position within the household, most strongly embodied within activities relating to cleaning. He is emasculated by Maria, who has an abortion without consulting him, and rejects his offer of marriage. In doing so she takes away Matthew's opportunity of repeating his passive experiences of paternity (child) as active ones (father). Yet Maria also allows Matthew the 'pleasure' of restoring his mother through this repetition of passive loss.

The central 'crisis' within *Trust*'s repetitions thus lies not only between the formal and the behavioural or, to re-assert paradigms, the philosophical and the psychoanalytic, but in the tensions which are inherent to them. It inhabits the conflicts between the linear and the cyclical, between repetition and difference, and within the interplay between active and passive positions which characterises behavioural

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[17]This is reproduced in the 'Cyclical Dialogue Repetition' section of Chapter II, under the heading: 'The Repetition of Continual Return'.

repetition within the film. These multiple crises which the film articulates, much like the assignment of blame which served as signifier of the loss of and search for the Mother, signify the wider crisis in which the film participates: the crisis of masculinity. And it will be seen throughout this thesis that Hartley uses his films similarly to effect a questioning of gender positions in film. Hartley portrays men whose marginal social positioning impacts upon their masculinity, an issue explored most comprehensively in Chapter VII. More than this, Hartley indulges throughout his films in a questioning of the use of the female image by the *auteur* who is himself rendered into the marginal position. Hartley's own marginality is brought about by his position as an independent American film-maker who makes European art-house style films. It is this position of marginality which the masculinity in crisis which Hartley portrays serves to evoke.

CHAPTER IV

AMATEUR: REPUTATION, REPENTANCE AND REDEMPTION

Trust was seen to embody, in its concern with the crisis of the masculinity of the film's protagonist Matthew, a nod to the marginality with which Hartley himself is aligned. *Amateur* is a film in which Hartley's engagement with marginality is more clearly asserted. Where *Trust* used repetition to introduce into the film a point of tension which signified the film's underlying expression of the crisis of masculinity, *Amateur* exploits criminality as a device through which to invoke male marginality. One of the most effective ways to signal marginality lies within the negation or flouting of the laws upon which society is founded. This positioning outside the law is inevitably manifest in the criminality by which Thomas is so problematically to be defined within the film.

In order to employ criminality as a medium through which the amnesiac Thomas' marginality can doubly be asserted, *Amateur* utilises generic conventions which have the negotiation of criminality at their centre. *Amateur* becomes a sort of gangster / thriller in which a newly urban setting, gangsters and guns are featured. Yet Hartley does not so much assume these conventions as problematise them, interrogating the very definition of criminality through Thomas' amnesia. The film asks if Thomas's criminal status in *Amateur* is undermined by the fact that he has no memory of having been one, rendering his criminality into the subjective accounts of it which others give.

This amnesia also introduces the question of redemption into criminality. It will be demonstrated in the thesis as a whole that redemption is an important subtext within Hartley's films. Not only does it feature within *Amateur*, but it is reprised in *Henry Fool*, as Chapter V will illustrate. In *Amateur*, Hartley asks to what extent Thomas has been redeemed by the fact that his loss of memory allows him to become 'good'. Since Thomas cannot repent of actions which he cannot remember, any

redemption which does occur is brought about through alternative means. Religion is one avenue through which redemption can be effected, and *Amateur* engages with a Catholicism which recognises Hartley's own. Redemption can also be induced through the trust which one character exhibits towards another. The paradox of a criminal character experiencing a redemption which brings him into society and the law and yet retaining marginal status will be addressed. Since the film's three principal protagonists are involved in the pornography industry, the connection between pornography and criminality will be explored. This connection constitutes a site of marginality for the women who participate in its production as much as for the men whose criminality emanates from it.

Criminality

The Invocation of Criminality Through Genre

Despite the critical difficulty with genre addressed in the literature review, *Amateur* is most readily aligned with the thriller / gangster film genre. Hartley's approach is slightly oblique: notably Thomas, the film's gangster protagonist, has amnesia for the duration of the film, disrupting our experience of him as a figure of violence. However, it will be seen that *Amateur* nonetheless indulges in the characteristics of these genres. The signifiers of the thriller which *Amateur* utilises include the film's urban setting, since the film marks Hartley's move into the city of New York from Long Island. There is also the use of guns, car chases, police pursuit, and episodes of violence. These episodes are at once real, such as the torture scenes, and cartoon-like, such as the shooting of Jan. Even *Amateur*'s costuming conforms to established coding, with the police and gangsters alike wearing their respective 'uniform'. Thomas himself, like Jan and Kurt, wears the prescribed dark suit of the gangster.

Yet, despite its clear utilisation of these generic conventions, it would be easy to describe *Amateur* as a parody of the thriller / gangster genres rather than as a thriller itself. Hartley's approach to the genre is certainly more inclined towards pushing the boundaries of the thriller than merely replicating it. Hartley introduces

both darkly comic and deeply romantic sensibilities into the film. The director also plays upon the genre's lower as well as higher forms within *Amateur*, which indulges in a passing nod to the derivative and itself marginal form of the television 'cop show'. This allusion is largely instituted through the portrayal of Officer Melville, the woman whose empathetic treatment of the unstable Edward, rendered comic by its extremity, leads to her being kidnapped by him. It is largely in those sequences concerning the edgy Melville interacting with Edward that *Amateur's* occasional foray into the realm of the T.V. 'cop show' occurs. The allusion is evidence of Hartley's generic as well as character-driven concern with marginality. Television, with the associations of made-for-T.V. films, is itself a marginalised format in relation to what is widely considered to be the 'higher' cinematic form.

Amateur's very tone of referentiality and detachment in relation to the thriller is itself characteristic of a genre which has become so perpetuated and therefore perhaps inevitably ironic and derivative. The violence is exaggerated, the gangsters made ridiculous both by their useless technologies and the fact that they get a receipt for a slice of pizza to put it on expenses. *Amateur* may be atypical of the thriller / gangster narrative in many ways, with a plot concerning Thomas, a gangster who doesn't remember that he is one, who is taken in by Isabelle, a former nun who makes a living writing pornography. When Isabelle falls in love with Thomas, the film becomes more romance than thriller. Yet *Amateur* is surprisingly conformist in its postmodern tendencies. It satisfies generic convention just enough to allow for the reinforcement of the character criminality with which the film is concerned.

The most obvious appeal of the thriller to a film-maker interested in character marginality lies within the status of the gangster, whose criminality places him both outside of and in implicit opposition to society and its laws. The gangster has been described as: 'the "no" to that great American "yes" which is stamped so big over our official culture' (Warshow 1970: 86). He can be viewed as a figure whose status as 'other' affords a vantage point from which a commentary of society can be made. This is particularly the case because that society has, after all, shown itself to be capable of engendering such a violent character: 'In the gangster / crime film, meanings emerge

[...] about the nature of the society and the kind of individual it creates' (Shadoian 1977: 3). Although Thomas' amnesia creates a problem for our definition of him as a criminal, an issue returned to below, this problem does not undermine but rather enhances his positioning outside society. If he has no recollection of his life, he can have no idea of his location within society and, by extension, no place within it. His very homelessness and poverty, consequences of his amnesia, render him society's 'other'. Thomas is marginal both as a result of his criminal past, and, more surprisingly, *because of* (rather than despite) his inability to recollect it.

Thomas' death at the end of *Amateur*, gunned down by a police officer because he is holding a gun, is further evidence of the way in which the film's conformity to generic narrative resolution works with the characterisation of Thomas as a criminal. It has been noted that:

> The death of the gangster is qualitatively different from death
> in other genres. Death comes with an inevitability that
> precludes suspense, often arbitrarily, and always with finality.
> The gangster dies at the hand of fate, isolated, and yet a public
> spectacle. What makes this death appear tragic is variously
> defined.
>
> (Cook 1985: 89)[18]

The 'tragedy' of Thomas' death in *Amateur* lies within the fact, as inevitable as the death itself, that it doubly denies resolution. It frustrates the romantic since it occurs before the consummation of the relationship between Thomas and Isabelle. It also impacts upon the redemptive. Thomas's death whilst still suffering from amnesia is ambiguous, preventing him from realising the error of his crimes and repenting them.

Even the film's final tableau conforms to generic expectation. Bent over Thomas' body, Isabelle, at the moment of his death, becomes the woman 'placed in opposition to the representatives of the law' (Jenkins 1982: 47) typical of the gangster

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[18]Pam Cook is paraphrasing Steve Jenkins (Jenkins 1982: 44).

/ thriller genre:

> By placing the dead gangster between the law (man) who
> stands over the body, and the woman, who often kneels by it
> or cradles the dead man's head, the distinction is clearly made
> between the official 'meaning' of the death (public enemy dealt
> with) and its resonance for the audience's emotional
> investment in the character, the spectator's interest in the
> gangster's human qualities, which is developed through the
> woman's romantic interest.
>
> (Jenkins 1982: 47-8)

This 'meaning' is of course deflated in *Amateur*'s typically parodic and idiosyncratic approach to its genre. Thomas is killed not for his own criminal past, but because he is mistaken for Edward, who has just taken an officer hostage, brought about a police car chase, and shot Jan. When Thomas' body is moved to reveal his identity, a detective announces that: 'This isn't him' (Hartley 1994: 70). Yet the very ambiguity of the film lies in Thomas' 'innocence'. We know that he has done terrible things in the past that might allow us to interpret this as some form of divine Justice, yet our experience of Thomas is as a good, gentle and kind man.

Thus although *Amateur*'s tone is placed somewhere between referential parody and generic deflation, mingled with a melancholic romanticism, it can reasonably be defined as a gangster / thriller. This is because of its subject matter and narrative resolution, its newly urban setting (Hartley's films formerly concerned themselves with rural Long Island), and its preoccupation with characters made marginal by their criminality. Although the thriller / gangster film genre which *Amateur* utilises could hardly be described as marginal, Hartley's oblique approach to it can. His interpolation of the most un-thriller-like elements of romance and comedy, like his tendency towards more 'B' like conventions, makes *Amateur*'s genre, as much as the characters who inhabit it, marginal.

The Interrogation of Criminality: Problems of Definition

Amateur therefore uses the conventions of the thriller / gangster film in order to support the characterisation of the film's male protagonists (Kurt and Jan, the men who are trying to find Thomas, are similarly transgressive of the law) as criminal. The interest in the criminality of characters which Hartley exhibits in *Amateur* extends throughout his films. Hence *Simple Men*'s narrative concerns two brothers who participate in a quest to find their father. He has escaped following incarceration for ideologically motivated and therefore, the film suggests, arguably excusable, bombing activity. Similarly concerned with the impact of criminality upon a community is *The Unbelievable Truth*, in which Josh returns to his home town, having served a sentence for a murder which, it transpires, he didn't commit. Hartley has consistently problematised definitions of criminality in his films.

It is thus unsurprising that, despite placing Thomas within his most generically 'criminal' film, the definition of Thomas as a criminal is one which Hartley at once proposes and disputes throughout *Amateur*. The greatest problem with definition of Thomas as criminal lies in his amnesia. Can a man be defined as a criminal if he has no idea of ever having been one? The film, never allowing the return of Thomas' memory and yet killing him off like any gangster should be at the end of the film, equivocates on this point. Despite a criminal reputation which follows Thomas throughout the film, impinging upon his relationships both new (with Isabelle) and established (with Sofia), it is the case that, as an amnesiac, Thomas is incapable of participating in criminal activity. He is not only inept, not knowing, for example, that answering the phone and alerting others to his whereabouts in Portchester is unwise, but is hurt by Sofia's suggestion that he is capable of causing Isabelle harm. This demonstrates that the behaviour in which Thomas was once happy to indulge is not an intrinsic part of him which his amnesia cannot shake. If behaviour is so ingrained then Thomas might, for example, have been equally violent and nasty as an amnesiac.

In the absence of Thomas exhibiting criminal behaviour within the film's temporal space, it is through others who appear in the film that we hear of Thomas'

criminal past. He involved Sofia in drugs and pornography when she was young, and is involved in the blackmail surrounding the floppy disks with which the 'highly respectable yet ultimately sinister international corporation with political connections' (Hartley 1994: 57) is concerned. We hear Isabelle telling Thomas that he threatened, whilst talking in his sleep, to slice up Sofia's face with a razor blade, and Sofia herself telling of how Thomas showed her pictures of a disfigured woman in order to support an apparently identical threat. This threat, made directly to Sofia, occurred before she pushed him out of the window, causing his amnesia. More immediately, we see Thomas' criminal past in the highly visible fear which both Sofia and Edward exhibit when they look at Thomas. Edward flinches when he sees a picture of Thomas on Officer Melville's wall, and when Thomas tries to save Sofia from Kurt and Jan, she is as reluctant to go with Thomas as she would be to stay with her torturers. It is only Isabelle's presence and encouragement which persuades her to go with him. Vitally, what we do not see is Thomas actually being a criminal.

Because of the manner in which we are afforded a suggestion of the nature of Thomas' criminality, i.e. through people's accounts of, rather than our own experiences of, his behaviour, Thomas' criminality is displaced within *Amateur* into the subjective. It is a subjectivity which is instituted in the film through the opposition of Isabelle and Sofia. Isabelle loves Thomas largely because she sees him as good. Possessed of a strange view of sexuality and courtship because of her lengthy removal from the world whilst in the convent, Isabelle looks for men through inappropriate means, dating men she meets through hot phone-sex party lines. These are men who take her to pornographic films and attempt to touch her without concern for her own enjoyment or consent. Thomas, rendered innocent by his amnesia, represents what Isabelle is looking for in a man. This is largely because she has been a good influence on him, rescuing him with an act of kindness, feeding him and taking him in when he had nowhere to go. Thomas, a blank sheet onto which Isabelle's desires can be projected, has become that which she needs and wishes him to be.

Isabelle loves Thomas, sees him as good, because, like the spectator, she has never directly experienced Thomas as a criminal. As such, she is representative of our

position in relation to Thomas. The moment when her belief in and trust of Thomas is shaken is significant. It occurs when Sofia tells Isabelle of Thomas' past, and she develops a fear of him as a result. At this point she has departed from her role as our representative within the narrative. This is because, unlike Isabelle, we do not hear what Sofia tells her about Thomas' past. Later in the film she hands the loaded gun back to Thomas, once again expressing a desire to have Thomas make love to her. This constitutes both Isabelle's return to a position of belief and trust in relation to Thomas, and a return to her position as our spectatorial representative. Isabelle, in being capable of transcending her fear, thus works against defining Thomas by his criminality.

Conversely, Sofia consistently exhibits fear of Thomas. This is despite his obviously harmless new persona, exemplified in his failure to know how to behave when they are hiding. When he answers the phone which alerts others to their whereabouts, Sofia expresses consternation. She tells him that the man she knew would have known not to do such a thing. Yet Sofia cannot escape her perception of Thomas as a dangerous, transgressive and criminal man. She still believes him to be a potential danger, creating the fear of sleeping in a house with him which Isabelle temporarily assumes. Thus, whilst Isabelle is our representative within the narrative, largely (with the aforementioned exception) knowing only as much as we know, Sofia represents to us who Thomas really is or, rather, who Thomas once was. It is these tensions between the positions which Sofia and Isabelle represent in relation to Thomas, and between the person that Thomas is and was, that characterise the problem of definition of Thomas as a criminal within *Amateur*.

If the portrayal of Thomas as a criminal within the film is subjectively conveyed, the problem of the nature of that subjectivity inevitably impinges upon it. Since our sources of knowledge in relation to Thomas' transgressive acts are, much like Isabelle's, secondary, they are tinged with inevitably slanted viewpoints. Thomas is a criminal by reputation, a reputation which follows him because it is perpetuated in others' opinions of him, rather than being sustained by his own actions. Hence Sofia's opinion of Thomas, however justifiable it would appear to be, is coloured by her

decision to remove herself from the type of life she has been living, and become a 'mover and a shaker' herself (Hartley 1994: 17). It is important to note that Sofia is not averse to indulging in a little criminal activity of her own. Rather than passing into an employment wholly detached from the criminal activity with which her life has been associated, she involves herself in the floppy disk sub-plot. It is her intention to attempt to change her life with the aid of a million dollars' worth of blackmail money, rather than by a more honest endeavour.

Edward's reaction to Thomas's picture, at once arresting because of the tangible fear which Thomas elicits in Edward, is equally influenced by his subjectivity. Obviously in love with Sofia, Edward's opinion of Thomas might arguably arise as much from Sofia's accounts of her life with Thomas as from his own experience of Thomas, about which we are given no information. Sofia's tales obviously play upon Edward's desire to protect her. He offers her a place to escape to, giving her the address of the empty house in Portchester. There therefore exists the problem of how far these tales, and by extension Edward's fear of Thomas, can be relied upon as true reflections of Thomas' character as opposed to reflections of Sofia's feelings about Thomas.

Even Isabelle, our most reliable source due to her detachment from Thomas' life as a criminal, affords us only a secondary experience of the abhorrent side to Thomas' character. Although we witness Isabelle reporting to Thomas that she heard him talking in his sleep, we do not see it for ourselves. Rather, we learn of the threat made to Sofia at the same time as Thomas himself, and are influenced by Isabelle's reaction to it. By saying that she doesn't expect that a woman to whom he was so mean would be looking for him, Isabelle demonstrates her belief in what she has heard Thomas say in his sleep. Both through this, and through Sofia's fear of sleeping in the Portchester house in which he also resides, we are invited to assume that Thomas may have inflicted harm in the past. There are certain activities in which we are told Thomas has participated which are unambiguous in their classification as criminal. Yet the subjectivity through which Thomas' status as a criminal is delineated is suggestive of the fact of his trespasses existing principally in other's opinions of

him. His deviation from such behaviour in amnesia is equally suggestive of his criminality as an identity which Thomas once assumed, and has now, despite the perpetuation of perceptions of him as criminal, shed.

Thus, although *Amateur* does not invite the spectator to draw the conclusion that Thomas was *not* a criminal in his pre-amnesia past, our experience of the criminality which is so central to the film is made problematic by the subjectivity through which it is conveyed. This problem of the impact of subjectivity exists in relation to criminality itself. If crime is: 'an act or omission prohibited and punished by law', and law itself: 'a rule or set of rules instituted by an act of Parliament, custom, or practice, in order to punish those who offend the conventions of society' (McLeod 1992: 231, 567), then criminality is to be defined as the transgression of laws which are there in order merely to maintain the conventions particular to a society. This necessarily renders the very nature of that criminality as fluid as society itself.

The underlying point which arises from the impact of subjectivity upon the characterisation of Thomas as a criminal is the fact of the assumed nature of identity. Hartley has exhibited a wider interest in characters who assume transgressive identities. Although existing within the realm of the breaking of rules, rather than law, this notion of the assumption of such an identity characterises Sofie's actions in *Surviving Desire*. Succumbing to Jude's obvious attraction to her, his student, Sofie, is acutely aware of the problematic nature of their affair. Although professing a fear of people thinking she is only sleeping with him in order to get a better grade, she admits that she is afraid that she might do so. In doing so, Sofie has assumed the role, however fleeting, of a student who transgresses the rules of her particular establishment, in this case the university, in order to achieve the grade she desires.

It is with the assumption of a criminal identity that *Amateur* is concerned. Since the ambiguity of Thomas' identity lies in the problem of which of Thomas' identities ('good' or 'bad') is real, the film could be said to pose the question of which is the assumed identity. Logic suggests that, since the criminal identity of which we learn predates Thomas' life within the film's temporal space, it is the 'good' identity

which Thomas has assumed. Yet, since we only see the 'good' Thomas, it is our perception that it is the criminal identity which Thomas assumes during the film, as a result of the accounts of his activity which we hear. It is innocence to which Thomas naturally reverts. Yet this innocence, according to accounts of his life, deviates strongly from his general pattern of behaviour. The question of which is the assumed identity is one whose resolution the film deliberately frustrates.

In the absence of this resolution, the film makes a wider point. Fundamentally, Thomas is the same man, as he himself indicates to Isabelle who, newly fearful of Thomas following Sofia's account of him, is reluctant to allow him possession of a loaded gun. Isabelle, temporarily swayed by the knowledge which she now has the use of, is afraid that, rather than use the gun to protect her, Thomas might use it against her. This is an action of which we are told that the criminal Thomas would have been capable. It is clearly her belief at this point that, if Thomas is the same man as yesterday, then this should be extended to the point where Thomas is the same man as he was when he was capable of doing such terrible things.

What is demonstrated is the performative nature of all behaviour. It might realistically be posited that Thomas assumes the 'good' identity merely because he comes into contact with Isabelle, who is good and trusting, at a moment when he is a clean slate upon which she can leave her own impression, peculiar to her. Thomas could therefore be viewed as a cipher, a man devoid of identity who becomes what Isabelle wishes him to be, i.e. the first man she has met to whom she feels that she can entrust her virginity. It is important to note that, in once again asking Thomas to make love to her, and giving him the loaded gun of which she had been so fearful, Isabelle demonstrates her belief that Thomas is indeed the same man *she* knew yesterday; the man rendered innocent by his amnesia. For Isabelle, Thomas is the man who has little idea of how a criminal should behave (unwittingly betraying their presence in the house), a man who is not capable of violence against women. He is not the pre-amnesia Thomas, the man Sofia knew in the yesterday that saw her pushing him out of the window, hoping it to be to his death.

Amateur therefore serves as a demonstration of the fluidity of identity, of its assumed rather than fixed nature, of the problem of defining a character as criminal when both character, and the criminality itself by which it is to be defined, are in states of transition. Thomas' reputation is one which engenders a depiction of him as having been violent, comprising the exploitation of, and exertion of control over, women. The punishment to which Sofia subjected Thomas in throwing him from a window perpetuates for the duration of the film, since Thomas cannot escape the state of amnesia into which falling from a window enters him. That he should be punished in this way is suggestive of him having deserved it, with his 'goodness' a coincidental by-product of his amnesia, rather than a restoration of an intrinsically good character. Suggestive of his criminality in that it is conventional for the gangster to die at the end of the film, Thomas' death at the end of *Amateur* also paradoxically serves to negate his criminality. It denies Thomas the return both of his memory and, implicitly, of his criminal identity. His death therefore fails to offer a solution to the question of whether he would become 'bad' again if his memory returned. Death allows Thomas the finality of dying as a 'good' man, but does not resolve the problem of whether he is truly good.

The issue of whether or not Thomas can be defined as criminal is thus a difficult one. The subjective accounts of him contrast sharply with the Thomas we witness, a 'good' man who has little idea of how to participate in the criminal underworld. Thomas *is* consistently 'good' for the entirety of the film's temporal space, making it difficult to see him as deserving the ultimate punishment of death to which the events lead. Hartley is therefore illustrating both the fluidity of a behaviour which is necessarily socially constructed and performed, and the inescapable nature of reputation. More than this, the problem of Thomas' identity impacts upon the redemption with which the film engages, equivocating over whether Thomas is either needing or deserving of redemption. If he is a criminal, he needs but does not necessarily deserve it, as a 'good' man, redemption is unnecessary. Despite this ambiguity, *Amateur* is concerned with redemption, and its complement, repentance. In order for redemption to occur, repentance must come into play. And it is this repentance which *Amateur* denies its protagonist.

The Rhetoric of Repentance and Redemption

Amateur's equivocation over the extent to which Thomas should be defined by his criminality inevitably impacts both upon his repentance, and the redemption which it signifies. It is Thomas' state of amnesia which serves as the greatest barrier, not only to the settling of the question of whether Thomas needs / deserves redemption, but to his ability to effectuate any redemption which is necessary. Repentance, the most obvious avenue through which his redemption might be brought about, is denied because, even though Thomas says he is sorry, he dies not knowing what for. It could be argued that, at the moment when Thomas tells Isabelle that he is sorry, he becomes redeemed and, through this redemption, reintegrated into the conventions of society. Having already said to Sofia: 'I can't imagine what I've done to you. But I want you to know whatever it is I can do to help you, I will' (Hartley 1994: 54), Thomas gives his fullest apology to Isabelle. Visibly shaken by her new found knowledge of Sofia's account of Thomas' past, Isabelle listens to Thomas as he says to her: 'I don't know what I'm sorry for. But I am sorry. That's got to mean something, right? I mean, whatever it is she told you ... Whatever it is I was ... This is me. Now. What else can I do?' (68).

Yet the fact that Thomas has no understanding of the full extent of his past, and therefore cannot know the implications of apologising for it, problematises this repentance. The irony lies in the fact that, since he did not know Isabelle prior to his amnesia, and therefore, by extension, none of his acts of violence or criminality can have impacted directly upon her life, Thomas' apology is strangely inappropriate. Effectively saying that he is sorry for that which Sofia has told Isabelle, that which Thomas himself was not party to, it is as if Thomas is apologising for Sofia (who has upset Isabelle with her account of Thomas' former life) as much as for his own actions. He dies without knowing of his past, a fact as beyond his control as the amnesia itself. He does want Sofia to tell him of his past, and she refuses to tell him. Therefore Thomas' 'sorry', however well intentioned, means little. Because he doesn't know what he is sorry for, his apology is an empty gesture, a symbol of his desire for

repentance rather than his effectuation of redemption.

Thomas' death at the end of *Amateur* before the return of his memory constitutes the film's greatest tragedy. His actions of looking out for Isabelle, being gentle, honest and kind, have had a great impact upon our sense of him deserving redemption. Yet his death constitutes a frustration of the repentance which Thomas actively seeks through his apologies. The film recognises this by offering Thomas an alternative avenue by which to achieve redemption before he dies. This goes beyond his ultimately empty apology and the impact of his good behaviour. It is the impact of others upon his life that affords Thomas the greatest opportunity to achieve redemption.

The repentance implicit in Thomas' apology to Isabelle was significantly inhibited by his inability to know *what* he is repenting. Reconsidered, it is possible to see that when Thomas tells Isabelle that he is sorry for his past, it is her response, rather than the apology itself, which is most suggestive of his redemption. Returning the loaded gun which she had, out of fear, been withholding from Thomas, Isabelle expresses her belief in Thomas by not only entrusting him with her life, but with her body. She once again expresses the desire to have Thomas make love to her. Implicit in her willingness once again to trust Thomas is Isabelle's forgiveness. In the absence of a redemption effected through true repentance, a sort of third party redemption comes into play, in which Thomas is offered the possibility of redemption by others. In this, the Newtonian theme of Hartley's films is reprised. Had we not seen Isabelle, who learns more about Thomas's past than we as spectators are exposed to, forgive and trust him, we would not have believed so firmly in the possibility of his salvation. The role of repentance in redemption has been displaced, and the redemptive impact of one person upon another has been invoked.

Religion and Redemption

This notion of one person granting another redemption feeds into the obvious, and highly significant, religious connotation which the term 'redemption' embodies:

> Redemption presupposes the original elevation of man to a
> supernatural state and his downfall from it through sin; and
> inasmuch as sin calls down the wrath of God and produces
> man's servitude under evil and Satan, Redemption has
> reference to both God and man. On God's part, it is the
> acceptation of satisfactory amends whereby the Divine honour
> is repaired and the Divine wrath appeased. On man's part, it is
> both a deliverance from the slavery of sin and a restoration to
> the former Divine adoption ... That double result, namely
> God's satisfaction and man's restoration, is brought about by
> Christ's vicarious office working through satisfactory and
> meritorious actions.
>
> (Sollier 1999)[19]

Redemption thus arises out of the original fall of man into sin, and man's restoration back into the Divine state from which he fell. It is a fall from grace which *Amateur* literally visits upon Thomas in having him thrown from a window. Thomas is therefore a sort of symbolic fallen angel whose sin is transposed into innocence (amnesia). He dies at the end of the film in a similarly innocent state, since he has remained celibate, and abided both by legal and moral edict. His death could be read as a return to God, a redemption.

Redemption also, significantly, involves an interaction between man and a Redeemer. As such, when Isabelle demonstrates the fact that she has forgiven Thomas, it is important to recognise that she could be seen in doing so as a sort of agent of God. Although not specifically holding one of the titles or offices which the Redeemer occupies, namely Christ, Priest, Prophet, King and Judge (Sollier 1999), Isabelle nonetheless constitutes a figure representative of religion within *Amateur*'s

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[19]This, like much of the material in the literature review in Chapter I, has been taken from the internet. For this reason, quotations from this source will not contain page refererences.

narrative. A former nun who spent several years of her life in a convent, Isabelle has returned to the world because of her belief that God has a task for her in it. And the 'sign' which tells her of the nature of this task is brought to her by Thomas:

> ISABELLE: This is it.
>
> THOMAS: This is what?
>
> ISABELLE: This is the thing I'm supposed to do.
>
> THOMAS: I'm not sure I understand.
>
> ISABELLE: This is it. This is the sign. This girl.
>
> THOMAS: Are you sure? How can you tell?
>
> ISABELLE: I just know. I can see it. It's in her face. (*Looks at him.*) And you're part of it.
>
> THOMAS: (*Watches her, then*) How can I possibly be part of it?
>
> ISABELLE: You have to be. Why else would you have come to me?
>
> THOMAS: I didn't come to you. *You* found *me*.
>
> ISABELLE: Yes. I found you. But you've brought me the sign.
>
> (Hartley 1994: 38)

A cynic might say that Isabelle's sense of recognition is fostered by her earlier, transitory encounter with Sofia at the cinema, the significance of which is indicated by that momentary visual stutter referred to in the 'Visual Repetition' section of the taxonomy. The shot in question sees Sofia and Isabelle, her hair tied up to appear bobbed like Sofia's, twinned within the image. The existence of this earlier moment displaces Isabelle's recognition into a remembrance of that encounter which, because of its transitory nature, Isabelle would seem to have forgotten. Certainly this earlier encounter offers an explanation of Isabelle's reaction to Sofia's image other than that which Isabelle herself offers: she perceives it to be important as a sign. Isabelle's interpretation of the image of Sofia which Thomas is watching is therefore informed by the religious undercurrent which the narrative suggests. Isabelle left the convent

because of her belief in her calling, knowing that the task to which she had been assigned was one which could only be executed outside the convent. Later, Isabelle's statement on the nature of her calling is developed. She announces to Thomas in the Portchester house that she believes that it is her duty to save Sofia from him. Her actions are motivated by a belief in her own religious significance.

As well as the allusions made to Isabelle's status within the narrative, the religious iconography within the film supports this coding of Isabelle as a figure of religious import to whom the role of Redeemer could symbolically be extended. Clothed for much of the film in an austere blue dress (a colour symbolic of the Virgin Mary), Isabelle surrounds herself with artefacts of Catholicism. Hence the room to which she takes the rescued Thomas is replete with a variety of religious imagery, including the obligatory statue of Christ on the cross. Isabelle's modest clothing, indicating her virginal status, is contrasted starkly within the offices of George, the editor of Isabelle's pornography, with a classical painting of a naked, reclining woman. A powerful image of female sexuality, the painting looms over the uncomfortable Isabelle, whose own demure pose, although shadowing that of the muse, provides an interesting counterpoint to the woman in the painting who is so obviously more at ease with her sexuality. The incongruity of Isabelle within such an environment as a pornographer's office is perfectly evoked by this juxtaposition.

Yet, despite the fact that the film's iconography supports this coding of Isabelle as a religious figure, a virginal woman, the coding is far from unequivocal. Isabelle is, after all, a former nun who makes a living trying, however unsuccessfully, to write pornography. George, in a superlative example of the subtlety of *Amateur*'s humour, gently chastises Isabelle for her writing with the statement that her work is not suitably pornographic: 'It's poetry and don't you try and deny it!' (Hartley 1994: 25). Isabelle is a virgin who considers herself to be a nymphomaniac, a paradox she resolves by saying 'I'm choosy' (13). She spends much of the narrative exploring her sexuality. Seen early in the film suffering through a date with a man she met through a 'hot phone-sex party line' (8), Isabelle's oft-repeated desire that Thomas make love to her is precipitous, occurring when they have just met. Quick to try on Sofia's sexy

outfits when she discovers them in Sofia's apartment, Isabelle is eager to transform herself into the arresting woman who finally piques Thomas' desire. Seeing her in a suit made from an iconically fetishistic glossy black leather and deep red, lacy lingerie, Thomas lets down Isabelle's hair and begins to seduce her. It is only the fact that they are interrupted by Jan and Kurt that prevents Thomas from making love to Isabelle.

Isabelle is therefore characterised not only by her coding as a religious woman, but by the juxtapositions which undermine it: of nun and nymphomaniac, virgin and whore. This is further symbolised by Isabelle's hair which, ostensibly practical and bobbed, can be let down to reveal its more voluminous and sensual aspect. Yet this altered coding of Isabelle which problematises the notion of Isabelle as Redeemer is itself problematic. Rather than being transposed by Sofia's attire, it is as if Isabelle is playing at dress-up in another's clothing. A woman who is undergoing an exploration of her sexuality, Isabelle is, arguably, only temporarily assuming the mantle of the whore in order to discover whether or not she might like it. She is trying on overt female sexuality for size, rather than to bring about a fundamental change. Although Isabelle demonstrates the semiotic relevance of clothing as an important mode of character coding, she remains essentially unchanged by her clothing. The greatest change occurs within Thomas, in that his desire is awakened by Isabelle's assumption of Sofia's sexy way of dressing. This change does not impinge upon Isabelle herself. She has only 'become' sexual because her outfit codes her as such, a fact which Thomas' suddenly desiring gaze supports. Her virginal status, more significant than her mode of dress, is perpetuated to the end of the film.

Amateur therefore indulges in the establishment of extreme codings of women, who vacillate between their points of greatest opposition rather than occupying a middle-ground. Isabelle can reductively be viewed as a one-woman embodiment of the virgin / whore dichotomy beloved of film-makers, fundamentally constituting the former whilst exploring her own pretensions to the latter. These juxtapositions are not confined to Isabelle, but also exist within the relationship between Isabelle and Sofia. Isabelle and Sofia could be said severally to symbolise this regressive filmic coding.

Placed in a sort of binary opposition which serves both to reprise and reflect their opposing and subjective views of Thomas ('good' and 'bad'), Isabelle is 'virgin' (a nun), whilst Sofia, a former star of pornographic film who, implicitly, spends the night with a stranger simply in order to have somewhere to sleep, is 'whore'. Dressed throughout in the sort of overtly sexual outfit which Isabelle somewhat incongruously adopts, Sofia, like the painting of the recumbent nude in George the pornographer's office, is a symbolic sexual counterpoint to Isabelle.

The painterly intertext which serves to express Hartley's contrast of overt and contained female sexuality extends into a more general exploitation and flouting of religious iconography in *Amateur*. It has already been suggested that the placing of Isabelle under the female nude in the pornographer's office is suggestive of a woman overwhelmed by a female sexuality which she has yet to experience, or master, for herself. The nude, in her serenity, seems perfectly at ease with her own sexuality. Following on from this, a more powerful and contentious image sees Sofia adopting the pose of Bernini's St Teresa. In a juxtaposition of sexual and religious ecstasy, Sofia, seen by Thomas in one of her appearances in a pornographic film, is caught, her head turned in an affectation of momentary rapture, in a freeze frame reminiscent of the Bernini. It is this image, viewed both by Thomas and by Isabelle, which fosters Isabelle's recognition of Sofia as a 'sign'. Whilst watching the pornographic film, both are surrounded by the religious iconography with which Isabelle's room is furnished. Specifically, Thomas is framed by an image of the Virgin, brimming with the suggestive glow of a halo, as he sits, remote in hand, pondering the images he sees. Rather than being stable, or given reverential treatment, religion persists as a site of questioning within the film.

There is therefore a melding of the sacred and profane within the image in *Amateur*, in which the contrast established between Sofia and Isabelle is reinforced. While Sofia's sexual ecstasy constitutes an impious repetition of a hallowed image, Isabelle's demure containment conflicts with the nude which she is set against. A reversal has therefore been effected through the use of visual intertextuality, a reversal which is more widely instituted structurally in *Amateur* through the gradual

interchange through which Isabelle and Sofia pass. Hence, whilst Isabelle ends the film dressed in Sofia's overt clothes, having experienced an albeit brief suggestion of sexual desire, Sofia ends the film lying, enveloped in white sheets, in the convent from which Isabelle was once liberated.

Thus, like the criminality by which Thomas is defined, the identities both of Sofia and, more significantly, Isabelle, are shown to be unstable. The coding of Isabelle, dressed according to religious convention in the blue of the Virgin, is disrupted by the end of the film. Although posited as a representative of the religious whose forgiveness of Thomas is capable of effecting a redemption which his inability truly to repent denies, it is essential to recognise that Isabelle is not coded as 'virgin' but 'whore' at the moment when she forgives Thomas. Despite the fact that the alteration is on the surface rather than fundamental, this could be said both to problematise and, apparently, disrupt the possibility of her being effective as a symbolic Redeemer. This is because the role of the Redeemer is necessarily an elevated one.

Yet this use of the symbolic 'whore' within conceptions of redemption echoes the biblical story of Mary Magdalene and the resurrection of Christ. The analogy between this story and *Amateur* is supported by the importance of *Thomas* to the story of the resurrection. Thomas doubted that the resurrection had taken place until Jesus appeared to him, showing the wounds upon his hands. It was to Mary Magdalene, the prostitute whose friendship with Jesus was the cause of much scandal, that Jesus first appeared upon his resurrection. Symbolic of him having forgiven her and brought about her redemption, the story of the resurrection demonstrates that redemption and immorality are not mutually exclusive: one cannot be beyond redemption.

It is this which *Amateur* both reprises and reverses within the relationship between Thomas and Isabelle. Mary Magdalene is the 'prototype of the reformed prostitute' (Room 1997: 682), the latter part of which definition is befitting of Sofia, who has exchanged her body for money within the pornography industry, and seeks to change her life. It is this mantle, with all its resonances, which Isabelle has assumed

through putting on Sofia's clothing. In becoming visually coded as the immoral woman, Isabelle seemingly moves into the portrayal of a woman who needs redemption herself. She has become a Mary Magdalene, the Patron Saint of Penitents. Yet, in not needing redemption for herself, Isabelle does not serve to oppose redemption, but rather to reinforce its association with repentance. It is Thomas rather than she who is performing penitence, and she who is able to offer him redemption. Isabelle's assumption of Sofia's clothing, and playing of the role of the 'whore', therefore constitutes a reversal rather than a denial of redemption. It is she who is in the position to redeem the resurrected man, rather than he offer her redemption.

Moreover, Isabelle's ability finally to forgive Thomas is reinforced by the fact that she is still a virgin, and any immorality exists within her desire for experience, rather than her encounter with it. Her role as Redeemer is not undermined by her mode of dress (which serves to evoke the resonances of penitence rather than to undermine her morality) nor by its associations. Isabelle *is* posited as representative of the religious to the end. Her first impulse, when in trouble, is to return to the convent from which she fled. Her ostensible transition from a position of purity befitting the religious to a position of degradation suggested by the 'immoral woman' seemingly disrupts her effectuation of a religious redemption. Yet, through the persistence of her belief, and the perpetuation of her pure state, Isabelle retains the power which, in the absence of worldliness, her faith affords her.

The question which *Amateur* poses is therefore: is redemption without repentance impossible? The quickest answer to this would be that yes, Thomas would be subject to eternal damnation because, despite his willingness to say that he is sorry for his past actions, he cannot truly repent that of which he has no memory. Mary Magdalene, as her status as Patron Saint of Penitents suggests, was redeemed because she repented of her life, rather than simply because she changed it. Yet, when the importance of forgiveness by a representative of God is introduced, the possibility of Thomas' redemption becomes tangible. Since he is clearly forgiven by Isabelle who, although at first shaken by her new knowledge and frightened of Thomas, comes to trust him again, it would be easy to argue the case for Thomas' redemption.

Taking this one stage further, it could be suggested that Thomas dies precisely *because* he is forgiven, and has been redeemed. Certainly, it is the fact of him being in possession of a gun which causes the police to shoot him. The moment of his death is preceded by a slow motion shot of him, passing through the heavy wooden doors of the convent, and tuning towards the gunmen, his own gun in his hand. Had Isabelle not given Thomas back the gun, a gesture symbolic of her forgiveness and the restoration of her trust, he might not have been killed. The emotive impact of this lies in the fact that Isabelle is effectively killing the thing she loves. Yet Thomas' destruction immediately upon his redemption prohibits his being soiled by the return of his memory, and the possibility of a return to the possession of his former character. Upon death, he embodies only original sin. As it is, Thomas dies in a state of innocence, of perfection, a fallen angel who has been returned to the place from which he fell, unable to repent, but afforded the possibility of redemption by Isabelle.

Pornography

Isabelle is given agency within *Amateur*'s redemption narrative, a position from which to effect this most fundamental of changes in Thomas' life. This is not undermined by the fact that her coding undergoes alteration within the film. Both 'virgin', the coding to which she most strongly adheres, and 'whore', which brings with it an association with Mary Magdalene's penitence, work with the redemptive. Although enjoying the associations of the sexualised identity which she adopts, piquing Thomas' desire, Isabelle remains essentially unchanged. Thus, rather than being situated within her sexuality, the greatest change in Isabelle herself lies within the issue of a knowledge which she wishes to obtain. This constitutes what Williams has described as the desire for knowledge of pleasure (Williams 1990: 3) or, in the original terms from which Williams' argument is derived:

> pleasure in the truth of pleasure, the pleasure of
> knowing that truth, of discovering and exposing it,
> the fascination of seeing it and telling it, of

> captivating and capturing others by it, of confiding
> it in secret, of luring it out in the open - the
> specific pleasure of the true discourse on pleasure.
>
> (Foucault 1990: 71)

It is a knowledge of the truth of pleasure which Isabelle most fundamentally lacks throughout the film.

Having little knowledge of the world because of her lengthy, self-imposed confinement within the convent, Isabelle lives by comforting routine outside it rather than seeking new experiences. The waitress at the local coffee shop into which Thomas walks complains of Isabelle that she sits there, day after day, taking up space. Isabelle's ability to write pornography is hampered by the fact that her limited knowledge is culled from magazines and videos rather than her own experience, which is almost as lacking as when she was in the convent. This lack of empirical knowledge is not alleviated through her dating practice. Searching for men through a 'hot phone-sex party line' (Hartley 1994: 8), Isabelle has not met a man with whom she desires to lose her virginity until Thomas. His death before the consummation of their relationship does little to advance her knowledge of the subject.

Yet, despite this, Isabelle becomes transformed by knowledge by the end of *Amateur*. Although disclosure of the nature of Thomas' past is not afforded to the spectator, Isabelle learns the details of Thomas' experiences which we are denied. When Sofia lies wounded in the convent, she gives Isabelle a full account of Thomas' past, rendering her, much more so than the spectator, a 'knowing' woman. This was discussed earlier in this chapter, in the section: 'The Interrogation of Criminality: Problems of Definition', in terms of the departure of Isabelle from her role as our representative. This is because she has had the same level of knowledge as the spectator for much of the film until this point. An interesting reversal of the power which the spectator usually has over a film's subjects is thus created. More than this, however, Isabelle's knowledge affords her a position of power over Thomas. Like Sofia, Isabelle now knows more about Thomas than does Thomas himself. Yet, unlike

Sofia who is unable to trust or forgive Thomas, Isabelle uses her knowledge to create a sort of redemption for Thomas, demonstrating this through her willingness to trust him both with the gun and with herself.

Despite the positive effect which Isabelle's increased knowledge has upon her, *Amateur* finds Hartley more willing to explore the other side to the resonances of the pleasures of knowledge, namely the pornography / commodification discourse. As a result of her years spent as a pornographic actress, Sofia is a woman who felt so trapped in her exploitative relationship with Thomas that she threw him out of the window, believing it to be to his death. The extremity of her desire to escape her participation in pornography is apparent. In the story of Sofia, many of the negative associations of the pornographic industry are borne out. She was involved in it by Thomas when she was still underage. Both drugs and violence had a role in getting Sofia to participate in the making of pornographic films. Hence she tells Isabelle that Thomas showed her pictures of the cut face of a woman, a clear personal threat, when she tried to leave. Further, *Amateur* reinforces the associations of criminality with the pornography industry. Thomas, in his involvement in the sub-plot concerning the floppy discs and the high-level governmental corruption which they connote, is clearly coded as a man who has a criminal past.

The corrupting effect of pornography is therefore demonstrated. Sofia, her life once changed by her involvement with Thomas, wants to change it back so desperately that she will harm Thomas in order to do it. Yet it is not only Sofia whose innocence is corrupted by pornography in *Amateur*. Isabelle's concern with pornography arises out of her need to end her innocence. Attempting to write pornography for a living, Isabelle patronises pornographic films with men she has met on phone-sex lines. Such men have little concern for her own desire. Fostered by the rhetoric of male-centred pornography which equates female pleasure with that of the man (the sentiment being that if I am enjoying it, then so will she), a man gropes Isabelle without reference either to her pleasure or her consent.

As a mode of corruption, pornography is not very effective. Isabelle remains

almost impossibly innocent, retaining both her virginity and her ability to believe in and trust men. This is exemplified by her treatment of Thomas. Yet the film is self-consciously aware of the notion of pornography as a corrupting influence. Hence the scene where a twelve year old boy, and the adult Thomas rendered innocent by his amnesia, compare their reading material on a park bench. The boy who is able to articulate the plot of *The Odyssey*, and captivate Thomas in so doing, is also well versed in pornography. The boy is apparently innocent. When Thomas shows him his pornographic magazine, the boy asks of one of the women in the 'Chicks' magazine whether all women have hair between their legs like this. The response is that there is a woman on page twenty-two who doesn't. Yet the boy is able instantly to recognise an image of Sofia, whom he knows as 'the most notorious porno actress in the world' (Hartley 1994: 28). Further, he is able to recount the nature of one of her film appearances, whose details are so explicit as to be whispered to Thomas.

As such, the twelve year old boy, a beguiling mixture of innocence and knowledge, is contrasted with Thomas. Thomas is strangely dispassionate about the pornography to which he, under the influence of Isabelle, is exposed. Although aware of the level of body hair of the various women who appear within the pages of the magazine, he appears to occupy a position of detachment rather than arousal in relation to them. Although he subsequently watches one of Sofia's pornographic films, this is motivated more out of his recognition of her name on the video box than out of a desire for titillation. Not only was it at Isabelle's suggestion that he rented a 'dirty movie', but Thomas watches it quizzically, tilting his head to one side in an attempt to make sense of the images he sees. In this gesture, Thomas prefigures Simon's experience of watching the young couple in the back of the car in *Henry Fool* with a gaze that is curious and detached rather than knowing and active.

Similarly dispassionate is Isabelle's experience of pornography. Reflecting her assumed rather than empirical experience of sexuality, Isabelle fails to derive pleasure either from her own writing, or from her limited sexual experiences. When she returns from her date, she articulates her belief that there is something wrong with her because she didn't enjoy being molested. Writing a romantic rather than explicit

account of human sexuality which George the pornographer rejects, Isabelle expresses her concern to Thomas not only that she will not know how to make love, but also that she is afraid that she will not enjoy it. In fact, Isabelle does enjoy the brief moments of her sexual encounter with Thomas, which are cut short because they are interrupted. Yet her expectation of pleasure has been quashed rather than elicited by her experiences both of viewing and of writing pornography.

Since she derives no pleasure from her incongruous and fairly unsuccessful career as a pornographer, the sense that Isabelle is effectively selling herself to write pornography is evoked. The avenues of employment available to a former nun wholly lacking employable skills are limited, and it is quite likely that Isabelle is only writing pornography because it is the only means she has found to make the money necessary for her survival. Presumably she cannot make enough by writing the poetry that her pornography is accused of being. Thus Isabelle, as much as the pornography itself which she writes, becomes commodified in *Amateur*.

Amateur is a film in which all of the pornographers are male, including Thomas and the pornography editor, and the objects of it are female, such as Sofia, Isabelle and the women in the 'Chicks' magazine. As such, the film reflects the wider commodification of woman in pornography. Although seen by anti-censorship feminists as capable or reflecting a freedom of sexuality, it is the case that much pornographic output is created by men, for men. And it is both Isabelle and Sofia who, twinned by the film's images, are rendered into commodities by *Amateur*'s concern with pornography. Isabelle is commodified through selling her innocence in order to write pornography for a living, Sofia is commodified in having lived off the exploitation of her own body.

This is not to say that the film advocates such a coding. It shows that Sofia's past role in pornography was one involving coercion through drugs and violence. Similarly, Isabelle's attempts at pornography, laughably unsuccessful, support the argument that she should find an alternative mode of employment. Yet both Isabelle and Sofia are trapped by their positions as men's commodities. The rejection of

Isabelle's work by George is amusing: 'It's poetry and don't you try and deny it!' (Hartley 1994: 25). However, that Isabelle needs the money to survive is a harsh reality of her life. When Thomas encourages her to eat, she vomits because she is unused to food. Similarly, the difficulty of Sofia's escape from her position is evoked in *Amateur*. So desperate to escape that she is willing to throw the man who she is so afraid of out of a window, and indulge in some dangerous blackmail in order to get the necessary funds to change her life, Sofia is nonetheless trapped within her coding for the duration of the film. Dressed throughout in a sexy outfit, the Sofia who is instantly recognisable as a porno star even by a twelve year old boy spends the night with a stranger merely in order to have somewhere to sleep. It will be more difficult than she believes to escape her life.

Conclusion

Thus *Amateur* participates in a discourse which, it will be seen, *Henry Fool* extends, concerning issues of marginality, criminality, belief and redemption. At once utilising and deflating the generic conventions of the thriller, *Amateur*, in its use of 'B' movie coding, is generically marginal. The problem of genre signals a wider difficulty in the definition of criminality. Thomas' amnesia in *Amateur* disrupts the coding of him as criminal, posing the question of which is his 'true' character, the criminality by which he continues to be defined, or the goodness which he has now assumed? The influence of Isabelle in forming Thomas' character is emblematic of the fluidity of identity. Nonetheless, whichever identity Thomas is defined by, he is inherently marginalised, as much by his amnesia (he cannot hold a place in society if he has no idea of where that place should be) as by his former criminality.

Despite the fact that Thomas' definition as a criminal is so problematised by his amnesia, the film indulges in the rhetoric of repentance and redemption. Thomas seeks to make recompense by saying that he is sorry, but is denied repentance of his criminality because if he cannot remember his past, he cannot truly repent. Thus *Amateur* posits an alternative means by which this redemption can be instituted: through the influence of others. This is evident in the importance of Isabelle's trust

and forgiveness to the formation of Thomas' new character. Religion is an inevitable part of this. As a representative, although hardly unequivocal, of religion in *Amateur*'s narrative, Isabelle is afforded a position from which to effect Thomas' redemption, a position of agency and strength.

Yet this strength is fundamentally undermined through the film's concern with pornography, which persists in *Amateur* as a means of turning women into commodities. The film engages fully with the negative associations of pornography with criminality, and with drugs and violence as modes of coercion. *Amateur* demonstrates the male perspective on pornography. Hence it is men (Thomas, George) who are producers of pornography, and women (Isabelle, Sofia) who are embroiled in it. Yet, as much as the women are marginalised by this, the pornographers themselves occupy a similarly marginal position, standing outside the moral majority.

Thus Thomas' double marginality as a criminal and an amnesiac is reflected in the associations of pornography with the marginal positioning of *Amateur*'s characters. It is a marginality which the film does not resolve. Despite the fact that criminality is an agent for Thomas' marginality, there is more to his marginality than just criminality. Although redeemed and, to an extent, reintegrated into the conventions of society upon which laws are founded, Thomas retains his marginal status. The centrality of this paradox lies in the issue of redemption. Thomas follows the pattern of a criminal who, standing outside the law, experiences redemption and apparent reintegration into societal constructs, yet is kept on the margins. Thomas is held on the margins by his amnesia, a state which disrupts but does not remove the association of him with criminality. It is upon this criminality which the discourses surrounding repentance and redemption in the film rely.

CHAPTER V

CRIMINALITY, BELIEF AND REDEMPTION: *HENRY FOOL*

The concern with the marginality of the criminal protagonist is one which Hartley extends from *Amateur* into *Henry Fool*, which is similarly concerned with transgressive characterisation. The film is ostensibly unambiguous in this criminality. Henry readily admits that he has been imprisoned for statutory rape. Yet issues of subjectivity, judgement and consent impinge upon the apparent intransigence of the definition. The disputation of morality which *Henry Fool* effects is indicated by the fact of the film's alignment with the generic convention of the morality play which, although not specifically concerned with criminality, nonetheless illuminates the way in which Henry's criminality is established and asserted within the film. A film which demonstrates the blurring of legal and moral castigation, *Henry Fool* asks if the criminality of its eponymous protagonist is diminished by the arguable compliance of the girl with whom he committed statutory rape.

Like *Amateur*, *Henry Fool* is a film which participates in a discourse surrounding the importance of redemption to the discussion of criminality. Unlike *Amateur*'s Thomas, however, the greatest barrier to Henry's redemption lies not in his inability to repent, but in his refusal to do so. Once again, the film, showing Henry indulgence for his professed weaknesses, sets about the task of finding alternative modes by which he can be redeemed. The epic *Confession* which Henry writes effects a symbolic but not literal redemption, reprising the subtext of Catholicism which informed *Amateur*. Despite this, it will be argued that *Henry Fool* demonstrates a more secular approach to the saving of Henry, in which the film's reiteration of the notion of third party redemption is key.

The ability which one person has to change another is one which Hartley has shown consistent interest in. Here, it is manifest in the central relationship between Henry and Simon, and a shamanic intertext will be shown to function as a means by

which to illuminate it. A belief system which concerns itself with the mediation between the sacred and the profane, shamanism further serves to re-introduce the profanity which Simon's writing arguably constitutes. This is because the impact which Henry has upon Simon's life results in his production of writing that is at once lauded as work of literary significance, and reviled as pornography. And it is pornography, as much as criminality, which *Amateur* and *Henry Fool* commonly assert as a site of marginality.

Criminality

Like *Amateur* before it, *Henry Fool* is concerned with criminality. Its narrative focuses largely upon the relationship between Henry, a man on parole for statutory rape who is obsessed with writing a *Confession* of epic proportion, and Simon, the garbage man whom Henry inspires to write. *Henry Fool* is a film concerning the influence of one person upon another as Henry enters the community in which Simon, a garbage man, lives. Encouraging Simon to emulate his own desire to write, Henry facilitates Simon's production of a work which, at once reviled and lauded, comes to be regarded as a great piece of literature, winning Simon a Nobel Prize. Henry's *Confession* of his sins of lust, on the other hand, is not considered a success, and, rejected by the literary establishment, Henry ends the film married to Simon's sister, living in his house, and filling Simon's former post as a garbage man.

Since Henry has spent time in prison, it would appear that the definition of him as a criminal within *Henry Fool* is unambiguous. Suffering the attentions of a parole officer who shadows his movements, Henry, a man who readily confesses the nature of his crime to Simon within the film, could be said to be clearly coded as a criminal within *Henry Fool*. He is known both to us and to characters in the film as a criminal *because he tells people that he is one*: he 'confesses'. Asked where he got the word processor which he gives Simon in order to facilitate his writing, Henry laconically and without embarrassment or apparent conscience states that he stole it. He is invested throughout the narrative with a relish for lusty behaviour. This includes sleeping both with Fay and with her mother, frolicking with women in the strip club

to which he takes Simon, even introducing his own son, Ned, to that which such an establishment has to offer. He teaches the seven year old how to put a dollar into the garter of a stripper. The approach to sexuality which saw Henry having intercourse with an underage girl is clearly defined. His sins are of a lust which he performs and of which we assume Simon writes.

Yet, despite the apparently unambiguous assertion of Henry's transgressions within the film, the definition of him as a criminal is made problematic. According to legal rhetoric, having paid his debt to society, Henry should no longer be considered a criminal. It is the continued presence of the parole officer, subjecting him to punishment for the duration of the film, which perpetuates the definition of Henry as a criminal within the film. Further, it is the case that, as for Thomas in *Amateur*, the definition of Henry as a criminal in *Henry Fool* is a matter of subjectivity. Unlike the case of Thomas, however, it is Henry's own subjectivity which affords us our most expansive account of and therefore experience of his criminality. His exposition, given to Simon in the basement of his home, embodies a central paradox. It at once satisfies the definition of criminality in that he tells Simon that he had intercourse with an underage girl, which is statutory rape, and questions it since the consent he posits introduces a central problem into the application of the law. Like Thomas who is to be defined as a criminal or not a criminal according to whose opinion you listen to, Henry is a criminal or not a criminal according to your belief in the honesty of his account, or, rather, in his ability to render an account whose relation to the actual events is not significantly impinged by his subjectivity. And, possessed of an ego of gargantuan proportion, Henry's every speech is problematically tinged with his own, slightly skewed, take on the reality of his situation.

The controversial facts of the 'crime' itself are therefore key to the definition of Henry as a criminal. The importance of the age of the girl with whom Henry committed statutory rape should not be underestimated. Maintaining a position of ambiguity in relation to Henry's criminality, Hartley carefully places the age of Susan, the girl with whom Henry was caught engaged in sexual intercourse, at thirteen: young enough to be prohibitive, old enough to allow for the possibility of precocious

consent. And it is the very age of the girl which allows for the very real possibility of her, like a Lolita seducing her Humbert, having given the active consent which Henry's account of the incident suggests.

The issue of Henry's criminality can be displaced onto the notion of judgement, which doubly figures within the film in terms both of Henry's judgement (or lack thereof) in spending an afternoon of 'blissful transgression' with Susan, and of the judgement to which he is subjected as a result. It is a lack of judgement rather than malice which informs much of Henry's behaviour. Although Henry's moral code does not conform to one more widely held by society, it is nonetheless one to which he vehemently holds. Realising that Simon has signed a publishing contract which does not include the publication of his own *Confession*, it is significant that Henry says that he expected honesty of Simon. It is a subtle absurdity that it is Henry's very honesty and openness about his life which affords us a position from which to judge it. Simon is as shocked when Henry tells him of the reason for his confinement in prison as others are about the nature of Simon's writing. Yet the film prohibits our judgement of Simon's work, whilst affording full disclosure of the fact of Henry's criminality.

It is this judgement which was exercised in the application of the laws governing the age of consent to Henry. The resonances of this are many. It is after all judgement which allowed a law put in place to protect young women to be applied in the case of Henry and his liaison with Susan, the girl who 'played upon my weaknesses' (Hartley 1998: 63). It is important to recognise that, although it could be considered morally reprehensible, Henry's interlude with the girl cannot universally be held as having been beyond the bounds of the law, particularly since in certain American States the age of permissible marriage is as low as the age of the girl in question. That the force of the law was brought down on Henry in this case is therefore a matter of judgement, since the law was being used to protect a girl for whom, in this case, the probability of her consent persists.

Hartley engages more widely with the resonances of judgement when he seeks implicitly to question the fitness of the peers who might have sat in judgement over

Henry. The individuals with which Henry interacts in the course of the film would not literally have sat upon the jury that condemned him. Henry is from an undefined elsewhere. Nonetheless the community is as suggestive of a microcosm of society as any upon which Hartley's films focus, and thus effects a commentary upon that society. Warren is a witless exponent of the right-wing moral majority. He supports an electoral candidate Fay describes as a Nazi because he 'takes complicated issues and totally simplifies them. And I appreciate that' (Hartley 1998: 50). He also beats Vicky and sexually abuses her daughter, Pearl. An apparently responsible citizen who involves himself in the political processes of his democratic country, Warren exemplifies the problem of one individual sitting in judgement over another.

More than this, the extent to which the community insists upon strict adherence to the letter of the law is not universal. There is no mention of punishing Henry for providing Simon with the stolen word processor upon which Simon writes his Nobel Prize-winning novel. Similarly outside of the law is Henry's act of killing Warren. When Henry confronts Warren for his abuse, killing him in the fight which ensues, the community rallies around Henry. They excuse his more serious crime of manslaughter rather than statutory rape because of its altruistic motivation. Rather than judge, they support Henry, aiding his escape. Since both his theft of a word processor for Simon and his destruction of Warren are selfless, a sort of Robin Hood theory is applied to Henry, and judgement used in the community's decision not to apply the law to him. This places his criminality in an uncertain position.

Since the community does not seek to apply the law in instances to which they have no moral objection, there is a blurring of the distinction between the legal and the moral. This is implicit in the community's treatment of Henry's criminality, and signalled in the film as a whole. It is exemplified in Vicky's reaction to the piece of Simon's poem which Mr Deng displays in the local shop. Her protestation: 'It's disgusting! There oughta be a law or something!' (Hartley 1998: 31) demonstrates the willingness which people have to legislate against that which they personally find distasteful. In doing so, it subjects Simon to the criminality by which Henry is more readily identified. Questions arise: Can Simon be held responsible, for example, for

criminal activity which the extremity of his writing inspires in others? Is the 'pornography' with which his work is critically aligned inherently criminal? It is not only Henry upon whose transgressive behaviour the interrogation of criminality in *Henry Fool* relies.

Inherent to a disputation of morality is the question of our conventional perceptions of such abstractions as 'good' and 'evil' and, in a more secular context, where the imaginary boundary between the un/acceptable should be drawn. It is Henry's general character, bawdy, irreverent and excessive, which places him in a position in which to be judged. The fact of his aggressively sexual persona facilitates our appreciation of how such an event as intercourse with a young girl might have occurred. Despite the fact that the film does not invite the spectator to take a moralistic stance in relation to Henry, viewing Henry's sexuality with indulgence, asking of us that we find it amusing rather than threatening, and situating the similarly promiscuous Fay as Henry's counterpoint, it is easy to see why Henry has been judged.

This is because the castigation to which Henry has been subjected would seem to be as much founded upon an objection to his transgression of morality *as on his* breaking of a law. Not only was Henry actually caught *in flagrante delicto* with Susan, a vision sure to induce moral outrage in the presumably shocked discoverer, but Henry recounts the tale with relish rather than humbled repentance. It is an attitude bound to aggravate those who would seek to punish him. There is therefore an erosion, implicit in *Henry Fool*'s focus upon the criminality of Henry, of the distinction between the legal and the moral. In semantic terms, the apparently absolute nature of the law, which is capable of finally and irreparably being *broken*, is subjugated to the looser and more ambiguous *transgression* of morals. *Henry Fool* is a film which, although narratively concerned with the former (criminality), is really more interested in the latter (morality). And the invocation of morality as a genre will be seen as evidence of this.

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Morality as Genre

Despite what Graham Fuller identifies as *Henry Fool*'s placement somewhere between the traditions of the Western and the status of an epic tragedy (Fuller 1998: vii-viii) it will be argued that *Henry Fool* calls more upon the obscure drama of a morality play than any recognisable film genre. Although the relationship between *Henry Fool* and the morality play is one of analogy, the analogy is a strong one. Part of the Medieval English dramatic tradition, with *Everyman* and *Doctor Faustus* its most widely known examples, morality plays:

> Characterise Man as a creature of body, soul and free will. Man, whatever his intention, opposes his damnation, often represented by the World, the Flesh, and the Devil. Man, in his own person or in that of his supporters, intends to gain salvation by choosing good before evil. The representatives of damnation are determined to capture the soul of Man. Since the antagonists of Man know the significance and the freedom of his will, they hope to succeed by persuading Man to choose evil before good. This conflict is dramatised in the exposition, usually termed an action.
>
> (Fifield 1974: 35)

This Faustian account of the structure of the morality play is highly reminiscent of *Henry Fool*, albeit within a much more secular context. Like the protagonist of Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*, Simon, in a moment of crisis, appears to conjure Henry, his personal Mephistopheles. Henry's influence causes Simon's downfall. Like Mephistopheles exposing Faustus to new experiences, Henry takes Simon to a strip club, and encourages him to write what is widely reviled as pornography. Yet Henry also brings about Simon's subsequent restoration through fostering his creativity. Simon's work is recast by liberal intelligentsia as a masterpiece which wins Simon a Nobel Prize. This 'pattern of reversal and then restoration' (34) [or redemption] is characteristic of the morality play's fall and rise structure, which is not only applicable

to the shifting fates of Henry and Simon in *Henry Fool*, but recalls the more literal fall to which *Amateur*'s Thomas is subjected before Isabelle offers him redemption.

Thus Simon can be appointed as the Faustian protagonist of Hartley's morality play, conjuring Henry, his own Mephistopheles. An unworldly young man who looks upon a couple copulating in a car with the artless gape of the ingénu rather than the knowing gaze of the voyeur, Simon seeks both worldliness and power from Henry. The temptation to see Henry as a Mephistophelian figure is enhanced by Hartley's iconic association of Henry with hellish symbolism, with the glowing embers of the fire in his underground domain playing upon his face. Like Faustus, Simon exchanges his self for the power which his new-found ability to express his insight gives him. Henry in turn indulges with relish in his role as antagonist. If *Everyman* is a personification of the universal human predicament, Henry is a personification of lust.[20] Teased by Fay, Henry seeks the immediacy of gratification with her mother who is lying on the sofa, rather than travel the greater distance to Fay, who awaits him upstairs. Henry also tries, albeit unsuccessfully, to tempt Simon into the lustful world of the flesh. Whilst Henry dances wildly with strippers, an uncomfortable Simon sits at the bar.

Under the influence of Henry, Simon gains both experience and the ability to express it. He achieves the power inherent in his success through his new-found status both within his community and within the world of critical opinion. However, much like Marlowe's Faustus, who begins to realise that Mephistopheles does not quite possess the unlimited power that he lays claim to, Simon discovers the limitations of Henry's own power. Reading his work, Simon realises that Henry does not have in his *Confession* the potent and influential work that he purports to have. Yet, despite this discovery of Henry's creative impotence, Simon continues his Faustian pact to the end, paying with his self (if not his soul) by giving over his identity to his friend.

Conversely, it is equally possible to see Henry as a Faustus. An analogy

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[20]Hopper describes the morality as a play in which there exist: 'virtues and vices, personified' (Hopper and Lahey 1962: 9-10).

supported through the trend of naming the morality play after its protagonist (*Everyman*, *Doctor Faustus*), Henry Foole (he informs Simon that his name once had the pseudo-archaic 'e' attached) is equally a man whose soul is in crisis. The centrality of will over intellect (Fifield 1974: 10) which is manifest in the morality tradition characterises Henry. He lays claim to an intellect which he would seem not to possess, with his writing being described as 'really quite bad' by Angus, the publisher (Hartley 1998: 120). Henry, like Faustus, is a man driven by impulse rather than reason. And, like Faustus, Henry falls. His fall occurs as a sort of prelude to the film's narrative, with Henry telling Simon of his past rather than us witnessing the events themselves. Henry has indeed fallen far, having succumbed to the sin of lust. According to his subjective recounting of the story, in which he proclaims not only the consent of the girl but her Lolita-style active role in the seduction, the girl herself played antagonist to his protagonist, tempting him, like a bad angel, into a sin which brought about his fall into criminality.

This Faustian intertext illustrates how *Henry Fool* concerns itself with a gradual reversal. Although Henry does not become entirely 'good', his is indeed the 'fever arrested and a spiritual cure effected' of an *Everyman* by the end of the film (Hopper and Lahey 1962: 50). Key motifs within the morality play figure greatly in the development of Henry's character. These include repentance, in that Henry 'confesses' his past both directly to Simon and through his writing, and the forgiveness of sins, which becomes evident in the exhibition of trust towards Henry. Both repentance and forgiveness will subsequently be discussed in the sections: 'Repentance and Redemption' and 'Redemption Without Repentance' which appear later in this chapter.

Thus what is being demonstrated is the essential interchangeability of Henry and Simon. Both pass through processes of transgression and restoration which are caused by each other. The film sees the gradual dissolution of identity. Beginning the film as the character who possesses the strength which Simon lacks, as the writer, the enigmatic figure, Henry takes over Simon's identity in stages as Simon increases in talent and confidence, reaping the success to which Henry aspires. Thus, along with

the rebirth *of* Simon which Henry facilitates, there occurs Henry's rebirth *as* Simon as he is integrated into the very community from which Simon has now departed. This assimilation includes living in Simon's house, doing his former, menial job, wearing his uniform. Both thus experience the characteristic regeneration through death and rebirth of the protagonist of the morality play (Potter 1975: 10), death in that they each give over their identity to the other, rebirth in becoming each other. The climax of the film sees Simon giving over his passport, identity, and opportunity to collect his Nobel Prize to the fleeing Henry who at once sheds a life to which he cannot return, and is transformed into the lauded figure that Simon has become.

Henry Fool is thus inherently marginal in its genre, having much in common with the morality play. Points of comparison include the concern with the tension between good and evil, the portrayal both of the temptation and of the restoration which one person can elicit in another, and the destruction of the protagonists at the end of the film despite this attempt at restoration. This displaces the focus of the film away from the criminality by which Henry has been defined, and onto the morality whose transgression afforded such a definition. The fact that it is not only Henry but Simon who can be cast as the Faustian protagonist is symbolic of the wider character doubling which occurs within the narrative. In *Henry Fool*, a film which is more dependant upon third party redemption than *Amateur* because of Henry's refusal to repent, the impact which one person has upon another becomes yet more central to the film's redemptive discourses.

Repentance and Redemption

The lack of repentance which problematised the definition of Henry as a criminal because it was suggestive of legal equity having been tinged by moral judgement serves as the greatest barrier to his redemption. It is Henry's judgement of his own actions which prevents him repenting of them. This impinges upon a redemption which is frustrated not only by this lack of repentance, but also by Henry's relish in recounting the details of his seduction of Susan. He displaces responsibility for his actions onto Susan rather than take it upon himself, continuing to believe not only in

the consent, but in the active and desiring role played by the thirteen year old. It was she, according to his account, who exploited his weaknesses in order to bring about the seduction. It is just such a contention which creates the moral ambiguity upon which the interest of Nabokov's *Lolita* relies (Nabokov 1980). It is Lolita who, having gained precocious sexual experience at summer camp, seduces Humbert, not the other way round. Yet, although honest about the fact of the seduction, Henry does not use this fact to judge his actions and repent. His lack of guilt or repentance thus constitutes a problem within the narrative. Henry cannot repent if he does not believe the seduction to have been wrong, a crime.

This arises from the fact that Henry lives by an alternative moral code to that more widely held by society. It is an irony that, although rejecting general morality, Henry nonetheless desires that others conform to his own. This explains his disappointment at Simon's lack of honesty in relation to his work. Henry's own honesty about his criminal past, and his act of halting Warren's abusive behaviour, are examples of his moral code. Even Henry's approach to sexuality could be termed as 'honest'. Rather than construct sexuality as a site of game playing, Henry's sexuality is straightforward, almost animalistic. He enjoys pleasure wherever he finds it, making love to Fay's mother rather than Fay, who has provocatively retreated upstairs, because her mother is nearest. He has no conception of the fact that it is inappropriate to expose his young son to bar dancers. His is a morality which Henry holds to and defends. Since this prohibits his repentance of his transgression of more widely held views on morality, Henry relies for repentance on other avenues.

Whilst Henry does not indulge in the parlance of repentance, his actions speak more loudly of a redemption which is variously expressed. Henry, in an apparent repetition of the temptation to which Susan subjected him, is placed by the underage Pearl in a similarly tempting situation. Desperate to free herself and her mother from the abusive Warren, the fourteen year old Pearl, aware of Henry's existing 'weaknesses', propositions Henry. She offers him sexual pleasure in return for him killing Warren, who has just beaten her mother. As the section: 'Literal Repetitions' in the taxonomy discussed, Pearl repeatedly asks of Henry: 'You want some?'. Yet Henry

refuses her, effecting a sort of redemption-through-negation in which he redeems himself with exemplary action. He confronts Warren without the need for such an incentive. That he recognises that Pearl's consent is there only because of her desperation, and therefore is not true consent, further supports Henry's claim that Susan truly consented to the act in whose execution he was caught, and for which society punished him.

More important than the fact that Henry redeems himself through electing not to repeat his past transgression, is the significance of the modes of confession with which *Henry Fool* engages. Although Henry does not repent of his actions, rather relaying the story to Simon with a relish for the lurid, it is highly significant that Henry *confesses* them. Although not conceding fault, Henry could be said to be confessing when he tells Simon of the reason for his confinement in prison, in the sense of 'confession' as an acknowledgement of crimes. It is also implicit that Henry has confessed to Father Hawkes. Not only is Henry seen with Father Hawkes, in a bar aptly named *The Inferno*, discussing issues relating to the probability of man's innate badness, but Father Hawkes later suggests that he knows what Henry has done. He says to a concerned Simon, faltering over the magnitude of what he is saying, that: 'There's hope for everyone. Even. Even Henry' (Hartley, 1998: 65). Although it is possible that Father Hawkes' implied knowledge of Henry's past actions is secondary, the film is suggestive of the prospect of him having 'confessed' to Father Hawkes. It is in the least possible that Henry received an absolution in return.

More than this, however, is the fact that Henry's epic is referred to as a *Confession*. When Simon, talking with Henry in the basement apartment, asks Henry about his notebooks, Henry describes the collection as follows:

HENRY

(*Proudly, returning*)

This? This is my life's work. My memoirs. My 'Confession'.

SIMON

(*Carefully*)

What have you done?

Henry drinks and looks down into the raging fire

HENRY

(*Wistfully*)

I've been bad. Repeatedly.

(*shrugs and steps away*)

But why brag? The details of my exploits are only a pretext

for a far more expansive consideration of general truths.

(Hartley 1998: 13)

Going on modestly to describe the work as being at once a 'philosophy', 'poetics', 'politics', 'literature of protest', 'novel of ideas' and a 'pornographic magazine of truly comic-book proportions' (13), Henry has an inflated sense of the importance of his work. Yet, with all the characteristics with which he invests it, it is significant that Henry elects to describe his work as, and therefore centre it around the notion of, *Confession*.

The rhetoric of confession and repentance is therefore invoked, and immediately rendered problematic, by Henry's lack of penitence. He suggests that he should brag about rather than seek absolution for his repeatedly bad behaviour. Since confession without repentance does not lead to redemption, Henry's *Confession* is suggestive of the criminal who brings about his downfall because, proud of having gotten away with a crime, he cannot help but tell somebody. Henry is seeking fame rather than forgiveness and redemption for his past exploits. Since it is rejected for publication, and is self-indulgent, an attempt to bring power upon himself, it is difficult to see that Henry is redeemed by his *Confession*. Yet the inclusion of the ubiquitous if secondary character of Father Hawkes, who counsels Simon and drinks with Henry, burying Simon's mother and marrying Henry and Fay, makes it impossible to escape the religious resonance of his *Confession*.

Perhaps this is because the performance of repentance can create it;

performance can have an effect on the spirit. Penance is itself performative within Catholicism, which asks of the penitent that s/he repeat a rosary, or a Hail Mary, in order to gain forgiveness and redemption. Yet Henry is so resolute in his tone in relation to his past that it is difficult to apply this to him. The question of redemption without repentance is therefore as significant for Henry as for Thomas in *Amateur*. Can Henry be redeemed because he confesses, even if he does not repent? We are denied a glimpse of Henry's *Confession*, and therefore a position by which to judge for ourselves. It is, however, by his own account provocative rather than contrite. It would seem that Henry has confessed as in 'told' rather than 'conceded'. His *Confession* is therefore symbolic rather than literal, mediating between the sacred and the profane and implicitly inclining more towards the latter.

Henry Fool thus demonstrates the failure of modes of repentance to bring about Henry's redemption. Although Henry's performance of repentance which his *Confession* constitutes could have provoked an alteration in spirit, evident in the shift implicit in his decision not to seduce Pearl, it is problematic to assert that redemption has been accomplished by his *Confession*. This is a work which, in line with the anecdote that Henry tells Simon, we assume to be an unremorseful and inflammatory account of his life. As in *Amateur*, which necessitated a Redeemer in creating redemption, Henry's redemption must be taken out of his own hands, and instituted by others. And this redemption is possible because of the trust which others exhibit towards Henry.

Redemption Without Repentance

The Grim family most obviously exhibit trust in Henry. They unquestioningly allow him to occupy their basement apartment when he arrives in town, and Henry gradually becomes subsumed into their household. Fay's trust in Henry is displayed when she enters into a contract of marriage with him. Simon exhibits multiple modes of trust towards Henry. He trusts him with his sister, whose marriage to Henry he condones. He trusts him with his home, into which Henry moves upon his marriage. He trusts Henry not only with his job, which the unpublished Henry takes on once Simon has

moved on, but with his intellectual development. Simon's trust in Henry is apparent in his desire to emulate Henry, in his belief in Henry's accounts of his past. Approaching the publisher who Henry claims to have been friends with, Simon is surprised to learn that Henry was merely a janitor at the offices. More profoundly, Henry is entrusted with Simon's identity. In giving Henry his passport, Simon gives up not only his chance to collect his Nobel Prize, but his very self. Since Simon is a recluse, Henry can easily pass as Simon. He is indeed treated as Simon at the airport where, having been told by the check-in assistant that his writing changed her life, he is personally ushered to the plane.

The wider community also exhibits confidence in Henry. He was trusted with the younger Pearl, carrying her on his shoulders and taking her home when finding her wandering alone. And despite the fact that this trust is shaken when Fay is told that Henry took Pearl up on her offer, it is borne out in the fact that Henry's destruction of Warren was more altruistically motivated. Henry 'jumps away' from Pearl, 'moments later' appearing at her house in order to confront Warren, with a temporal gap too small to be suggestive of anything having occurred between Henry and Pearl (Hartley 1998: 135). Henry's redemption is therefore effectively brought about by the impact of Pearl upon him, by his refusal to sleep with her, by his desire that she remove herself, and therefore his temptation. His confrontation of Warren is selfless. Henry doesn't need sexual favours from Pearl in order to help her and, rather than rejecting him for his transgression of the law, the community rallies around him in order to assist his escape. Their displacement of legal into moral judgement not only serves to disrupt the classification of Henry as criminal, as has already been asserted, but has a broader impact. It is the fact that others trust and support Henry that offers him an avenue of redemption.

Thus, in the absence of a redemption effected through true penitence, and the presence of a *Confession* which constitutes a symbolic but not literal form of repentance, a sort of third party redemption comes into play. Henry is offered the possibility of redemption by others. Had we not seen Henry's effectuation of such positive change in Simon, had we not seen him trusted with Pearl and by Fay, we

might not have believed his to be a character either capable or deserving of redemption. The impact of one person upon another thus becomes the key avenue to redemption. Yet it is not the case here, as it was in *Amateur*, that this Redeemer is a figure of significance within a subtext of Catholicism. Rather, it will be asserted that shamanism serves as an intertext which allows for an interrogation of the figuring of influence.

Shamanism

It has already been noted that Hartley's films exhibit the sort of Newtonian impact of one body (moving, often into a community) upon another (often static, a character within the community) which similarly was explored by Steinberg in *Bodies, Rest and Motion* (1993). In *Amateur*, this impact concerns Isabelle and Thomas; in *Simple Men*, Kate and Bill. In *The Unbelievable Truth* it is Josh's impact on Audry which is significant; in *Trust* it is Matthew and Maria's simultaneous effect on each other which is interesting to note. In *Henry Fool*, the film in which this notion of the impact of one person upon another is, arguably, most fully developed, it is evident that both Simon and Henry effect change in each other's lives. And it is through a shamanic intertext that this will be explored.

The Faustian intertext to *Henry Fool* has its foundation in Christian myth, in the interplay between good and bad, and in the role of temptation in the fall of man. The film ostensibly uses characteristically Christian imagery. The resonances of placing the 'bad' Henry in an underground basement aglow with the light reflected from the fire, like those of the *Inferno* bar which Henry patronises, are hardly ambiguous. Despite this, it will be argued that much of *Henry Fool*'s representation of belief systems can be detached from this mode of religious mythology.

Usually coexisting with other forms of religion within a society, shamanism is defined by Eliade as a 'technique of ecstasy' (Eliade 1989: 4). An effector of cures and performer of miracles, the shaman 'may also be a priest, mystic and poet' (4), the last of which will be seen to be particularly pertinent to *Henry Fool*'s concern with poetry.

A vocation to which he is called, or which he has passed on to him in an hereditary conveyance, the shaman is of the 'elect', having 'access to a region of the sacred inaccessible to other members of the community' (7). As such, although being an integral part of the community in which he participates, the shaman is necessarily distinguished from that society. Possessing powers and an access to knowledge and experience which others are denied, the shaman's position as one who stands outside society is one of strength and influence, rather than exclusion.

About a central figure who is both part and yet not part of society, integrated within and yet standing outside it, shamanism has obvious associations with the protagonists of *Henry Fool*. Both Simon and Henry are marginal characters. Simon is marginalised by his lack of articulation. He feels it necessary to point out to Henry, with a clumsy expression which would appear to support society's view of him, that he is not retarded. Further, he is marginalised by his lack of experience. His reaction, a gaze of wonderment and curiosity, to the rituals of teenage courtship within the back seat of a car, is suggestive of him never having partaken of his share of sexuality. As such, he is a figure who seems as unable to fit into his dysfunctional family as into the wider society.

Equally, Henry is marginalised both by his criminality, and by a level of self-belief which betrays a hegemonic rather than democratic civic aspiration. Rejecting both the legal and the moral foundations upon which society is founded, and deliberately distinguishing himself from society through his writing which, he feels, places him in a position from which not only to effect a commentary of, but, more ostentatiously, to 'blow a hole *this wide* straight through the world's own idea of itself' (Hartley 1998: 13, author's emphasis), it is almost Henry's ambition to be marginal. He is visually distinguished by the fact that he wears a dark, formal suit whilst others around him wear less auspicious clothing. Fay's cheap outfits and Simon's overalls exemplify this. Henry's assumption of the mantle of marginality involves an acceptance of marginality as a position of superiority. It is a rejection *of* rather than an exclusion *from*.

Although both Henry and Simon are marginal characters in *Henry Fool*, it is ostensibly Henry to whom the characteristics of the shaman can most fully be applied. Responding to a self-imposed calling, Henry has produced a great (in the quantitative rather than qualitative sense) work of literature. He exists within the society into which he has passed, living in Simon's house and becoming, through an almost osmotic process, part of the family in whose basement he resides. Yet he also stands outside it. He is different. Henry is a figure whose inherent, magnetic power over others is self evident. He is more mystic and poet than priest. Indeed, to describe Henry as a Priest-like figure would border on blasphemy. Henry is indeed a man who persists in his ideology despite the fact that the society in which he lives is far from favourable to it, a further reflection of his shamanic qualities (Eliade 1989: 8).

Hence, occupying a self-imposed role as society's commentator and agent of its change, Henry evokes shamanism's emphasis upon the power of the shaman to change the lives of others. The iconography of fire, dominant within Christianity, is also a signifier within shamanism, which concerns itself with the ability to conjure fire. The images of Henry in his sub-floor apartment as he seemingly starts the fire without having to do anything, and sits with the shadows of the fire playing upon his face, are as resonant of shamanic mythology as of Christian. The use of fire therefore serves to signify *Henry Fool*'s edgy mediation between contrasting conceptions of religion, constituting a transition from one mode of belief to another.

Further, Henry embodies many of the more mercurial characteristics of the shaman. Embodying the forefronting of sexual emotion which Eliade postulates (Eliade 1989: 79), Henry's effusive sexuality embodies the sort of animal-like behaviour which serves as a further signifier of the shaman. The shaman blurs the distinction between man and animal in order to symbolise pre-catastrophic (or, to adopt the language of the Christian version of the myth, pre-lapsarian) man:

> It was not until a primordial catastrophe ... that man became
> what he is today - mortal, sexed, obliged to work to feed
> himself, and at enmity with the animals. While preparing for

his ecstasy and during it, the shaman abolishes the present
human condition and, for the time being, recovers the situation
as it was at the beginning.

(Eliade 1989: 99)

The proximity of much of Henry's sexual behaviour to the innately animal within the human has less to do with the ritualistic assumption of the animal (98) than with the satisfaction of primal urges. Hence his act of satisfying the sexual urge aroused in him by Fay with her mother with no apparent motivation other than that of convenience. Fay has coquettishly retreated upstairs, her mother lies in a stupefied state, in a robe, on the sofa which Henry discovers on route. Yet Henry, like the shaman, has an aura of the animal about him, with his predatory sexuality and reliance upon impulse rather than reason.

Further, Henry's general tone of decadence, his participation in the revelry and disassociation which alcohol facilitates, connotes shamanism's reliance upon the 'techniques of ecstasy' by which shamanism is to be defined (4). Constituting a defilement of rather than true absorption into the shamanic syndrome, such modes of intoxication as drugs and alcohol are symbols of the difficulty of the shamanic experience. They: 'provide an *imitation* of a state that the shaman is no longer capable of attaining otherwise' (401, author's emphasis). In partaking of alcohol (an act in which Henry is frequently engaged in the film) and in enjoying the luxurious vices which its consumption engenders, Henry could be said to mimicking the sort of ecstatic experience which he might otherwise have sought in his writing.

The question thus has to be asked: Was Henry's writing of his *Confession* an ecstatic experience? Henry's belief that his work embodies a form of power beyond that which it actually possesses could be read as a reflection of Henry's level of self-belief. Henry could be seen as aggrandizer for his work, claiming more of it than it comprises. Yet there is an alternative reading. Henry's belief in the potency of his work could arise from his experience of writing it. This supposition participates in the very mythology of writing itself, with the muse a common symbol for the outpouring

of ideas which creativity presupposes. Shamanism places the writing of poetry in particular as an integral part of the ecstatic experience. Is the prolific nature of Henry's *Confession* therefore evidence of an ecstatic flow of ideas, or, on a more pragmatic note, merely a reflection of the length of time he has been working on it? His *Confession* was the only pursuit to which Henry refers as having occupied him during his seven years of prison.

The holding up of Henry to the figure of the shaman is thus useful in the illumination of Henry's character. He constitutes a sort of shamanic figure within *Henry Fool*, a position of power and influence which he takes upon himself. Possessed of a knowledge to which others within society would seem not to have had access, Henry embodies the shamanic properties of being at once part and not part of society, claiming an insight which his marginal position affords him, and using his position to inject this knowledge into others. Both worldly and scholarly, Henry's experience and knowledge is passed onto Simon, whom he encourages to write, and to whom he gives articulation. This process of teaching is emblematic in the sequence which sees Henry teaching Simon the three types of 'there' with the delightfully accessible rather than esoteric aid of the cultural symbol of the donut (sic): 'there are the donuts', 'it is their donut', 'they're the donut people' (Hartley 1998: 31).[21] It is also evident within Henry's eagerness to teach his young son about the commodification of women. Showing Ned how to put money into the garter of a woman at a bar, and giving him words of encouragement when he gets it right, Henry problematically passes this mantle onto his son.

It is of course easy to view Henry's effusive qualities, explained in shamanic terms as ecstasy, as a form of madness. The mania to Simon's melancholia (Foucault 1989: 117), Henry is indeed the 'fool' by which madness was once defined, a man whose marginal positioning allows him both to really see and to effect a commentary upon society (14), for which he constitutes the 'other'. Henry satisfies Foucault's

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[21]Once again, the number three is evident within an incidence of repetition, reprising Deleuze's emphasis on the importance of three to episodes of repetition (Deleuze 1994: 92).

definition of madness as 'a life more disturbed than disturbing, an absurd agitation in society, the mobility of reason' (37). Existing within the ambiguous space between ridiculing and being ridiculed, Henry's madness is at once a weakness and a strength. Its weakness lies in self-obsession, the loss of moral recognition and a lack of control over the expression of desire. Its strength is Henry's mania for a knowledge which he unjealously shares, and an experience through which he finds pleasure.

Despite constituting a sort of madness in western culture, Henry's characteristics can positively be placed within shamanic mythology. The passing of knowledge from one individual to another is central to shamanism's reliance upon the notion of inheritance. For, symbolic of the wider character doubling within *Henry Fool* in which both Simon and Henry seemingly exchange identities within the film, it is as if Henry passes his shamanic mantle onto Simon, a man who is in a position of crisis and who seemingly conjures Henry in an attempt to traverse the crisis. The importance of being in a state of crisis is highly significant to the delineation of the shaman. Like Simon, the shaman discovers his vocation through an experience which sees him pass through an 'hysterical or hysteroid crisis [signified by Simon's inability to ingest food; his body's violent rejection of that which is necessary to sustain him] followed by a period of instruction during which the postulant is initiated by an accredited shaman' (Eliade 1989: 17).[22] Simon's marginality is one of exclusion *from* not rejection *of,* and thus constitutes a point of crisis for him. It is, however, the possession of insight without articulation which exists as the crux, as the most significant site, of Simon's crisis. This crisis is resolved through Simon's act of passing from one identity to another. A person who is ineffectual and inarticulate (this is, after all, a man who has to proclaim, with characteristic ineloquence making him resort to gesture, that he is not retarded), Simon becomes a man possessed not only of a great insight which his years as of marginality have afforded him, but of an ability to express this insight in a powerful and affecting way.

Indeed, if shamanism is about the setting apart of an individual who possesses

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[22]Eliade is using case studies which Shirokogoroff has provided (Shirokogoroff 1923: 344).

power over others, then it is Simon, much more so than Henry, who achieves this. Although beginning the film with a lack of power so extreme as to be almost ludicrous, allowing his family to be idle while he works, and being subjected to humiliation and abuse within the wider community, Simon ends the film in a position of great influence. The people who once sought to degrade and belittle Simon now seek to involve themselves in his success. The very girl upon whose defiantly bare and provocative posterior Simon vomited now asks if his work can be published in her magazine. The publisher who rejected his work now offers Simon a lucrative publishing contract. The secretary from the publishing house who dismissively mistook Simon for a repair man cohabits with him in the flat to which the reclusive Simon has retreated. Having received much attention for his writing, Simon gains both infamy from being featured on a news programme which implies that the Pope has commented upon the negative impact of his work, and critical acclaim. That Simon's work creates uproar, social agitation and is subjected to partisan rejection is in line with the fact that the shaman often exists within an ideology which is not receptive.

On a smaller scale, shamanism is concerned with an individual's passage of discovery, and his ability to heal. It is about the community as an insular unit, rather than the world community which Simon reaches. And it is just such an experience through which Simon passes in *Henry Fool*. Under the guidance of Henry, who passes his shamanic qualities onto him, Simon discovers his ability to cause change in others, evident in the fact that Fay becomes a more useful member both of the household and of the community when, as a result of Simon giving up his job, she goes out to find work. Not only this, Henry also prompts Simon to discover his ability to write.

Although we do not actually see him write, we see more of Simon's mode of writing than of Henry's. This is because we know him at the point of his discovery of his gift. It is therefore easier to impose the notion of writing as an integral part of the ecstatic shamanic experience upon him. This is further supported by our increased if still highly restricted access to Simon's work. We know, for example, that its form is poetry, and that he writes in iambic pentameter. And it is poetry, rather than the prose

which Henry's work is more likely to be, which is most akin to the resonances of shamanism:

> It is likewise probable that the pre-ecstatic euphoria constituted one of the universal sources of lyric poetry ... Poetic creation still remains an act of perfect spiritual freedom. Poetry remakes and prolongs language; every poetic language begins by being a secret language, that is, the creation of a personal universe, of a completely closed world. The purest poetic act seems to re-create language from an inner experience that, like the ecstasy or the religious inspiration of 'primitives', reveals the essence of things.
>
> (Eliade 1989: 510)

Perhaps this is why Simon, whose behaviour is an expression of a pure, rather than an affected and vulgarised, search for ecstasy and of the search for the resolution of crisis, is untainted by and unwilling to participate in the decadence which characterised Henry's behaviour. Whilst Henry revels in his altered state in the bar, writhing with the semi-clad women, Simon remains both detached and dissociated from the proceedings. Rather than being sexual, Simon's experience of ecstasy is that involved in poetry. So inarticulate in his ordinary passage through life, Simon's ability suddenly to write both prolific and affecting poetry is suggestive of him having undergone some sort of ecstatic experience. This allows him, found asleep on the kitchen table in the morning, to look upon a volume of work which has appeared overnight. This is further supported by the fact that Simon writes in iambic pentameter even though he doesn't know what it is. It is as if, with his inspiration flowing from him, Simon is a medium for rather than the agent of his expression.

Thus, although Henry is the most obviously shamanic figure in the film, it is Simon who, in the interchange of character characteristic of *Henry Fool*, comes to embody the purest aspects of the ecstatic shamanic experience. At the start of the film, Henry enjoys a power which he uses to bring about positive change. He effects this

change in Simon's life, passing his knowledge and with it his power onto Simon. He also effects his own spiritual cure through his selfless acts towards both Simon and Pearl. Yet, coming into Simon's life at the moment of his greatest crisis, Henry ultimately passes his own power, his shamanic mantle, onto Simon. In doing so, he gives Simon the articulation which he lacks to express the insight he possesses.

Henry Fool is thus a film in which the influence of one person upon another is key to the salvation and transformation of characters. The interchange between Faust and his Mephistopheles discussed in the analogy with the morality play has been transposed into interchange of shamanic identity from Henry to Simon. Although redemption is not part of shamanic rhetoric, the relationship between *Henry Fool* and shamanism (one of analogy, implicit and interpretative rather than explicit), serves as an intertext which allows for the interrogation of the consequence of the impact of one person upon another. And although the secular shamanism doesn't explicitly utilise terminology such as redemption, the overall impact of this is nonetheless redemptive. In the absence of repentance, it is through the extension of the figuring of influence into an osmotic interchange that redemption (or, to adopt appropriately secular vocabulary, restoration) can be effected.

Pornography: Defiling an Ecstatic Experience?

If Simon's writing is indeed an experience of ecstasy, whose output is capable of bringing change, then it is problematic to consider the possibility that his work is pornographic. It is through pornography that *Henry Fool*'s concern with the profane is expressed. Although sexuality is an integral part of the shamanic attitude, the writing of pornography is hardly the pure form of expression which one would expect from an ecstatic experience. It is an outpouring of the soul, not of base desires that is anticipated. Yet the violent reaction to Simon's work, and the fact that it is characterised by at least one character, Vicky, as pornography, introduces the profane into the sacred.

The problem of defining Simon's writing as pornography lies within the lack

of disclosure of it. We gain an impression of the impact that Simon's work has on others: Henry has great belief in its greatness, Vicky finds it abhorrent, vehemently commenting upon its suitability as a work for public display within the local shop. The dumb Gnoc is moved to song when she similarly sees it on show, the public is roused to violent outbursts in reaction to it. We are not, however, afforded a glimpse of the work for ourselves.[23] This problem of definition characterises the very debate which surrounds pornography. The 'I know it when I see it' (Williams 1990: 5) school of thought demonstrates the subjectivity which inhabits the perception of something as pornographic. Williams has pointed out that what one might consider to be pornography, another might perceive as erotica (6). Implicit is the suggestion that the former is qualitatively worse, i.e. more explicit, or offensive, than the latter. This is suggestive of an hierarchical approach to the material as well as a subjective one, and explains the highly contradictory reactions to Simon's work.

Yet, for the spectator who is denied access to and therefore a position from which to judge Simon's work according to our perceptions of and criteria for pornography, the issue becomes: 'I might have known it if I could have seen it'. This is a fairly unsatisfactory position from which to examine the importance or indeed relevance of the definition of Simon's work as pornographic. Despite this obstruction of the writing itself, *Henry Fool* nonetheless reprises an interest in the pornographic which figured in *Amateur* and will be seen to constitute an important motif in *The Unbelievable Truth*. It is in *Henry Fool* that the most vehement reaction to pornography is expressed. The association of pornography with criminality is asserted through the criminal acts which are incited by reactions to Simon's work. The greatest degree of interest thus lies within the question not simply of whether criminality and pornography are inherently associated, but whether, in the absence of primary evidence, Simon's work can indeed be characterised as pornographic.

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[23]It is a point of interest that, although Hartley elected not to include it within the final cut of *Henry Fool*, the published screenplay contains a brief voice-over of something that Simon is writing. This might conceivably be regarded as part of his poem. It refers to a desire 'tenderly' to 'break' the girl who provides the inspiration for the piece (Hartley 1998: 59). However, the fact that the excerpt is not in iambic pentameter, and is being jotted into a notebook with a reminder to 'ask Henry' (59), undermines the assertion that this should be viewed as a segment from the poem itself.

The word 'pornography' is currently defined as: 'writings, pictures, films etc., designed to stimulate sexual excitement' or 'the production of such material' (McLeod 1992: 768). It is based upon an arcane Greek term, at first meaning simply social and medical texts written on the subject of the problem of prostitution. Yet the term soon became morally pejorative, referring more widely to texts which depicted sexual acts in a licentious manner, in line with our perception of the word today. It was the Victorians who sought not only to define, but to restrict access to such material, based upon criteria such as class, age and gender.[24] In similarly restricting the access of the spectator to Simon's work, Hartley occupies an ambiguous position. At once policing us, protecting us from the writing which may be characterised as offensive, Hartley's denial of disclosure disrupts our very definition of, and thus our willingness to characterise Simon's work as pornography.

Acting as the censor of his own material, Hartley seemingly indulges in the rhetoric of that censorship. Avoiding the explicit portrayal of that which might contravene the decency or morality of the spectator, Hartley could be seen to have obfuscated in his treatment of Simon's work, enjoying the resonances of pornography without risking offence. In his role as censor, Hartley echoes the Obscene Publications Act of 1959 which is still applied in England, and which is representative of the desire which persists in our culture to police pornography. Thus the pornographic and the obscene are linked, the former suggesting the arousing of a sexual response, the latter the arousal of a pejorative, legal and moral reaction against it. And, whilst the word 'pornography' persists as a site of ambiguity, the word 'obscene' has a more extreme quality to it. It has a suggestion of the indefensible.

Although the etymology of the word 'obscene' is unclear, it is possible to assert an hypothesis in which it is a derivation of *Ob Scaena*, which roughly translates as 'off the stage'.[25] It explicitly refers, within the context of the dramatic

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[24]The ruins of Pompeii, when discovered and excavated, showed an ease with graphic depictions of sexuality in the form of carvings and friezes on domestic walls which predates conceptions of the need for censorship of such images.

[25]This is certainly the case in Latin, in which *ob*, as well as: 'about, before, in front of, over' can denote: 'instead of' or 'against' (Lewis and Short 1962: 1232), and

traditions of antiquity, to material which was performed off stage, such as violence, for fear of upsetting the gods for whom the drama was performed. The resonance of the term obscene suggests *that which should not be seen*. Thus, whilst Hartley equivocates upon the point of whether Simon's work is really of pornographic content, he participates fully in the discourse of the obscene when he demurs from the active portrayal of, as opposed to mere allusion to, the content of Simon's writing. Simon's work, whether pornographic or not, is truly obscene, always occurring off stage, away from our eyes.

Hartley's reluctance to portray, yet interest in the issues which surround pornography could be seen as a reflection of a wider concern on Hartley's part with the portrayal of women, explored in the subsequent chapters of the thesis. The feminist concern with the resonances of pornography which feeds this argument are contradictory. At once an expression of liberation (the freedom to express your sexuality) and oppression (much of the pornographic output is made by men for men), pornography is a complex political issue. Hartley skirts this problem through his refusal to portray it in an explicit manner within his films, notably *The Unbelievable Truth*. Yet he claims female acceptance of Simon's work which, at once reviled as pornography, comes to be considered a great work of literature. It secures him not only critical acclaim, with Camille Paglia, playing herself, offering a laudatory view of the poem, but the ultimate distinction of a Nobel Prize. Thus, although implicitly containing material which can readily be defined as pornographic, the work itself is not reduced to this definition. Simon's work, in the face of such an accolade, becomes transformed and legitimised, a piece of high rather than low art, using the rhetoric of nudity and high art beloved by art house cinema as a means to legitimise itself, a means to postulate its 'cultural legitimacy' (Williams 1990: 10).

In achieving this, the work does not suddenly become less contentious. Rather, in being raised into the realm of the literary rather than a more base mode of pornography, Simon's poem gains a more powerful position from which to provoke reaction, to effect a social commentary, to 'radically transgress social taboos'

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*scaena refers to 'the stage boards, scene of a theatre' (1637).

(Williams 1990: 10).[26] It is elevated to a height. It is modern, literary, and, one infers from the awarding of a Nobel Prize, to be considered high class. Yet it equally constitutes a reflection of mass culture. Not only is it written by a man of lowly social status and education, but it is transmitted through the internet, which has little of the elitism of other modes of publication. Simon's work occupies a compelling position. Both high in that it is a work of literature which gains acclaim and legitimate publication, and low in constituting a form of mass culture, Simon's work gains power from each aspect of its status.

As such, Simon's work articulates the interpenetration of power and pleasure (Williams 1990: 56) which characterises both pornography itself and the censorship which attempts to curtail it. A man whose powerlessness is in the extreme at the start of the film, Simon ends it enjoying a position where he is not only acclaimed, but has the power to be an agent of change, both on a social and a personal level. His identity is one of such authority that it not only allows for Henry's escape, but positively aids it. Stewards usher his passage through the airport, holding the plane for him in their desire to assist the man they believe to be Simon.

Socially, Simon's work also wields power. That the depiction of base desire and sexuality can still be seen as socially disruptive is implicit in the news broadcast relating to Simon's work, in which it is implied that the Pope has found it necessary to condemn it. Thus Simon, by writing pornography, becomes an agent through which society can examine its sense of itself. This is why some find his work so threatening that they desire to have it suppressed. It explains the vehemence, even violence of the reaction to Simon's work. More widely, their reaction demonstrates culture's ability to make a commentary on society of sufficient power to disturb the equilibrium of that society. And the form which this social observation takes, that of pornography, is key to the positioning which affords such a commentary. Both pornography itself, and the iambic pentameter around which Simon builds it, are inherently marginal forms. Reflecting both Simon's marginality, and Hartley's own awareness, as an independent

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[26]Linda Williams is referring to Susan Sontag's comments about Sade in 'The Pornographic Imagination' (Sontag 1994).

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film-maker, of marginal positioning, the marginality of pornography is a significant expression of the power of the marginal position.

Yet it is not only Simon whose work involves itself in the resonances of pornography. It is equally possible that Henry's work is pornographic. He uses his work to confess his past, in which he proudly says that he has 'been bad. Repeatedly.' (Hartley 1998: 13). In view of the sexual nature of the crime to which he does confess within the film's space, i.e. the statutory rape of a thirteen year old girl, it would be a logical extension to consider that much of Henry's *Confession* might constitute a confession of his sexual exploits. Indeed, discussing Foucault, Williams talks of the way in which:

> Confession plays a central role in the production of this
> modern sexuality: it is the technique for exercising power over
> the pleasures that we seem to be so 'free' to confess, the means
> of producing a 'knowledge of pleasure: a pleasure that comes
> of knowing pleasure', and it operates in many discourses - in
> medicine, law, psychoanalysis, and pornography.
>
> (Williams 1990: 35)[27]

Thus confession becomes part of the rhetoric of pornography, part of the knowledge of pleasure which Henry so actively seeks through the sexual act, and the knowledge of pleasure which, implicitly, he recounts in his *Confession*.

The suggestion that Henry's *Confession* may be pornographic is certainly in line with the notion that pornography is capable of holding the power of social disruption. Henry's every action could be said to be socially disruptive. Certainly, he disrupts the microcosmic society of the Grim household, ignoring taboo in his act of sleeping with Fay's mother, who posthumously becomes his mother in law. Talking of the incestuous nature of man's early love for his mother and sister, Freud talks of the

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[27]The direct quotations which Williams uses are from Foucault's *History of Sexuality* (Foucault 1990).

importance of the taboo of intercourse with your mother in law, who is both your not-mother and your mother at once, who 'might have been, but in fact was not, his mother' (Freud 1912: 13).[28] By having intercourse with the mother of the household, Henry effectively transgresses this taboo. He upsets Fay, who childishly cries 'Mommy!' when she catches them, and disturbs Simon, who does not wish to hear about it. In doing so, Henry not only causes a disruption in the household through the act itself, but compounds this through the retelling of it to Simon which, in talking about the sexual act, is symbolic of pornography.

Similarly implicated in the pornographic is Henry's intercourse with Susan or, rather, his telling of it to Simon. The film could be said to be one which 'undercuts the idea of rape as coercive sex' (Williams 1990: 164) much in the same way as the pornographic film which Williams is here describing. Henry's act of having intercourse with an underage girl occurs prior to the film's temporal space. The depiction of the rape, the rendering of it into a form of pornography, occurs at the moment when Henry confesses it rather than at the moment when we see it. Although not explicit, the C/confession becomes pornography precisely because of the way in which Henry describes it. He exhibits a sense of pride rather than repentance, giving a sense not only of his own knowledge of pleasure, but of the possibility of it engendering a pleasure that comes of knowing pleasure.

Thus, although not actively portraying pornography, *Henry Fool* participates in some of the discourses which surround it. It reflects the problem of definition of pornography by denying us a position from which to judge Simon's work to be such. The film participates in censorship by keeping the obscene off the stage, or out of the film space. Raised into the realm of art and capable of constituting social commentary, Simon's work is at once elitist (it is the literary establishment which helps to legitimise and gives the accolade to the work) and a reflection of mass culture, gaining popularity on the internet when publishers were still rejecting it. Yet the film's concern with the processes of commodification which are inherent to pornography, and dealt with explicitly within Chapter VI's concern with the

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[28]Freud is making reference to Crawley (1902: 405).

commodification of Audry in *The Unbelievable Truth*, is fairly one-sided. Simon is enfranchised by his sale of his poem to the publisher, escaping his lowly societal position, if remaining marginal because of his reclusive bent. Reviled by the few, his work is respected by the many and granted a Nobel Prize. There is reward indeed for the pornographer.

Conclusion

Henry Fool participates in the discourse concerning issues of marginality, criminality, belief and redemption which *Amateur* established. Henry is readily defined as a criminal, particularly because he tells Simon he was imprisoned for statutory rape. This definition is nonetheless made problematic by the question of consent, and the blurring of the legal and the moral which the film embodies. It is Henry's lack of repentance for his actions which is most suggestive of moral outrage having contributed to the imposition of the law upon him. Henry, who is marginalised by his possession and defence of an alternative moral code, cannot repent if he does not believe his actions to have been wrong. The problem of Henry's criminality is emphasised through the introduction of morality both as a point of transgression, and as a generic point of reference, within the film.

Since Henry's transgressions are coded to be as much of moral as legal convention, morality becomes significant. The analogy with the morality play allows both Simon and Henry to be cast as the protagonist whose crisis, fall and redemption are at issue. This reintroduces the redemptive subtext which Henry's refusal to repent problematises. Despite his *Confession*, a redemption which can be given by others is necessitated. And it is Simon, who not only trusts Henry, but entrusts him with his own identity, who gives the greatest sense of Henry having been redeemed during the film. This transposition of identity signals the wider doubling and exchange though which Henry and Simon pass, as each is reborn as the other. The impact of one person upon another figures within the shamanism with which both Henry and Simon can be aligned. Shamanism places emphasis on the passing of authority from one man to the next. Its resonances embody the powerful marginality of the instinctive Henry, and

the ecstatic writing of Simon.

It is within modes of writing that the ecstatic experiences reminiscent of shamanism are defiled. Henry's *Confession*, in constituting a mode of pornography, signals the film's concern with this issue. Yet the associations of pornography are most fully visited upon Simon and his work. A marginal form through which to exhibit and explore character marginality, the pornography which Simon's writing is proclaimed to be in *Henry Fool* provides a means of instituting a social commentary acute enough to provoke discomfiture in the public domain. Evocative both of Simon's marginal social positioning, and Hartley's own position as an independent film-maker who himself utilises a marginal form of expression, Simon is both integrated and further marginalised by his work. Integrated in that he receives critical acclaim, and the local girls will now talk to him, Simon nonetheless continues to occupy a marginal position as a recluse who has been vilified by certain sectors of the community. As such he embodies the central paradox of Hartley's concern with marginal characters who, although redeemed and reintegrated into society, retain their position on its margins.

More than this is the way in which *Henry Fool* signifies the relevance of gender positioning in relation to pornography. It is important to note that there is female acceptance of Simon's work. Gnoc is moved to song by it, Camille Paglia to a position of defending it. Perhaps accepting of Simon's work because they too are marginalised, the film hints at the liberation / objectification discourse which surrounds women in pornography. Simon's work, after all, becomes a commodity much in the same way as a woman in the pornography, and indeed film-industry. These issues will be reprised in the next chapter, which concerns itself with *The Unbelievable Truth*. It will be seen that the resistance which Hartley exhibits to the use of images of Audry, which are coded as explicit and sexualised, functions in the same way as the concealment of Simon's work: allowing the resonances of pornography to be explored, whilst being careful not to show it on screen. By not seeing the obscene which is, by definition, meant to occur 'off stage', pornography becomes a sign which allows for the positioning of characters, and the spectator, in

relation to it.

CHAPTER VI

THE UNBELIEVABLE TRUTH: THE PROBLEM OF THE
COMMODIFIED IMAGE

Hartley's first feature, *The Unbelievable Truth* is a film whose narrative is concerned with fiscal exchange, with the trading of money largely being utilised within the narrative as a means by which to control others. Audry, the film's female protagonist, is subject to her father's exertion of his financial control over her as he makes deals not only with her, but with others involved in her life, in order to govern her choices. Her very person becomes an emblematic site of this exchange as she enters into a career in modelling. Audry is inevitably rendered into a commodity within the film. And it is within this commodification that *The Unbelievable Truth's* greatest point of interest lies. The commodification of Audry can be explored as a means through which Hartley's referential relationship with Godard is articulated. As in Godard's work, the commodification of women is being used by Hartley to effect a questioning of the representation of women in film. Thus the central paradox characteristic of the critical debate surrounding Godard's work is extended by Hartley into *The Unbelievable Truth.* The film asks if the image of a woman is inevitably complicit with her objectification, even if that image purports to question this.

The Unbelievable Truth is a film whose narrative concerns women escaping or withholding themselves from men, and whose positive portrayal of women offers a marked contrast to the frequently negative portrayal of men. It is therefore easy to assert that *The Unbelievable Truth* provides a positive questioning of the representation of women in film. This is in accordance with the prevailing view of Hartley's films, which is that they show both an interest in and a reverence for women. Audry reaps both financial benefit and increased control over her life through the exploitation of her own image through modelling. Hartley evades the problem of complicity with her objectification, not utilising the photographic images around which Audry's commodification pivots in order to effect viewing pleasure. Thus a

cinematic pleasure which 'depends on the articulation of vision and desire' (Thornham 1997: 38) is displaced into an analysis which invokes the questioning of woman as a source of visual pleasure whilst denying the spectator the vision upon which scopophilic pleasure relies.[29]

Yet, although Audry gains greater control over her life through modelling, her complicity with the use of the female image as an object both of desire and exchange moves her into passivity. A false relationship between complicity and control is established by showing Audry's success, with her loss of ideals being emblematic. She ultimately rejects her career, rebuffing Todd, the photographer, and returning to her home town. She also rids herself of its accoutrements, turning over the sum total of her financial gain in order to free herself from her father's control. It is in doing so that the restoration of Audry's self occurs, demonstrated in a sequence which sees her belief in the end of the world restored symbolically through the suggestion of the sound of a nuclear explosion in the distance.

The key to *The Unbelievable Truth* thus lies within the tension between the three transitional stages of Audry's commodification, between its 'imposition over' and 'assumption by' her, and through her subsequent 'rejection of' it. Once again, the import of 'three' is reprised. Audry's oscillation between positions of control and loss of control (nominally 'active' and 'passive') is characteristic of more recent feminist approaches to film theory than Mulvey's model, with its straightforward dichotomy. Issues of control will be reconciled through the drawing of a comparison between *The Unbelievable Truth* and Godard's exploration and exploitation of the female image. This neat synthesis of the two antithetical positions which Hartley occupies in relation to women will, finally, be disrupted through an exploration of the resonances of the pornography which is, as in *Henry Fool*, not seen and therefore never defined. Nonetheless, pornography functions within *The Unbelievable Truth* as a trap for the spectator, whose frustration of their ability to see the image gives way to a desire to

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[29]Metz stares that: 'Cinema Practice is only possible through the perceptual passions', with the primary of these passions being: 'the desire to see (= scopic drive, scopophilia, voyeurism)' (1975: 59).

see the very image whose potentially exploitative nature *The Unbelievable Truth* seeks to question.

The Opposition of Male and Female

Before exploring the resonances of the issues surrounding Hartley's commodification of women, it would be pertinent to examine the context in which the commodification of Audry functions. General critical perceptions of Hartley's women focus on his ability to create a positive portrayal. On the surface at least, *The Unbelievable Truth* is no exception, contrasting positive images of women with negative images of men. Hence the beauty of images of female friendship in which *The Unbelievable Truth* indulges. Note the lyrical sequence in which Audry and Pearl ride on a bicycle in the moonlight, with the breeze playing with their hair. It seems to slow in recognition of the restrained simplicity of the music which serves as an extra-diegetic evocation of the harmony of the image. Whether lying on their backs on grass, talking, or floating in the swimming pool in which Pearl is so laconically forgiving about what is perceived as Josh's injurious past interaction with her family, these women are treated with a quiet dignity. This is not generally extended to the men within the film. The swimming pool in which Audry and Pearl look so serene and beautiful is the site for Mike's childish attempts to show off to Pearl his ability to hold his breath under water for increasing periods of time.

In contrast, male friendship is characterised by competitive tendencies and distrust. It is principally men who are willing to invest in negative perceptions of Josh's past act of having killed Pearl's sister in a car accident, and father in the confrontation which ensued. It later transpires that it was Pearl's appearance at the top of the stairs which startled her father into his fatal fall, not Josh's physical intervention. In a conversation in the diner, each man relates an increasingly exaggerated account of what they believe to have happened. They are readily prepared to believe in Josh's criminality, using the evil glint in his eye which Mike fatuously imposes upon Josh in order both to support and to justify their feelings of distrust.

Mike is uncomfortable with Josh's status as other, and unable to identify with Josh's celibacy. It is a celibacy that has both been imposed upon Josh through imprisonment, and assumed by him when he doesn't take the opportunity to sleep with Audry. Mike extends his regressive gender views to Josh, asking of him: 'you're not a homo, are you?'.[30] His expression of the pervasive sentiment: 'I don't mind them as long as they don't hit on me' has the effect of perpetuating rather than negating the sort of regressive gender politics which characterise the small-town mentality of the men within the film. They are men for whom women are there in order to be controlled or fought over, men whose conformity to the established rules of male sexuality must be upheld in the face of alternatives (the celibate Josh, strong women) which have the potential to weaken their sense of masculinity.

Integral to this assertion of a maleness which finds itself threatened either by men who exist as an 'other' in relation to it, or by women whose strength would seek to undermine it, is a certain desperation. There is a note of desperation to the way in which Audry's father, Vic, seeks to control others. He uses money, the only means by which he feels secure in his superiority, to do so. Excessively aspirational, Vic perches in a ridiculous and superfluous striped canvas chair as he controls his family from his garden. There is also a desperation to Emmet's assertion of his masculinity in the face of Audry's decision to reject him. He picks a fight at her party for no apparent reason other than to negate the emasculation which her rejection threatens. Subsequently, Emmet falsely asserts a success in the fight, which patently evaded him, to Audry when she passes him the following morning lying prone on the grass outside.

Maleness is made ridiculous by *The Unbelievable Truth*'s portrayal of it. Mike's desire to prove to Pearl that he is capable of holding his breath for long periods of time, labouring under the false assumption that she will find this impressive, is akin to Emmet's fight: agonising in its futility. Mike's ineptitude as a mechanic, a

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[30]As noted in Chapter II, *The Unbelievable Truth* has not been published in screenplay form. Quotations from the film which appear in this chapter and throughout the thesis will therefore not be referenced, since they have been taken directly from the film.

stereotypically 'male' job, is played for laughs within *The Unbelievable Truth*, invested with a slapstick quality as, lying spread-eagled across the bonnet of a car, he drops his tools. Blissfully unaware that he is being watched both by his boss, Vic, and by the newly arrived Josh, a contrast is clearly being established between the assertively 'male' Mike's incompetence and Josh's subtler, more quietly accomplished brand of ambiguous masculinity. Josh's masculinity is, ironically, more successful with women. Whilst Josh is actively pursued by Audry, Mike's desire to marry Pearl is rebuffed.

Equally unerring in his lack of success with women is the clichéd Todd, who attempts to use his status as a photographer to hit on women. These women are variously suspicious of him, and unimpressed by his job, indicated when a woman leaves her seat in the diner to escape him. The waitress assumes that he is flattering her photogenic qualities because he is unable to pay his bill. It is unsurprising that although Audry accepts his far from disinterested hospitality, she rejects Todd's sexual advances. Despite his best efforts, Todd does not get to posses Audry simply because he has 'paid' for her with free accommodation in the city.

The Unbelievable Truth thus betrays much of the reverential treatment of women, contrasted with a flouting of negative male gender stereotypes, which supports the perception of Hartley as a film-maker who positively portrays women. Rather than a film in which men are in possession of the control which patriarchy affords them, *The Unbelievable Truth* could be described as a narrative about women escaping or rejecting men. Pearl refuses to marry Mike. Audry ends her relationship with Emmet, moves away from Long Island to escape her father, and then moves from the city in order to escape Todd. Although it is ostensibly the men within the film who are in control, an issue developed below, it is possible to argue that this control is illusory. The actions of the men are motivated by their desire to possess the women. And, since the women have the power to resist this, the proposition that the men have control is undermined.

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Josh as Exception

The exception to this tendency towards the representation within the narrative of women rejecting men is the sequence in which Audry, propositioning Josh, is turned down. Audry, in attempting to seduce Josh, assumes that clichéd symbol of male desire, the slickly painted red mouth. Yet she does so with a curious ineptitude, slipping as she applies the colour to her mouth and smearing the lipstick across her face. It is an inadequacy of her assumed femininity which prefigures her failure to seduce the object of her desire. Rather than increase her desirability, Audry renders her face into a mask with a double resonance. It becomes at once clown-like and ridiculous, and touchingly evocative of a child having played at dress-up in her mother's make-up. Certainly, Josh responds with paternal care rather than male desire, putting a plaster on her grazed knee.

Yet, the power which Josh assumes over Audry in turning her down does not significantly undermine the narrative tendency towards women as the holders of the ability to beguile men. For Josh's very 'maleness' exists in a state of crisis throughout *The Unbelievable Truth*. He is both a-social and a-sexual. A-social because of the paucity of his material needs, Josh seems neither to need or desire, or, indeed, to pursue the success or monetary gain with which the other males within the community are concerned. His supposed 'criminality', like Thomas' (*Amateur*) and Henry's (*Henry Fool*) before him, persists as the principal means through which his character is coded within the community in which he functions as an 'other'. This is despite the fact that the unbelievable truth of the title concerns the fact that he is innocent of the murder for which he has been imprisoned.

Further, Josh's a-sexuality persists in the willingness others have to see him as a religious figure. His celibacy does little to negate the fact that he is asked several times within the narrative whether he is a priest. Neither Audry's propositioning of him, nor the fact that Pearl is found sleeping in his bed, undermine Josh's celibacy. He turns Audry down, and Pearl's presence there is innocent. Contrary to the perceptions of others who, finding her in his bed, assume that he would have slept with her, he did

not do so. Josh therefore does not conform to the conventions of 'maleness' which the film both asserts and perpetuates, and which Audry is used to. If Josh is a gentleman, he is more 'gentle' than 'man'. The positive portrayal of Josh does little to undermine what stands otherwise as a marked contrast between positive portrayals of female strength and integrity, and negative portrayals of men desperately asserting their masculinity and trying to exert control over women.

Female Agency: Audry's Control Over her Commodification

The relationship between Audry and her father relies upon the making of deals. This constitutes a significant factor within the issue of whether Audry is in control of her life. Audry has a father who makes deals with her in order to secure her complicity with his wishes. She has been brought up to believe that people are only as good as the deals they make and keep, a fact which she recites in an apparently verbatim repetition of a phrase which we assume to have been frequently told to her by her father. This reliance upon the making of deals constitutes an extension of what could be termed to be the traditional values upon which business relies into the family. Rather than being based upon the traditionally 'female' quality of good communication, the relationship between Audry and her father is based upon 'male' notions of barter and exchange.

Audry is apparently controlled by her father. His wishes can be secured through the deals that he makes with her. Yet she barters her own complicity. Their deals therefore signify a mutually beneficial agreement between them, rather than an exertion by Vic of his control over his daughter. Were he in control of Audry he would merely tell her what to do and expect her to comply with his wishes, not attempt to make a deal with her. Hence, in entering into negotiations with her father, Audry is able to make him give over a sum of money to the charity in whose ideology she so adamantly believes. That Audry persuades her father to make a sizeable donation to a charity about whose ethos he is both patronising and dismissive is suggestive of Audry having her share of control within their relationship. Rather than being subjected to her father's desire to barter, Audry actively participates in the deal-

making which clearly characterises her relationship with her father.

It is important to note that Audry continues to re-negotiate their agreements in light of changes in her circumstances, effectively increasing the strength of the position from which she is able to make deals. When she realises that she is going to make enough money to contribute to her own college fund, and is going to be expected to thus contribute by her father, she re-negotiates their deal. She does so in order to be able to study literature instead of communication, the preferred choice of her father. As her financial clout increases, Audry's deals with her father are modified until their point of extinction, a point at which she gives over the total sum of her earnings to her father in order that all deals between them be considered null and void. This is clearly suggestive of Audry having the ultimate control over the deals which constitute the essential basis of her relationship with her father. Her participation is not merely *complicit with*, but an active *participation in* these patriarchal structures of control. The point at which Audry begins the process of re-negotiation in light of the relative increase in her financial powers constitutes a pivotal moment.

Audry is able to transfer the control which she has learned to exert over her father onto Todd, the substitute 'patriarchal' figure into whose hands she passes. She does not feel that it is necessary to succumb to his advances under a sense of obligation. Rather, she confidently posits her own greed as a motivating force within their relationship. She is living with Todd because it is free, and he is willing to let her live there under the false hope that she will give him the hoped for return, i.e. access to her body. Thus Todd, although making money out of Audry, and thus exploiting her, is arguably being exploited by her as she withholds from him literal access to her body. She does not withhold from him access to images of it, because she (as well as he) is able to profit from them. Her awareness of his desire for her allows her a position from which to take advantage of him. She is actively exploiting the patriarchal rules of exchange which have otherwise been imposed upon her.

Having learned to sell herself to her father through the making of deals, Audry becomes the site of this exchange. This signals the commodification which constitutes

the central issue upon which much of *The Unbelievable Truth*'s concern with women pivots. Audry has spent much of her life being a commodity. Yet, despite its underlying sense of women being passively commodified by men who seek to exploit them for their own visual pleasures, and although the commodification of women in film is an explosive issue within feminist debate, it is possible to argue for the commodification of Audry being a position of strength.

Certainly, Audry outwardly resists the notion that this commodification has been imposed upon her, vehemently negating Emmet's suggestion that he might once have felt that he owned her. When he expresses to Audry a desire not to lose her, her expostulation: 'you never had me, you idiot!', forcefully shifts his focus away from the possessive which his words imply. Yet, despite her resistance to a commodification which has been imposed upon her, she nonetheless exhibits complicity with a commodification in which she can actively participate, notably by making deals with her father, exploiting Todd's desire to possess her, and selling her image. Throughout *The Unbelievable Truth*, Audry is able to use her self to obtain money, both personal, such as making money through modelling, and altruistic, including negotiating donations to charity. That her modelling career affords her money and enfranchisement in return for the sale of her image constitutes, on the surface at least, a good exchange for Audry. It suggests that control has always presided with her rather than with others who would seek to own or buy her.

The question of whether control over a process of commodification can be said to lie with the person who profits most from it is therefore raised. It is reasonable to assume that, regardless of the commission which we assume Todd is able to earn from Audry's photographs, it is Audry who sees the greatest return for her work. This does not necessarily give her control. It is forces outside her which bring about her commodification. These include a consumer society, the coding of the female image as an object of erotic contemplation, the cliché of using sex / nudity to sell within the advertising in which she appears and the fact that she conforms to what society perpetuates as the ideal of physical beauty. It would therefore be difficult to argue for Audry's complete control over her commodification. Nonetheless, she is certainly able

to reap her own benefits from it. She gains both in terms of the money to which she has access for the first time, and the freedom which this money can buy. Money allows her to move out of the small community in which she exists as a marginal character into the city, ostensibly removing herself from the control of her father. Regardless of the fact that Audry has apparently been seduced into this complicity with her objectification and commodification, the financial reward which her participation affords her signifies control.

More than simply reaping financial reward and the freedom which money affords, it is essential to recognise that Audry not only gives, but, in turn, gains pleasure from her commodification. This is an essentially masochistic position, since the notion of the commodified female image being sold for the visual pleasure of the (male) spectator is inevitably problematic. It is bound up in Mulvey's dichotomy, in which woman is passive, 'to-be-looked-at' (Mulvey 1975: 412-428). This polemical theory, along with Rodowick's reprisal and modification of it, is further explored in Chapter VIII, which is concerned with *Flirt*. In terms of *The Unbelievable Truth*'s Audry, the essential masochism of her position is no obstacle to her derivation of pleasure. Audry's presentation of herself, with her baggy black clothing, resists the characterisation of her image as an object of desire and thus, implicitly, as a saleable item. There is, however, a perverse awareness on Audry's part of the power which the sexualising of herself through her image has, of the way in which her body could be said to constitute one of the central '*embodiments* of pleasure' (Williams 1991: 4). This is evident in the fact that she takes one such image of herself to Josh, the object of her desire. The image which she selects to show him in what one might assume to be a subtle attempt at seduction is inevitable: a photograph of her foot.

The foot is symbolic of the fetishisation and fragmentation of the female image. Hartley could have shown Audry simply drawing attention to the appeal of her corporeal body by, for example, having her play with her shoe. Instead, he has Audry show Josh a photographic image of her foot, tentatively proud of, if a little bemused by, the sum of money she earned for it. This is highly significant. By displacing Josh's viewing pleasure from the real Audry onto images of her, the process of

commodification, and its evocation of the notion of viewing pleasure, is rendered even more self-conscious. This is clearly a comment upon the commodification of the female image for viewing pleasure. Not only is the image of Audry's foot the result of a transaction in which she allowed a photographer to capture images of it in exchange for money, but the result is aimed at male viewing pleasure. The fragmentation of woman by the image is symbolic of the fragmentation of woman as a subject position in relation to film: she constitutes 'a multiplicity of subject positions' (Ang and Hermes 1991: 315). Fragmentation is not, it would seem, an obstacle to this pleasure.

It is interesting to note that Audry is aware of the power which this sexualising of herself through fragmented images of her body has. She shows the photograph to Josh in an ostensibly innocent manner, emphasising the money which she earned from it rather than the beauty of the image. Despite this, it is realistic to assume, in light of Audry's feelings for Josh, that her intention in showing him this image is to give him pleasure. A transaction is thus occurring, for not only has Audry already received money from the photograph, but she might be said to be assuming that, in turn for Josh's pleasure in looking upon the image, her own pleasure might be secured, i.e. the pleasure of her eliciting Josh's interest in her. In this, Audry occupies a doubly powerful position in relation to her pleasure. Not only is she taking advantage of a masochistic position in relation to the commodification of her image (gaining pleasure from an essentially passive position), but she could be said to be assuming that the exploitative power of her image lies with her rather than with others who look upon it.

Thus the 'interpenetration of power and pleasure' which Linda Williams refers to, with its ability to 'resist or counter the oppressive effects of each' (Williams 1990: 56), is being evoked. Audry's ability to meld power and pleasure serves to undermine her sense of having been exploited by rather than exploitative of her own image. Audry gains power from giving pleasure throughout *The Unbelievable Truth*. She is able to manipulate her father, getting him to give money to her favoured charity, precisely by giving him pleasure. This is the pleasure which he patently derives from controlling her life.

The exploitation of her sexuality could equally be seen as a liberating and empowering act for Audry, who is enfranchised by her willingness to take her clothes off. She gains money, and freedom from her father's control, by giving others access to the pleasure of looking upon her image. It could even be argued that not going to college constitutes an expression of Audry's power to choose. It is a power which the money she makes from the sale of her image gives her. After all, Audry expressed a desire not to go to college anyway, and certainly not under her father's terms, which involve studying communication rather than literature at an institution of his choice rather than hers. This question of whether the exploitation of female sexuality constitutes an act of empowerment, gaining power by giving pleasure, is reprised in *Simple Men*, within the debate concerning Madonna which will be explored in the section: 'A Desire for Recompense: Women as the Necessary Centre' in the next chapter.

The Unbelievable Truth therefore characterises Audry as an active force. Audry resists men who believe they can control her, namely her father, Todd and Emmet. And, although it is the case that Audry is commodified within the film, it is possible to assert that it is Audry rather than others who gains most from her commodification. Her gains are of money, power through the viewing pleasure which she is able to give others, and the pleasure which she gains in turn from the control which her sale of her image gives her. More than this, she gains pleasure both from being in control and from not being in control, both from ostensibly active, and inherently passive and masochistic positions. This places her pleasure as a point of strength. Since the sale of your image inevitably involves loss of control over it, that Audry similarly can gain pleasure from not being in control is key. It is as if Audry has gained a position of strength precisely by converting her potentially passive experiences into active pleasures.

Yet there is a sense in which these pleasures are not her own. Williams has said of the female who appears within a pornographic film that she 'gets pleasure but she must pay obeisance to a value system that condemns her for her pleasure; the rules of the game are not her own' (Williams 1990: 209). Thornham has extended this out to

the female spectator who occupies a masochistic identificatory position in relation to the pleasure she sees (Thornham 1997: 115). Audry is, within the narrative, seen looking upon her own images. She, in being afforded greater access to them than we, therefore constitutes a sort of substitute, symbolic spectator, as well as an object. The rules of the game of female spectatorship to which Williams and Thornham are referring can thus doubly be extended to Audry, who simultaneously both looks and is looked upon. However, her pleasure, at once serving as a 'celebration of fluid identificatory positions and oscillating gender roles' as she moves between active and passive and male and female subject positions, should not let us forget 'where ultimate pleasure [and power] lies' (Williams 1990: 217).

Out of Control: Audry's Subjection to Commodification

It will now be asserted that the issues surrounding *The Unbelievable Truth*'s approach to the commodification of images of women are clearly more complicated than the above allows. Audry's essential passivity in the face of patriarchal structures, both filmic and societal, can be seen throughout *The Unbelievable Truth*. Despite her financial gain, the film's participation in the rhetoric of 'selling your body is equal to selling your soul' results in Audry losing the ideals to which she so vehemently holds. Her final act within *The Unbelievable Truth* is to reject the money which was argued above to have afforded her enfranchisement. This may achieve a symbolic restoration of these ideals, yet it will be seen to return her to the position of passivity which, arguably, she holds throughout the film.

The prolific use of fiscal imagery within *The Unbelievable Truth* serves to establish money as a motif through which the discourses surrounding its associated power, and embodiment both of control and commodification, can be explored. The thematic concern with money, and its associations with power and patriarchy, is underlined throughout a film in which fiscal images abound. Notably, representations of George Washington, who appears upon that rudimentary unit of financial exchange: the dollar bill, are used in order to reinforce this theme. Upon his arrival in the city, Josh is overshadowed by the statue of George Washington which stands on

Wall Street as a record of his inauguration as the first President of the United States. The disparity in their relative scale is emphasised by the position of the camera which, looking over the shoulder of the statue, renders the figure of Josh on the street below diminutive in comparison.

More striking is the fact that Audry is seen waking in a bed dominated by a frieze of a dollar bill. This is a curious juxtaposition with the disdain with which she says of Emmet, the boyfriend she has discarded, that he wears underwear with dollar signs on it. Symbolic of the absolute dominance with which money figures in her father's household, the association of money and patriarchy is implicit within Audry's movement within this image. What starts as a sleepy, yawning stretch as she wakes becomes a signal of Audry's fear of nuclear destruction as she mouths a prophetic 'boom'. The expanse of her arms evokes the magnitude of the imagined explosion which her gesture mimics. Audry's tiny frame is emphasised through contrast with the size of the frieze from which Washington effects an omnipotent gaze upon her. She therefore serves to associate, through her movement, the image of Washington, already evocative of fiscal exchange, with the imperialistic power which nuclear capability signifies, and which she fears. Physically dominated by the frieze, she is seen as being small and insignificant in relation to these systems of power, over which she has no control.

The incongruity of Audry's relationship with money lies within the association of this iconic image of the Washington frieze in Audry's bedroom with the patriarchal systems upon which monetary exchange are founded. It serves as an ironic counterpoint to her ultimate rejection of the very money upon which Washington iconically appears. This association of money with patriarchy is made explicit within Audry's relationship with her father, whose control over the finances within their household has been expanded into patriarchal excess as he literally buys his daughter's complicity with his wishes. Although it has been argued that women are seen to be positively portrayed as being in control of interpersonal relationships within the film, withholding themselves from the men who seek to possess them, it is with men that control of the money within *The Unbelievable Truth* principally resides. The

traditionally 'patriarchal' structures of fiscal exchange which this money signifies are asserted. The film's attempt to reduce these phallocentric structures to a (negative) female counterpoint does little to undermine their power.

Regardless of the level of control which Audry has over the deals with her father, money serves to disrupt Audry's familial relationships. Her father's choice for the subject she should study: communication, is made ironic by its context of a relationship in which little real communication appears to occur. The lack of communication within the Hugo household is signified by a distortion and blurring of dialogue during an early family encounter in the kitchen. Audry's fear of nuclear war and declaration that 'History is coming to an end' is both juxtaposed with and undermined by the interpolation of the quotidian and mundane (the washing machine has broken down). Rather than listen to and attempt to understand his daughter, Vic treats her in a business-like way, substituting the making of deals for conversation.

Much of the film's control is mediated through fiscal exchange. Although a great deal of Vic's bartering is imposed upon his family, Vic does not limit himself to them. Rather, he extends his financial clout to those who exist on the periphery of his family's life. Josh possesses an austerity which renders him fairly unconcerned with financial gain. Nonetheless, Vic proffers an increase in pay, which Josh accepts as a compliment on his positive contribution to the garage, in order to bribe him into staying away from Audry. In doing so, he imposes his use of money as an agent of control onto Josh. Paradoxically, Vic later offers Josh money to go to Audry. This is because Mike has convinced him that Audry is safer with the celibate Josh than with any other man. Todd similarly uses money to gain control. He seduces Vic into encouraging Audry to become a model by telling him of the sums of money that he could make out of his daughter, bartering over the price Vic should pay for Audry's portfolio. They reach an agreement in which Audry's complicity is assumed, even though she is, significantly, excluded from the negotiation. Later, Todd believes that it is literal, physical access to Audry's body, rather than simply the ability to make money out of the sale of images of it, that he has 'bought' in introducing her to her success.

Although Audry finally rejects these modes of exchange, it is the case that she spends much of the film utilising her body in order to be afforded some of the control which the men who surround her have. Yet rather than concur with the argument that this assumption of control is positive, it is easy to see Audry as a woman who as been encouraged to 'actively participate in her own oppression' (Doane 1987: 23). That notions of control persist as a key means through which Audry is to be characterised is itself problematic, regardless of Audry's participation in them. She uses her commodification to grab her share of this control, notably through the re-negotiation of her deals with her father as her relative power increases. Since she earns more money for herself, she relies upon him for it less. Yet this does not allow Audry to escape from the notion that her relationship with her father is based upon the mediation and exertion of control. Essentially, Audry's possession of money constitutes an inversion of patriarchal structures. It is an inversion which fails to negate such structures because it inherently participates in them, signifying complicity with rather than rejection of them.

Similarly indicative of Audry's participation in modes of exchange is her interaction with Todd. Audry has been trained by her father in the etiquette of fiscal exchange. When Todd seeks to exert his purported right to Audry on the basis that she has been living at his place for free and owes him, she refuses Todd not by telling him of her lack of interest, but by negating his argument. She points out that they had no deal and therefore she is not under obligation. This was previously presented, in the section of this chapter 'Female Agency: Audry's Control Over her Commodification', as a positive act on Audry's part, an example of Audry exercising her control over Josh in using his desire for her as a means to exploit him. However, it is important to recognise that, in negating his argument in this way, Audry is merely participating in the male notions of exchange which her father has taught her. She is relaying as if by rote the rules of the game into which she has been drawn. Audry's grabbing of control, rather than constituting a source of empowerment, is an example of 'active' behaviour, demonstrating her conformity to the patriarchal structures to which she is subject.

Audry's conformity to patriarchal structures has negative associations in terms of the discourses of commodification. Having learned the lesson that money equals control from her father, Audry begins to sell images of her body, which becomes both an emblem for and a key site of the fiscal exchange into whose utilisation it is rendered within the film. Rather than an assumption of a more 'powerful' position in relation to the men in her life, and a positive source of her empowerment, it will be argued that Audry's sale of her body has a highly significant and negative consequence. There is a cost to her financial gain.

In undertaking modelling work, Audry participates in the problematic associations not only of the use of, but of the sale of the female image as an object of desire, of the 'blurring of the subject / object dichotomy' in which the consumer is 'indissociable from her positioning as a commodity' (Doane 1987: 13). The central problem of this characterises debates surrounding the use of the female image as an object of erotic contemplation in film. Just as suggestions of nudity or images of desire can be used in order to market a film, Audry's ability to generate money from the sale of her image is related to her willingness to take her clothes off. Contrasting with the direct relationship between money and control, an inversely proportionate relationship is established between the progression of Audry's body into further states of déshabille in magazine spreads and the increasing sums of money she is able to earn. Like Washington, whose appearance on the one dollar bill makes his image a monetary emblem, Audry's body becomes a symbolic site of the fiscal exchange with which *The Unbelievable Truth*'s narrative is largely concerned. Yet she has little of the associated power of the president under whose gaze she sleeps.

This is because the resonances of commodification are inherently questionable. It is highly problematic that, in entering into a career in modelling, selling her image in return for financial gain, Audry has been rendered into a commodity at all. It is forces outside of herself which state that it is she and not another physical type who constitutes a representation of physical beauty, and make Todd pursue her with more vehemence than the other women whom he approaches. The negotiation concerning the price which her father should pay Todd for the

production of a portfolio is one which the two men have over, rather than with, Audry. Her father encourages her to go into a modelling career because of the promise of financial reward that Todd makes, shouting defensively that he is 'only ashamed that I didn't think of it sooner' when the nude pictures of his daughter appear in a magazine. It is important to note that the money (and its associated power) which Audry gains from her career constitutes a motivating drive which has been imposed upon her, and which she ultimately, in giving over the total sum of her earnings to her father in order to break free from all of their deals, comes to reject.

The question of whether Audry is really so in control of her life now that she has discovered a way in which she can make money must be posited. It is highly significant that Audry's access to money involves her giving up both her education and, more problematically, her ideals. Rather than being obsessed with the possibility of nuclear disaster, asserting her desire to avoid it by supporting charities which work against the use of nuclear weapons, Audry becomes a person who no longer even bothers to read newspapers. The passionate belief which both marginalises and defines the younger Audry at a point in her life when she has little ability to control her own life let alone world events, is ironically displaced into apathy when she assumes a position of greater control.

Her loss of her ideals signifies submission to the alternative ideology which has been imposed upon her. The note of resignation inherent in Audry's giving up of ideals to which she so passionately held lies within the fact that her desire was never for financial gain. Placing the attainment of money above her beliefs is mere conformity to the sort of behaviour taught to her by her father and his patriarchal structures. Audry has been taught that people are only as good as the deals they make and keep, yet has lost something of herself in living by this ethos. Having learned from her father than money means power and that having power over your life means having the money with which to negotiate, Audry is living by the rules of patriarchy when she puts the attainment of financial reward over her own system of beliefs.

The control over her life which she gains through the attainment of money is

thus illusory, for it does not allow Audry to live by her beliefs. It is only by handing over her money to her father at the end of the film, in a gesture symbolic of her ultimate rejection of the patriarchy upon which notions of financial gain are founded, that Audry gains for the first time real control over her life. It is a perversity of *The Unbelievable Truth* that the suggestion of a nuclear explosion which accompanies the final gesture of an embrace with Josh constitutes a positive note upon which to end the film. Yet the sound is evocative of just that, gesturing symbolically the ideals to which Audry once held. Within this context, the sound is strangely comforting, both signifying and justifying this restoration of idealism. When the illusory nature of the freedom which she believes she has bought with the sale of her image is betrayed, Audry gives up the money which is symbolic of her as a consumable within a consumer society. The power and autonomy which the money has given Audry has proved deceptive and transient. Her rejection of the money whose motivating factor had been imposed upon her by her father constitutes a more powerful act than that of selling her image for profit. She gains power in the final scene of *The Unbelievable Truth* precisely by becoming passive, and marginal, once more, giving over her financial clout to her father and putting herself into Josh's hands.

Taking Issue with Agency: The Invocation of Godard

The Unbelievable Truth thus occupies two contradictory and apparently irreconcilable positions in relation to the representation of women. Faced with commodification, Audry participates in a double response: she occupies a position of strength by converting her potentially passive experiences of commodification into active pleasures, and yet gains power and control by reinstating her marginality. She turns her power back on itself and gives away her money, the apparent source of control, becoming passive in the arms of Josh. A classic paradigm has thus been invoked, with Audry moving between the active and passive subject positions which characterise Mulvey's approach to film theory. In that Audry simultaneously occupies both positions, Audry holds an ambiguous position in relation to what is apparently an opposition. Yet, in doing so, in oscillating between these positions, Audry embodies the less defined approach to active and passive positions which characterises more

recent film theory (Adams 1988: 28). And it is largely through the references to Godard in which Hartley indulges that a commentary on the use of women in film can be made. Hartley's invocation of the central paradox of Godard's films in relation to his use of images of women allows this more equivocal and paradoxical position in relation to feminist film theory to be articulated and reconciled.

As the literature review in Chapter I suggested, Hartley is fond of invoking Godard, who persists as a key point of reference throughout his films. His shorts are self-consciously Godardian, notably *Theory of Achievement* in which Godard is actually portrayed as a character making comments about sound and image through a translator to whom he whispers. Non-narrative, they involve the sort of disaffected, a-social youths connected only by a shared ideology who populated Godard's earlier films. *Surviving Desire*'s Sofie, the earnest young 'sexy intellectual' characteristic of Godard and reminiscent both of Jean Seberg and Anna Karina, is a similarly 'Godardian' woman who, in sleeping with Jude, her teacher, turns her body into a medium for exchange. The exchange is not explicit. Jude is apparently motivated by love for Sofie rather than any more sinister imposition of his position of power on her. However, Sofie, in expressing her fear that others might think that this is her motivation, has inevitably implied that it might indeed be so, and thus planted the notions of exchange and obligation into Jude's mind. That this is articulated by Sofie before they sleep together renders the act ambiguous.

More specifically, it is possible to identify both *Weekend* (Godard, 1967) and *La Chinoise* (Godard, 1967) as intertextual points of reference in which the debate surrounding the commodification of the body which *The Unbelievable Truth* reprises is evident. *Weekend* is a film in which the desire for commodities characteristic of a consumer society, personified by the unsympathetic bourgeois couple Corinne and Roland, is parodied. The film has been described as a 'savagely caricatured depiction of materialist society' (Wood 1972: 12-14). It is onto the body of the car that *Weekend* displaces the focus of its commodification discourse. Hartley's film echoes both the mechanisation and the possibilities of destruction which *Weekend* reveals. Audry's father, Vic, owns the garage in which Josh and Mike work. Like *Weekend*'s famous

extended tracking shot of a queue of vehicles halted by a car crash on the road ahead, the death of Pearl's sister arose from Josh's youthful drinking and driving. This reinforces the problematic associations of consumption (in this case of alcohol) and mechanisation.

La Chinoise more directly associates commodification with the female body, which is literally turned into a commodity when Yvonne willingly contributes to the political cause of the Maoist group by prostituting herself. It is a film which reduces the power of women within the political movement to reductive and regressive gender roles. Women are useful because they can cook, clean and give sexual pleasure, for which monies can be obtained. It has been said that Godard makes a 'self-conscious attempt to depict the problem of sexuality under capitalism', with its inherent patriarchy (Mulvey and MacCabe 1980: 95), which can be extended to *La Chinoise*. A film in which women are prostituted in support of their ideological beliefs, *La Chinoise* serves as an interesting counterpoint to *The Unbelievable Truth*, in which Audry's sale of her body (or at least of images of it) actually gets in the way of her ideology rather than serving to support it. Her sale of herself in modelling marks a low point in her intellectual and ideological development.

To compare and contrast the work of Godard and Hartley is to illuminate the way in which the commodification of women functions in *The Unbelievable Truth*. Any power which Audry possesses lies within the rendering of her into a site for fiscal exchange. It lies within her reduction into a commodity, with all of the problematic associations which this embodies. She becomes a self-contained article of commerce from which others are able to profit, reprising the sense of the female body as a object of consumerism which *The Unbelievable Truth* has in common with *Weekend* and *La Chinoise*. This notion of the body as a commodity is made most literal when the body in question is of the flesh rather than of a car. In Roland's demise at the end of *Weekend*, the body becomes an object of consumption in its most literal sense (cannibalism).[31] Yvonne transposes the female body into a veritable object of the

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[31] It is interesting to note that Godard makes both a male and a female body an object of this literal consumption within this sequence.

consumer culture through prostitution in *La Chinoise*.

Yet, more than simply repeating this concern with the female body as an object of consumerism, Hartley seeks, like Godard, to use the commodification of images of women in order to question this commodification. Hartley has Audry participate in a modelling career, a literal form of commodification in that it concerns the sale of images, in order to effect a self-conscious means of discussing woman as a commodity. The problem within this inevitably lies within the beauty of the female image whose impact Hartley seeks to question. As in Godard's work, this demonstrates a paradox: is the use of the female image inherently exploitative, even if used to question this exploitation?

It is this central contradiction which Hartley seeks to reconcile within images in which the commodification of women is obviously being brought to the attention of the spectator, and implicitly questioned. One such image concerns Audry standing before a calendar in the garage which her father owns. The calendar image of the women holding a power tool is stereotypical, constituting a conventional, mass-produced view of desirable female sexuality. Its subject is a blonde with large breasts posing provocatively with a symbol of phallic 'maleness' in her hands. Its juxtaposition with Audry, who is clutching Josh's wrench in her own hands, is at once obvious and ironic. It is obvious in its reference to Audry's choice of career, in which she is similarly objectified within images which are aimed at male viewing pleasure. The irony lies within the contrast between the visible charms of the calendar girl and the more subdued beauty of a darkly clad Audry.

Similarly self-conscious is the way in which images of Adrienne Shelly frequently fall into the problematic *auteurist* tendency to effect the fragmentation of women through the image. When Audry is paid $1000 for a photo of her foot, this constitutes a visual repetition of Shelly's dialogue in *Trust*. As Maria, she articulates the realisation that, for her boyfriend, she was merely the sum of her parts: breasts, mouth, cunt. Within *The Unbelievable Truth*, Shelly's mouth, with her voluptuous lips constituting the core of her appeal, is fetishised and disjoined. They are used within an

image in which lipstick is smeared from her lips across her cheeks. An ironic take on female sexualisation and fragmentation, the image at once disfigures Audry and renders her childlike, a quality emphasised by the addition of a plaster to her knee. Images of Shelly, an actress patently chosen for her striking iconicity and excessive facial features, are frequently used to mediate viewing pleasure. However much Hartley might wish to reprise a Godardian questioning of such images, their intrinsic pleasures problematise this.

This recalls Godard's professed intention to question the use of the female image as an object of erotic contemplation within film. Although an image of a naked female body in *British Sounds* (Godard, 1969) is made wholly un-erotic by its lengthy revelation, the woman who appears thus naked is nonetheless inevitably objectified by the process. She is rendered into a signification of women rather than being a woman. *Je Vous Salue Marie* (Godard, 1983) is equally problematic in its use of the objectification of women through the image. Joseph attempts to possess Mary, but she repeatedly pushes his hand away from her partially naked body. Denying him access to it, she turns his gaze upon her into the only means he has to possess her. Within these naked images of women, the problem of Godard's complicity with the objectification of women through his use, as an *auteur*, of female actresses, is inevitable, even if such images profess a questioning of this objectification.

In his concern with the female image, Hartley is not only referring to Godard, but also invoking the wider rhetoric of the *auteur*. Almost inevitably gendered male, the *auteur* occupies a compelling position in relation to the women he uses in his films. He is afforded control over the way in which they appear on screen, what they say, how they move and so on. Possessing this degree of control over the sexualisation of the female image, the *auteur* has traditionally shown himself capable of objectifying women through the image. And Hartley, as an *auteur* who inevitably uses actresses to mediate viewing pleasure, similarly falls in with the *auteurist* tendency to objectify women. A film-maker who has referred to a desire for 'dirty kicks' (de Jonge 1996), yet has also articulated a desire to express his love for women appropriately within his films, Hartley embodies the paradoxes of the male *auteur*.

Even Hartley's perceived reverence for women is, ironically, problematic. The pedestal upon which Hartley has a tendency to place women is a markedly unempowered place to be. It marginalises woman by marking her essential difference both from men and from other women from whose ranks she has been plucked, and into whose ranks the male is capable of returning her. He retains the power to reverse his elevation of her and effect her fall. Hartley at once reveres and objectifies the women he portrays. Yet Audry is nonetheless sold through her image, modelling for photographers, exchanging increasing sums of money for a decreasing amount of clothing, and being coded as an object whose image is for sale.

Resisting Images

Yet, unlike Godard's take on *auteurism*, Hartley's demonstrates a perverse reluctance to reveal these images of Audry. Although their content is referred to, allowing them to participate in the questioning of issues of female commodification, we as spectators are never afforded a look at the photographs. The fact that the spectator is not allowed to see the images of Audry is suggestive of there being an in-built resistance within *The Unbelievable Truth* to the notion of the commodification of women. It indicates the establishment of a discourse surrounding the commodification of the female image without exposing the film to the accusations of exploitation which follow Godard's work.

A dichotomy is established between film and photographic images of Audry. Film images of Audry are coded as intrinsic and functional. Audry could hardly exist as the key female protagonist within *The Unbelievable Truth*'s narrative without appearing within its images. The film images of Audry are essentially active rather than passive in the sense that they involve speech, movement, and at least a semblance of her control over them. Conversely, photographic images of Audry are coded as 'other', distinct from the film images in their exclusion from the film space. The photographic images are thus extrinsic. They exist within the narrative only in order to set up a discourse surrounding their inherently commodifying quality. This is

brought about without exploiting those images by showing them for viewing pleasure.

But what effect does this frustration of spectatorial desire to see these images have? On the one hand, Hartley's decision not to include these images of Audry could be seen as a positive representational choice; as an attempt to question the objectification of women within the image without complicity with it. On the other hand, the frustration of a desire to see the image increases its coding as an object of desire. Corinne, in *Weekend*, is teasingly shown by Godard in her underwear in such low lighting that a silhouette of her body can barely be detected. The images of Audry in *The Unbelievable Truth* are similarly tangible in their proximity if frustrating in their resistance to being looked upon. Hence, although we do not see the image of Audry's foot, we see Josh looking upon the image, with its heavy coding as a fetishised object. When Vic flicks through the magazine in which the nude images of Audry appear, the images are tantalisingly close to being within our possession (by the gaze). The possibilities of looking are fundamentally denied by Vic's act of tearing them up. It is an incidence of violence against Audry's image whose shocking impact is emphasised through a montage of typically Godardian jump cuts which repeat his action. Thus the desire to see by which scopophilia is defined is being invoked. It is a desire which is only increased, rather than dissipated, by its essential frustration.

Thus, despite resisting the use of the explicit female image in a way that Godard does not, Hartley is invoking precisely the same paradox as Godard. Their approaches are opposite. Hartley seeks to question the representation of women in film by *not* showing her image. His counterpart, Godard, seeks to do the very same precisely through the images he *does* show, displacing their sexuality into an excess whose function is to deflate it. Hartley is implementing a questioning-through-not-showing that Godard effects by excessive showing. Yet, although the methods may be different, the same point is being asserted, a 'having-your-cake-and-eating-it' wish that the images of women which inherently commodify them can be used in order to question that commodification.

This paradox, central to feminist writing on Godard's films, perversely serves

to consolidate what appeared to be a contradictory position on Hartley's part concerning whether or not a positive portrayal of Audry was being created. Apparently demystifying the female as an object of erotic contemplation, Hartley nonetheless commodifies her image, but differently. His frustration of the scopophilic drive in electing not to show these images perversely serves only to increase the signification of images of woman as being inherently bound up in notions of desire, pleasure and commodification. Hartley does little to escape the problematic gender associations of the male *auteur*, wanting to 'love appropriately' but managing only to love inappropriately if differently.

Further issues of Agency: The Problem of Pornography

It is possible to posit the argument that the essential difference lies within the issue of pornography. The associations of pornography were similarly invoked in *Henry Fool* in which Simon's work, to which the spectator is denied access and thus a position from which to judge for him/herself, is described as pornographic. Pornography functioned within the film as an empty symbol, evocative of the socially disruptive and the marginal, despite having its exact nature withheld from the viewer. An analogy can clearly be drawn between Simon's writing and the images of Audry which, established as involving nudity and provocative enough to elicit an extreme response from her father, could have been considered pornographic if only the opportunity to see them had been afforded. Thus like Simon's writing which was characterised in the chapter on *Henry Fool* as the obscene which is not to be seen, Audry's nudity could fall within the ambiguous definition: 'I know it when I see it' (Williams 1990: 5), if only it were there to be seen. The pornographic is an avenue worthy of exploration in light of these photographs. It raises a live issue within feminist film theory concerning the status of the image, to what extent the image is pornographic, and to what extent women can take pleasure from pornographic images which apparently degrade them.

Pornography functions in allowing the contradictory positions which characterise *The Unbelievable Truth* to be located. Hartley's resistance to showing

these images inevitably has an effect upon the power relationships which looking connotes. To return to Linda Williams' argument that there is an interpenetration between power and pleasure, it could be argued that Audry not only gains power by giving pleasure (i.e. through the sale of her image) but, to extend the argument, that Audry *retains* her power through the *denial* of our viewing pleasure. The fact that they are not seen displaces the usual power relationship in which power lies within the eye of the beholder: woman is looked upon, coded according to her to-be-looked-at-ness and passive in the face of the male gaze. Frustrating the male gaze allows Audry's image to resist its *to-be-looked-at-ness* and its inherent passivity (Mulvey 1975: 418). Despite the teasing proximity of the spectator to these images, we are fundamentally denied possession of them through the gaze. We are therefore, according to Mulvey's dichotomy, denied the position of power over them which the gaze connotes. Audry has been afforded the ability to derive control from images which can be supposed to degrade her.

Yet the frustration inherent to not having been afforded the opportunity to actually see (and therefore own / possess) these images actually increases their coding as objects of desire. Resisting the revelation of these images perversely increases the titillation which they are capable of provoking. The image/ined is thus as capable of being provocative as the image itself. The pornographic which exists as an empty symbol within *The Unbelievable Truth* thus functions as a vague locus for the pleasure which is key to the film. That the image/ined is undefined allows it to serve as a blank space onto which fantasies (whether sexual or intellectual) can be projected. As Jameson argues within his provocative statement: 'The Visual is essentially pornographic, which is to say that it has its end in rapt, mindless fascination ... thinking about its attributes becomes an adjunct to that, if it [the visual] is unwilling to betray its object' (Jameson 1990: 1). Thus Hartley's unwillingness to betray the images of Audry does not prevent them from being considered pornographic. It does not prevent the mechanism of pleasure in which power lies with the consumer rather than the consumed.

The pornographic, and its association with the visual which Jameson posits,

thus affords an exploration of power relationships within the gaze. Williams discusses the patriarchal premise of much pornography, which is a form traditionally created by men, for men (Williams 1990: 18). It is therefore interesting to note the reaction to Audry's nude work, in which the general amusement (pleasure) of the public is contrasted with the anger, embarrassment and shame of the father who has 'sold' his daughter into this to save himself money on her education. Although clearly not enjoying the experience of seeing, and being aware that others have seen, nude images of his daughter, that Audry has thus sold herself is nonetheless a perverse source of pleasure for the father. He expostulates that he is 'only ashamed that I didn't think of it [making money out of his daughter] sooner', and has clearly enjoyed having reduced his financial burden.

Pornography thus allows for a multitude of pleasures within *The Unbelievable Truth* to be located. These include pleasure in looking upon the images of Audry, pleasure in the frustrated desire to look upon them, Audry's pleasure in gaining money for them, and her father's and Todd's pleasure in making money from her. As such, Audry's image satisfies Jameson's definition of the pornographic. The fact that the spectator doesn't actually see the images, that Hartley resists the very viewing which Jameson posits within his claim that all viewing is pornographic, doesn't mean that images are not significant. They are a means to possess Audry, to gain pleasure from her and, in doing so, to render her into a consumable object of the (male) gaze. As such, the images of Audry, and the pleasures of commodification which they symbolise, serve as a means of trapping the spectator within the multiple pleasures which resonate around the empty centre which pornography constitutes.

Conclusion

Audry is commodified within *The Unbelievable Truth*, a film which, in its preoccupation with the imagery of money, makes Audry the object of much of the films' fiscal exchange. She is rendered into a commodity by others, notably Todd, her father and Emmet. She is also complicit in her own commodification, making money from the sale of her image. Audry is commodified both within the narrative and the

image. Her commodification thus constitutes a paradox. It affords her financial gain and enfranchisement, yet is not an ultimate source of control. It inverts rather than negates patriarchal structures, losing Audry her ideals.

The paradox can be reconciled in the application to Hartley of the central problem of Godard's use of women. The problem lies within the issue of whether a questioning of the commodification of women can be brought about through images which inherently objectify women and render them into a commodity. Hartley's attempt to traverse this problem by not showing the nude images of Audry in which she might be assumed to be objectified does little to avoid the resonances of Audry's commodification and objectification through the image. It does little to negate the pleasure (which is only to be increased by the frustration) and its associated power which the gaze connotes. And, although Audry is capable of deriving pleasure from her own commodification, and in spite of the interpenetration of this pleasure and power which Williams professes, the sale of her image inevitably saps Audry not only of control, but of her ideals. The power, the film suggests, lies with the one who looks rather than the one who is looked upon, with the *auteur* rather than the woman whose image he uses to mediate viewing pleasure. Exploiting your own to-be-looked-at-ness for money, although exhibiting complicity, does not constitute a means for you to gain control over it.

This is because the image, in which woman is the passive recipient of the male, objectifying gaze, marginalises women. Marginalised at the start of the film because of her ideological beliefs, black clothing and willingness to question things around her, Audry is ostensibly enfranchised when she finds a means to make money, moving out to the city and removing herself both from the control of her father and the community in which she doesn't quite seem to fit. Yet, despite this apparent enfranchisement, Audry is inevitably marginalised by her commodification, by becoming an image which self-consciously exploits its own *to-be-looked-at-ness* and which allows others to gain pleasure from looking upon her without her receiving any of the associated power. And although the symbol which the pornographic image affords allows for multiple pleasures to be located, its empty centre constitutes a trap

for the spectator whose own pleasure, and desire to see that which is not to be seen, ultimately takes precedence over Audry's.

CHAPTER VII

SIMPLE MEN: TROUBLE AND DESIRE

Simple Men has traditionally been viewed as the film which contains Hartley's most positive portrayal of women. Kate, in particular, has been viewed as a character whose embodiment of admirable qualities is most forcibly suggestive of Hartley having achieved a positive portrayal. She is 'good', an Earth Mother whose concern, exemplified by her planting of trees, is with positive activities surrounding regeneration. Indeed, Hartley himself has posited such an *auteurist* intention in relation to *Simple Men*, a film which he claims to have made as reparation for what he saw as an exploitative 'use' of women (notably of Adrienne Shelly) in his earlier films, which he felt objectified women.[32] And, as will be demonstrated, it is indeed possible to argue the case for *Simple Men* effecting as well as affecting just such a positive portrayal of female strength. This is achieved on both narrative (in relation to Kate) and surface levels (the iconic impact of Elina). The sequence in which the characters debate the issue of who is in control of Madonna's exploitation of her sexuality will be explored in relation to Hartley's purported intentions in relation to the portrayal of women.

Hartley's mission statement that *Simple Men* is centred around its women, is, however, undermined by the resonances of the emphatic repetition of the adage: 'There's nothing but trouble and desire' (Hartley 1992a: 26). It is spoken by Ned, a character whose name will be seen to place him as a representative of Hartley himself. The phrase will be interpreted as prescriptive, suggesting an approach to the film which places trouble and desire at its centre. The trouble will be seen to inhabit not

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[32]Hartley has said that: '*Trust* is nothing but the conscientious construction of a pedestal on which to put the young woman of my dreams. It is absolutely the highest and most well-achieved and finely wrought piece of objectification I have ever done in my life. And I was so successful at it that I made *Simple Men* as a result - as if to say, 'oh man, what have I done?' Because I started to question my own motives after I finished it' (Straffin 1999).

only gender, but the genre which complicates Hartley's apparent focus on women. The problem of authorial intention is demonstrated within Hartley's use and amalgamation of the conventions of the male-centred genres of the road movie and the Western with which the film can be most readily be aligned. These genres marginalise the female characters, turning them into function within a male narrative and retrospectively weakening the proposition that *Simple Men* is about the effectuation of a strong and positive portrayal of women. The desire which is placed as trouble's counterpoint is implicit in the problematic interaction between the men who seek women, and the women who are coveted. It also informs the film's quest narratives, in which the desire to find a sense of origin motivates the brothers' journey.

More complicated is the fact that, rather than displacing the female strength which Hartley posits into the male strength which the generic constructs ostensibly signify, these genres themselves characterise men as marginal in relation to such social organisations as community. They place them in a troubled position in which their masculinity is undermined. Thus although it becomes appropriate in light of the film's generic references to centre the focus on men, it is around the *problems* of a masculinity which is weakened not simply in relation to female strength, but through the feminisation and marginalising of the men, that *Simple Men* could be said to pivot. Although Hartley has sought to transcend the 'problem' of the female through appropriation rather than objectification, it is ultimately male difference (from women and community) which serves as a truer focus of *Simple Men*, a film which doubly marginalises men, placing them in a 'feminine' position as they subject themselves to the women they desire.

A Desire for Recompense: Women as the Necessary Centre

However, before exploring the issue of *Simple Men*'s genre, and its impact upon the gender focus of the film, it is pertinent to explore Hartley's purported *auteurist* intention, i.e. the question of the film embodying a positive portrayal of women. As suggested above, the focus of much of the critical attention concerning the women in *Simple Men* has been on the character of Kate. One of the greatest barriers to the

definition of Kate as a strong and positive character within the film lies in the consideration of Kate as surface. Predominantly clothed in a voluminous, baby blue dress, Kate's image is lacking in iconic assertion. The gravitas which Karen Sillas brings to the role is so understated as to initially undermine the notion that Kate constitutes a strong presence within the film.

Yet, in the face of this apparent lack, Kate is given great narrative import. Her strength is embodied within her position in the community which serves as the unwitting final destination for Bill and Dennis' journey, and with which much of *Simple Men* is concerned. Within this rural community into which Bill and Dennis, searching for their escaped-convict father, stumble, Kate is in a dominant position. Running both the café and the home whose hospitality Bill, Dennis and Elina enjoy, Kate's status as controller of this property enfranchises her. Having the power to bestow or, implicitly, withhold this hospitality, Kate is the person upon whom Elina, Bill and Dennis all rely for a place to stay. And they are each staying with Kate precisely because she has elected to invite them in.

More than her position of control over the setting of much of *Simple Men*, Kate has the ability to assert herself in the face of male desire within the film. That she is an object of desire is evident in the fact that both Bill, and Martin before him, have fallen for her. This could be said to reduce her into a powerless position. Aware that the newly arrived Bill is similarly attracted to Kate, Martin, her self-styled protector, tells Bill's brother, Dennis, of his admiration for Kate's appearance in a bathing suit. This statement ostensibly reduces Kate to the sort of pageant-centred view of femininity which could be said to objectify and thus weaken her. Yet it is key to note that Kate has, as Martin himself recounts, been afforded the position from which to rebuff him. She has placed her own desires above his. Although his attempt has been to reduce Kate to the object of his desire, Kate's refusal of Martin resists the passivity which Martin's professed objectification of her implies.

Kate is similarly resistant of Bill's attempts at seduction, slapping him when he kisses her. She doesn't do so because of a lack of interest in him. The film concludes

with a heterosexual pairing of the two in which she is complicit. Rather, she wishes to retain her position of control within their relationship:

> KATE: I didn't slap you because you kissed me. I slapped
> you because you thought I couldn't refuse.
>
> (Hartley 1992a: 51)

Her slap, in an instant proving that she *can* refuse, moves her from the passive position of the one who is desired and kissed to the active position of the one who controls the question of whether the kiss should take place at all. Bill is only successful in the kiss which later occurs between them in the kitchen of her house because Kate has explicitly told him that he may kiss her without fear of receiving another slap across the face. In contrast with the earlier, rebuffed kiss, which occurred on neutral territory at the site of the burnt house to which Bill and Kate travel in search for Bill's father, Kate is now on her own territory, and therefore in control. The consummation to which this kiss leads thus occurs because Kate is active, desiring and willing, not because Bill has somehow imposed a seduction of his own design upon her.

Kate therefore possesses an ability to control, if not male desire itself, then certainly male agency in the expression of this desire. The advances which men make upon her are successful only when and because she allows them to be. She institutes her own seduction by Bill only at the precise moment at which she has decided that it should occur, quietly asserting her own ability to control the situation rather than allowing it to be imposed upon her. She is aware not only of her own worth: 'Other men have loved me, you know' (63), but of her ability to direct and restrain the attempts which men make to seduce her. Yet, rather than doing so in a particularly forceful way, with the obvious exception of the slap, Kate's control is effective precisely because it is subtle and self-contained. It is part of her embodiment of the quiet strength which characterises her. This, along with her ability to effect both regeneration through the planting of trees and reformation in that Bill gives himself up to the law in order to be with her, turns her into a portrayal of femininity which could

indeed be read as positive.

Kate's counterpoint within *Simple Men* is Elina, the woman who is staying in Kate's house, and who serves as the object of the younger Dennis' affections. She is, it transpires, the girlfriend of Bill and Dennis' father. Unlike Kate, whose strength of character is delineated on a narrative level, Elina's strength lies most obviously within the image. Much of Elina's power lies within her visual association with Louise Brooks. With her bobbed hair and striking features, she is similarly iconic. It is an iconicity which Hartley exploits in the short *Theory of Achievement*, which, using the same actress, languishes in sustained shots of the her face. Hence the image in which Elina, wearing her striped top and black leather jacket, stands before the outer wall of Kate's house. The wall, comprised of wooden cladding, is similarly lined, a fact which draws attention to the image. Yet Elina does not fade into her surroundings as she stands listening for Dennis. Rather, she is held, her black hair jarring against the white of the wall, in a shot whose narrative motivation of waiting for Dennis is a mere pretext for Hartley's lengthy indulgence in the beauty and iconicity of the shot.

Elina is possessed of the sort of compelling quality which characterised Adrienne Shelly in *The Unbelievable Truth* and *Trust*. Dark to Kate's blonde, Elina is severally rendered 'other' in *Simple Men*, not only by her gender, but by her ethnicity (Elina is Romanian), and her epilepsy. The last of these is utilised only once within the film as a device through which to bring the brothers into Kate's community. They carry her to Kate's house after an attack. Yet it serves as a self-conscious demarcation of her essential difference. The problematic associations of Elina's excessive difference will be returned to. For the moment, this difference will be seen as a point of strength for Elina, the star quality which her resemblance to Louise Brooks signifies working as a 'denial of difference' (Gledhill 1991: xv) and thus making her more interesting to the spectator. This is exemplified in the fact that both Dennis, who attempts a seduction, and Dennis' father, with whom she is involved, hold her as an object of desire. They find her compelling enough to fight over.

Like Kate, whose ability to refuse the advances of men which could be said to

objectify her, Elina possesses the ability to negate unwanted advances. Hence when a drunken Dennis tries to kiss her, it is she who retains control of the situation. His attempt to kiss Elina comes as she has just fetched him a glass of water. This is suggestive of her looking after him, and evokes the pseudo-maternal relationship she has with Dennis as a result of her status as his father's girlfriend. Dennis hopes to redirect her affection by telling her that his father is a womaniser, and flattering her by stating his admiration for his father's taste in women. However, his belief in his ability to seduce her is utterly deflated when Elina rejoins: 'So then go make love to your mother' (Hartley 1992a: 59). The words of which her rejection is comprised are significant in two ways. They serve to indicate an oedipal subtext which will be returned to in a consideration of the quest aspect which *Simple Men*'s two most obvious generic points of reference have in common. More than this, they demonstrate, in that Elina so effectively and succinctly retains control of the situation, Elina's relative power over Dennis.

Yet, as already suggested, Elina's real strength lies within the image. And it is the case that Elina most forcibly demonstrates her position of relative dominance over the men visually. Hartley reprises, in *Simple Men*, a taste for choreography which burst forth in Jude's physical expression of his joy at the prospect of becoming involved with Sofia (*Surviving Desire*), and is more widely manifest in the precision of human placement and movement which characterises his work. In a sequence within the bar in which Elina, Kate, Bill, Dennis and Martin are slowly and collectively getting drunk, Elina, Martin and Dennis engage in a dance routine. Rather than having all of his characters dance together in a mode more in keeping with the pairing off which serves as the cliché of end-of-party dancing, Hartley indulges in a fully developed, if sloppily executed, dance routine reminiscent of *Bande À Part* (Godard, 1964) in which, significantly, Elina leads.

Hartley's sequence echoes the inclusion within *Bande À Part* of three protagonists (Odile, Arthur and Franz). Godard's three begin their dance simultaneously, with a degree of unspoken concord which reprises the suspension of disbelief characteristic of the conventions of the musical upon which Godard draws.

Yet there is a suggestion that it is Odile, rather than the men with whom she dances, who is leading the dance. Not only does she modify Arthur's request that she dance with him, demonstrating, with her fingers dancing upon the table, the movements that they will assume, but it is she who continues the dance after the men have stopped. In this, Hartley's sequence constitutes a reversal of Godard's: Elina begins her dance, and Odile ends hers, alone. It is with the women that the core of each dance lies, indicated in both films in the positioning of each woman in the centre, between two men.

In *Simple Men*, it is more obviously Elina who takes the lead rather than one of the two men who join her. Leading is traditionally the preserve of the male, and the fact that Elina leads serves as a reversal of the traditions of dance, in which the man controls the movements, and displays the woman to her best advantage. Within this particular dance, it is the men whose movements follow the woman's, as Dennis and Martin echo Elina's confident and fluid rhythms in an attempt to mirror her at which, with all their awkwardness of movement, and graceless bodily shifts, they prove relatively inept. The lyrics of the song to which they are dancing, sung by a woman, are a commentary on the film's gender relations. 'What are you gonna do for me?', the voice derisively sings, 'I mean, are you gonna liberate us girls from male, white, corporate oppression?' They are also humorously ironic, pointedly including the phrase: 'not good at dancing'.[33] Rather than detracting from her femininity through the rendering of Elina into a masculine presence, Elina's gestures manage to embody both the masculine and the feminine. The 'masculine' movements see her stomping, fist clenched, on the floor. The side steps with a fluid and expansive movement of her arms are more suggestive of the 'feminine'. Through her movements, she is denying the difference by which she is otherwise so forcibly characterised.

Both Kate and Elina could therefore be said to embody a positive portrayal of

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[33]Lyrics which seek to effect a commentary on the events into which they have been transposed were similarly used in *Trust*. Matthew walks through the factory in which he works, accompanied by a song which comments on dysfunctional families who seek the commodities which the factory produces. The lyric: 'and then we argue' is punctuated by Matthew punching one of the boxes in a diminutive expression of his suppressed rage.

women as a force of strength within *Simple Men*. Kate's strength, broadly expressed on a narrative level, lies in her position within the community as much as in her ability to exert a control, albeit subtle and contained, over men. Coming across as a woman of remarkable self-possession, Kate is a positive influence on the lives of others. This is particularly the case for Bill, whose angered desire to revenge himself on women is transposed into a submission to Kate and an assumption of her positive ethos. Although distinct from Kate in many ways, Elina, whose strength is most forcibly articulated within the image, is similarly able to control Dennis' attempt to seduce her. Excessively different (she is both Romanian and epileptic, as if 'woman' were not difference enough), Elina's difference is appropriated by Hartley as a point of strength, a means by which to grab more than her share of spectatorial attention through her iconic singularity. Elina's strength of presence is used as a means to subvert traditional gender roles in a dance which not only sees the men following her lead, but which transcends the gender distinction which usually characterises dance. It embodies gestures which could variously be characterised both as 'masculine' and feminine'.

Kate and Elina thus seemingly conform to Hartley's *auteurist* intention to transcend the objectification which almost inevitably characterises his use of women in film. However, *Simple Men* contains a far more self-conscious attempt to question the objectified and sexualised woman, to address the 'trouble' of women in film. Arguably the ultimate icon in both of her manifestations, (The) Madonna persists as a point of reference throughout *Simple Men*. This is a film which, in its dominant use of female 'types', including the schoolgirl and the nun as well as Madonna and Elina, places a collective and cumulative emphasis on female iconicity. This iconicity is most literally embodied within the pendant of The Virgin Mary which Josh is given by the security guard whom he has tied up during the robbery in the opening sequence of the film. The pendant comes along with a mantra which is repeated within the film: 'Be good to her and she'll be good to you' (Hartley 1992a: 4). Perhaps serving as a commentary on Bill's treatment of his then girlfriend, Vera, who leaves and double-crosses him at the climax of the robbery, The Madonna has literally been rendered into an object, an icon. Further, Bill gives the medallion to a drifter they encounter

during their journey through Long Island. 'Not only is she pretty', Bill ingenuously says of The Virgin, 'but she's got a nice personality. *And* she's the mother of God' (22). Finally, there is the nun whose own iconicity is undermined by absurdist humour which sees her smoking and fighting. When she finds Dennis looking up the skirt of a schoolgirl, apparently engaged in activities which refer back to Hartley's interest in pornography, she has to hide her own, furtive cigarette. The nun picks up the pendant, saying to an uncomprehending cop: 'It's the holy Blessed Virgin, you idiot!' (24).

It is within this context of both the use and the questioning of female iconicity through humour that Madonna is interpolated into the film's narrative. Madonna is similarly irreverent in her relationship with religion, having melded religious iconography with sexuality in music videos such as that of 'Like a Prayer'. It is Madonna, the star of popular music, about whom the characters have a debate during their drunken evening in the bar. Discussing who is in control of Madonna's processes of exploitation, asking: Is she exploiting or exploited?, Elina, Kate, Bill and Dennis ruminate upon the various facets of the argument, with an uncomprehending Martin struggling to grasp the nature of their discourse. It is useful to reproduce the conversation in full:

INT. PAVILION. LATER.

A drunken debate about Madonna and economics.

Angle: close on KATE ...

KATE: Madonna exploits her sexuality on her own terms.

ELINA: What does it mean to exploit your sexuality on
    your own terms?

BILL: It means you name the price.

KATE: Madonna is a successful business person.

MARTIN: I like old fashioned, straight ahead rock and roll.

DENNIS: She sings OK.

        (ANGLE: *Close on* ELINA ...)

ELINA: The representation of female sexuality that she

offers is of strength and self-determination.

MARTIN: I don't listen to much new popular music
myself.

KATE: Love songs are usually about weakness.

BILL: You can learn a lot about love from popular music.

ELINA: Is there a difference between exploiting your own
body for profit and having someone else exploit it
for you?

(ANGLE: *Close on* DENNIS ...)

DENNIS: Everyone is involved in exploitation: The person
whose body it is, the salesperson, and the audience
that is entertained.

BILL: The significant distinction is: Who earns more
money? The exploited body or the salesperson?

KATE: And what about the audience?

DENNIS: What about them?

(ANGLE: *Close on* BILL ...)

The nature of exploitation never improves, it only
changes.

BILL: Where did you read that?

ELINA: Is it a feminist achievement for a woman to
maintain such control over her own career?

MARTIN: I thought we were talking about music?

BILL: Exploitation of sexuality has achieved a new
respectability because some of the women whose
bodies are exploited have gained control over that
exploitation.

DENNIS: They earn more money.

BILL: (*Concurring*) They call the shots.

KATE: They're not thought of as victims.

BILL: If they earn the most money, no, they probably don't
think of themselves as victims either.

DENNIS: But what about the audience?

BILL: What about them?

(ANGLE: *Close on* MARTIN ...)

MARTIN: Hendrix. Clapton. Allman Brothers. Zeppelin. Tull. BTO. Stones. Grand Funk Railroad. James Gang. T. Rex. MC5. Skynyrd. Lesley West. Blackmore. The Who. The old Who. Ten Years After. Santana. Thin Lizzy. Aerosmith. Hot fucking Tuna.

(Hartley 1992a: 54-8)

This debate clearly reprises much of the paradox surrounding the exploitation of Audry's image with which Hartley was concerned in *The Unbelievable Truth*. It asks whether the issue of who gains most financially from the process of commodification is key in determining who has control over it. In interpolating this rather self-conscious parenthesis, Hartley is invoking the resonances of one of the greatest and most powerful female popular culture icons of the last two decades. The most famous of embodiments of the virgin / whore dichotomy, Madonna's star persona has always contained a central paradox surrounding the exploitation of female sexuality in which she is so successful. She is either, as Zadie Smith recently (and rhetorically) posited, someone who reflects and glorifies male desire at her own expense (Smith 2000: 5), or a woman totally and inexorably in control of her sexuality, exploiting those who are willing to buy into it.

It is significant that it is Kate and Elina who most obviously argue for Madonna as a strong and positive female force within this debate. Kate asserts that: 'Madonna exploits her sexuality on her own terms', Elina states that: 'The representation of female sexuality that she offers is of strength and self-determination'. It is Dennis and Bill who show greatest sensitivity to the problematic associations of the exploitation. Dennis pronounces that: 'The nature of exploitation never improves, it only changes', Bill ventures that: 'If they earn the most money, no, they probably don't think of themselves as victims either'. That Bill argues that a

woman wouldn't *think* of herself as a victim when earning the most money, in not precluding the possibility that such a woman can nonetheless be exploited rather than exploiting, shows a particular awareness of the issue.

The debate thus serves to highlight both the pleasure which another woman can gain from a strong and assertive portrayal of a woman (much of Madonna's fan base is female), and the problematic associations of a femininity which exploits itself in such a way. The exploration of the nature of the commodification of women implicit in *The Unbelievable Truth* becomes the explicit debate of the issue in *Simple Men*. Hartley is not only drawing attention to his awareness of a problem which inevitably impacts upon him as an *auteur*, but symbolically placing himself within the debate in having the men be so aware of the resonances of Madonna's gender politics. This is with the notable exception of Martin, who is utterly unable to grasp their conversation. Hartley questions female commodification in *Simple Men* through the reversal of what he perceived to be an objectifying and exploitative use of women in *Trust*, transcending the problem which troubles him by appropriating it in a highly self-conscious way.

It is therefore easy to read *Simple Men* as a film which is concerned with the supposed righting of wrongs, a statement of intent on Hartley's part which presupposes that it is the women who are to serve as the point of focus for the film. It is possible to find much of interest in Kate's literal ownership of the film's dominant narrative setting. It is likely for the spectator to be engaged by the powerful iconicity of Elina, which prefigures the interpolation of arguably the greatest icon of popular culture, Madonna, into the film's text. Yet there is a sense in which this attempt at a positive portrayal of women has been imposed upon rather than integrated into the film. The Madonna debate in particular is both incongruous and highly self-conscious, a poor 'fit' within the wider context of the film. It will be seen that the genres with which the film can most readily be aligned problematise the women. In particular, *Simple Men*'s use both of the buddy dynamic and the quest narrative, which in turn inform both the road movie and the Western upon whose conventions and iconicity the film draws, serves retrospectively to undermine Hartley's *auteurist* intention,

positing as these genres do the male as the necessary focus.

The Trouble with Gendered Genre: The Displacement of the Focus onto Men

The issue of genre fixity serves further to highlight the gender trouble which inhabits *Simple Men*. As the literature review revealed, an ambiguity persists in Hartley's use of generic convention. None of his films comfortably 'fit' the conventions of one genre to the exclusion of all others, including *Simple Men*. It is the case, however, that as well as emphasising *Simple Men*'s romantic and satiric qualities, critics have described the film both as a road movie[34] and a Western (McCarthy 1992). Ostensibly quite distinct genres, the extent to which the road movie draws upon the conventions of the Western is evident in the space given to the latter within recent writing on the road movie.[35] The most obvious difference between the two is technology. The road movie's car is the Western's horse (Cohan and Hark 1997: 3), a fact which Hartley typically subverts by having his male protagonists take the train into Long Island. There are, however, a great many similarities between these genres. And, in its quest narrative, buddy dynamic and iconography of the open space, the points of comparison between *Simple Men* and these genres must inevitably be drawn.

Hartley's superficial interest in the Western has been referred to in interview, and forms the basis for the pseudonym Ned Rifle. This persists both as a character and an authorial name in his films, notably being given to the drifter who articulates the film's motif: trouble and desire.[36] Hartley has also used this name to credit his

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[34]Jonathan Romney, in an article on *Simple Men*, describes the film as a 'mathematical analysis of the premises of road romance' in which we see 'precious little road' (Romney 1992).

[35]The two key, recent books on the road movie give chapters over to the Western. *Lost Highways: An Illustrated History of Road Movies* has a prominently placed first chapter on the Western (Watson 1999: 21-37). The chapter, 'Western Meets Eastwood: Genre and Gender on The Road', also appears in *The Road Movie Book* (Roberts 1997: 45-69).

[36]There is a character called Ned Rifle in *Simple Men*, Henry's son is called Ned in *Henry Fool*, and Ned Rifle is credited with the authorship both of *The End of the World*, a book which Audrey is shown reading in *The Unbelievable Truth*, and of the similarly fictitious book: *The Man and the Universe* in *Trust*.

contribution to his films' original scores throughout his career.[37] Further, Hartley has talked of his admiration for Wenders, whose reliance upon the road movie genre characterises his films.[38] More than this, *Simple Men* is a film in which the open spaces of Texas which play Long Island[39] work within a Western iconography which includes a mise en scène that: 'depicts the geographical panoramas as one of its key visual pleasures' (Sargeant and Watson 1999: 15). It is also a film in which the road is invoked (if under-used) as signifier of the necessary, quest-orientated journey of the brothers, who seek their father.

The most significant point upon which the Western and the road movie concur is the fact of their being male-centred. It has been argued that the role of the Western is to 'address a male problematic and a male audience' (Cook 1985: 69), which serves to explain why the protagonists of the genre are almost universally male. The more recent appropriations of the road movie which involve both female and gay protagonists, such as *Thelma and Louise* (Scott, 1991), *My Own Private Idaho* (Van Sant, 1991), and *The Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert* (Elliott, 1994), have done little to negate the fact that the road movie is seen as an inherently 'masculinist' genre (Roberts 1997: 65). And it is within this context that *Simple Men* portrays its narrative of two brothers travelling through Long Island to find their father who, on the run for many years following a politically motivated bombing in which a man was killed, has escaped from his recent capture.

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[37]Hartley has talked of his creation of his pseudonym, Ned Rifle, as a character name for a thesis film in his fourth year of film school: 'During that year I was studying the Western films and I had a tutorial to get extra credits by watching all the Western films, writing papers on them so I was flooded with these Western sounding names' (Anipare and Wood 1997). This interview was screened as part of the 42nd London Film Festival.

[38]Hartley has said: 'Godard, Wenders ... these are sources that I go back to again and again and find inspiration and encouragement again and again' (Anipare and Wood 1997).

[39]Although set in Long Island, *Simple Men* was filmed in Texas, whose landscapes bear an apparent similarity: 'FULLER: You shot *Simple Men* in Texas. How did you make it look like a Long Island Coastal Suburb? HARTLEY: It was very easy. Long Island looks like most other places. It's flat and nondescript' (Fuller 1992: xxxvii-xxxviii).

Their journey is therefore, like the essential frontierism upon which the Western is structured, quest-orientated. The 'interdependent physical and spiritual journeys' (53) of the brothers have as their goal a search for the origin. As such, *Simple Men* echoes the manner in which Westerns are about a 'myth of origin which forwards a historical fight for personal freedom and liberty ... [with] the birth of a civilising nation' at its end (Watson 1999: 22). Although the masculinity of the hero / father is 'self-evident' (Roberts 1997: 60) in the Western, the father often figures in the road movie as lack. This constitutes a response to the breakdown of the family unit, 'that Oedipal centrepiece of the classical narrative' (Cohan and Hark 1997: 2).[40] And it is this double loss of the father who is at once hero and outlaw and who, having finally been captured, had escaped before the brothers reach him, which prompts their search.

Hence, carrying only a written phone number which serves as a visual representation of the end of the road, the quest upon which the brothers embark is necessarily Oedipal and male-centred. This is particularly the case for Dennis, for whom the search for his father constitutes a driving force which is not displaced into Bill's broader quest, and which has as its resolution an encounter with his father. The point of closure which the shaking of his father's hand constitutes has its significance demarcated by an emphatic close-up. Dennis' behaviour is markedly Oedipal within *Simple Men*. It has as its narrative model Oedipus killing his father and sleeping with his mother. Hence Dennis has a momentary but nonetheless symbolic altercation with his father when he finds him aboard the boat *Tara*, and attempts to seduce Elina, an act which is lent its Oedipal undertone by her status as his father's girlfriend.

Less obviously Oedipal is Bill's journey, which constitutes a broader quest for an origin whose frame of reference is widened into family and community. He has reacted to his father through an emulation of his criminality rather than a disavowal of it. As such, it is the case for Bill that the end of his journey constitutes him coming under the influence of Kate, becoming assimilated into and civilised by her community. The final tableau in which Bill embraces Kate will be returned to, but has

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[40]They are quoting Corrigan (1991: 145).

significance in Kate's coding as 'origin'. She is an Earth Mother, a giver of life (to trees) and regeneration (to Bill). This tableau is at once evocative of the heterosexual coupling which Bellour argues that the Western has as its goal,[41] and constitutes the tentative closure of the film's Oedipal narratives, which Elina's rejection of Dennis otherwise denies.

Thus *Simple Men*, a film whose very title is suggestive of the correct focus for the film being upon its male rather than female characters, causes trouble to Hartley's professed *auteurist* intention. In its assumption of the quest narrative characteristic both of the Western and the road movie, *Simple Men* can be aligned with genres which have male-centring in common. Rather than being focused on women, and the desire for women, the film's generic references are concerned with male individualism which sets itself in opposition to a community which has been gendered as female.

That *Simple Men* could be said to about male individualism is evident not only in the prominent characters of Bill and Dennis, but within the character of Martin who fulfils a small but important role within the film. He is rejected by Kate from the heterosexual coupling which he desires. Knowing that her ex-husband, who is described variously as both 'angry' and 'psychotic' (Hartley 1992a: 59), was safely behind bars, Martin proposed marriage to Kate. Standing as her protector rather than her husband within the narrative, Martin is fundamentally distinct and separate from the community. The only one who doesn't sleep in the house, his exclusion is signified in his incomprehension over the Madonna debate reproduced above. Whilst the others, Bill, Dennis, Elina and Kate alike, all not only become usefully involved in, but grasp the complexities of the discussion, Martin stumbles over the very rudiments: 'I thought we were talking about music?'. He may be of fixed abode, situated as he is on the periphery of Kate's community, and therefore as excluded from the road as he is from the community; nonetheless, Martin occupies a resistant space in relation to that community. This is exemplified in the outburst where, furiously

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[41]Raymond Bellour refers to the Oedipal resolution of couple formation as the implicit goal of theWestern: 'If you take Westerns as different as those of John Ford or Anthony Mann, Samuel Fuller or Delmer Daves, you notice that the problematic of the formation of the couple is absolutely central in all of them' (Bergstrom 1979: 88).

stamping on his hat before kicking it into the dust, he cries out that he can't stand the quiet (Hartley 1992a: 54). Implicitly resisting the inherent peace which the backwater in which he lives affords, Martin exists as its 'other'. He is a man not contained by domesticity, marriage or apparent socialisation.

The male individualism with which both the Western and the road movie are concerned characterises both Bill and Dennis because of their position of being distinct and separate from community. Their individualism is created by virtue of their being on a metaphorical road (it is not literal in light of their preference for the railway as a means of conveyance across the state). A significant part of their individualism lies, perversely, within their embodiment of particular and opposing characteristics. Bill, a career criminal who signifies lawlessness and instinct, has acted out of self interest, with his egoism being integral to his masculinity. The younger Dennis, although in a state of transition on the road, signifies conformity to the law and intellect. Like Shane and Starrett in *Shane*, Bill and Dennis could be said to constitute 'composites of conflicting impulses' (Ray 1985: 72). In this, the brothers embody the film's larger oppositions, derived from the genres upon whose conventions the film relies. Oppositions between civilisation and wilderness, East and West, community and individual, it is these dichotomies which Kitses presented in his structuralist approach to the Western. (Kitses 1970: 11).

The natural and useful extension of these oppositions is explicitly gender based. Male individualism, with its connotations of freedom and self-interest, can be set against female-as-community. This has been expressed as an opposition of masculinity with women who signify not only sexuality but, implicitly, society (Mulvey 1981: 14). The 'solitude, self-determination and freedom' which the Western hero enjoys stands in opposition to 'family, society and responsibility' (Ray 1985: 72). The road movie has similarly been seen as characterised by the 'absence of civilisation, law, and domesticity' (Roberts 1997: 52), with civilisation and domesticity, if not law, being traditionally seen as female. If these genres are male-centred, then women function as signifiers within this male scenario. They are signifiers of a femininity which troubles masculinity, of the 'other', of family, society

and domesticity, and of the community which is founded upon them.

In light of this, Kate moves from her aforementioned position of strength *within* the community to a *representation of* it, a weaker position which reduces her to function within a male scenario. Her influence upon Bill is a civilising one. It is out of love and respect for Kate that Bill gives up his intention to make a beautiful, blonde woman fall in love with him just so that he can leave her and thus carry out his statement of repugnant intent against women. His desire, once for revenge, becomes for domesticity. He wants to live with Kate, work all day planting trees for her and work in the bar at night. Yet this reduces Kate to a representative of the 'good' woman of the Western (Cook 1985: 66), a demonstration of the civilising influence of women. She is representative of the generic resolution which the woman provides in terms of the re-integration of the male protagonist into the community, of the way in which *Simple Men* could be described as a film about men coming to terms with what it is to be civilised. It is a film which is concerned with men trying to understand female desire.[42] This is evident when Dennis tries with youthful ineptitude to find his feet as a seducer of women, and Martin proposes marriage to Kate despite his apparent unsuitability as a candidate. It also explains the fact that Bill modifies his predatory approach to Kate into a more subtle and effective one involving the mirroring of her desires. In this, women are reduced to function: Kate reforming Bill, Elina leading Dennis to his father.

More than this reduction to function, it is possible to characterise the women in *Simple Men* as absence. They are absent in relation not only to the male individualism which *opposes* itself to women / community, but to the buddy dynamic which fundamentally *excludes* them. The fact that the 'buddies' with which *Simple Men* is concerned are brothers does little to undermine the dynamic which their relationship inevitably references. Although their familial relationship complicates the homoerotic pressures of road intimacy, it is the case that this has already been

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[42]Hal Hartley has said of *Simple Men* that: 'On one level it's about these guys looking for their father, but I think that's just a ruse. It's really about how men look at women and how they define themselves in terms of their relationship with women' (Anon 1992c).

displaced. Neither the time they spend on their journey, which is given very little space within the film, nor their mode of transport which is public and communal rather than private and confined, have set up this tension.

Rather, the buddy dynamic works within the film's 'engagement' with the 'sexual politics of tough guy cinema' (Romney 1992) and within the way in which Bill and Dennis conform to buddy movie types. Bill is the 'high flyer': self involved and intent on achieving a personal goal. Dennis is the 'neurotic' who is deficient in relation to his counterpoint (Hark 1997: 204). Women are, crucially, not allowed to trouble these male relationships. They are displaced in relation to them, with the lack of conversation between the film's two women standing in contrast to the conversations, often personal and occasionally emotional, which men have with each other. This is exemplified in the conversations in which Dennis is moved to touch the troubled Sheriff on the shoulder, and Mike is stirred into asking the Sheriff if things are 'OK at home' (Hartley 1992a: 46).

The buddy dynamic which the film references thus oscillates between regressive gender politics, evident in Bill's statement of intent about seducing a woman only to leave her, and positive depictions of male sensitivity, notably the way in which the men react to the Sheriff's angst. If emotional support can be afforded by your buddy, and sexual tension implicitly created within male / male relationships, then women are displaced from these functions. Indeed, women *must* be excluded because of the threat they pose to the buddy pairing. The heterosexual coupling of Bill and Kate with which the film concludes serves to break both the 'buddy' and the 'road' dynamics with which *Simple Men*, a film which asks the Godardian question of why women exist at all, engages.

The deliberate way in which the Western and the road movie have been amalgamated and rendered interchangeable in this chapter recognises not only the essential fluidity of genre definition, but the numerous points of reference upon which they concur. Notably, the generic constructs that *Simple Men* assumes embody gender trouble. Demonstrating the problem of authorial intention, *Simple Men*'s genre

displaces women from the central position in which Hartley claims to have placed them. They are reduced to signifiers in a male scenario, a 'catalyst' for male choices (Cook 1985: 70). Kate is a representation of 'goodness' (making her narratively less interesting) and of a 'community', both home and society, which is completed by a man. Rather than being self-sufficient, woman needs man, and masculinity is reinforced through being needed. At best reduced to function, woman is at worst absence. The very fact that woman constitutes a signifier reduces woman to absence. She becomes an empty symbol through which male anxieties, including those of the *auteur*, can be worked through and resolved. She is absence both in relation to male individualism to which she is set in opposition, and the buddy dynamic in which she can only serve as disruption because it is concerned with the relationships between men rather than with women.

Women are thus symbolic of difference from men. Elina embodies excessive difference. She is not only different from man, but from the 'community' with which her gender associates her as a result of her racial difference and epilepsy. This difference is, rather than a source of strength, capable only of excessively marginalising her. Hartley has tried to achieve a positive portrayal of women in a masculinist genre, through evoking a collective female iconicity. This iconicity is conveyed not only through Elina's appearance and the invoking of Madonna, but through the inclusion of a nun and a schoolgirl, all iconic and representational facets of women in society. Hartley has, in applying this methodology, embarked upon a project in which he is bound to fail.

Yet it is not only women who are the site of gender 'trouble' within the film. It is possible to see the simple men of the title as men whose masculinity is in crisis. However marginalised women might be by their reduction to representations of such social constructs as community, it is men, both the road movie and the Western suggest, who are themselves marginal in relation to these social constructs. Thus the focus is displaced from the issue of the representation of women, and the problem of coding 'female' as 'difference'. Thus displaced, it falls onto the uncertainty of masculinity, onto male difference in relation both to women and to community, onto

the marginalisation and ultimate emasculation of the men.

Troubled Masculinity: the Problem of Emasculation

Male marginality is a motif which both the Western and the road movie have utilised in their characterisation of the protagonist as being outside society. He is separate either by virtue of an outlaw status, or as a result of being in a state of transition which inevitably places one outside the social constructs which the protagonist moves between. A marginality exemplified in Kerouac's Beat Generation novel: *On the Road*, the road has been described as a 'resistant space' (Cohan and Hark 1997: 3), an inherently 'marginal' territory, a 'perceptual in-between' (Schaber 1997: 34). Similarly, the 'tragic Western hero (male) exists outside of social values and civilised society (female)' (Cook 1985: 67), with the classical plot being one which 'begins with the hero outside society, and shows his progressive integration into society' (Frayling 1998: 43). Kerouac's *On The Road*, the key literary example of the- road-as-genre, is similarly invested in the characterisation of the road as a marginal space. The protagonists who undertake a spiritual quest of discovery are not only marginal, but 'unassimilable by mainstream culture' (Cohan and Hark 1997: 7).

Each of the two principal male protagonists of *Simple Men* is marginal in his own way, both inherently and by virtue of being on a symbolic road as a result of the search of Long Island for their father. More than Martin who, on the margins of the microcosmic society of which Kate is head, exists as signifier of marginality in relation to this place, it is the brothers who are more literally on the road and who inhabit the marginal territory which it connotes. Ostensibly, Dennis is less 'marginal' than Bill. He conforms to the laws of society, being, it would seem, the only male member of his family who has not chosen a criminal path for himself. Nonetheless, his marginality is expressed in his journey. He occupies a temporarily marginal space in which, momentarily distracted by his need to follow an Oedipal quest, he has found himself. The career criminal Bill, with whose carrying out of a robbery *Simple Men* commences, is more readily characterised as marginal in relation both to the society which he flees and the one which serves as the unpremeditated end of his road. Both

are, however, marginalised, by their being in the state of transition, occupying a territory *between* two points of which their journey is suggestive.

Although this marginality can be seen as a point of strength, as a facet of the male individualism which is asserted as a counterpoint to established society, marginality has inevitable connotations of disenfranchisement and dislocation. It has the possibility of people finding themselves at the margins of society because they have little idea of how to function successfully within it. Bill's and Dennis' marginality ostensibly constitutes 'rejection of' rather than 'rejection by'. They choose to be on the metaphorical road. Yet the fact that the brothers seek modes of reintegration suggests that their displacement is one that is ultimately undesirable, a disconnection with society and family rather than a rejection of it. Hence Dennis seeks to reconnect with his sense of family through his search for his father. He develops a relationship with Elina, who is his pseudo-mother within the narrative because she is his father's girlfriend. Similarly searching for a reconnection with the society from which he has been so marginal is Bill, who subsumes himself into Kate's community, embracing the domesticity which it signifies.

Male marginality thus functions in Hartley's work in much the same way as the female marginality with which the chapters on *The Unbelievable Truth* and *Flirt* are concerned. The men assume a position of social difference which women inherently occupy. They move into a location which, in placing them in opposition to hegemony, has the effect of feminising them. This questioning of masculine constructs is one which serves as a subtext for *Simple Men*'s reference to the road movie genre. Although the genre is: 'informed by residual conceptions of the American and the masculine' (articulated through its male centring and emphasis on male individualism), it is an 'uneasy and self-reflexive genre [which] simultaneously calls their hegemonic equation into question' (Roberts 1997: 62). Emasculation has been described as being 'deeply imbedded (if unacknowledged)' in the 'potently masculine myth of Road Man' (Hark 1997: 206).

It is the fear of losing his mastery over the women in his life which informs

Bill's behaviour. He has been rejected by Vera, who tells him mid-robbery that she has transferred her affections to his partner in crime. In the face of this, Bill desperately asserts his threatened masculinity by deciding deliberately to seduce, use and hurt another woman. Dennis is already lacking in the sort of obvious masculinity which characterises Bill. He seeks to find the source of his own masculinity through his search for his father, and his attempt to seduce his father's girlfriend. It is this lack of the father which has troubled Dennis' masculinity: the emasculation with which the road movie is concerned is largely created through this loss of the father as the ultimate 'masculine hero' (Roberts 1997: 60). Hence it is Dennis, the younger, feminised son, who seeks the father, rather than the older Bill. Bill has been afforded more time to find his own brand of masculinity, mimicking his father's criminality, albeit without the ideological motivation with which his father justified his criminal act.

This notion of one brother being more 'feminised' than the other can be extended into the buddy dynamic which was referred to above as a means by which the exclusion and displacement of women, who are seen as disruptive of these relationships, can be articulated. To reprise and extend this argument, the buddy dynamic with which *Simple Men* engages through the relationship between Bill and Dennis is pertinent to this emphasis on the feminisation of men within the road movie. As indicated above, the brothers respectively conform to the two distinct types which Ina Rae Hark has identified in her consideration of the buddy movie. The younger brother, Dennis, is 'feminised' and 'deficient' (Hark 1997: 204) in relation to his apparently more self-possessed brother. Characterised by thought rather than action, Dennis is severally feminised: by his youth, by his inadequacy with women, by his inability to take his drink and by his willingness to follow Elina's lead within the dance.

In this, Dennis serves to embody the emasculation which is so 'deeply embedded' (206) within the genre, and which informed the sympathetic interaction between men referred to above, notably in relation to the Sheriff. It was suggested that this brings about a symbolic displacement and exclusion of women. Yet it is clear that

this also feminises the men, as they assume what are traditionally viewed as feminine qualities in order to give each other emotional support. Equally troubling to Bill's masculinity is the 'feminine' position which Bill assumes when he is directed to sweep the floor by Kate. Emphasising the fact that it is Kate who is running the business, it is as if her symbolic husband is doing the work upon command. Bill's emasculation at so being directed to do 'women's work' repeats Matthew's emasculation as he cleans the bathroom in *Trust*. As such, the brothers' assumption of the buddy dynamic, in the way that it sets up an obvious contrast between levels of masculinity and femininity within the male / male relationship, serves to render visible what has otherwise remained as an undertone within the film: that the men are feminised by it.

The marginal position which these men occupy in relation to society inherently feminises them by removing them from hegemonic constructs, and placing them on the road which constitutes an 'other'. There is therefore an irony in the fact that the reintegration into the community, symbolised by Bill's return to Kate at the end of the film, is a further source of his feminisation. It has already been suggested that *Simple Men* could be described as a film about marginal men trying to come to terms with what it is to be civilised, with women, with community. Hence Bill's desire to become part of Kate's community, engendered by his development of romantic love for her, serves to deflate his 'engagement with tough guy cinema' (Romney 1992). It signifies Bill giving up his excessively masculine statement of intent about seducing a woman only to leave her. This was itself an excessive reaction to the emasculation which both Vera's rejection of him, and the fact that she takes his money, signify. The enfranchising power of money was illustrated in *The Unbelievable Truth*, and Hark refers to the 'financial solvency whose lack threatens' the masculinity of the protagonist (Hark 1997: 224). By extension, the lack of financial solvency which Vera imposes upon Bill is as threatening to his masculinity as her decision to leave the scene of the robbery with another man.

This general subjugation and loss of excessive masculinity to women allows the brothers' quests to be reconsidered. The object of their quest is finding the father who has been on the run for politically motivated criminal activity and, albeit led by

Dennis and despite Bill's protestation that he is merely there in order to look after his younger brother, is one in which Bill has become involved. It is clear that the father is the true object of Dennis' quest, as he seeks to resolve a troubled masculinity which his father's lack of presence has engendered. When he finds their father, Dennis has the obligatory scuffle with him that the Oedipal narrative necessarily connotes, a symbolic killing of the father which, along with his attempt to sleep with his 'mother', Elina, completes the Oedipal quest. Yet the resolution of Dennis' quest involves an ultimate submission to his father. He parrots his father's words rather than providing and asserting his own, and implicitly accepts his father's dominance in shaking the hand that has just slapped him.

It would, however, be a mistake to acquiesce in the belief that Bill's true quest is for his father. Rather, as has already been implied, the true object of Bill's quest is the broader definition of a search for the origin, an origin which the Earth Mother Kate, more than his father, constitutes for Bill. More than just about Kate, Bill's quest could more widely be seen as being about community as origin, a community which, in having Kate stand as its representative within the narrative, is being gendered female. The culmination of this search for a community into which Bill can be integrated rather than stand as other in relation to is *Simple Men*'s final tableau, an image whose resonances are manifold.

This tableau was earlier referred to as the symbolic end of Bill's journey in which he comes under the civilising influence of Kate and becomes assimilated into her community. Its significance, it was suggested, lay not only in Kate's coding as 'origin', an Earth Mother, a giver of life and executor of regeneration, but in the way in which it provides a closure. This closure relates both to the film's sexual tensions, in that it constitutes a heterosexual coupling, and to Oedipal narratives, which are otherwise denied by Elina's rejection of Dennis. The tableau serves as a symbolic return to the breast. Josh places his head on Kate's shoulder in a position in which she might hold a child. Yet the tableau has a further resonance. It constitutes a sort of secularised pietà, with Kate as Mary and Bill as Christ. Kate's dispassionate face evokes the restrained and resigned expression of Mary as she holds the dead Christ in

Michelangelo's version of the tableau.[43]

The tableau also has a wider impact upon Bill's masculinity. Much of the interest of this final tableau lies within the comparison which Hartley invites us to draw between it and the end of *The Unbelievable Truth*. This is a film in which the same actor (Robert Burke plays both Josh in *The Unbelievable Truth* and Bill in *Simple Men*) similarly concluded the film in an embrace with his female counterpoint within the narrative. Although each ending is evocative of heterosexual pairing, there is a distinct point of contrast between the two. In *The Unbelievable Truth*, Josh actively lifts Audry into the air within their final and climactic embrace. It is an embrace which signifies their mutual acceptance of each other. Albeit tinged by impending doom as Audry believes that she can hear the sound of distant bombs, the gesture constitutes a veritable (if restrained) sweeping of a woman off her feet. In lifting Audry into the air, Josh is implicitly demonstrating his masculinity. By contrast, *Simple Men* does not end with a gesture in which it is the male who is physically dominant. This is despite Bill's dramatic return to Kate, who has been waiting for him on the front porch of her house. Bill does not run up to her and sweep her off her feet, but rather engages in a static tableau which places him, head on Kate's shoulder, in a submissive position. The tableau is doubly static. Not only does Bill have little desire to remove himself from Kate, but he is being told not to move by the police. This in itself lends narrative closure, since the first line of the film, Vera saying 'don't move!' during the robbery, becomes repeated as its last. Ultimately, the gesture is symbolic of Bill's assimilation into Kate's community, his rendering of himself into a passive position in relation to her. The emasculation of Bill is therefore emphasised through the contrast between this tableau and the ending of *The Unbelievable Truth*.

A symmetry is thus created between the resolution both of Dennis' and Bills' quests. Dennis ends his quest by being overpowered by his father, who keeps 'the girl' and controls his son's speech, having him parrot his own words. Bill ends up in a gesture of submission to Kate. Contrary to common perceptions of laconic maleness,

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[43]Michelangelo's Pietà (1498-1500) stands in Saint Peter's Basilica, Rome.

Bill's lack of speech within the tableau which constitutes the final moments of the film could be seen as feminising. A laconic mode of speech characterises Bill throughout the film. Kate earlier interprets it as a signification of the depth of his character. When Bill cannot think of a way to reply to her questions about him, she mistakenly reads his evasion and confusion as a sign of thoughtfulness and depth (Hartley 1992a: 41). This is part of the coding of Bill as a continuum of the 'tradition of laconic macho heroes' (Knee 1993: 96). The lack of articulation which stars like Eastwood brought to their Western protagonists was always considered as an integral part of their masculinity.

Neale argues that a 'reticence with language' in the mode of Eastwood enhances masculinity. This is because it places the hero in a symbolic space before absence and lack, with their castrating associations, have been instituted through language (Neale 1983: 7). It could, however, equally be argued that the loss of speech works fundamentally against the individualism which is so important to the male protagonist. A silence which can be read as a resistance to male structures (Kaplan 1983: 98), it symbolically returns Bill to the point before he lost his ideal ego through a discovery of language. It is this language which serves to differentiate the individual from the world. He has fundamentally been subsumed into the community which the film has coded as female, becoming emasculated by his integration into it. In doing so, he has rejected the individualism which both his marginal status in relation to society and his speech connote, becoming silent and passive in Kate's arms.

Conclusion

Simple Men thus works against Hartley's desire to make a film which constitutes a positive portrayal of women in recompense for his earlier exploitation of them. In supposedly resisting the placing of women upon a pedestal (an inherently unempowered place to be), in attempting not to marginalise them, Hartley has nonetheless doubly marginalised *Simple Men*'s women. Elina is marginalised by her excessive difference. Despite its appropriation by Hartley, who exploits her essential iconicity as a point of strength, this difference inevitably reduces Elina. She is 'other'

in relation both to men and to the society with which the film is concerned by virtue both of her race and her epilepsy. Elina's denial of difference through dance does not allow her to transcend the gender difference by which she is identified. The 'good' and admirable Kate is marginalised in relation to a genre in which she is reduced to function. She is a signifier of 'community', which becomes gendered female. The positing of Kate as the good woman is as artificial as the imposition of a debate about Madonna upon the narrative: there in order to support Hartley's assertion that the film is positive in its representation of women. His attempt to effect female strength through collecting iconic stereotypes is inevitable in its failure.

The greatest barrier to the project's success lies in the film's male-centred genre, in the fact that women are not, as Hartley has implied, the appropriate focus of the film. Rather, *Simple Men*'s use of the conventions both of the road movie, and of the Western from which it is derived, points to the men of the title as the necessary and appropriate centre of the film. Searching for the male strength which, in light of the tentative nature of female strength within the film, one would expect to find, it becomes clear that *Simple Men* engages with the masculinist aspect of these genres only on the surface. Underlying the empowered assertion of male individualism and the buddy dynamic is the threat of disruption which women pose. Masculinity can be troubled by femininity.

Further, male marginality places the men in a position more usually applied to women: recall Martin's marginality in relation to the microcosmic society, and the way in which Bill and Dennis are marginalised by being on the road. Both Dennis and Bill find emasculation at the end of their quest. Dennis, feminised by his youth and by contrast with his more obviously masculine brother, is overpowered by his father's dominance over him. This domination is both physical (the slap) and linguistic (the tract). Bill serves to express not powerful masculinity, but the emasculation which the double marginalisation of the generic protagonist evokes. He is marginal both when he is outside society, and when he is re-integrated into it. Bill remains marginal by virtue of his criminality. He does not shed this identity just because he has been socialised. He is changed, but not freed from the consequences of his past. Yet he is

further marginalised because his reintegration into what is a literally as well as figuratively female society signals his emasculation. His desire for Kate has caused trouble for his masculinity. The giving up of his marginal (feminised) position outside society and community has itself been feminising and doubly marginalising for Bill. If femininity is a marginal position for women, then the feminisation which ultimately informs *Simple Men's* approach to its male protagonists is certainly one for men.

CHAPTER VIII

FLIRT: REPETITION WITH A DIFFERENCE

or

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE? _FLIRT'S_ REPETITIONS

It has been demonstrated throughout this thesis that Hartley exhibits the *auteurist* tendency towards repeating certain narrative and thematic events. Points of comparison have been drawn in recognition of the consistency of Hartley's vision. These correlations have been emphasised on a structural level, with each chapter having its complement. Both *Henry Fool* and *Amateur* portray criminal males whose repentance and redemption are in a state of crisis. Both *Simple Men* and *The Unbelievable Truth* appear to be addressing the problem of a femininity which is in each case marginalised in relation to male constructs, whether narrative or theoretical. The present chapter turns its attention back to the issue of repetition which served as the point of inception for the thesis. The companion to *Trust*, *Flirt* is Hartley's most formally repetitive film. It would be impossible to address the film without recognising the importance of repetition to it.

This chapter will do more than simply repeat the material on repetition which appeared in the early chapters of the thesis. It will at once reprise and extend it in light of the gender discourses which have been seen throughout to inform Hartley's work. The distinction drawn between formal repetition (which incorporates a tension between its linear and cyclical forms) and behavioural repetition was established by the taxonomy of repetitions in Chapter II and used in the *Trust* chapter. Accordingly, it will be extended into the present consideration of the way in which *Flirt's* repetitions function. It will be seen that it is within behavioural repetition that *Flirt's* essential 'difference' is located. This will lead into an exploration of the pleasure principle, notably of the masochistic aspect to the overriding of the pleasure principle which repetition involves. Further, there will be an interrogation of masochism as a marginalising phenomenon. Finally, the return to repetition in this chapter will be

asserted as something which constitutes a resolution for Hartley's wider questions, with the film placing gender as the essential difference which inhabits Hartley's repetitions.

Reprising Formal Repetition

As suggested above, *Flirt* is a highly and deliberately repetitious film, with Hartley's concern with formal repetition reaching its climax within the film's tripartite structure. Arising from Hartley's decision to re-make a short film three times rather than extend one of the episodes into a feature, *Flirt* repeats a narrative in which a flirt, given an ultimatum by their partner to commit or else they will end the relationship, goes out in search of alternatives in order to help them come to a resolution. In each case, the flirt receives a gunshot wound to the face which, although not fatal, acts as a catalyst in their decision-making. Each of the episodes embodies national, racial and gender variation. They are variously set in New York, Berlin and Tokyo, with Caucasian, black and Asian protagonists. The flirts are, respectively, a heterosexual male, a homosexual male and a heterosexual female. The significance of these points of difference will be returned to. For the moment, it is to repetition that attention will be turned, particularly because the degree of repetition, including the triplication of an all but identical script, is extremely high.

Once again, the interplay between linear and cyclical modes of repetition, seen in the taxonomy and *Trust* chapters to be central to philosophical approaches to repetition, is borne out within the form of episodes of repetition in Hartley's work. Deleuze associated the number three with cyclical repetition (Deleuze 1994: 92). Recall his emphasis on the 'persistence of the triadic structure' within dramatic tradition (92). Like the Theban Plays which Deleuze references in his allusion to Oedipus, *Flirt* passes through three dramatic events before reaching its conclusion.[44] The fact of *Flirt*'s structural embodiment of triple repetition would seem to place it

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[44] This implicit comparison of the structure of *Flirt* and Sophocles' *Theban Plays*, like the morality play analogy in Chapter V, emphasises the fact that film is derivative of theatre.

within the realm of the cyclical,[45] and it is thus appropriate momentarily to assume an unequivocal acceptance of *Flirt*'s formal structure as cyclical because of its embodiment of 'three'. By extension, it would therefore be easy to posit the application of Deleuze's theory of signification, which he links to the cyclical, to *Flirt*. Yet, as was the case for *Trust*, evident in the section: 'Linear v Cyclical' of Chapter III, the issue of signification problematises the cyclical form with which Deleuze associates it. This is emphasised when the application of Deleuze's theory of signification to an episode of repetition in Hartley's films is considered.

It is possible to apply the theory of signifier, signifier, signified which informed the bathroom cleaning sequences in *Trust* to the broad formal structure of *Flirt*. In doing so, it becomes pertinent to suggest that 'New York' and 'Berlin' are each signifiers for the ultimately signified: 'Tokyo'. The ultimatum with which Bill is presented in 'New York', like Dwight's in 'Berlin', signifies Miho's dilemma in 'Tokyo'. The destruction of the flirt's face which occurs both in 'New York' and 'Berlin' signifies the destruction of Miho's face in 'Tokyo'. The very nature of *Flirt*'s structure begs our anticipation of the signified within 'Tokyo'. Having witnessed the chain of events in the two earlier sections, our absolute expectation is that they further serve to signify 'Tokyo', that we will witness an almost identical causal chain in the final episode, and yet, as the film desires, derive both novelty and meaning from the repetition. It will be seen that much of this novelty lies within the difference which finally seeks to disrupt the film's otherwise fairly emphatic formal repetition. The importance of 'difference' to 'Tokyo' will be returned to below, in the section: 'Repetition and Masochism: The Difference in *Flirt*'s Repetitions'.

There is a further manner in which *Flirt*'s patterns of repetition are more linear than cyclical. In applying theories of linear and cyclical repetition to *Flirt*, it is important to note not only that Hartley clearly indulges in patterns of signification

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[45] It is certainly interesting to consider whether the impact of the film would be the same if a spectator were to watch the episodes in a different order, or begin their viewing in the middle of the film. Were the film truly cyclical, it would be possible for the spectator to come into the film at any point and still gain a useful experience from it.

within the film, but that he chose to show the film in the order in which it was made. The order: 'New York' in February 1993, 'Berlin' in October 1994, 'Tokyo' in March 1995. In doing so, Hartley is allowing his own discoveries, made as he pushed the boundaries of the repetition, to inform the final product. This gives a sense of progression to the film which problematises its apparently cyclical nature. The conflict between the linear and the cyclical which was evident in *Trust*'s patterns of repetition can therefore be extended into *Flirt*. Hartley's adoption of temporal linearity in showing the shorts in order undermines their apparent circularity. The film's inexorable progression to the point of an 'ultimately signified' makes it more linear than cyclical. *Flirt* is a film which, despite its triple episodic structure, is as readily aligned with the linear as the cyclical. This is because its patterns of signification move to the point at which the signified, not only of the film but, arguably, of Hartley's entire canon, has been reached. It will be seen that it is within 'Tokyo' that *Flirt*'s 'ultimately signified' lies.

But what is being signified? Formally, the extent to which *Flirt* abandons itself to repetition renders the repetition itself into a sort of norm. It becomes the standard, the anticipated, the predictable. The first two episodes, in which recognition is cultivated, are necessary to facilitate our expectation of events in the third. The first allows us to learn the narrative progression, the second to reinforce our knowledge. To resume the mode of expression which the taxonomy adopted, episodes A and B are substantive. They are there in order to signify C. By the time the third episode is seen, the spectator has gained enough understanding of the plot to impose an expectation of repetition upon it. Yet, when a narrative becomes so subsumed in formal repetition, it becomes the differences which assert themselves. *Flirt*'s patterns of events in 'New York' and 'Berlin' serve as significations of the same events in 'Tokyo'. But, more importantly, they foster our awareness of the differences which, although impinging to an extent upon the 'Berlin' segment, are most pronounced in 'Tokyo'. It is difference to which the film's formal repetitions build, difference which they serve to signify.

It is clear that, despite revelling in such self-imposed formal stricture, *Flirt* is a film in which the 'maximum difference within repetition' (Deleuze 1994: 22) is most

obviously exploited. But what is the function of the differences which *Flirt*'s episodes of formal repetition embody? It is possible to reduce the interpolation of difference into the repetitive form of the film to novelty, to the importance of gaining something new from each of the repetitions. Since 'New York' and 'Berlin' have already dissipated the novelty of such a high degree of repetition, it is the pushing of the bounds of repetition which constitutes the novelty within 'Tokyo'. Deleuze identifies an inherent potential for something new to be drawn from our experience of repetition. He is careful to emphasise the mind's propensity for a memory and habit which renders it infinitely capable of making something 'new of the repetition it contemplates' (14). Arguably it is this notion of deriving 'newness' from a process of mitosis which constitutes repetition's most compelling contradiction. Although the taxonomy identifies consistencies within Hartley's use of repetition, there is a sense in which the varying nuances of each fresh episode render each capable of novelty. It is within the subtle differences which inhabit formal repetition that this occurs.

There are several ways in which difference is asserted within *Flirt*'s form, a difference which is more fundamentally instituted than the reduction of it to a search for novelty allows. Formal repetition engenders a difference which constitutes the real interest of Hartley's formal repetition. The increasing reliance upon the visual rather than the verbal as the film progresses is an obvious formal difference in *Flirt*. 'Tokyo' is the most visual of the three segments. Events merely described in the earlier segments occur on screen in the final one. A notable example of this occurs when the flirt's facial wound is attended to by a doctor. The verbal expressions of desire which each male flirt expounds in order to take their mind off their predicament is transposed into a visual sequence in which we see Miho with men.

This formal difference could dismissively be ascribed to the self-imposed limitations of making a film in a culture so different from your own, in a language you do not speak. However, Hartley has talked of a desire to make the 'Tokyo' segment as a silent film because of his recognition of the importance of surface, of the appearance of things, to Japanese culture (Hartley 1996: xvi). This is a factor which goes some way towards explaining the interpolation of an extended choreographed sequence into

the opening segment of *Flirt*'s final episode, a sequence which is mesmerising, almost shocking, both in its essential silence, and difference from the film which precedes it. The dancers are daubed in white, their bodies wrapped in fabric whose rustle provides the only sound. Expressionless, Miho, with a mouth gashed in red, has her movements manipulated by the hands of the men.

Yet this institution of formal difference is not limited to *Flirt*'s visuals. According to the conventions of narrative film in which Hartley places *Flirt* (albeit tentatively), the most notably 'different' scenes which are interpolated into the overall repetitive form of the narrative are those concerning the advice sought by and given to each flirt. In 'New York', this advice is given by men in the lavatory of the bar. It is advice which varies in tone. One piece of advice is heavily romantic. The man suggests writing to her every day, telling her that you are afraid of losing her. Another is philosophical: 'love is a sort of faith', 'relinquishing our hold on someone is an act of love'. The advice becomes openly pessimistic: 'embrace reality for what it is: cruel, brutal, cold, and totally unconcerned with the individual' (Hartley 1996: 16-17). In the 'Berlin' segment, the advice is given by labourers who discuss Dwight's situation amongst themselves rather than offering it to him. This is primarily because he is an American who does not speak German. The sequence is marked both by the length of the dispute, and by its degree of self-reflexivity. The men discuss Dwight's dilemma as a spectator might discuss the plot, referring to the similarity between Dwight's indecision and Bill's quandary in the 'New York' segment. This creates a distanciation so abrupt that it literally forces the spectator out of the film space. The phrase: 'like Bill in New York' (Hartley 1996: 46) is Hartley's most self-reflexive moment.

In 'Tokyo', the flirt is given advice from three women in a police cell. Each is a caricature of a Japanese societal 'type'. They are described in the screenplay as a 'traditional Japanese married woman' who speaks of human imperfection, a 'tense businesswoman' whose own desperation leads her to advise Miho not to let a Western man get away and a 'fierce young motorcycle chick' who advises Miho to tell him to get lost (Hartley 1996: 79). It is significant that Hartley elects to differentiate between the Japanese women to such a degree, reducing each one to a representation, a societal

'type', in a way that does not occur within the other segments. The men in 'New York' and 'Berlin', although holding similarly contradictory opinions, are less diversely delineated and thus, despite the degree of self-reflexivity in 'Berlin', more acceptable characters. They are allowed to be men without constituting stereotypical cultural representations of maleness. It is women who are the ones being marginalised in *Flirt*, an issue developed in the sections which follow.

A further example of difference being formally interpolated into repetition lies within the forms of expression with which each flirt is associated. In each segment of the film, there is an episode in which the flirt is confronted with a definition of love. In 'New York', Michael, a friend of the flirt's, reads from a book:

> But such hours of worldly delight were followed by others of
> deepest despondency in which he considered himself eternally
> damned.
>
> (Hartley 1996: 10)

In 'Berlin', Harry similarly reads aloud in the presence of the flirt, although this time in German which, translated, reads as:

> Germans regard love as a virtue, a divine emancipation,
> something mystical. It is not eager, impetuous, jealous and
> tyrannical, as it is in the heart of an Italian woman. It is deep,
> visionary, and utterly unlike anything in England.
>
> (Hartley 1996: 38)

In 'Tokyo', the flirt herself reads poetry from a book:

> Love is an actual thing.
> We ourselves bring it into existence.
> These words, these written pages,
> the melody of the sentences,

the images they conjure ...

these are not just the products of love,

nor are they merely the expression of love ...

they are a *form* love has taken.

They are *actually* my love.

<div align="right">(Hartley 1996: 75, author's emphasis)</div>

It is interesting that Hartley seeks to place emphasis upon the word 'form' within this final repetition, drawing attention both to formal replication, and to the formal difference which this repetition embodies. Implicitly, it is the differences between these linguistic episodes, rather than the mere fact of their repetition, which are of interest. They are differences which do not so much arise from the different milieus, but rather seek to comment upon them. The differences within this repetition are of interest for their formal aspect. It is important to note that there is a common formal / gender association made within literary theory that poetry has become a stereotypically 'female' form and prose a 'male' form.[46] This is borne out in the mode which Hartley chooses for each commentary upon love. Hence both Harry in 'Berlin' and Michael in 'New York' utilise a prose form in order to express their impersonal discourses on love. This associates both male flirts, gay and heterosexual, with the 'masculine' form. 'Gay' is not coded as 'difference' in the way that 'female' is. It is Miho who expresses herself with poetry, and marks her difference through form.

This formal difference, rather than being instituted for its own sake, arises out of the gender differences which are of greater import within these differing philosophies about love. The men in the Berlin segment nod approvingly at the public statement which Harry, by reading aloud, makes about the theme of love. Because it has been displaced from the personal to the national it could hardly be uncomfortable

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[46]Not only is there a traditional association of structured prose with 'maleness' (Virginia Woolf strove to restructure the novel into a 'female' form by rendering it into a looser, stream-of-consciousness mode of expression) but poetry has come to be seen as a more 'feminine' form, personal and expressive. There is an hierarchical binary opposition within literary theory between 'impersonal', 'disinterested', 'objective', 'public' and 'male' *theory* and the 'personal', 'subjective', 'private' and 'female' *experience*. See Selden, Widdowson and Brooker (1985: 122-3, author's emphasis).

for them to hear such a declaration. In contrast, Miho is embarrassed to realise that her deeply personal recital has been overheard. When, looking up after her utter absorption in the poem is broken, she sees people looking at her, she closes the book and moves her browsing elsewhere. It is a stereotypical gender commentary that it is the woman who personalises, rather than remaining aloof from love. Both of the men, in 'New York' and 'Berlin', talk of love in generalisation, whether in terms of Michael's use of the second person, or Harry's wider cultural dichotomy. It is only Miho who appears moved by her recital, talking of the written word being '*actually my love.*'

But what underlies these formal differences? Most obviously, formal difference arises out of the differences which exist between the three segments by virtue of the differing gender, sexuality and language of the respective characters. These include the fact that in 'New York', the flirt's original lover is being offered marriage by her established boyfriend. This is not the case for Johan and his established boyfriend in 'Berlin'. The reduction of the Japanese women to such distinct 'types' seeks to reflect Japanese culture, in which these types exist. In the sequences referred to above, when each flirt lies on the table at the hospital undergoing treatment for their wound, Bill ('New York') talks of his hand cupping a breast, Dwight ('Berlin') of his hand holding a cock. In the images we see of Miho ('Tokyo'), we see her in bed with men. Each of these differences in detail is motivated by the gender and / or sexuality of the flirt in question, allowing the repetition to remain resonant for each of the milieus it portrays.

There is more to this than an exposition of difference-by-rote, a rhetorical 'let's see what happens to the bare form of repetition if the second flirt is gay and the third female'. Talking of the stricture of the 'rules' of his play on repetition within *Flirt*, Hartley has said of the Berlin segment that:

> The Berlin 're-write' was pretty close to the New York version:
> literally a reorganisation of the dialogue to fit a homosexual
> situation in Berlin - the original idea. But when I got to the

part where Dwight addresses three strangers I hit a wall. I could no longer just transpose. The advice given to Bill in New York, repeated again to Dwight in Berlin, seemed to ignore the subtle differences the earlier dialogue has already required by virtue of the transposition. So, although there was a crisis, something *was* working: the dialogue and plot *were* acquiring new meaning as a result of the transposition. This crisis proved it.

(Hartley 1996: xiv)

These differences satisfy Deleuze's condition for the definition of repetition: the success of Hartley's repetition is conditional upon something new being derived from it (Deleuze 1994: 6). This difference is not merely formal difference, such as the assignment of dialogue to different characters, the sequential re-organisation of scenes, the emphasis on the visual rather than the verbal. Rather, it is a difference arising from the changing requirements of each milieu. Although it is at first the case that national and gender difference arise out of the idea of a play on form, it soon becomes the case that formal difference begins to arise out of the national and gender difference: the roles are reversed. Despite *Flirt*'s status as Hartley's most formally repetitive film, a status which is suggestive of form being the appropriate point of focus, it is in behavioural repetition, and the gender difference which inhabits it, that the essence of the film lies.

Reprising Behavioural Repetition

What this chapter will now seek to demonstrate is that *Flirt*, the film which, as has already been seen, has a status as the ultimate expression of Hartley's formal concern with repetition, constitutes a culmination of behavioural repetitions in which gender is exaggeratedly performed as a point of difference. Where the difference in *Trust*'s linguistic and formal repetition arose explicitly out of cadence variation, here it arises implicitly out of a gender difference which, it will be argued, is the ultimately signified of Hartley's concern with repetition. This emphasis on gender as a point of

difference implies an association of difference with marginal social positioning. The 'Tokyo' women who give advice are certainly marginalised by their portrayal, much as Miho is later marginalised by performing a self-castration which disrupts her active gaze, and Dwight is problematically portrayed prostituting himself in a heterosexual encounter in order to gain possession of a gun. These are issues which are explored below. Each flirt participates in behavioural repetitions in which they become involved with people who have existing partners. In each case, the culmination of this involves encountering a distraught spouse in possession of a gun, and embodies a climactic destruction of the face. Yet it is only Miho who is involved in a masochistic destruction of her own face. This ultimately returns us to the wider issues of marginality, since the masochism which is the pinnacle of this behavioural repetition is itself a marginal phenomenon.

An inevitable limitation of *Flirt*'s episodic nature is that there is little space within each of the 'shorts' to develop the sort of character motivation which is in evidence in *Trust*'s behavioural repetitions. Yet *Flirt* is a film which not only embodies, but is positively satiated with behavioural repetition. The formal structure, which has already been discussed, in turn compels three sets of people to repeat an almost identical set of behavioural patterns from one episode to the next. As the film's title (in its reference to a recognisable mode of behaviour) suggests, *Flirt* is a film in which behavioural repetition and stereotyping are mutually interdependent. The temporal restriction of the 'short' results in a falling back onto useful stereotypes in order quickly to establish character. This tendency is arguably most marked, and most problematic, in the 'Tokyo' segment. As already discussed, it is here that the people to whom the flirt turns for advice are most reducible to stereotypes. The women who give Miho advice are each caricatures of a Japanese societal 'type'.

It is within such a context of stereotyping that the eponymous flirts function. They are delineated according to a societal 'type' involving coquettish behaviour, the inability to settle into a prolonged relationship without becoming preoccupied by alternatives, and a lack of emotional commitment. They also have their pattern of behaviour pre-determined by the previous segment. In light of this, the flirts could

hardly escape circumscription. Each is by definition impelled to repeat a certain mode of behaviour. Hence in the 'New York' segment Bill, given an ultimatum to commit by Emily, goes out to explore his alternatives, namely the girl in the phone booth, Trish in the bar and Margaret, before making the decision to pursue Emily to the airport. Similarly Dwight in the 'Berlin' segment, given an ultimatum by Johan, explores the alternatives which Harry in the cafe and Werner constitute, before indulging in the ambiguity of an encounter with a stranger at the Inbiss. In 'Tokyo', Miho, given the ultimatum self-reflexively by 'Hal',[47] explores her alternatives, namely Ozu,[48] before finally settling into Hal's arms.

Each flirt is thus impelled to repeat the actions (with some modification) of their predecessor. Yet what of the pattern of repetition which each betrays within their own behaviour? It is the fate of the flirt, unable to commit to a single relationship, to repeat endlessly their failure at establishing relationships. Constantly lured by the pleasure of novelty, Bill enjoys the lingering touch of a stranger's hand and Trish's eager kiss, and all this in the brief pause between leaving Emily and seeking Margaret! In view of the lack of established motivation for these behavioural repetitions in past experience, it would seem that the compulsion of the flirt to repeat must be examined primarily in light of the pleasure principle.[49]

If there is any apparent motivation for the repetition in which each flirt

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[47]This is Hal Hartley playing himself. This constitutes a literal expression of his status as *auteur*. Not only does he control the actions of his wife, Miho Nikaidoh, in a director / actress relationship from outside of the narrative, but he has an impact upon the character Miho within the film. In coming to the hospital, Hal brings about a comfortable resolution to the film from within, a resolution involving heterosexual coupling.

[48]Ozu's name betrays the predilection for referential character names which Hartley further displayed in naming *Henry Fool*'s parole officer Buñuel, and Audrey's father in *The Unbelievable Truth* Vic(tor) Hugo.

[49]It would be mere conjecture to assume that this behaviour arises from a formative experience of abandonment. This imposes a limitation upon pursuing the theory which Freud posited in 'Remembering, Repeating and Working-Through', namely that the repression of painful experience manifests itself as expression through action (repetition). It is with reference to the pleasure principle, which does not have such a limitation, that *Flirt*'s patterns of behavioural repetition must be considered.

indulges, it is clearly that of the 'thrill of the chase'. One must assume in light of the pleasure principle, which places the pursuit of pleasure as its aim, that each finds pleasure in the excitement of a new relationship, from the notion that their alternatives are somehow better than their established lovers. Yet, like Matthew in *Trust* who experiences both pleasure and unpleasure when he repeats the experience of losing his mother, the pleasure which the flirt derives from their repeated flirtation is far from unambiguous. In playing out their pattern of behavioural repetition, moving from one lover to the next, the flirt begins to experience pleasure (novelty, excitement) through unpleasure (loss, hurting others). This is particularly the case when one takes into account the fact that Hartley establishes that each flirt's main alternative is married. By choosing the married alternative as their new lover, the flirt would have to reconcile their new-found pleasure with a multiplicity of unpleasures. These would include their own feelings of the loss of their former relationship, the feelings of loss that their former lover will feel, the presence of guilt in breaking up a marriage, and the inevitable disappointment in their new lover to which the flirt, in view of their behavioural patterns, exhibits a predilection.

The behavioural approach to repetition is most compelling because of such contradictions: it melds the incongruity of pleasure and unpleasure, at once overriding the pleasure principle and yet yielding an alternative pleasure. Yet the application of Freud's pleasure principle to *Flirt* is ultimately unsatisfying. It does not explain the thrice repeated climax of each of the segments, namely the destruction of the flirt's face. It fails to take issue with the notion of difference which, as will be seen, is key to behavioural as well as formal repetition in Hartley's films.

Repetition and Masochism: The Difference in *Flirt's* Repetitions.

It is within the destruction of the flirt's face that Hartley's most compelling association of difference with gender lies. As has already been suggested, in playing out their pattern of behavioural repetition in moving from one lover to the next, the flirt begins to experience pleasure (novelty, excitement) through unpleasure (loss, hurting others). This notion of the derivation of pleasure from unpleasure leads us back to Freud, and

further into the masochistic aspect of repetition. It is this aspect with which Hartley most fully engages in *Flirt*. Freud touched upon masochism in 'Beyond the Pleasure Principle', in which he defines masochism as: 'the component instinct which is complementary to sadism ... sadism that has been turned round upon the subject's own ego' (Freud 1920: 54). However, a more expansive account appears in the 1924 essay entitled: 'The Economic Problem of Masochism', a discussion of masochism which moves beyond 'Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality' (1905), 'Instincts and their Vicissitudes' (1915) and 'A Child is Being Beaten' (1919), in recognising the existence of primary masochism to which 'Beyond the Pleasure Principle' tentatively alluded.

In 'The Economic Problem of Masochism', Freud isolates three forms of masochism: masochism as a 'condition imposed on sexual excitation' ('erotogenic' masochism in which pleasure is derived from pain); masochism as an 'expression of the feminine nature' ('feminine' masochism); and masochism as a 'norm of behaviour', ('moral' masochism, which presents itself as guilt). Freud is arguably most interested in the second of these forms, feminine masochism. This is the theory in which the masochistic phantasies, rather than simply involving pain or debasement, consist of elaborate phantasies which: 'place the subject in a characteristically female situation'. These 'female' scenarios may comprise such activities as being 'castrated', 'copulated with', or 'giving birth', and are based upon 'primary' (erotogenic) masochism, i.e. pleasure in pain (Freud 1924: 162).

An analogy can thus be drawn between repetition and masochism: both override the pleasure principle. Repetition does this through the compulsion to repeat repressed and therefore painful material (which can in itself yield pleasure), masochism through the derivation of pleasure from pain. It is therefore unsurprising that, within the film through which Hartley pushes the boundaries of his idiosyncratic realisation of repetition furthest, his concern with repetition moves firmly into a depiction of masochism. Within *Flirt*, the climax of each of the three repetitions is the shooting of the flirt's face. The shootings in 'New York' and 'Berlin' are illustrated in different ways, the former is intrinsic and the latter extrinsic to the film's visual space. Yet they fundamentally constitute repetition. In each case, the flirt is shot by the

spouse of the alternative lover whose possibilities they seek to explore in the face of an ultimatum by their more established lovers. Bill, confronted with Margaret's distraught husband in the New York bar, is shot in the face as he tries to comfort him. In 'Berlin', Dwight, comforting Werner's wife Greta, is shot either, we assume, by Greta (since it is she who possesses the gun) or by Werner, who enters the building moments before the shooting occurs. We, excluded from the apartment, only hear the sound of the gun.

As the earlier section on structure established, it is thus the final segment, 'Tokyo', in which the difference within the repetition is most exploited. The sequence in which Miho is shot appears initially to be following the lead of the earlier segments. Miho encounters a distressed Yuki, the wife of Ozu, drunk and in possession of a gun. Having calmed Yuki, Miho seeks physically to comfort her, an act which itself effects a visual repetition of the earlier choreographed sequence in which the two women are manipulated into such an embrace. Yet, rather than being shot by Yuki, Miho, surprised by the sound of film cans being knocked over, shoots herself.

Although the current concern is primarily with masochism, the issues arising from this deviation from repetition are manifold. In terms of gender politics, that Miho becomes disfigured in this way emphasises the problematic commentary upon female sexuality which is in evidence throughout *Flirt*. The male flirts are more widely admired for their prowess. Trish, the waitress who reprimands Bill for being 'loose', nevertheless 'accepts him with relish as he leans down and kisses her on the mouth' (Hartley 1996: 15). Dwight attracts women as well as men, for example being startled by a woman in a phone booth grabbing his crotch. He survives his disfigurement to receive a sympathetic gesture full of possibilities from a new man at the end of the film. Both of the male flirts experience a greater number of harmlessly flirtatious encounters than Miho. Despite this, each of the men remains more fully within the definition of flirtation as *chaste* and amorous within the film space. Hence whilst Bill and Dwight escape into innocuous fantasy on the hospital bed, respectively expounding the universalised appeal of 'breast' and 'cock', Miho's sexuality is given

sharply contrasting treatment. Like Bill and Dwight, she is similarly seeking distraction from her pain. Yet we are actually shown a dream-like montage of her indulging in sexual encounters with a number of men. Her attractiveness is more readily reducible to her own willingness to perform sexually, rather than her discovery of such willingness in others.

Further, Miho's disfigurement seems most likely to end her promiscuous tendencies. Dwight's injury actually prompts a new encounter. He is charmed by the gesture of a sympathetic man offering his coat. Although Bill elects to pursue his established lover, Emily, she is a character whose sexual attractiveness has been pointedly defined. Her ultimatum is delivered in a post-coital conversation, with her naked body wrapped in a white sheet, and her image rendered solicitously by Hartley, who gives as much attention to her face as he did Elina's in *Simple Men*. Miho, on the other hand, ends the film in comfortable assimilation with Hal, her promiscuous tendencies curbed by her disfigurement.

It is equally problematic that it is only the homosexual character who does not elect to maintain an existing relationship, but rather to pursue fresh liaisons at the end of his segment. This is within a context of a highly questionable portrayal of homosexuality. Unlike Bill and Miho, who each comfort the distraught spouse of their alternative lover with an asexual embrace, Dwight is compelled to abandon his sexuality momentarily in order to salvage the situation with Greta. It is an act which, according to the directions in Hartley's own screenplay, hardly seems necessary. Although Greta 'grabs him by his belt buckle', she seems more in need of consolation than sexual tokenism, being 'desperate for the consolation of even a disinterested hug' (Hartley 1996: 55). Since Greta's body, curled into foetal position, is more reminiscent of a child than a woman overcome with desire, it is extraordinary that Dwight finds it necessary to facilitate an 'unthinkable' seduction, prostituting himself in order to attempt to gain possession of the gun.

The issue at hand is, however, that of the gendering of masochism. It is highly significant that Bill and Dwight are passive within the shooting incidents. Although

Dwight's shot is extrinsic to the film, we do not assume that it is self-inflicted. In contrast, Miho subjects herself with Freudian relish to disfigurement.[50] It would thus be pertinent to examine Miho's actions in light of Freud's theories on masochism, in particular in his establishment, in 'The Economic Problem of Masochism', of masochism's three forms: 'erotogenic' masochism, 'feminine' masochism and 'moral' masochism.

Miho's act of shooting herself is not erotogenic masochism in its most literal sense, since Miho does not shoot herself in pursuit of sexual pleasure. The act is nonetheless analogous to the derivation of pleasure from pain which erotogenic masochism posits. This is because of the predilection which a flirt's behavioural repetition betrays for gaining pleasure (novelty, excitement) through unpleasure (loss). Miho succeeds in getting Hal to stay with her, rather than return to America, because of the incident. He is waiting for her as she comes out of the treatment room at the hospital. Thus pleasure (Hal missing his flight to be with her) is drawn from unpleasure (the pain of the wound).

This concern with the pleasurable aspect of erotogenic masochism is also reminiscent of the active / passive aspect of the pleasure principle. Miho derives pleasure from being active within the confrontation rather than passive. Her act of pointing the gun at her own head within the climactic sequence repeats the earlier incident in which Yuki, upset at the flirtation between her husband and Miho, threatens to shoot herself. Although witnessing the event, Miho is, earlier in the film, powerless to intervene. Hence when Yuki is once again in possession of the gun, Miho now takes an active role by taking the gun from Yuki. This both yields pleasure

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[50]The fact that Miho's injury occurs at a moment of surprise will not be considered to preclude it from the present discussion of masochism. Miho had, for a significant duration prior to the trigger being pulled, pointed the gun to her own head: 'strong, convicted, fed up, and impervious' (Hartley 1996: 83). Although both Bill and Dwight's respective aggressors were similarly startled during the moments surrounding the guns going off, the fact that Miho has possession of the gun at all, as well as the fact that she is pointing it towards her face, constitutes a significant 'difference' which draws attention to her experience of the pain of being shot as an active one.

in that repeating an unpleasant passive experience as an active one is a form of pleasure, and avoids unpleasure, since passively allowing Yuki to harm herself would inevitably result in the unpleasure of guilt. The definition of her action as pleasure, according to Freud's pleasure principle, is thus satisfied. Miho deriving pleasure from pain is thus an expression of the primary or 'erotogenic' masochism on which other forms of masochism are based.

Miho's self-inflicted wound also implicitly falls into the category of moral masochism, which is closely allied to guilt. As in the other segments of *Flirt*, each of Miho's lovers has a partner. Hal is returning to his girlfriend in America, Ozu is married to Yuki. Although Miho does not witness the pain that one must assume Hal's partner would experience upon the discovery of Hal's relationship with Miho, Miho positively experiences Yuki's pain. She finds her, drunk and distraught, alone with a gun. Whomever Miho elects to be with, her choice will inevitably result in the infliction of pain upon others, as well as her own repetition of the sadness of loss at ending one of her relationships. The presence of guilt in Miho's self-destructive behaviour is thus undeniable. Yet is it also problematic. Both Bill and Dwight are in an almost identical situation. Both their established lovers, and their alternative lovers, are involved in partnerships with other people. Yet it is Miho, the only *female* flirt, who reacts to this situation masochistically by inflicting pain upon herself.

Thus when applying Freud's tripartite theory of masochism to *Flirt*, the notion of feminine masochism is potentially the most fruitful aspect. Such application of Freud's theories is not without qualification. It is important to acknowledge that Freud, talking of the masochistic phantasies of pain and debasement, including castration, being copulated with and giving birth, which constitute the characteristically 'female' scenarios of feminine masochism, was referring to a male phantasist. Feminine masochism is, for Freud, about being feminised, not female. Yet masochism can be, indeed has been applied to women within the film theory of recent years, a fact which is demonstrated below.

In 'The Economic Problem of Masochism', Freud's suggestion of masochism

as a feminising influence implies a male masochist. Even within his discussion of moral masochism, which describes guilt simply as part of normal human behaviour, Freud avoids discussion of female masochism. Rather, he leaves the gendering of guilt ambiguous. Yet, as Rodowick points out in his discussion of Freud's earlier work 'A Child is Being Beaten', female-specific guilt is an important aspect of the masochistic phantasy (Rodowick 1991: 69-84). The second (unconscious) stage of the beating phantasy as Freud conceives it is as follows:

female: 'I am $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{being beaten} \\ \text{loved (genitally)} \end{array} \right\}$ by my father'

(Rodowick 1991: 75)

This, in betraying an incestuous position in relation to the father, engenders guilt:

> The child thinks, 'Because my father is beating the other child, he loves only me ...,' and this thinking represents an attempt to take the father as a sexual object. From the standpoint of a genital organisation dominated by patriarchal authority, such an incestuous solution is clearly untenable. Therefore, love for the father is subordinated to the development of a sense of guilt that distributes the libidinal economy of the phantasy according to its sadistic and masochistic forms. The figuration of the beating phantasy thus formulates a condensation that exploits this relationship by uniting a sense of guilt with sexual love.
>
> (Rodowick 1991: 75)

The problem with what Freud later termed 'moral' masochism (guilt) is that it posits the female who equates her sexuality with guilt. It is such a connection which *Flirt* perpetuates in its treatment of Miho. Not only is her flirtation, as has already been established, more obviously sexualised than that of her male counterparts, but it is only Miho whose injury is self-inflicted. Miho effectively punishes herself for her

promiscuity, not only equating her sexuality with guilt, but her guilt with a peculiarly female mode of masochism.

This female masochism is not, however, limited to the motivating impact of guilt within the *act* of self-destruction, but the very *nature* of the injury. That Freud lists castration as one of the phantasies of feminine masochism would initially appear to preclude the female masochist who is, implicitly, already defined by such a position of lack. Yet the resonances of symbolic castration do not fundamentally exclude women. As Rodowick discusses, Freud argued that, in being positioned as spectator within the 'A Child is Being Beaten' phantasy, the female 'refuses her genital sex', identifying herself with the position 'from which she has been excluded' (Rodowick 1991: 81). An analogy can be drawn between this negation of genital sex in looking, which would necessarily involve symbolically gaining the phallus which the female lacks, and the negation of genital sex which the male undergoes as part of the castration phantasy of feminine masochism. Although one involves gain and the other loss of the phallus, both fundamentally involve an inversion of genital sex. In her refusal of her genital sex, the female child thus effects a symbolic reversal of male castration phantasies. This nonetheless involves her assumption of them, as she wishes actively to negate the very position of lack which she holds and the male fears.

Symbolic castration can equally be displaced onto bodily parts which the female does not inherently lack. Freud, to return to 'The Economic Problem of Masochism', refers to: 'Being castrated - *or being blinded, which stands for it*' (Freud 1924: 162, my emphasis). This association of blindness with castration is a long-standing one. It was of course Oedipus himself who, unable to face the mother with whom he had, in fulfilment of a prophecy, propagated children, blinded himself in order to avoid the guilt of facing her in the afterlife. It is thus highly significant that Miho's wound is to the face, with her bandages partially obscuring her eye. Freud's full account if this is as follows:

> Being castrated - or being blinded, which stands for it - often
> leaves a negative trace of itself in phantasies, in the condition

> that no injury is to occur precisely to the genitals or the eyes ...
> A sense of guilt, too, finds expression in the manifest content
> of masochistic phantasies; the subject assumes that he (sic)
> has committed some crime ... which is to be expiated by all
> these painful and tormenting procedures.
>
> (Freud 1924: 162)

Miho thus moves through fluid gender positions in *Flirt*. Although her sexual guilt is portrayed as being peculiarly feminine, originating in the formative phantasies of the father which Freud discusses in 'A Child is Being Beaten', Miho's embodiment of Freud's moral masochism places her in a position at least of gender ambiguity, if not masculinity. This is because, although Freud does not specifically gender the *moral* masochist, he nonetheless generally posits a male masochist. Her position moves more firmly into a stereotypically 'male' one when she becomes active rather than passive in the shooting, expressing her guilt as a symbolic castration which does not necessarily, as has been argued, preclude the female. In doing so, in threatening her own ability to look upon the sources of her guilt, she is turning herself into a 'good girl', implicitly curbing both her curiosity and her desire.[51] This is not undermined by the fact that Miho is not literally blinded because castration phantasies occur on 'condition that no injury is to occur precisely to the genitals or the eyes'.

Miho's masochism thus allows her to move fluidly between the gender positions which masochism connotes. Hartley implicitly genders masochism as female when he elects only to have Miho's wound to the face be self-inflicted. The male flirts who are similarly shot in the face have their lesions imposed upon them by others. In this, Hartley is subverting the gender roles which inform psychoanalytic film theory, placing the men in passive positions in relation to the gun which constitutes a phallic symbol. They are shot by it, rather than shooting themselves with it. The masochism which Miho exhibits in actively shooting her own face ostensibly

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[51]Linda Williams refers to the fact that, since 'to see is to desire', the 'good girl' heroines of silent cinema were 'often figuratively, or even literally, blind'. This blindness 'signifies a perfect absence of desire' (Williams 1984: 83).

places her in a masculine position, particularly since masochism has been gendered male by Freud. Yet Freud's association of masochism and maleness is not unequivocal. The guilt which moral masochism signifies is equated with female sexuality in the scenarios of 'A Child is Being Beaten'. The symbolic castration of feminine masochism can be applied to areas of the body which the female does not lack. The female flirt is as able to derive pleasure from pain as her male counterparts. This occurs both in terms of the patterns of gain and loss which inform the flirt's patterns of behaviour, and the vivid and involved sexual fantasies into which Miho drifts at her point of greatest pain on the hospital bed. Miho's assumption of the characteristics of moral, feminine and erotogenic masochism thus affords a transition between the gender positions which masochism connotes. *Flirt* is a film which participates in the discourses surrounding the gendering of masochism. However, the drawing of a straightforward analogy between femininity and masochism which the film suggests, like the association of masculinity with masochism which is the theory which Freud posits, is apparently impossible to assert.

The Gendering of Masochism

The analogy of femininity with masochism is implicit in certain areas of film theory. This question of how to gender masochism is central to recent writings on film. That Mulvey, in her polemical article: 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema' (Mulvey 1975: 412-428), avoided gendering the masochist as female demonstrates the antipathy which feminist writing on film and psychoanalysis has for defining masochism as a female position. Mulvey's key establishment of a series of binary oppositions within cinematic spectatorship pointedly denies female masochism:

male	female
active	passive
scopophilia	narcissism[52]

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[52]This series of binary oppositions, although derived from Mulvey (1975: 418), appears in this tabulated form in Rodowick (1991: 10).

Rodowick identifies an 'implicit blind spot' (Rodowick 1991: 10), developing Mulvey's position by adding the masochism from which Mulvey's argument all but abstains[53] to the opposition of two different modes of looking, which now become:

active	passive
voyeurism	fetishistic scopophilia
sadism	*masochism*

(Rodowick 1991: 10)

Rodowick recognises that Mulvey wishes 'neither to underestimate the extensiveness of a "masculinization" of point of view in the cinema, nor does she want to equate femaleness with masochism' (11). Yet, despite his general tone of questioning binary polemics which have 'too often been treated as axiomatic' (4), and the problem of 'biological determinism' (13), Rodowick inevitably genders masochism as female by associating it through the use of binary opposition with both passivity and fetishistic scopophilia. This is in line with Mulvey's often quoted phrase: 'In a world ordered by sexual imbalance, pleasure in looking has been split between active / male and passive / female') (Mulvey 1975: 418). Cinematic masochism is thus inextricably bound up in the pleasure of looking, with Miho's act of self-castration in symbolically destroying her eyes being doubly problematic in its gender politics. Not only does it characterise Miho according to the problem of a woman who 'can exist only in relation to castration and cannot transcend it' (413), but having Miho deny her pleasure in looking by destroying her eyes constitutes an act of masochism.

It is easy to see how Rodowick asserts that, since fetishistic scopophilia is passive, and Mulvey has already stated that voyeurism and sadism are inter-linked, both it and masochism must be feminine. Rodowick's extension of Mulvey's argument is, however, problematic. To expand upon the argument from which Rodowick's work is derived, Mulvey stated that both voyeurism and fetishistic scopophilia were responses to male castration anxiety. Since the female form portrayed within the film

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[53]Mulvey refers to the masochism of Judy in *Vertigo*, but does not universalise this into a wider gendering of masochism within her binaries (Mulvey 1975: 426).

image implies castration, the spectator, who is gendered male, has two avenues of escape. The first, voyeurism, involves a 'preoccupation with the re-enactment of the original trauma (investigating the woman, demystifying her mystery), counterbalanced by the devaluation, punishment or saving of the guilty object'. Mulvey cites *film noir* as an example of this. The second, fetishistic scopophilia, necessitates a 'complete disavowal of castration by the substitution of a fetish object or turning the represented figure itself into a fetish so that it becomes reassuring rather than dangerous ... this second avenue ... builds up the physical beauty of the object, transforming it into something satisfying in itself' (Mulvey 1975: 421-2).

Mulvey herself linked voyeurism with sadism: 'pleasure lies in ascertaining guilt (immediately associated with castration), asserting control and subjecting the guilty person through punishment or forgiveness' (422). It is inevitable that Rodowick, seeking to complete a perceived gap in Mulvey's binary oppositions, would in turn align fetishistic scopophilia with masochism. This is the natural development of Mulvey's association of voyeurism with sadism, and both of these positions with the masculinity which the active gaze connotes. The corollary is, however, limited. It will now be argued that the associations are far more fluid than this.

Mulvey's definition of voyeurism involves a 're-enactment' of the trauma of castration as an active experience, gaining the power either to punish or to save the castrated object. This is reminiscent of the pleasure principle. Reminded of the unpleasure of earlier castration phantasies, the voyeur gains pleasure through re-enacting the unpleasure as an active experience. Mulvey correctly identifies an element of sadism in this process, with the male voyeur inflicting his trauma upon another. There is patently an element of masochism to this also. The voyeur is after all preoccupied with the re-enactment the trauma of castration phantasies. There is an element of masochism to the derivation of pleasure from repeating unpleasure. The castration which constitutes this repeated unpleasure is itself characteristic of Freud's definition of feminine masochism.

The link between fetishistic scopophilia and masochism which Rodowick suggests is similarly ambiguous, not least because of its implicit association of masochism and femininity. Fetishistic scopophilia is 'passive' and thus, in view of Mulvey's binary oppositions, 'feminine', if not actually female. Fetishistic scopophilia involves turning the castration anxiety which is evoked through looking (the female body as a symbol of castration) into pleasure in looking (the female body as a source of visual pleasure). This is analogous to the broad proposition of Freud's pleasure principle, in which pleasure can be derived from unpleasure. However, it fits less comfortably into Freud's theories on masochism. This is because feminine masochism involves deriving pleasure from castration phantasies. This informs Miho's act of symbolic self-castration. Yet Mulvey asserts a 'complete disavowal' (Mulvey 1975: 421) of castration inherent to fetishistic scopophilia. This must inevitably be problematically at odds with the very masochism with which Rodowick seeks by extension to align it. To further extend Rodowick's reprised binaries, the association becomes trapped in an illogical cycle:

Fetishistic scopophilia

Passive (feminine)

Feminine Masochism = castration

Masochism

The association of the feminine with masochism involves a recognition of the castration phantasies of feminine masochism. Placed into the binary, fetishistic scopophilia becomes associated with the castration which Mulvey argues that it disavows. The limitation of the binary opposition with which Rodowick engages in recognising the 'excluded middle' (Rodowick 1991: 3) has not been traversed by his extension of Mulvey's binary opposition. A fluidity of associations is thus apparent. Despite usually being diametrically opposed, voyeurism has an element of masochism, fetishistic scopophilia an element of sadism.

The limitation of a binary approach lies within the fact that it continues to foreground the male (active) spectator without recognising either the fluidity of gender positions, or the possibility of an alternative gendering of the active spectator. It is a presupposition upon which Mulvey's argument is grounded. The binary marginalises the female. This denial of the female as active spectator, as Doane has pointed out, has its origins within Freud's lecture on 'Femininity': '...to those of you who are women this will not apply - you are yourselves the problem ...' (Doane 1991: 17). As the title of the chapter in which Doane makes this point: 'Film and the Masquerade: Theorizing the Female Spectator' suggests, others are not as reluctant to postulate the female spectator, and recognise the pleasure, often displaced within early psychoanalytic theory, which a *female* may derive from looking.

The 'problem' of how to theorise the female spectator is, however, inextricably bound up with notions of activity and passivity. As Doane illustrates, female pleasure in looking is inevitably perceived as a mere reversal of subject / object positions inherent to established spectatorship theory. The very recognition of an active, objectifying female gaze thus regressively serves to reinforce this essentially patriarchal (subject / object) way of thinking about the process of spectatorship (Doane 1991: 20-21). It exchanges one over-simplification for another. Rather than having the power to *effect* a gaze from which she can derive her own, particular form of pleasure, the female is merely serving to *affect* what Williams has called a 'parody of the male look' (Williams 1984: 85), 'masquerading' as spectator (Doane 1991: 26) rather than owning the gaze.

Thus, although attempting to theorise the female spectator, Doane's argument fundamentally recognises the lack of a peculiarly female mode of looking divorced from the notion of the male as possessor of the active gaze. The female spectator is at best subject to fluid gender positions when she looks, moving between rather than embodying a fixed gender:

> ... the result [of theories of the feminine] is a tendency to view the female spectator as the site of an oscillation between a feminine position and a masculine position, invoking the metaphor of the transvestite. Given the structures of cinematic narrative, the woman who identifies with a female character must adopt a passive or masochistic position, while identification with the active hero necessarily entails an acceptance of what Laura Mulvey refers to as a certain 'masculinization' of spectatorship.'
>
> (Doane 1991: 24)

The female, in this case Miho, thus chooses between masochism and masculinization when she looks. The active and desiring gaze with which Miho seeks to seduce Ozu is suggestive of a masculinization. Her promiscuous sexuality is socially acceptable only when it is coded as male. It is masochism through which Miho returns herself to a female and passive position, in a steadying relationship with Hal in which her gaze has been averted. The binary relationship of masochism and masculinization implicitly reinforces the links between the active position and 'maleness', and between passivity, masochism and femininity. Even within a gender fluidity in which the female oscillates between these two positions, a division is to be drawn between the male and the female behavioural pattern. It is the female who is situated at the margin. For her, identification with the female image prescribes both narcissism and the masochism of identifying with what is, within established narrative codes, a passive position. Masochism has become, for Miho, a marginalising phenomenon.

Pleasure in Looking: The Return to Repetition

Perhaps the limitation of these arguments lies within what they miss, i.e. the importance of the issue of repetition to this concern with pleasure in looking. As implied above, repetition is key to female pleasure in looking because, in becoming an active spectator, the female is repeating her experience of to-be-looked-at-ness
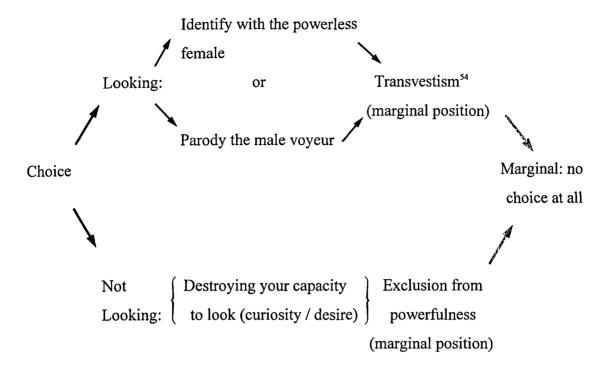
passivity as an active (scopophilic) experience. It is in this expression of the pleasure principle, i.e. the derivation of pleasure from actively repeating passive experience, that the key to female spectatorial pleasure lies. But what of the role of repetition in male pleasure in looking? It is a founding premise of spectatorship theory that the gazing male is gaining pleasure from 're-enacting' his trauma of castration anxiety. Both voyeurism, which involves re-enacting that traumatic experience of looking on the female body devoid of phallus, and fetishistic scopophilia, which involves turning the female form into a fetish, are essentially reducible to much the same origin as the aforementioned female possession of the gaze: the repetition of a passive experience as an active one. Both of these active viewing positions holds repetition as key.

Thus what can be derived from the theory of repetition is the recognition that both the male and the female spectator can be active within cinema. The interplay between active and passive modes of behaviour fundamental to spectatorship theory can therefore be usefully reconsidered in light of the issue of repetition. This is because repetition is an issue which, in rescinding the displacement of the female into the realm of object, ostensibly serves to disrupt the marginalisation of women. It does so both in terms of the theory of the gaze in that it recognises the active female look, and in terms of behavioural repetition in that it negates the association of femininity with masochism. Rather than a simple set of binary associations (active / male, passive / female), each gender is, through their repetition of passive experience as active, afforded much the same 'oscillation' between these two subject positions.

This echoes the tensions between linear and cyclical modes of repetition, in which linearity correlates with the stricture of binaries, and the cyclical is suggestive of the looser and more fluid sense of oscillation. It was discovered that linearity is not the antithesis to the cyclical. Equally, oscillation does not deny the binary positions, but allows for a movement in between the two, a movement into the 'and' of the 'excluded middle' (Rodowick 1991: 3). Passivity is as integral to the male spectator's behavioural repetition as activity is to the female, and masochism as much a preserve of the male as of the female.

It is thus highly problematic that in *Flirt*, a film which, as has already been suggested, embodies problematic gender politics, Miho is so marginalised. Unlike the two male flirts, Miho significantly turns her experience of activity in on herself, shooting her own face when she gains possession of the gun. Having participated in a repetition which is suggestive of the possibility of the active female, moving through the repetitions from a passive position to an active one, Miho is fundamentally returned to a passive position. Her gaze, with its representation both of curiosity and desire, is transposed through masochism into passivity. Like the femme fatale of *film noir*, the sexualised Miho is not only punished for her transgressions, but is instrumental in that punishment. This constitutes a doubly reductive view of women. Miho is thus finally an embodiment of the regressive and marginalising association of femininity with masochism.

The marginalisation of Miho is inevitable when one considers that, for the female, both looking and not looking are masochistic positions. This is not so of the male, who is not forced into the marginalising position of transvestite (Doane 1991: 24) in relation to the image when he identifies with the 'hero' of the narrative tradition. The female choice between looking and not looking is thus illusory, since both are fundamentally marginalising. Displayed diagrammatically, Miho's alternatives become:

Identify with the powerless
female

Looking: or   Transvestism[54]

Parody the male voyeur   (marginal position)

Choice   Marginal: no
                                              choice at all

Not   { Destroying your capacity }   Exclusion from
Looking: { to look (curiosity / desire) } powerfulness
                                              (marginal position)

It would be tempting to read Miho's destruction of her face as a refusal to participate in the subject / object dichotomy of spectatorship. However, that the act is passive as well as active (she is surprised into pulling the trigger) and masochistic in that it is she, the only female flirt, who is instrumental in the destruction of her own face, marks her 'difference'. This is fundamentally marginalising, as is the regressive mutilation and self-violation of her body in which Miho participates. This suggests that femininity, within *Flirt*'s repetitions at least, is to be inevitably equated with marginality.

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[54]Like Doane, who refers to female transvestism (Doane 1991: 24), Mulvey refers to the possibilities of trans-sex identification in her 'Afterthoughts on Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema', in which she places an emphasis on female oscillation between active and passive subject positions (Mulvey 1981: 13). This constitutes a development of her previous emphasis on the opposition of these positions within binaries.

Repetition and Difference: Some Conclusions

Flirt's behavioural repetitions thus confirm what the structural repetition section discovered, i.e. that Hartley's concern both with repetition and with the difference which inhabits it is realised to its greatest extent here. Each flirt repeats the same pattern of behaviour, loosely defined as the 'thrill of the chase', in which pleasure and pain are mingled within experiences of novelty and loss. This notion of pleasure and pain being integral to repetition suggests the drawing of an analogy between repetition and masochism. Both, according to the Freudian model, involve the derivation of pleasure from pain. Hence an exploration earlier in this chapter of the three aspects of masochism which Freud identifies (moral, erotogenic and feminine) led to the recognition of the latter of these as the most fruitful in its application to *Flirt*, in which female masochism is the key difference within the final, repetitive and symbolic destruction of Miho's face.

Flirt's repetitions ask of established spectatorship theory: is the female destined to become necessarily masochistic and 'passive' when she aspires to an active gaze? Is masochism necessarily 'female' as Rodowick's development of Mulvey's key work on spectatorship suggests? Arguably, the limitation of Rodowick's argument lies within his continuation of Mulvey's gendering of the active spectator. Although he recognises the problem which led to Mulvey's reluctance to gender masochism as female, it is nonetheless a gendering which he uses, and which continues to marginalise the female. Although the possibility of a fluidity of positions; an oscillation between them, is clearly apparent, Miho's destruction of her face occupies a contradictory position in relation to this. It constitutes both an act of symbolic castration (placing her in a masculinized position), and a problematic denial of her active, curious and desiring female gaze.

Repetition serves to shed new light upon the notions of 'active' and 'passive' within spectatorship theory. This binary offers a useful but limited view which is keenly felt in Doane's work on the female spectator. She is understandably reluctant merely to institute a reversal of these positions when theorising the female gaze. Both

male ('re-enacting' the trauma of his castration anxiety) and female (repeating to-be-looked-at-ness passivity as active experience) pleasures in spectatorship are inextricably bound up in notions of repetition and masochism, i.e. deriving pleasure from the repetition of pain. Indeed, with both male and female moving between active and passive positions through such patterns of repetition, the possibility of the masochistic male is as concrete as the theory of the masochistic female.

It is thus contradictory and problematic that, despite the fact that masochism is not necessarily 'feminine', it is Miho whose actions are tinged with masochism. After examining the application of psychoanalytic theory to film, looking for the limitations of the arguments, it becomes apparent that the very issue of spectatorship continues to marginalise the female. Within established narrative cinematic coding at least, both looking and not looking constitute marginalising positions for the female spectator. Looking requires either identification with the objectified and powerless female, or an assumption of the male, voyeuristic gaze. Not looking, for *Flirt*'s Miho at least, involves both the destruction of her capacity to look, and a return to the passive position from whence she came, her promiscuous sexual tendencies curbed by her own actions. If masochism is not to be exclusively equated with femininity within a theory of spectatorship modified in light of repetition, femininity *is* to be equated with marginality within *Flirt*'s repetitions, repetitions which are suggestive of gender constituting the 'difference'.

It is the question: 'What is the difference?' to which the final words of this chapter are to be addressed. In terms of formal repetition, difference was found to inhabit patterns of repetition both in *Trust* and *Flirt*. Where the degree of repetition is high, attention inevitably begins to be drawn to the differences. These differences can be linguistic, such as the use of cadence, or differing modes of emotional expression, as a means of interpolating difference into formal repetition. They can also lie in other aspects of the film's form, which becomes a mode through which to mark the difference which inhabits patterns of repetition for our attention. It can finally be asserted that the difference within Hartley's repetitions is gender difference. By suggesting an element of masochism within Miho's actions in *Flirt*, Hartley

perpetuates a coding of masochism as a marginalising phenomenon. Yet even when this association is itself put into crisis through the use of repetition, the association of femininity both with difference and with marginality persists.

The signified of Hartley's repetitions (female as difference, and difference as marginalising) becomes his *auteurist* signature. Earlier chapters revealed a use of women which is inherently regressive, despite Hartley's professed intention to effect a positive portrayal. The heterosexual coupling of Miho and Hal with which *Flirt* concludes serves to re-inscribe patriarchy. It is a conservative act on Hartley's part, closing off the possibility for the female to be radically different (active, desiring) rather than rendered into a difference into which her gender places her. The obvious sexuality which was previously asserted as an empowered assertion of difference has been transposed into a subsumed version of itself. Inevitably, the result is a paradox which at once restricts radical difference in returning the woman to a position of passivity in relation to man, and emphasises the gender difference which marginalises women, as Miho becomes assimilated into a conventional relationship with Hal.

CONCLUSION

The tension between difference and repetition is the key to Hal Hartley's films. It signifies a conflict between the desire to reference admired predecessors and the impulse to assert a different mode of film-making, personal and distinct. Both repeating and modifying, Hartley implicitly refers out to the wider discourses of postmodernism, setting up a conflict between the postmodern (allusion, repetition) and the modernist (Godard) and imposing onto his films postmodernism's function: creating something new out of repetition. Both nostalgically recycling and ironically questioning the film image, Hartley occupies a distanced position which belies his obvious love of the image, and both the deliberation and quirkiness with which he uses it.

The structuring of this thesis around parallel films serves to illustrate the way in which thematic events and consistent concerns are repeated across Hartley's films. Notable themes which recur include the redemption of criminal characters, the questioning of the commodified image of woman and the invocation of pornography as a signifier of this commodification. Most consistently repeated is the concern with marginality. This presents itself within issues of genre, both through the use of marginal generic references, and through a marginal approach to mainstream genres. It is also evident within Hartley's characterisation of people marginalised by youth, criminality, social status and by their involvement with pornography. Fundamentally, marginality presents itself within gender, in which women are marginalised in relation to men who are themselves marginal in relation to hegemonic patriarchy, men whose emasculation seemingly makes them as marginal as the women.

Specifically, Matthew's masculinity is put into crisis in *Trust* through the repetition of conflict with his father, in his carrying out of 'women's work' in the home. It is a crisis which the film institutes formally through the use of repetition. Repetition embodies tensions between linear and cyclical forms, between formal and behavioural modes of repetition, and between repetition itself and the difference

which impinges formally on the spaces between repetitions. *Trust's* difference lies within Matthew's emasculation. The tension between active and passive positions which characterises the behaviour both of Matthew and of his father can be transposed into non / conformity to patriarchy, with a position of non-conformity being an inherently marginal position for a male in a patriarchal society. Matthew repeats his passive experiences of loss and blame as active ones through his relationship with Maria. Yet he is marginalised by the emasculation which this engenders, as Maria affords him a true repetition of loss by aborting her child. In its engagement with active and passive modes of behaviour, *Trust* serves to highlight the concern with gender which is a consistent point of interest throughout Hartley's films.

Similarly concerned with patriarchal institutions is *Amateur*, in which criminality is articulated as a marginal position in relation to the law, and amnesia perpetuated as a means through which this marginality can be moved into excess. Thomas is doubly marginalised, both by his criminality, and his inability to remember it. If he cannot recall his social positioning he has, by extension, lost his claim to one. Thomas' amnesia serves to illustrate the problem of an identity which is seemingly assumed rather than fixed, and perpetuated by reputation rather than action. *Amateur*'s protagonist is rendered into passivity through his reliance upon others, notably Isabelle, for redemption. In being situated as Redeemer in relation to Thomas, Isabelle ostensibly occupies a position of agency and strength. Yet she is subjected to the pornography which is doubly invoked in relation to *Amateur*'s two female protagonists: Sofia who has appeared in pornographic films, as well as Isabelle who attempts to make a living writing it. Despite Thomas' experience of redemption, he, the producer of pornography, is as marginalised as the women who rely upon it for survival, remaining, like Isabelle, on society's margins.

Henry Fool reprises *Amateur's* concern with pornography, and the problems it entails (in terms of definition as well as gender positioning). The writing which both Simon and Henry produce resonates with pornography: Henry's through his association of his work with *Confession*, one of pornography's key modes; Simon's because it is defined as such by society. The castigation and rejection to which each

man's writing is subjected indicates a blurring of the legal and the moral, with morality constituting a genre through which *Henry Fool*'s inherent marginality is articulated. Whilst Henry is an embodiment of marginality as rejection of, Simon's point of crisis is a marginality that has more to do with exclusion from. Yet, more than Henry's criminality (for which redemption is disrupted: he won't repent) and Simon's withdrawal from society, it is in the film's analogous points of reference that *Henry Fool's* true marginality lies. Invoking morality as genre and shamanism as characterisation, the film is satiated not only in the repetition of themes from *Amateur* (redemption, criminality, belief systems) but in marginality.

It is this marginality which Audry personifies in *The Unbelievable Truth*. Hartley places her in a marginal position in relation to filmic constructs by having her symbolise the female experience of woman as an object to be seen. She is the site of fiscal exchange, a commodity over which others (as well as she) can negotiate. Her complicity with her commodification gives her the semblance of control. It allows her to move into the city and away from her father. It also separates her from her ideals, withholding ultimate control from her. The power lies with those for whom she mediates viewing pleasure (the spectator, the *auteur*) rather than with Audry. Despite the apparent relationship between the two which the film establishes, complicity does not equal control, and Audry is further marginalised by her ultimate rejection of money as she places herself in Josh's hands, resuming the belief which formerly marked her difference.

Simple Men is the film in which Hartley attempts to effect his most positive portrayal of women. Apparently reverent (he places Kate at the centre of the narrative, and lovingly transposes Elina's image onto the screen), Hartley nonetheless marginalises these women by locating them on the periphery of male-centred genres. Placed as signifiers of society and community, and disruption of male buddy dynamics, the women are not the true focus of the film. Rather, they are, as Elina's excessive and multiple points of difference indicates, marginalised by it. Yet it is the case that, although it becomes ever clearer in *Simple Men* that it is women who are 'difference', it is men who are 'marginality'. This male marginality is generically

instituted through Bill and Dennis' state of transition on the road, and the fact that the culmination of the brothers' quests is in each case an emasculating submission: to Mother (Kate / Bill) and Father (Dad / Dennis).

Before returning to *Flirt*, it is pertinent to reprise the interrogation of marginality which the introduction articulated. It is possible to discern both a positive and a negative aspect to marginality, with the possibility of interpreting the difference which characterises marginality and pushes it to its furthest bounds as a position of empowerment and insight, a rejection of rather than by. Certainly, Hartley's own position of marginality as an independent film-maker who makes Godardian, art-house films is suggestive of this. The negative aspect comes along with the fact that it possible also to see marginality as a displacement to the periphery, a rejection by. It is the case that Hartley is universally concerned with the marginal character, male and female. The films establish a discourse about male marginality. Hence the crisis of Matthew's masculinity in *Trust*, the passivity with which both Henry (Fool) and *Amateur*'s Thomas receive third-party redemption and the subjugation of Bill to Kate in *Simple Men*. Yet this marginality is resonant precisely because, in being marginal, man is rendered into a position more usually occupied by women: he is emasculated, if not feminised.

It becomes increasingly apparent that it is within gender that the ultimate difference, the most absolute version of marginality, is located. Hartley indulges in a Godardian attempt to question the commodification of the female image, notably through his reference to pornography, in which the obscene is nowhere to be seen. Yet he inescapably uses women to mediate viewing pleasure, collecting actresses whose iconicity is asserted (the striking faces of Adrienne Shelly and Elina Löwensohn, the icon of French cinema that is Isabelle Huppert). It is women who are more fundamentally marginalised, who are placed as the ultimate expression of difference, within Hartley's films. This is despite the fact that Hartley seeks self-reflexively to question the his use of the female image through not showing it, despite the fact that Hartley attempts to invoke pornography as an empty centre around which gender positioning can be located.

It is through *Flirt* that any ambiguity within Hartley's treatment of women can retrospectively be resolved, and in which this fundamental and regressive association of women with difference is perpetuated. The films are themselves using a system within which woman is inherently marginalised (can subsequent revisions which take oscillation as their centre ever dissipate the inescapable cogency of the dichotomy which marginalises woman into passivity?). In using Miho Nikaido, his wife, and placing himself as a character within the film, *Flirt* serves to magnify the relationship between *auteur* and actress. The importance of his role becomes exaggerated as the wife / actress is rendered passive, moulded by her husband / *auteur*, with the choreographed sequence serving as an emblem of the woman who is manipulated passively by male hands. The spectator who identifies with Miho is thus placed in the ultimately passive position which she embodies, the double marginalisation of a difference which is asserted both in terms of her gender, and her relationship with the *auteur* who elects to gender that difference female.

Repetition thus functions in Hartley's films in much the same way as pornography: it constitutes a medium through which gender can be interrogated. Despite Hartley's desire to be positive in his portrayal of women, and apparent focus upon masculinity as much as femininity, his films do not transcend the binaries which marginalise. Multiple points of opposition persist: between looking and not looking, between active and passive patterns of behaviour, and between repetition and difference, which constitutes the central binary of Hartley's films. Hartley engages with male marginality, and with masculinity in crisis. Yet it is the women who are most fully marginalised in relation to masculinist forms, both generic and pornographic. In being marginal, Hartley's male protagonists invariably occupy an emasculated or feminised position. It is this, as much as the treatment of Miho in *Flirt*, which asserts that it is femininity which is most forcibly asserted as a point of difference. It is this difference which lies both at marginality's greatest extent and between the repetitions upon which Hartley's films are structured. It is gender difference which is Hartley's 'ultimately signified'.

HAL HARTLEY FILMOGRAPHY

1984: *Kid* (Short)

Director: Hal Hartley
Screenwriter: Hal Hartley
Producer: Hal Hartley
Cinematographer: Michael Spiller
Editor: Hal Hartley

Principal Cast:
Ned: Ricky Ludwig
Ned's Father: Leo Gosse
Accordion Girl: Janine Erickson
Patsy: Karen Sillas
Bruce: Bob Gosse
Ivan: George Feaster
Ivan's Sister: Pamela Stewart
The Boyfriend: David Troup

33 mins

1987: *The Cartographer's Girlfriend* (Short)

Director: Hal Hartley
Screenwriter: Hal Hartley
Producer: Hal Hartley
Cinematographer: Michael Spiller
Editor: Hal Hartley

Principal Cast:
Girl: Marissa Chibas
Boy: Steven Geiger
George: George Feaster
Mom: Lorraine Achee
Dad: Robert Richmond

29 mins

1988: *Dogs* (Short)

Director: Hal Hartley
Screenwriters: Hal Hartley, Steven O'Connor, Richard Ludwig
Producer: Hal Hartley
Cinematographer: Steven O'Connor
Art Director: Liz Hazan

Principal Cast:
Ricky Ludwig
Mike Brady
Gary Sauer

20 mins

1989: *The Unbelievable Truth*

Director: Hal Hartley
Screenwriter: Hal Hartley
Producers: Bruce Weiss, Hal Hartley
Executive Producer: Jerome Brownstein
Production Company: Action Features
Cinematographer: Michael Spiller
Editor: Hal Hartley
Production Designer: Carla Gerona
Music: Jim Coleman, Philip Reed, Wild Blue Yonder, The Brothers Kendall

Principal Cast:
Audry Hugo: Adrienne Shelly
Josh Hutton: Robert Burke
Vic Hugo: Christopher Cooke
Pearl: Julia McNeal
Mike: Mark Bailey
Emmet: Gary Sauer
Liz Hugo: Katherine Mayfield
Todd Whitbread: David Healey
Otis: Matt Malloy
Jane, the Waitress: Edie Falco

90 mins

1990: *Trust*

Director: Hal Hartley
Screenwriter: Hal Hartley
Producer: Bruce Weiss
Executive Producer: Jerome Brownstein
Production Company: Zenith Productions Ltd. / True Fiction Pictures in association with Film Four International
Cinematographer: Michael Spiller
Editor: Nick Gomez
Production Designer: Daniel Ouellette
Music: Philip Reed, The Great Outdoors

Principal Cast:
Maria Coughlin: Adrienne Shelly
Matthew Slaughter: Martin Donovan
Jean Coughlin: Rebecca Nelson
Jim Slaughter: John MacKay
Peg Coughlin: Edie Falco
Anthony: Gary Sauer
Ed: Matt Malloy
Rachel: Susanne Costollos

101 mins

1991: *Theory of Achievement* (Short)

Director: Hal Hartley
Screenwriter: Hal Hartley
Producers: Ted Hope, Larry Meistrich
Production Company: Yo Productions Ltd. #2 / Alive from Off Center
Cinematographer: Michael Spiller
Editor: Hal Hartley
Production Designer: Steven Rosenzweig
Music: Jeffrey Howard, Ned Rifle, John Stearns

Principal Cast:
Bob Gosse
Jessica Sager
Jeffrey Howard
Elina Löwensohn
Bill Sage
Naledi Tshazibane
M.C. Bailey
Nick Gomez
Ingrid Rudfors

17.45 mins

1991: *Ambition* (Short)

Director: Hal Hartley
Screenwriter: Hal Hartley
Producers: Ted Hope, James Schamus
Executive Producer: Alyce Dissette
Associate Producer: Larry Meistrich
Cinematographer: Michael Spiller
Editor: Hal Hartley
Production Designer: Steven Rosenzweig
Music: Ned Rifle

Principal Cast:
George Feaster
Patricia Sullivan
Rick Groel
Jim McCauley
David Troup
Chris Buck
Margaret Mendleson
Julie Sukman
Bill Sage
Bob Gosse

9 mins

1991: *Surviving Desire* (Short)

Director: Hal Hartley
Screenwriter: Hal Hartley
Producer: Ted Hope
Executive Producer: Jerome Brownstein
Production Company: True Fiction Pictures Ltd. / American Playhouse
Cinematographer: Michael Spiller
Editor: Hal Hartley
Production Designer: Steve Rosenzweig
Music: Ned Rifle, The Great Outdoors

Principal Cast:
Jude: Martin Donovan
Sofie: Mary B. Ward
Henry: Matt Malloy
Katie: Rebecca Nelson

60 mins

1992: *Simple Men*

Director: Hal Hartley
Screenwriter: Hal Hartley
Producers: Ted Hope, Hal Hartley
Executive Producers: Jerome Brownstein, Bruce Weiss
Production Company: Zenith Productions Ltd. / American Playhouse Theatrical Films
in association with Fine Line Features, Film Four International, BIM Distribuzione
Cinematographer: Michael Spiller
Editor: Steve Hamilton
Production Designer: Daniel Ouellette
Music: Ned Rifle

Principal Cast:
Bill McCabe: Robert Burke
Dennis McCabe: Bill Sage
Kate: Karen Sillas
Elina: Elina Löwensohn
Martin: Martin Donovan
Mike: M.C. Bailey
Vic: Christopher Cooke
Ned Rifle: Jeffrey Howard
Sheriff: Damian Young
Dad: John MacKay
Security Guard: Richard Reyes
Nun: Vivian Lanko
Vera: Mary McKenzie

104 mins

1993: *The Only Living Boy in New York*
(Music video for Everything But The Girl)

Director: Hal Hartley
Cinematographer: Michael Spiller
Editor: Steve Hamilton

4.10 mins

1993: *From a Motel 6*
(Music Video for Yo La Tengo)

Director: Hal Hartley
Cinematographer: Michael Spiller
Editor: Steve Hamilton

3.00 mins

1993: *Iris*
(Video produced for No Alternative Compilation)

Cast:
Parker Posey
Sabrina Lloyd

1994: *Amateur*

Director: Hal Hartley
Screenwriter: Hal Hartley
Producers: Ted Hope, Hal Hartley
Executive Producers: Jerome Brownstein, Scott Meek, Lindsay Law, Yves Marmion

Production Company: UGC in association with American Playhouse Theatrical Films and Channel Four Films. A Zenith / True Fiction Pictures Production
Cinematographer: Michael Spiller
Editor: Steve Hamilton
Production Designer: Steve Rosenzweig
Music: Jeffrey Taylor, Ned Rifle

Principal Cast:
Isabelle: Isabelle Huppert
Thomas: Martin Donovan
Sofia: Elina Löwensohn
Edward: Damian Young
Jan: Chuck Montgomery
Kurt: David Simonds
Officer Melville: Pamela Stewart
George, the Pornographer: David Greenspan
Kid Reading the *Odyssey*: Adria Tennor

100 mins

1995: *Flirt*

Director: Hal Hartley
Screenwriter: Hal Hartley
Producer: Ted Hope
Executive Producers: Reinhard Brundig, Satoru Iseki, Jerome Brownstein
Production Company: True Fiction Pictures / Pandora Film / NDF with the support of Filmboard Berlin-Brandenburg Gmbh
Cinematographer: Michael Spiller
Editor: Steve Hamilton
Music: Ned Rifle and Jeffrey Taylor

Principal Cast:
New York
Bill: Bill Sage
Walter: Martin Donovan
Emily, Bill's Girlfriend: Parker Posey
Dr Clint: Karen Sillas
Nurse: Erica Gimpel
Men's Room Man # 1: Harold Perrineau
Men's Room Man #2: Robert John Burke
Men's Room Man # 3: Paul Austin

Berlin
Dwight: Dwight Ewell
Johan, Dwight's Boyfriend: Dominik Bender
Greta, Werner's Wife: Geno Lechner
Doctor: Peter Fitz

Nurse: Elina Löwensohn
Boris, Labourer # 1: Hans Martin Stier
Peter, Labourer #2: Lars Rudolph
Mike, Labourer # 3: Jörg Biester

Tokyo
Miho: Miho Nikaido
Yuki, Ozu's Wife: Chikako Hara
Mr Ozu: Toshizo Fujiwara
Doctor: Yutaka Matsushige
Nurse: Tomoko Fujita
Kazuko, Jailbird # 1: Eri Yu
Shoko, Jailbird # 2: Yuri Aso
Narumi, Jailbird # 3: Natsumi Mizuno
Hal, Miho's Boyfriend: Hal Hartley

85 mins

1997: *Henry Fool*

Director: Hal Hartley
Screenwriter: Hal Hartley
Producer: Hal Hartley
Executive Producers: Larry Meitrich, Daniel J. Victor, Keith Abell
Production Company: True Fiction Pictures and The Shooting Gallery in association
with Zenith Productions
Cinematographer: Michael Spiller
Editor: Steve Hamilton
Production Designer: Steve Rosenzweig
Music: Hal Hartley

Principal Cast:
Henry Fool: Thomas J Ryan
Simon Grim: James Urbaniak
Fay: Parker Posey
Mary Grim: Maria Porter
Warren: Kevin Corrigan
Ned: Liam Aiken
Gnoc Deng: Miho Nikaido
Father Hawkes: Nicholas Hope
Angus James: Chuck Montgomery
Camille Paglia: Herself

132 mins

1998: *The Book of Life* (Short)

Director: Hal Hartley
Screenwriter: Hal Hartley
Producers: Thierry Cagianut, Matthew Myers
Executive Producer: Jerome Brownstein
Production Company: La Sept Arte, Haut et Court and True Fiction Pictures
Editor: Steve Hamilton

Principal Cast:
Jesus Christ: Martin Donovan
Magdalena: P.J Harvey
Satan: Thomas J. Ryan
Edie: Miho Nikaido
True Believer: James Urbaniak

62 mins

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Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert (Stephan Elliott, 1994)

Bande À Part (Godard, 1964)

Bodies, Rest and Motion (Michael Steinberg, 1993)

Breakfast Club, The (John Hughes, 1985)

British Sounds (Jean-Luc Godard, 1969)

Je Vous Salue Marie (Jean-Luc Godard, 1983)

La Chinoise (Jean-Luc Godard, 1967)

My Own Private Idaho (Gus Van Sant, 1991)

Rebel Without a Cause (Nicholas Ray, 1955)

Thelma and Louise (Ridley Scott, 1991)

Vertigo (Hitchcock, 1958)

Weekend (Jean-Luc Godard, 1967)

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