

GIRLS ON THE BORDERLINE  
Rewriting the Rite of Passage Film

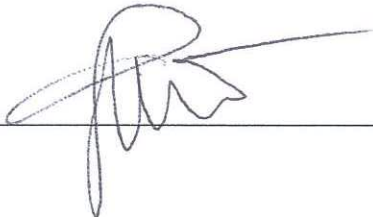
**Esther Jo Steiner**

**Doctor of Philosophy  
Feature Film Screenwriting**

**Media Arts Department  
Royal Holloway, University of London**

**Declaration of Authorship**

I ..... hereby declare that this thesis and the work presented in it is entirely my own. Where I have consulted the work of others, this is always clearly stated.

Signed:  \_\_\_\_\_ Date: 1.7.2011

## Abstract

Girl protagonists in rite of passage films regularly come to be burdened with a sobering maturity that sees them acquire a dysphoric subjective position under an oppressive patriarchal paradigm. According to Oedipal logics, both genders, in extricating themselves from the imaginary fullness of the maternal bond, come to be subjects of lack, but culturally entrenched patriarchal fictions concur in fostering masculine narcissism at the expense of the feminine. This practice-based research asks how the Oedipal narrative structure, which has defined twentieth-century mainstream cinema, can be re-appropriated and re-imagined for the purpose of writing a screenplay that highlights the girl's active and constructive engagement in the project of selfhood.

My reading of seven films, which are all at the low-budget end of the mainstream (studio-financed as well as independent), details parallel structures and discourses within the proposed genre. Victor Turner's rite of passage model is used as a template for understanding rite of passage plot structure and transformative symbolism, while key concepts in Lacanian psychoanalysis serve to throw light on the adolescent girl's psychosexual development. My reading of *Girlfight*, which follows Luce Irigaray's critique of phallogentrism and concept of intersubjective dialogue, provides a key insight into how the narrative aspects of film can provide a propitious environment for resolving cultural impasse and catalysing understanding and change.

I have written my screenplay *Lullaby*, which accompanies the thesis as Appendix IV, in accordance with my research goals. It serves as a blueprint for a feature film that will hopefully, one day, go into production.

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A special mention must be given to two people sadly no longer with us, my mother Jennifer Rose Steiner and my grandfather Dr. Ronald S. Savidge, whose gracious examples will always inform my endeavours.

I dedicate this thesis to my adorable daughter Billie Elizabeth who was born in the throes of it, and who has been very co-operative in the way of being happily away from me for longer periods. And I thank Thomas for the invaluable experiences of relationship and motherhood that furnished me with the passion to explore these life-defining challenges and persevere throughout.

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## Introduction

I'm a teenager, I'm supposed to  
get out of control!  
(Nicole, *Crazy/Beautiful*)

In the film *Crazy/Beautiful* (John Stockwell, 2001, US), Nicole Oakley (Kirsten Dunst), the privileged daughter of congressman Tom Oakley (Bruce Davidson), is unable to stay out of trouble. Nicole is shown skipping classes, getting very drunk at parties, teasing men with her sexual availability and generally pursuing an anti-authoritarian and pleasure-seeking lifestyle. She cultivates recalcitrant and angry behaviour, which she directs towards institutional but also personified authority, especially that of her father. She laments his inability to show real emotions and criticises him for his self-serving ethics. He in turn claims to love her but considers her a liability and a danger to the wellbeing of others. He even tells Nicole's boyfriend Carlos (Jay Hernandez) that she is "capable of running a perfectly oiled train straight off the tracks".

After a series of turbulent events, Nicole makes peace with her father and Carlos's dream of becoming a pilot is realised. The film ends with a nostalgic montage of earlier moments in which Nicole and Carlos are shown enmeshed in the naïve devotion of first love. Indeed, the twosome looks utterly blissful in this sequence of flashbacks recalled by Nicole in her final voice over and closing with a shot of Carlos, dressed in his pilot's uniform, walking towards a fighter aircraft, bathed in sunlight and smiling broadly. It then freezes and becomes a photograph, which Nicole asserts she keeps with her all the time. Despite having a certain narrative authority, Nicole's melancholic reflection emphasises her dependency on Carlos, and this reading is underscored by absent visuals of her matured self and the lack of references to

her personal future or career. Nicole concludes that she is looking forward to her next visit to Carlos. But is that really all she has to look forward to? Noteworthy also is the disappearance of Nicole's best friend Maddy (Taryn Manning), half way through the film, with whom she is seen on near-romantic terms. Rachel Pfeffer, the producer of *Crazy/Beautiful*, said in an interview that "he [John Stockwell] was always trusting that a teenage audience would want to see a drama if it was done honestly" (Malanowski, 2001, AR12). Was Stockwell, despite the honesty of his intentions, aware of the ambiguities of his finale? As a white male he might have unwittingly served his own purposes. But *Thirteen*, which is directed by a woman, reveals a similar problematic.

The journalist Desson Howe describes the film *Thirteen* (Catherine Hardwicke, 2003, US) as "like real life unfolding before your eyes" (Howe, 2003, T34). After falling under the spell of fellow teenager Evie (Nikki Reed), Tracy Louise (Evan Rachel Wood) becomes manipulative and conniving. Worse, she gets her tongue pierced, steals from shops, skips classes, takes drugs, performs casual sex and becomes increasingly self-destructive. Unlike Nicole, Tracy does not appear to undergo some kind of character transformation but ends up in the restraining if loving embrace of her mother Mel (Holly Hunter). Writer/director Catherine Hardwicke said that "I wanted something that could connect to kids and moms so they would realise they were not alone" (Lee, 2003, ST1). She uses the term "cinematherapy" to describe this desired effect. Hardwicke went on to win Best Director at Sundance 2003 and Holly Hunter, who plays Tracy's mother, earned a nomination in the Best Supporting Actress category of the Academy Awards. The Internet Movie Database (IMDB, 2006) lists a number of awards for *Thirteen*. Fox Searchlight president Peter Rice, who bought the film rights for \$2 million, says in

*Entertainment Weekly*, "It's provocative material, and yes, it presents a challenge". He further points out that he had no interest in selling it in an exploitative way to a younger audience but maintains that "everyone who saw *Thirteen* loved it" (Nashawaty, 2003).

Hardwicke's *Thirteen* falls into the category of independent<sup>1</sup> film, which for many viewers represents a seemingly alternative and progressive vision (Sweeney, 1999, p10-13). But there is a clear relatedness between the protagonists in the studio-produced yet smaller film *Crazy/Beautiful* and *Thirteen*, particularly with regard to the girls' unresolved developmental trajectories. In these growing-up narratives the girls are shown unable to move forward into a socially and emotionally strong and stable adulthood. What is behind this tendency to have a girl's<sup>2</sup> rite of passage result in this unsatisfactory impasse? This practice-based research should not only shed some light on this matter, but also guide me in writing a rite of passage screenplay that, while accounting for the difficulties of growing up in a culture defined by patriarchal values, should emphasise the girl protagonist's more constructive advances made in the name of self-determination and self-autonomy.

The basis of my thesis is my reading of seven films that show a consensualising tendency to expose and highlight individual and social growing-up problems faced by the adolescent girl in a world located at the intersection between patriarchal ideology and capitalism. The girl protagonists demonstrate an awareness of how the social apparatus works to undermine their self-respect and

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<sup>1</sup> The term "independent film" usually refers to American "low-budget, off-Hollywood" productions (Kleinhans, 1998, p308).

<sup>2</sup> With the use of "girl" I refer to Catherine Driscoll's definition of the term, which in her view is not age-related but connotes an unfixed and becoming identity contrasting fixed notions of womanhood (Driscoll, 2002, p 47).



autonomy and they stage their rebellions accordingly. Significantly, these films have had mainstream releases in the years surrounding the second millennium mark (1999 - 2004), and were produced in regions ranging from the US to Australia and Europe<sup>3</sup>, allowing me to determine more or less contemporary, universal narrative patterns that have emerged within the modern, industrial West over the past century<sup>4</sup>. To begin with, I have not purposely avoided non-Western films but have looked for films that depict the individual at odds with the myth of the right to self-determination so typically present in societies structured around patriarchal/capitalist control. An example here is the beauty myth articulated by Naomi Wolf, who purports that the easing of material constraints led to increased ideological pressure on women to embody beauty standards set by a patriarchal elite (Wolf, 1991, p14). Grappling with the beauty ideals of a consumerist society will constitute a main theme in my feature screenplay *Lullaby*, which is attached as Appendix IV.

My research approach allows me to put my own conception of female adolescence to the test. This thesis not only gives a close analysis of *Lullaby*'s main story elements but should also guide subsequent rewrites, since, as a "spec script", *Lullaby* is written with the aim of selling for production, requiring ongoing revision and efforts at optimisation<sup>5</sup>. My use of the "Courier" font - the standard font for screenplays - is offered as a personal reminder of this ultimately practical purpose. Significantly, and particularly in view of this being a screenwriting thesis, my analysis is guided by the understanding that it is not the screenwriter alone who is in control of the final

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<sup>3</sup> 27 *Missing Kisses* and *Show me Love* are European co-productions.

<sup>4</sup> 27 *Missing Kisses* receives special status here, as it is largely a Georgian film.

<sup>5</sup> This early draft of *Lullaby* is written with the explicit aim of testing and exploring my hypothesis.

cinematic expression of story and character. While my readings of films rather than screenplays<sup>6</sup> should not devalue the screenwriter's already little acknowledged authority and authorship in industry and research, a screenplay is, nevertheless, the first stage in a longer process, a blueprint for a visual story that changes and evolves throughout and only receives an eventual structure in the cutting room. The director and other production entities and conditions of production radically transform the screenplay into its final shape. As David Bordwell<sup>7</sup> notes, "collective film production creates collective authorship" (Bordwell, 1997, p40).<sup>8</sup> And Bordwell gives yet another reason for taking my viewing experience of the final film as a model, rather than the underlying screenplay, which is the active role of spectator in the narrative process:

The narrative film is so made as to encourage the spectator to execute story-constructing activities. The film presents cues, patterns and gaps that shape the viewer's application of schemata and the testing of hypotheses (Bordwell, 1985, p33).

In his view, it is not least the spectator's efforts that determine the film's narrative coherence. Although Bordwell's definition of film as narrative has been criticised for its wide inclusiveness (e.g. Cowie, 1998, p178), I propose that it offers a useful approach for the

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<sup>6</sup>This said, *Girl Interrupted* (James Mangold, 1999, US) and *My Summer of Love* (Pawlikowski, 2004, UK) are film adaptations based on books, and references to both novels and film versions are essential to my line of enquiry in these respective chapters.

<sup>7</sup> In this thesis, I refer to both the neo-formalist David Bordwell and the psychoanalytic cultural theorist Slavoy Žižek, despite an antinomy between the two thinkers (see e.g. Žižek, 2001b). Without going into the intricacies of the ongoing debate, and despite the thesis' dominant psychoanalytical approaches, I propose that Bordwell's systematic, detailed observations give a useful picture of mainstream cinema form that complements Žižek's socio-cultural insights.

<sup>8</sup> At the same time, Bordwell acknowledges that the director "usually has most control over how a movie looks and sounds" (Bordwell, 1997, p41), which is a view not universally accepted (see e.g. Riikka Pelo, 2010, p114).

screenwriter, not least because it fosters "a cinematic approach".<sup>9</sup>

When I use genre conventions, I do so with the understanding that they help me communicate potentially complex story material to the spectator. Graeme Turner notes that genre is a useful tool that "makes films comprehensible" (1999, p97), while British film producer Stephen Woolley points out that "every interesting filmmaker wants to subvert audience expectations" but that the "audience needs to have some preconceptions to begin with" (Woolley, 1996, p38). While my story-writing approach is debarred of a Brechtian "self-reflexivity" in which the modes of production are laid bare (Stam, 2000, p146), my research should nevertheless demonstrate that within the dialectic of innovation and repetition, which Umberto Eco emphasises is present in even the most generic and mainstream of films (Eco, 2005, pp 191-207), social change can be reflected, inspired and made accessible to a mass audience. Indeed, as will transpire over the course of this research, the rite of passage film is all about the reflection of social values as well as emotional growth and learning and hence presents an apt site for my goal of subverting the dominant paradigm.

### **Adolescence and the Rite of Passage Film**

With his book *Adolescence* (1904), G. Stanley Hall was one of the first to publish a methodical monograph on this subject. Ever since, scholars of various disciplines have argued over the significance and timeframe of this stage. Peter Blos writes that adolescence, as one phase of the

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<sup>9</sup> While the goal of the thesis is not to radically transform the classical screenplay, it is arguably imperative for any screenwriter to (also) think outside the written form (for a more in-depth discussion see Chapter VI).

psychosexual continuum, has always been implicit in psychoanalytic theory (Blos, 1962, p15). Blos (1962, 1979) and Erik H. Erikson (1968) both emphasise the importance of identity formation and social acceptance during this stage and have developed models that show the various phases adolescents must go through. D. W. Winnicott also writes that adolescence is a "phase in the growth-process of every boy or girl", covering the period of puberty and socialisation (Winnicott, 1965, p242). For other theorists adolescence is a social construction that has proved troublesome since its conception. The anthropologist Margaret Mead, for example, criticises essentialist and universalist concepts and in her influential study on Samoan girls, argues that it is mainly culture which counts to define adolescent problems and behaviours (1973), while John Doherty (1988, p207) notes that for the motion picture industry, adolescence is purely a matter of birth date as the boundaries are set in the well-known rating systems of the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA): G ("General Audiences"), PG ("Parental Guidance"), PG-13 ("Parents strongly cautioned"), R ("Restricted - Under 17 requires accompanying parent") and NC-17 ("No one 17 and under admitted")<sup>10</sup>. I will demonstrate that adolescent and adult identities are multi-layered, unstable and complex constructions and argue that the uncertainty of these positions is reflected in their filmic portrayal.

Film critics frequently use the term "rite of passage" to describe a large variety of films<sup>11</sup>, including some on my list: *Somersault* (Cate Shortland, 2004, Australia) has been called an "intense rite-of-passage tale" (Film Four, 2005) and *My Summer of Love* a "startling rite-of-passage

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<sup>10</sup> See also the website of the MPAA, <http://www.mpa.org/>.

<sup>11</sup> While "rites of passage" recur from adolescence to old age, accompanying any individual's change in social status (see Chapter I), film critics tend to use the term in conjunction with films about adolescents.

drama" (Smith, 2004). For this project I treat the rite of passage film as a subgenre of the youth film, which Steve Neale, in view of the diverse nature of the films associated with this genre, describes simply as any film focussing on adolescent characters (Neale, 2000, p124). On this point it needs to be established that any genre discussion is fraught with a lack of consensus. Not only are there different and contrasting approaches to genre theory but there is also a pronounced difference between academic and industrial genre concepts. Tom Gunning points out that industry professionals even make films fit into categories simply to increase their marketing appeal (Gunning, 1995, pp 49-61). It is not my purpose to discuss the teen film per se as there already exists a wealth of publications on this topic<sup>12</sup>, nor to argue the case for a rite of passage genre, but to glean common particulars from a group of films to be able to extrapolate, for myself, a certain set of conventions.

### **The Angry Girl**

Peggy Orenstein writes that before 1996 very few films were made with girls tackling big themes such as anger, sexuality, alienation and displacement but that a new wave of teen films heralded a change: "Those films portray girlhood, and the transition away from it, as many grown-ups remember it: treacherous, painful and relentless" (Orenstein, 1996, p1; p20). *Manny & Lo* (Lisa Krueger, 1996, US), *Foxfire* (Annette Haywood-Carter, 1996, US), *Girls Town* (Jim McKay, 1996, US) and *Freeway* (Matthew Bright, 1996, US) all opened the same year. *Crazy/Beautiful* and *Thirteen* are more recent examples, contributing to a fairly consistent and continuous output

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<sup>12</sup> See Timothy Shary (2003), David Considine (1985), Thomas Doherty (1988) etc.

of such films. For Timothy Shary the "tough girl film" constitutes a delinquent youth subgenre<sup>13</sup> (Shary, 2003, p110). However, he does not include all films featuring rebellious young women in this category. For Shary, films about tough girls focus on the exhilaration of their toughness via delinquency (Shary, 2003, p111) or at least some form of immorality (p9). Although these aspects feature in all my selected films, their relevance is negligible. Furthermore "tough girl" may not be an adequate term to describe the girl protagonists in these films (I am going to avoid the term "heroine" throughout this thesis, because of its associations with fantasy and role model behaviour), since their vulnerabilities are too easily exposed<sup>14</sup>. As a matter of fact, tough behaviour may be more easily ascribed to the antagonists, e.g. Lisa in *Girl Interrupted* and Mona in *My Summer of Love*, who come across as much more resistant. Kimberly Roberts introduces the expression "angry girl", a very useful description, since "angry" is not identified with the negative connotations that encumber the term "tough"<sup>15</sup> and does not imply that the girls have to act tough. But Roberts, like Shary, also correlates angry girls with unapologetic and violent behaviour (Roberts, 2002, p217).

Roberts notes that the angry youth film to date has by and large been a male story, because the male character has been traditionally thought to better fit the dominant trope in such films, which is that of the "lone wolf" pitted against a larger society (Roberts, 2002, p222). The reason for this could well be down to a past tendency to repress and invalidate the expression of anger in girls. Girls in

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<sup>13</sup> The delinquent youth genre has further been classified a subgenre by Doherty (1988) and Lopez (1993).

<sup>14</sup> In *Somersault* Heidi breaks up in tears when Bianca's father tells her to stay away from his daughter.

<sup>15</sup> The online version of the Oxford Dictionary associates "tough" with uncompromising and violent behaviour (Oxford Dictionary, 2010).

the past were often told to be a "good sport rather than make a fuss" (Thomas, 1993, p36). But subcultural movements such as "girl power" and the more aggressive "riot grrl" movement, which have their roots in second-wave feminism (Fine & Harris, 2004, p33), have caused a cultural disruption and have had a major impact on the ways girls are represented today. Many recent teen films have featured violent or cruel girls but also have increasingly featured girl protagonists who protest less aggressively (all seven films in this thesis fall into this category). Shary also observes a shift in the representation of girls. He writes that:

As films and their characters continue to discover the range of their identities, young women in cinema will continue to achieve greater authority, and they won't have to appear 'delinquent' to do so (Shary, 2003, p122).

The girl's position outside the social structure, her anger at traditional mores of society and her overwhelming desire for recognition are the nodal points upon which this thesis is strung. The films in my selection avoid the excessive femininity and commodified girl culture of teen comedies such as *Clueless* (Amy Heckerling, 1995, US) or *Confessions of a Teenage Drama Queen* (Sara Sugarman, 2004, US). On the contrary, the leading girls here distance themselves from traditional forms of performed femininity and, despite their need for recognition, do not hesitate to publicly express their criticisms and display their anger. Their rebellion is not just a fashion trend, not just a cool exterior, although they may play with the powerful opportunities invested in them by their youthful sexuality. They may still look beautiful but do not use their looks to please others, especially men, although they may consciously make use of their beauty to provoke and experiment. Simone De Beauvoir writes, "when woman begins to doubt men's superiority, their pretensions serve only to

decrease her esteem for them" (De Beauvoir, 1997, p700). The enormous frustration, anger and bitterness the girls suffer results from the paradox that they seek recognition from precisely the traditional authority (usually "the world of men") they have come to deplore. De Beauvoir notes that "she [the free woman] attempts to disguise her dependence from herself, which is a way of consenting to it" (p718) and also points out that this resistance costs the girl energy and time (p692). Is it at all possible for a girl to extricate herself from this symbolic bind.

### **Girl Empowerment**

Maggie Humm writes that the task of feminist theory is to understand how sexual difference is constructed in our conscious and unconscious and to question the relation between difference, identity and social and economic inequalities (Humm, 1997, p179). Exposing and thus mapping current social inequalities is an important part of the feminist agenda. However, female empowerment implies pushing issues past exposure and into change. It seems clear that simply unearthing the unspoken laws by which mainstream filmmakers find themselves bound and examining patriarchal ideology in order to understand the subtleties of its machination, does little to effect the status quo. Wolf writes that the "beauty cult attests to a spiritual hunger for female ritual and rites of passage" and that "we need new and positive, rather than negative, celebrations to mark the female lifespan" (1991, 279). Like Claire Johnston, who in her seminal essay "Women's Cinema as Counter Cinema" (1975) claims that the working through of desire demands the use of the entertainment film (Johnston, 1999, p40), and Teresa de Lauretis, for whom feminist cinema "should be narrative and oedipal with a vengeance" (1987, p108), Wolf claims that "in transforming the



cultural environment, women who work in the mainstream media are a crucial inside vanguard" (p278). The films in this thesis attest to the notion that we have already come a long way, but despite the increase in critical content that lurks between the lines of mainstream narratives, the question that feminist film-makers have been asking themselves for decades still remain: How can we make a mainstream film that empowers women? How can we instil in the female viewer a sense of purpose and agency? What exactly serves female empowerment?

### **Theoretical Frameworks**

I have adopted an interdisciplinary approach, drawing from a range of fields such as symbolic anthropology, psychoanalysis and feminist film theory. I have taken some liberty in collapsing different theoretical traditions, which nonetheless concur in seeing the subject as unfinished, as unstable and ever only "becoming". The origin of the term "rite of passage", which was coined by the anthropologist Arnold van Gennep in 1904, serves as the starting point for my enquiry. By studying social rituals, Gennep delineated a three-phased schema of separation, segregation and incorporation by which individuals are moved from one social sphere to another (Gennep, 1960, p11). The anthropologist and comparative symbolologist Victor Turner further elaborated on the central phase of the schema, the so-called "liminal phase". Having turned away from his functional-structuralist roots, Turner put these concepts into a wider theoretical perspective and expanded the concept of liminality to encompass any "betwixt and between 'space'" (Grimes, 2000 p121). Although Turner may be criticised for the romantic overtones of his concept of liminality by marking out everyday life as static and inhumane and "sacred marginality" as humanistic

and creative (Rapport & Overing, 2000, p235), his dynamic model can be a useful tool in mapping the rite of passage plot structure underpinning the film narratives in this thesis. Tied in with this is Turner's model for studying ritual symbolism, which offers a multi-layered approach to symbols and their ritual signification. I will not only consider how these symbols are employed to express ideas of transformation but also discuss their functionality with regard to validating cultural values and positions of domination and subordination.

Victor Turner remarks on the incompleteness of anthropological analysis by pointing out that the anthropological method does not consider "the relationship between the normative elements in social life and the individual" (1967, p47). Here, Jacques Lacan's psychoanalytic theory gives a good insight into issues of feminine subjectivity and resistance. Turner and Lacan have both been associated with structuralism, a form of enquiry that has been criticised for giving partial and reductionist theories of the subject, particularly with regard to feminine subjectivity. According to Monica Wittig, here quoted by Elizabeth Wright, proponents of structural anthropology and psychoanalysis have conspired to define society according to a number of rigid concepts, such as "sexual difference", turning them into myths (Wright, 1989, p149). But Turner and Lacan also signal a departure from their structuralist roots. Mary Jo Buhle argues that psychoanalysis and feminism have evolved dialogically, sharing "a common domain as theories of human liberation, even at subsequent moments of conflict and competition" (Buhle, 1998, p3).

"Woman" has always been a highly problematic concept in the Freudian/Lacanian framework. In *The Question of Lay Analysis* Freud writes, "the sexual life of adult women is a

'dark continent' for psychology" (1927a, p212). And Lacan, famous for his provocative aphorisms, remarks in seminar XX (*Encore* 1972-73), "there is no such thing as Woman" (p68). But taken in a descriptive or evaluative rather than prescriptive sense, Lacan's works constitute a useful area of discussion in which ideological and libidinal issues surrounding power may be apprehended. In fact, Lacan departs to a certain extent from essentialist and universalist presuppositions by asserting that the Oedipus complex, which psychoanalytically speaking lies at the root of all patriarchal evil, is not a universal phenomenon. He writes that the Oedipus complex "occupies a privileged position in the present state of Western civilisation" (1988a, p198) and points out, "with respect to a Sudanese population, we discover that for them the Oedipus complex is just a rather thin joke" (1988a, p86). He also maintains that the Oedipus complex, although based on a biological disposition, requires "cultural mediation" for its normalisation (1949, p79). This biological disposition rests in the fact that the oedipal crisis is instigated by the child's realisation that not it but the father has sexual rights over the mother's body, which arguably goes some way in fostering the idea that the penis, with its obtrusive physical shape, is the same as the phallus, an image of superior physical completeness, and thereby symbolically speaking comes to dictate post-oedipal gender relations (Lacan, 1958). Lacan-critical psychoanalytic feminists, such as Judith Butler and Luce Irigaray, have pointed out that this "normalisation" of oedipal relations in the cultural-symbolic landscape has no other foundation but the white male's hegemonic aggressiveness (Butler, 2004; Irigaray, 1985). In this thesis, I would like to show that the truth may lie somewhere in the intersection of these critical positions. While the narratives bear legacy to the "tenuousness" with which man clings to his fantasised coherence, the stories clearly unfold in a

patriarchal symbolic world inherently at odds with feminine subjectivity and desire, but in which both genders are found lacking.

### Chapter Outline

The first chapter, which is divided into two sections, is dedicated to the topology of the rite of passage feature film. I will apply the Gennep/Turner rite of passage model to *Somersault* (Cate Shortland, 2004, Australia) in which a 16-year-old town girl absconds to a remote country resort. My reading will help me delineate important elements in the rite of passage plot structure and determine the extent to which this age-old and arguably universal narrative schema applies to a 21<sup>st</sup> century teen film. Following on, I will discuss the "ritual symbolism" of the Georgia-based film *27 Missing Kisses* (Nana Dzhordzhadze, Germany/Georgia/UK/France, 2000), in which 14-year-old Sybilla falls in love with a local 41-year-old womaniser. I will argue that, while the structural breakdown of post-communist society adversely affects Sybilla's passage into adulthood, the deployment of transformative and subversive symbols enhances the visual landscape of the protagonist's journey.

In the second chapter, also divided into two sections, I will discuss the psychosexual dimension of the girl protagonist's passage and discuss how phallic politics of identification may determine a girl's developmental progress. In *Crazy/Beautiful* (John Stockwell, USA, 2001), 16-year-old Nicole's conflict with her father, the exemplary congressman Tom Oakely, drives the narrative that stipulates love as a subversive principle capable of challenging his symbolic politics. In *Thirteen* (Catherine Hardwicke, USA, 2003) the focus shifts to the mother

figure. 13-year-old Tracy perceives her mother as lacking assertiveness and value in the eyes of society, which drives her to fetishise her body at the point of physical and mental breakdown.

In the third chapter, I will chart the passage of a supposedly "borderline" female adolescent patient in the film *Girl Interrupted* (James Mangold, 1999, US) and examine the relationship between patriarchal ideology and feminine pathology. I will counterpose Jacques Lacan and Donald W. Winnicott's diverging strands of psychoanalytic theory to highlight the different positions taken in the film.

In the fourth chapter, I will look at *My Summer of Love* and the portrayal of a lesbian love affair between Tamsin and Mona, two adolescent and class-divided girls. I will discuss Pawlikowski's remarkably liberal film adaptation that locates the girls inside the aesthetics of an ironic nostalgia and phallic fantasy.

The fifth chapter follows the constructive negotiations of a heterosexual relationship in which both partners follow identical ambitions. In *Girlfight* (Karyn Kusama, 2000, US), Diana falls in love with fellow boxer Adrian with whom she competes for the amateur boxing championship title. I will rely on Luce Irigaray's concept of intersubjectivity in difference to explain the dialectics of their mutual becoming.

Finally, in my sixth chapter, I will give a comparative analysis between *Lullaby* and the seven other films to determine parallel discourses and determine the extent to which the thesis statement can be reflected in the actual process of writing a screenplay.

## I

### **A Threshold View Between Structure and Anti-Structure**

In one way or another, most teen stories are about what cultural theorists call the liminal experience: that intense, suspended moment between yesterday and tomorrow, between childhood and adulthood, between being a nobody and a somebody, when everything is in question, and anything is possible.

(Martin, 1994, p68)

### **Introduction**

The anthropologist Arnold van Gennep coined the term "rite of passage" in his book published under the same name in 1904. As the name implies, rites of passage are social rituals that accompany individuals in their progression from one well-defined social status to another. These rituals take the form of special acts (e.g. presenting a passport at customs) or, particularly where religion is concerned and the nature of the sacred is revealed, full-blown ceremonies (van Gennep, 1960, p3). The purpose of these rituals is to protect society's equilibrium by informing and emotionally preparing the initiand<sup>1</sup> and by assuring public recognition of his/her new rights and obligations.

Many societies, particularly tribal ones, perform what is generally termed "puberty rites" but which van Gennep regards as inaccurate since his account shows the alignment of physiological as well as social puberty rarely coinciding<sup>2</sup> (van Gennep, p65). Rather, van Gennep points

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<sup>1</sup> A term Turner uses interchangeably with that of neophyte (Turner, 1995, p95).

<sup>2</sup> van Gennep points out that in Italy girls are allowed to marry at the age of twelve at which time only a few of them reach physiological puberty (p66).

out that adolescent rites of passage are typically rites that follow the initiand from an asexual world into a sexual one and, significantly, one in which the sex of the individual is clearly demarcated (p67). John Bancroft also notes that "adolescent initiation ceremonies are more likely in societies which attach greater social significance to gender identity" (Bancroft, 1989, p218). It may be then that the breaking of sexual taboos and the questioning of gender traditions may have contributed to the lack of adolescent rituals in the modern West. Ronald L. Grimes laments this lack of clearly identifiable adolescent rites and particularly the post-modern, peer-driven form (as opposed to the elder-guided way) that compensational structures tend to assume (Grimes, 2000, p94). Hans Sebald similarly suggests that typical adolescent behaviour (e.g. role confusion) is down to the manifestations of maladjustment to a world poorly defined for adolescents (Sebald, 1977, p2, p117).

Media environments to a large extent help adolescents define and shape their identities and realities. Jane D. Brown concludes, after a series of focus groups she conducted with adolescents, that:

Poised, if not pushed, to break out of the safety net of childhood, they embrace movies as stories about the way the world is, the way they should act as adults (Brown, 2002, p249).

Brown emphasises that adolescents realise that films are commodities produced to satisfy tastes and generate large profits but nevertheless find truths in what they see on screen (p249). Hence, by emotionally drawing the adolescent and adult audiences<sup>3</sup> into the narrative, films

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<sup>3</sup> In connection with these claims it must be noted that many rite of passage films are targeted at adult audiences (e.g. *Thirteen* was awarded an 18 rating by the British Board of Film Classification),

inform and educate both sides about the transformations of adolescence and thus share this purpose with the initiation rites observed by van Gennep, and there are many more similarities to be gleaned on the narrative, structural level. Victor Turner's dynamic approach to van Gennep's rite of passage model will provide a method for studying film as a modern initiatory experience. His structure/anti-structure duality is less dependent on the conflation of sexuality and age identity and offers a very useful approach for charting the unstable and mercurial nature of both cultural and subjective age. Significantly, however, Turner's schema reflects the dialectic process between adolescent and adult communities. Brown also notes that youth films usually encompass a critical outlook on society and as such are "powerful agenda setters" (p250).

Turner, who essentially transposes van Gennep's ritual concepts to our modern Western lifestyle, identifies two grades of immersion: social structure, which is the "distinctive arrangement of mutually dependent institutions and the institutional organization of social positions" (1974, p272), and anti-structure, the necessary withdrawal from such normal modes of social action and interaction. Turner places all anti-structural behaviour under the name "liminality" (1982, p28), a concept which he developed extensively and which I will outline in detail over the course of the chapter. Another important term in Turner's works - one that he also associates with anti-structure (1982, p44) - is "communitas", which stands for an unmediated form of human interaction that preserves and fosters individual distinctness and creativity (1982, p45; 1974, p231). Turner emphasises that symbolic actions associated with communitas and liminality are necessary in helping humans adjust to different environments and

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while the presence of nostalgia further serves adult interests (see Chapter IV).



internal or external changes, respectively (1982, pp 21-22). He even notes that people can go "crazy" if they never experience *communitas* (1974, p266). The Turnerian human feels an inherent longing to mature and progress and to experience life in its many modes of expression and fullness. This is because "man...grows through anti-structure and conserves through structure" (1974, p298, author's italics). Despite certain structural obligations (e.g. school), adolescents, more than adults, move in liminal spaces and develop *communitas* with their fellow initiands. Conversely, work and family obligations see adults more firmly enmeshed in the social structure. Adults bear the brunt of adolescent anti-structural rebellion and, on the basis of this conflict, are made to assert their structural positions more strongly. Ideally, however, these vexed relations do not rigidify the adversaries in their respective positions but give rise to creative dialogues and a reappraisal of normative privileges and authorities, allowing for mutual transformations.

Despite the openness of the Turnerian model, he received criticism from Caroline Walker-Bynum, who in her study on Christian women in medieval Europe maintains that Turner's ideas "describe the stories and symbols of men better than those of women" (1991, p 32). She further argues that subjects that occupy a low place in the social structure (women by tradition) have no need to escape from structure, because they are already outside of it (p34). Turner indeed affirms that in male-dominated politico-legal systems, social links through women, and by abstraction femininity itself, tend to become associated with "*communitas*" (1978, p 289), but he does not identify femininity per se as an essentially liminal phenomenon. According to Turner, socio-structural as well as liminal existence determines all living beings at all times.

Indeed, Barbara Babcock maintains that Turner's anthropology is not a male discourse, but - by valorising liminality and emphasising its import - a "gynesis", a putting of woman back into discourse (Babcock, 2001, p116). While there is an unmistakable gender bias discernable in the films in this thesis with almost exclusively men in positions of authority, the films support the Turnerian ideal of a "coming together" - a fusing of structure and anti-structure - in the construction of people's self-identities. In none of the films are the young women shown accommodating their identities fully to an invariably male-dominated social order; instead, they end up anchoring themselves at the fulcrum between a social structure that provides for their basic necessities and a liminal space that allows for the continuation of their personal creativity and critical thinking.

### **The Mapping of the Rite of Passage Plotline**

According to van Gennep's model, a typical rite of passage can be broken down into three stages: separation (preliminal), transition (liminal) and re-incorporation (post-liminal) (Gennep, 1960, p11). In his works, Victor Turner elaborates in particular on the individual's transitional phase, which he, like van Gennep who introduced the term to describe an area of ambiguity or social limbo (Turner, 1982, p24), calls the limen (meaning "threshold" in Latin). Turner describes "liminars" as "neither here nor there", as "betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention, and ceremonial" (Turner, 1995, p95), but also as a "privileged class, largely supported by the labour of others" (1974, p 259). Adolescents, whether male or female, actual or fictional, are liminal beings. They are indeed an ambiguous group, on the one hand dependent on

family and state, on the other independent in spirit; they share adult privileges (e.g. they have sex and, at least in Europe, drink alcohol) but not yet their responsibilities such as work or family commitments.

Turner broadens the significance of van Gennep's ritual model by arguing that it can be applied to a plethora of pre- and post-industrial processual forms, which range from the Ndembu ritual to Aristotle's definition of tragedy, and that it shapes an age-old narrative, the social drama, which affects and changes social relationships<sup>4</sup> (1982, p72). The social drama has a basic structure that can be broken down into four phases, "breach, crisis, redress, and *either reintegration or recognition of schism*" (Turner, 1982, p69, author's italics): the dissident individual breaks out of the norm-governed social structure, which leads to crisis and a liminal attempt at redressive action, then follows either a re-incorporation of that individual into the social structure or recognition that the cleavage between the two sides is too irreparable for the time being. Turner emphasises the dynamical relation between social drama and "expressive cultural genres", to which he counts the feature film, by stressing that we are bound to encounter variations to the basic structure when we analyse concrete cultural examples. But he also asserts that "in its full phase structure" social drama is a process of "converting particular values and ends" into a "system of shared or consensual meaning" (1982, p74). It follows that when Turner talks about social drama making us "conscious of our consciousness" (1982, p75), what he means is our cultural or ideological consciousness. This view is substantiated by Turner's mention of how the American myth, which is often found deeply entrenched in American films,

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<sup>4</sup> Turner points out that he does not preclude the existence of other types of processual units that can affect and change social relationships (1982, p71).

works to plant the striving for an ideal yet unreachable homeland in the minds of its spectators (p74).

### **Liminal Manoeuvrings in *Somersault***

In the opening shots of *Somersault* (Cate Shortland, 2004, Australia),<sup>5</sup> the camera moves through the shadowy blue twilight forest and this effect recurs with 16-year old Heidi (Abbie Cornish) repeatedly walking through similar atmospheric landscapes. This setting is very much in keeping with Turner's definition of liminality as "wilderness" and "darkness" (1995, p95). By contrast indoor scenes are sometimes painted in bright orangey-red colours. While the stark colour spectrum of blues and reds reflect encoded binary relations - coldness and warmth, apathy and love, outside and inside - all exaggerated hues come to identify liminal landscapes, while scenes showing conventional social spaces are characterised by a normalised colour palette.

Breach and ensuing crisis in *Somersault* occur when Heidi seduces her mother's boyfriend thinking her mother, Nicole (Olivia Pigeot), is at work, but Nicole returns and finds them kissing and embracing. She immediately responds with shock and disgust, which drives a distraught Heidi out of the family home. Heidi decides to take a bus to Jindabyne, a quiet rural holiday resort, to see a man called Eddie. Indeed, Turner emphasises that geographical movement often accompanies change in social status (1982, p 25). In rituals, the novices are frequently separated from their community and forced to remain in seclusion (1982, p78). Starting with Heidi's arrival in Jindabyne and her disappointed expectation of being accommodated by Eddie,

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<sup>5</sup> See Appendix I for a synopsis.

her liminal existence is also one mainly marked by seclusion. The narrative's main thrust is defined by her search for containment and compensation for a lost maternal comfort, but all her efforts to attach herself to other people, especially men, fail. Moments of relative stability do not persist and Heidi is either isolated by outside forces or inner drives. For instance, in one scene Heidi's petrol station colleague Bianca provokes her with a remark, prompting Heidi to take a pump nozzle and spray petrol on the glass windows.

A scene that sets the liminal against the "liminoid" further demarcates Heidi's liminal status. In contrast to the seriousness of liminality, Turner defines the liminoid as "all play and choice" (1982, p43). For him leisure counts as liminoid, because it has the function of making the system tolerable (1982, p52). It has no transformative agenda as such but serves to keep society's members adaptive enough to embrace eventual societal changes and progress (1982, p52). Heidi spends her first night drinking and dancing with two boys who are clearly liminoid characters. She has sex with one of them in their caravan and the next morning expects to be taken in by the boys, willing to come along on their trip back to Sidney. But they mock her and she leaves the caravan with pent up emotions. The boys only visit Jindabyne to "play" and return to Sidney and their family structure, unchanged and unilluminated.

Heidi's contrasting features of boldness, openness and vulnerability are further expounded in two later scenes with middle-aged men. In the first, Heidi asks an initially friendly shopkeeper for a job but is told that none are available. Heidi then alluringly pushes his visible jumper tag back inside, making him suddenly feel uncomfortable in her presence. The other man sits waiting

in his car in front of the shop, observing Heidi intently as she walks out. Heidi stares back and approaches his car under the illusion of having established rapport. But the man's wife returns in time and he greets her with relief. Heidi has an unsettling effect on these men. Her humble and passive<sup>6</sup> presence signifies an invitation that prompts their forced and embittered refusal. Turner writes, "what is mundanely bound in sociostructural form may be unbound and rebound" (1982, p84). This leaves a gap filled with all horrors of the unknown. Thus confronted with the unspeakable, the men fear their own sexuality and whatever alarming thoughts Heidi provokes in them are left to the audience's imagination. In her naivety, Heidi seems impervious to any perils, but there is clearly a real danger for her in the liminal wilderness of her self-abasement, beyond the safety of established social conventions.

The narrative affirms the efficacy of love as a transformative vehicle. Heidi's sexual affair with Joe (Sam Worthington), the son of a well-off farming couple, plays a significant role in her maturation process, despite their relationship being fraught with difficulties. Joe first notices Heidi at the Jindabyne bar and observes her gazing dreamily at a drowned brandy glass in her beer. He is alerted to Heidi's absorption with sensory sensations, which is a quality he also shares (on separate occasions both he and Heidi are shown playfully holding up red-tinted glasses against the sunlit sky). They encounter each other again the following day in a hotel lounge and have a drink at the bar later that night. They start to like each other and when, suddenly and surprisingly, Joe decides to leave for home in the middle of the evening, Heidi will have

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<sup>6</sup>Humility and passivity are two inclinations that Turner identifies with liminality (1995, p 95) and which may seem at odds with the rebellious attitude normally associated with adolescents. But then it is this very ambiguity that defines the adolescent's liminal status.

nothing of it and demands that he take her along. Joe spends the night with her in a local motel and the next morning gets up in a hurry for work. He leaves Heidi at the motel where she befriends the motel owner, Irene, who offers to rent her an apartment belonging to her now-imprisoned son. Heidi and Joe's romance unfolds in this setting. From this moment, Joe's rite of passage is given equal weight. He is similarly posited as a liminar, disaffected with his status and looking for answers. While Heidi's conflicted emotional neediness and tendency for self-destructive acts takes a toll on their mutual affection, Joe is unable to understand and express a number of conflicting tensions. He is unable to accommodate his feelings of love for Heidi to their class divide, but he also has homosexual desires and his parental emotional indifference belies their support in other areas.

Turner distinguishes between various groups of people that, voluntarily or by ascription, cannot be integrated or reintegrated into the social domain (1974, p233). One such group is given the label "structural inferiority", which for Turner signifies the lowest rung of a social stratification (1974, p237). Irene's son is a representative of this group, since murderers are not normally recuperated into society at the same privileged level. Then there is Bianca's brother, who suffers from autism and therefore receives "marginal" status. For Turner, marginals typically belong to more than one group and these groups may even stand socially opposed to one another (Turner, 1974, p233). Bianca's brother grows up inside a traditional family from which he receives structural support, but his autism also marks him out as different and as properly belonging to a group of people who share his condition. Such characters emerge in a story as "symbolic types", which is Dan Handelman's term for impenetrable beings that introduce limits in keeping with

their own radically different inner logic (pp 244 - 245). This means that such characters are often included to determine a contextual horizon for others. The presence of Irene's son and Bianca's brother helps contextualise Heidi's and Joe's problems. While Heidi feels guilt for seducing her mother's lover, she has not committed a punishable crime. Conversely, Joe has difficulty coping with emotions, but he is far from suffering a psychic condition such as autism.

Turner argues that redressive processes are triggered by decisions to "counteract the contagion of continuing breach" and resolve the crisis (1982, p108). In *Somersault*, more than one redressive movement unfolds in the closing scenes with transforming consequences for Heidi, Joe and Irene. When Joe, after abandoning Heidi for two days, opens her apartment door to find her naked, drunk and high on drugs with two boys, he expresses utter dismay and a complete lack of understanding at her behaviour, which is her cognitive escape through sex and substances - her only viable coping strategy for dealing with loneliness. Joe asks, "You go out, you get drunk, you fuck everything that moves, you think that's normal?" Heidi replies no. Joe says that she is so "fucked up" she should get help. Heidi in turn points out that he also has problems and that in a loving relationship he needs to be more communicative and trusting. Joe storms out with a still-naked Heidi following him, but she is unable to prevent him from driving off. The following morning, Irene vents her annoyance about the nightly disturbance. When Heidi apologises, Irene dryly comments, "You'll be saying sorry till the cows come home, that's your type". Irene demands she move out and the next morning Heidi hands her the keys back. At that moment Heidi breaks up in tears and explains to Irene her reasons for absconding. With motherly affection, Irene takes her in and calls Nicole.



Joe arrives at the apartment just before Nicole is due to pick up Heidi. For one last time the lovers face each other, but this time with understanding and empathy. All three characters - Heidi, Joe and Irene - follow emotionally insightful journeys that bring them closer together, not least by helping each other see a certain truth about themselves. Heidi makes Irene see that bitterness over her son's imprisonment has made her too severe a judge of other people's children. Heidi's daring and straightforward emotionalism makes Joe realise his inability to express emotions. And Joe's independence teaches Heidi not to be so dependent on others for emotional support. Indeed, in their last scene, it is Joe who is looking needy. When the lovers sit side by side on the bed, he moves his hand close to hers but she refuses it. And when Heidi walks towards Nicole's car, she imitates his manner by casually mouthing, "See ya".

For Mary Douglas, "to have been in the margins" means "to have been in contact with danger, to have been at the source of power" (Douglas, 2002, p120). She emphasises that "disorder" can yield truths and powers, which cannot otherwise be attained by conscious effort (p117). For Turner, this, in his words, "sacred knowledge" attained by neophytes in the limen compensates for their liminal weakness (1974, p259). More importantly, such knowledge makes them inwardly free of the despotic authority of social structure (1974, p260) and, as a result, the neophytes are able to accept that which they originally found unbearable, i.e. they are ready to re-integrate and take up a position in the social mainstream. Turner suggests that they accept or even "forgive" structure (1974, p260) when they give up their dangerous, unstable and, for what it is worth, impractical position in the limen for a safe and reliable place back inside their social circle.

While Heidi's return to the maternal nest may represent a resignation of sorts, her journey has left her more confident and independent, leaving room for further development. Heidi's forward movement is also reflected in the last shot which depicts her in Nicole's car, looking away from her mother and out of the passenger window, peacefully gazing ahead at the oncoming landscape.

### **Ritual Symbols and Behaviour in *27 Missing Kisses***

Victor Turner distinguishes between ritual symbols and individual psychic symbols by placing the first in the domain of social and natural reality and the second in the domain of inner drives, specifying further that analysis of ritual symbols requires attention to relations external to the psyche (1967, p37). Nonetheless, Turner asserts that ritual symbols are, like dream symbols, a compromise formation between two opposing principles: the need for social control and the gratification of inner drives. Rituals are wholly determined by symbols and symbolic behaviour and their arrangement in time (1967, p45). According to Turner it is with "precept and symbol" that reluctant liminars are "induced and coerced" into accepting their culturally prescribed destiny (1967, p43). In other words, the liminar's resistance is overthrown with both rules that legitimise conduct and representations that provide a basis for symbolic identification. Turner also notes that ritual symbols need to be "pregnant with meaning" for the liminars to produce the desired effect (1967, p44). To arrive at a better understanding of the functionality of such symbols - which are roughly divided into "dominant symbols", which are ends in themselves, and "instrumental symbols", which are more particular and may point up individual ritual goals (ibid) - Turner formulated an analytical model, which looks at a symbol's exegetical,

operational (what people do with a symbol) and positional (the symbol's place in the overall culture) meanings (1967, p50). Within the exegetical or interpretative field of meaning, Turner further distinguishes between the oretic and normative poles, the first indicating a close proximity of physical characteristics and meaning (primarily affecting emotions), while the second deals with "components of moral and social order" (1967, p28).

The film *27 Missing Kisses* (Nana Dzhordzhadze, Germany/Georgia/UK/France, 2000)<sup>7</sup> contains an overabundance of initiation symbols, while the film's ritual expression of social structure sees it not as sustaining and regenerating its fabric but throwing all traditional roles and behaviours into upheaval, arguably reflecting social transformations in war-ravaged post-Soviet Georgian society. In a politically significant gesture, Sybilla sets fire to two Marxist tomes that Alexander uses to adjust his height for sex with another man's wife, who is writhing on the office table. Then there is Veronica's lieutenant husband who suffers from sexual impotence as well as a small penis and who, with much bravado and excitement, randomly bombs people and objects without ever hitting his targets. With this surreal intersection of pleasure and politics, Dzhordzhadze follows in a tradition of magic realist filmmaking of which the Yugoslav Emir Kusturica is a popular proponent. Pavle Levi writes that Kusturica's films, which are also infused with libidinal excess, offer an anti-ideological and equalising corrective to an ideology-soaked reality, which is full of repression, hatreds and oppositions (Levi, p93-95). In *27 Missing Kisses* this idea of an unconditional freedom culminates in a narcissistic body cult and marked double standards well manifested by adult-adolescent relations. With their

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<sup>7</sup> See Appendix I for a synopsis.

incompetence, frivolity and boundless consumption, the adults are incapable of providing guidance and setting a moral agenda for the adolescents, who are often on the receiving end of their disapproval. The inevitable upshot is a "schism" ending when 14-year-old Mickey (Shalva Iashvili) kills his father with a shotgun and his age-twin Sybilla (Nutsa Kukhianidze) forsakes the society of her elders in search of something new.

The powerfully symbolic opening shots show a lunar eclipse followed by a solar eclipse, an alignment that signifies the dual passages of Sybilla and Mickey. Mircea Eliade, who, like Turner, analysed tribal rites of passage, explains that in India there is a whole "mythico-iconographic complex which presents the sun as descending into darkness" and that actions involving womb symbolism are habitually performed "for the purpose of obtaining a new birth" (Eliade, 1958, p56). Victor Turner also identifies rites of passage as death/rebirth cycles underpinned by corresponding symbols (Turner, 1974, p273). Next to the eclipses, *27 Missing Kisses* commences with an abundance of acts or symbols signifying death. On her first nocturnal visit to Alexander's (Yevgeni Sidikhin) house, Sybilla says she has come to see the light of a dying star, but when she looks through his telescope she sees the moon. Meanwhile, Alexander covers his eyes with white shells that give him an uncanny, ghost-like appearance. Sybilla also resembles a ghost with her long, bulging white night shirt. Conversely, rebirth symbolism is seen in Sybilla's "baptism" when she dives into the ocean to catch up with the captain's boat about to sail away into the sunset. The symbolic expressiveness of this last scene arguably does more than justice to van Gennep's argument that baptism indicates a final rite of separation from the previous world (van Gennep, 1960, p63). The black ship sailing away arguably also represents death but in

symbolic terms, while Alexander's death is real. Honey and eggs, which also feature in the film, are likewise prominent transformative symbols linked to death, birth and re-incarnation in many different cultures (see e.g. Ransome, 2004, p19; Newall, 1984, p21).

The banding together of socially "inferior" with socially "superior" symbolism contributes to the film's extrusive ritual iconography. Symbols of both poverty (e.g. rags) and power (e.g. cigars) illustrate Sybilla's ambiguous, liminal status, although, symbolically speaking, poverty does not always equal inferiority. Turner notes that while liminal entities indeed draw on symbols of poverty to express their outsider status, these symbols may also represent a powerful threat to the social structure (1974, p 245). Sybilla's unkempt red hair resembles that of an old mop and in one scene she proudly walks around town wearing a torn dress, a sight that throws a number of adults into consternation. At the same time, she appropriates symbols that have come to socially signify power and sophistication. Turner notes that young neophytes and "inferiors" in particular "compensate for cognitive deficiencies" by drawing on society's "affect-loaded symbols of great power" (1995, p175). Sybilla is frequently depicted smoking Alexander's cigars. Marcel Danesi points out that in modern industrial culture cigarettes not only represent a potent phallic symbol but that in a girl's mouth they also symbolise coitus. Smoking in mating rituals, he summarises, signifies "both sexuality and unabashed bravado" (Danesi, 1999, p4). Moreover, the cigar's physical proximity to the penis arguably situates it in a class of masculine symbols (also signified by Alexander's ownership), which, according to Eliade, are often appropriated by women in their rituals. Eliade maintains that the reason behind this is to transcend existential boundaries and "attain a total mode of being"

(1958, pp 79-80). But there is also a comic element present in the use of the cigar when Alexander opens his cupboard to find Sybilla cowering inside with not just one but two cigars in her mouth.

Next to the rather pervasive use of Turner's so-called dominant ritual symbols, the film encapsulates also a number of "instrumental symbols", which have meanings that are for the most part contextual. When Turner examined the use of the colour red in Ndembu ritual, he observed that it varied in significance, at one time standing for "lack of strength" and at another for the "blood of the mother" (1995, p53). Sybilla's red dress may signify the beginning of her menstrual cycle, while for Veronica hers expresses her fiery sexuality. In fact, there is a correlation between the girl and the older woman to the extent that both are attractive, impulsive and sexually confident, despite Sybilla's virginity. The fickleness of colour symbolism is also narrated with the example of yellow roses. Veronica passes a bunch of them to Sybilla's aunt for safekeeping (a lover's present, she cannot take them home to her husband). After she has left, Sybilla's aunt sneers that yellow roses signify separation. Sybilla later meets her aunt carrying the roses and cries out in rapture, "Oh, yellow roses, you have to show them to the moon and wish for something".

A very important symbol in the film that ties in elegantly with the rite of passage theme is that of water, which signifies fluidity or - the lack of it - aridity respectively. Water is of central importance in scenes with Sybilla who is often immersed in it - diving into a dangerous river, crossing a picturesque stream or cycling in the rain - but even more so for the French captain (Pierre Richard), who arrives in town one foggy night on his tractor pulling a large, black boat. He tells

Alexander and Sybilla that he would like to sail it but that he "lost" his ocean. On a straightforward level, water and aridity here come to signify youth and old age respectively, but there are also political and personal factors involved. Sybilla is in love and water may not only symbolise love's tremendous flow of emotions but also Sybilla's youthful purity and the purity of her first love. On a political level, the reading becomes more complex. It may be surmised that the French captain and his black boat represent a Europe that has become mired in its history of pallid intellectualism, contrasting the villagers' libidinal diversity. The captain's incomprehensible, metaphorical language supports this reasoning. But water also represents the collapse of structures and the possibility of *communitas* where none would normally occur. Turner notes that water symbolism is often used "to erase the lines of structural cleavage" (1974, p 246). When, in the closing scene, Sybilla and the captain sail away across the ocean, there arguably is a coming together of two opposing positions: youth and old age, and abstract reason and concrete passion. It is the singularity of Sybilla's passion that marks her superiority over the multi-amorous adult crowd, but also her disregard for social, adult norms that enclose society inside a web of lies and deceit.

Despite the all-pervasive anomy, the adults carry out their respective social functions within a fairly rigid social structure. There is no moral deregulation or malfunctioning of the system; rather, it is their liberal libidinal economy that makes daily routine manageable and interesting. It seems that the villagers have integrated the cyclical narrative of love, marriage, betrayal and jealousy into their culture. This forked thinking is reflected in a scene where the schoolteacher follows her comment about Sybilla's bad behaviour with an adoring remark about Alexander, enticingly padding her hair. Later

in the film, her husband dies in bed with the French teacher, but the community agrees he was a good headmaster with clear, moral principles. Even the very sexualised Veronica (Amaliya Mordvinova), who makes her husband suffer her many lovers, advocates structural obligations when she promises to find the captain a wife. The captain, however, will have nothing of it, and when the villagers join him for a party one sultry summer night, he rudely starts his tractor in the middle of the celebration and pulls the boat away, leaving the frolicsome adults to their trivial pursuits. He finds his ocean and, with Sybilla, sails away into the sunset, cutting them both off completely from all social attachments.

### **Conclusion**

*Somersault* and *27 Missing Kisses* point up the high levels of uncertainty adolescents face in a modern, industrial and secular society when coming into their own maturity. Particularly the fading of rigid gender roles has seen traditional, formal initiation rituals replaced by compensational means for attaining information and guidance. Films, such as the two analysed in this chapter, show remarkable similarities in narrative structure and symbolic content to the age-old rituals analysed by Arnold van Gennep and Victor Turner. But it is Turner's dialectical model for social change that best suits the analysis of modern initiatory narratives critical of established codes of conduct.

Approaching adulthood in *Somersault* and *27 Missing Kisses* is presented as an acutely individualised undertaking and is less about the internalisation of a society's normative patterns, than self-reflexivity, the acquisition of knowledge and the experience of *communitas*, which in



Turner's definition is an unstructured, equalised community. In the two film examples, the girls experience *communitas* as closeness to other liminars, affecting mutual transformations between them. There are no wise elders guiding the adolescents into a society of formalised relations. Gender still plays a key role in the process of becoming but only to the extent that the girls learn about social bias. In both cases there are moments when the protagonists are referred to as "easy" girls, but it is arguably only with their sexuality that they can impact on adult consciousness, make themselves visible and show their need for containment.

The final shots depict the girls contained in physical yet mobile structures - Heidi in her mother's car and Sybilla on the captain's ship. Acknowledged here is the adolescent longing for omnipotent protection. Becoming an adult does not happen overnight and, at their respective ages, Heidi and Sybilla are not fit for social adulthood. Even Heidi's brief stint at the petrol station does little to increase her feeling of independence. But despite their attachment to adults, the narrative conclusions lead to a shift in power relations as the girls realise that structural dependence does not forestall a certain maturity and freedom of mind. Indeed, liminality induces a state of arrested development and the lack or rejection of structural support blocks opportunities. Therefore enlisting the help of significant elders, who through their seniority are able to provide them with a "social vehicle", is arguably the only way forward for the young adolescents.

There is a very intense critical evaluation given in both cases to the moral and socio-cultural worlds of wider adult society. On the one hand there is the class-ridden, self-serving community of Jindabyne where people keep to themselves and show little tolerance or support for one

another. Then there is Sybilla's Georgian village community of sanctimonious adults who, despite their open debaucheries, condemn her freewheeling spirit. In both films, the protagonists leave these locations behind. But while Heidi is heading back to her hometown, Sybilla's destination is left to the winds of indeterminateness.

## II

### **The Parent Trap: Oedipal Conflicts and Female Subjectivity**

Am I not worth loving?  
(Nicole, *Crazy/Beautiful*)

How many times are you going to let him fuck you over?  
(Tracey, *Thirteen*)

#### **Introduction**

For Sigmund Freud, who introduced the Oedipal complex in his book *Interpretation of Dreams* first published in 1899, the story of Oedipus Rex by Sophocles reflects a universalism in the advancement of sexuality and identity formation in childhood (Freud, 1955, p262). Oedipus famously marries his mother and kills his father, which for Freud is a story about deeply rooted infantile wishes. The successful mastering of the Oedipus complex, i.e. the emancipation from parental authority, involves the infant's withdrawal of its fixation on the mother and overcoming of jealousy of the father (Freud, 1938, p618). This happens as late as puberty when Oedipal fantasies re-emerge to culminate in the creation of a "proper" sexual difference. Freud stresses the primacy of the penis as "gender-structuring" in this process (Freud, 1938, p622).

Jacques Lacan, in his emphasis of the Freudian model as a signifying system, strongly opposes the reduction of things "to biological data" (Lacan, 1958, p575), maintaining that the phallus is, first of all, a signifier and not an anatomical object that can be possessed (1958, p579). For Lacan it is the mother who initially contains the phallus, because the child does not perceive her as lacking in any respect. But there is a moment when the child realises that the mother is not complete and self-

sufficient, in the sense that her desire is directed elsewhere (at the father, who has a penis) (1958, p582). In a move that implies the objectification of the mother, the father's authority becomes a substitute for her desire, thereby assuming an arguably unjustified command. Linguistically speaking, the paternal "non" directed at the Oedipal child installs the "Name-of-the-Father" (*Nom du pere*), locating the child in a grammatical symbolic of "I", "you" (the child-mother dyad) and "he", the third party who breaks it apart (1948, p97).

Lacan constitutes the phallus as the "privileged signifier", which at the moment of castration gives "the subject reality" (1958, pp 581-582). But while the child's frustration at the Oedipal moment is about realising that the mother does not have the phallus, what is much more crucial here is the child's first awareness of the law by which the child, regardless of sex, enters the symbolic<sup>1</sup> (language) as a subject of lack (ibid; 1949, p79). Consequently, the function of the phallus, the signifier of this alienation, is to produce gender fictions to counteract this fundamental lack-in-being that humans find somewhat unbearable. As a result, two subject positions emerge within the field of symbolic signification that are conversely determined by the possibilities of being and meaning (Lacan, 1998, p211). While, in this model, woman is required to mask her own lack in order to mask the lack in man so he may retain a sense of coherence (Lacan, 1958, p582), Žižek stresses that both positions are equally inadequate. For him the masculine subject gets existence structured by fantasy, while the feminine position gets thought without the means of "positive" (coherent) symbolic self-realisation (Žižek, 1993, p61-62).

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<sup>1</sup> See Appendix I for an overview of the three psychic registers: symbolic, imaginary and real.

Lacan uses the term "unary trait" to describe the way that a single signifier is used as "insignia of omnipotence" to fix the subject's lack (1960, pp 684-685). The woman has no equivalent to the penis, which arguably serves man as a clear and prominent visual mark for his idealised image and fictional coherence (Lacan, 1993, p176). Irigaray remonstrates that, in this theory, "the hole that woman signifies affords woman too few figurations, images or presentations by which to represent herself" (1985b, p71). She conceptualises the vagina differently in emphasising her two lips, thereby counterposing the masculine "one" with the female "two", but points out that in a binary-based culture the female "two" poses a mystery (1985a, p26). In other words, a culture that counts "one-by-one" cannot deal with a concept that is "two-as-one". Irigaray also points out that, despite being deprived of a means to articulate and signify her "two-ness", the touching of her vaginal lips enables woman to be in touch with herself (ibid). These two lips that are always together somehow connect woman with the Lacanian concept of the real as that which is steady and unchanging. Indeed, Lacan posits the real as a place originally occupied by the maternal body, which is prohibited to the child by the incest taboo and therefore repressed from memory (1992, p67). While this theory may go some way in explaining why the mother is at the same time perceived as lost and threatening, it would arguably serve my thesis better to describe a more constructive affiliation by emphasising the vagina's stability in contrast to the phallus' elusiveness. In my analysis of *Thirteen*, I will show that the narrative's cornucopic inscription of maternal abjection in no way diminishes the formidable impact of her body. She is the rock that persists throughout the stormy weather of symbolic signification.

The films in this chapter - *Crazy/Beautiful* (John Stockwell, US, 2001) and *Thirteen* (Catherine Hardwicke, 2003, US)<sup>2</sup> - both reproduce the Freudian/Lacanian gender myths at the level of an arguably equally reductive, ideologically skewed narrative, thus reinforcing the view of feminine helplessness in relation to a society and culture infused by omnipotent and universal patriarchy. The main conflict in *Crazy/Beautiful* follows the daughter/father relationship. The mother is absent from the text, having committed suicide long ago. The arrival of the daughter's boyfriend on the scene leads to an unfolding of Lacan's Oedipal logic in that the tripartite relation of father, daughter and boyfriend establishes an exogamic alliance that benefits the boyfriend but is detrimental to the daughter's subjective wellbeing. By contrast, mother-daughter relations inform the story of *Thirteen*. The parents are separated and the father occasionally visits. The mother's fierce protective behaviour only serves to drive her daughter deeper into the macho culture of drugs and sex that penetrates high school life.

In her analysis of post-feminist culture, Angela McRobbie discusses how girls are still strongly undermined by an unequal patriarchal symbolic. She argues that pathological behaviour (anorexia, mutilation etc.) has been incorporated into current cultural definitions of what it means to be a girl, thus confining girlhood, and by extension femininity, to a state of ongoing distress. The key issue here is the understanding that these harmful acts are the acting out of fantasies of omnipotence that are somewhat resistant to change, as they offer an escape from the requirement of subordination (McRobbie, 2009, pp 98-103). While McRobbie praises *Thirteen's* insightful

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<sup>2</sup> See Appendix II for the film synopses.

exploration of these issues (McRobbie, 2003, pp 8-9), the argument of this chapter is the film's lack of affirmative girlhood ideals that may offer sustained containment. Even though Tracey has access to many new freedoms (e.g. homosexual and interracial intimacies) (ibid), I argue here that they are not presented as viable or lasting options able to alleviate Tracey's Oedipal deadlock.

While both films highlight the difficulties of growing up a woman in a male-dominated public world and as such help to establish a critical evaluation of power relations adverse to the cultural inscription of feminine subjectivities, there is an overwhelming feeling of powerlessness that marks the girls' journeys right up to the last minute of the film. Whatever redeeming impressions my analysis of the two films offer should not take away from this, above all, troublingly ambiguous portrayal of the girls' experiences.

### ***Crazy/Beautiful* and the Name of the Father**

In *Crazy/Beautiful*, 16-year old Nicole Oakley (Kirsten Dunst) is the deviant daughter of congressman Tom Oakley (Bruce Davidson<sup>3</sup>). With her best friend Maddy (Taryn Manning), Nicole is shown skipping classes, getting very drunk at parties, teasing men with her sexual availability and generally pursuing an anti-authoritarian and pleasure-seeking lifestyle. In the opening scene, Nicole collects rubbish on the beach required by a community service order she has collected for drink driving. There she meets Hispanic student Carlos Nunez (Jay Hernandez), who dreams of becoming a pilot and appreciates the educational

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<sup>3</sup> Bruce Davidson has been frequently cast as a government representative, such as general, ambassador, judge, pastor and senator (<http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0001117/>, 20 February 2007)

opportunities afforded him by a scholarship programme despite having to travel two hours each way to school. Much to the disapproval of both their families, Nicole and Carlos fall in love. Tom warns Carlos off Nicole and even tells him that she is capable of "running a perfectly-oiled train right off the tracks". He loves his daughter but is unable to communicate with her effectively and can only articulate symbolic interdictions. It is as if they are in two separate worlds, speaking two different languages.

Lacan writes that the role of the father is "to be always only the Name-of-the-Father" (1992, p309), the paternal interdiction that helps the child break out of the mother-child dyad. Tom Oakely's privileged position as member of congress locates him so far inside the law that he lacks reality as a person. He seems too temperate, orderly and moral. In one scene, Tom proudly tells Carlos that with the help of a priest he built 25 houses in a deprived area of Los Angeles. Tom does not understand disorder, especially in the women around him. His current spouse is constantly nagging and never happy, while his first wife, Nicole's mother, committed suicide and Nicole is rebellious and self-destructive. These flawed relations seem to worry him, but they do not affect his self-regard or ability to function. Tom is the symbolic father par excellence in that he appears almost dead in this closed circuit of symbolic unity. This is why, for Nicole, Tom is impotent, castrated. Her message to him is precisely what Žižek defines as the punk's response to the totalitarian state: "you are so powerful, *but for all that, you are impotent. You cannot really hurt me*" (Žižek, 1989, p157). What Nicole is really looking for is a trace of the imaginary father, "the one who would really be someone" (Lacan, 1992, p308); the one who could ideally step in for the loss of the mother. Nicole repeatedly



poses a demand for love that Tom, at least by her standards, cannot meet. Her defiant stance towards him signifies an unwillingness to accept the apparent impossibility of her imaginary demands. Her use of substitutes for the mother (drugs, alcohol, casual sex) may briefly recreate the illusion of infant bliss, but they clearly do not offer her a liveable solution. During the film's climax, Nicole expresses her outrage at Tom for telling Carlos, the person she loves the most in the world, to stay away from her. She asks Tom, "Am I not worth loving?" Tom answers with a blank expression.

In *The Elementary Structures of Kinship*, Claude Levi-Strauss acknowledges the institution of the incest taboo as the structuring principle of exogamy (marriage outside the kin group) and emphasises its social benefits facilitating economic and social co-operation via intermarriage between different groups via the exchange of women (1969, p481). While Lacan acknowledges the exchange of women as fundamental to the patrilineal order, he criticises Levi-Strauss' attempt at explanation by noting that sons also do not sleep with their mothers (Lacan, 1992, p67). Rather, language and exogamy exist by the same stroke: the persistence of an incestuous object in the unconscious (a leftover from the infant's polymorphous sexuality) interdicted by the Name-of-the Father (Lacan, 1953b, pp 229-230). This means that exogamic relations are a testament to the more general law of displaced desire originating in the Oedipal phase.

Significantly, by laying down the law, the father is the only one allowed to make sense of his prohibited desires, which is why Luce Irigaray writes that "it would be good to take issue with the cloak of the law in which he wraps his desire, his penis" (Irigaray, 1985b, p38). Tom cannot break through to Nicole because he is incapable of meeting

her demands, which arguably amount to making sense of her rejected desire. In a hopeful move, Nicole's decision to cut her elopement with Carlos short to return and confront her father, as well as her adoption of a mature speaking voice free of accusation and aggression, seems at first to consolidate their reconciliation. Tom, whose anxiety about Nicole's safety has put him in a state of exception, indeed shows a little bit of his penis by professing to seeing his daughter for what she really is, his flesh and blood. He even demonstrates this change in attitude when his new wife interrupts the conversation to remind him about his new baby's first swimming lesson. Tom repeats to her, proud and resolutely, "I am talking to my daughter", causing his wife to morosely withdraw.

However, Nicole's agency is ultimately undermined when Tom puts more emphasis on Carlos' role in their reparation. When Tom and Nicole walk down the driveway to meet him at the gate, Carlos is still unaware of the new situation and about to start a speech. But Tom cuts him short and thanks him for demonstrating how to love his daughter. Carlos does not understand how he could have precipitated this turn of events. "I wasn't even there", he later tells Nicole, to which she answers smilingly, "You were so there". Not even Nicole seems aware of the change in tack signified by Tom's remarkable statement. By positing Carlos' display of unconditional love as the catalyst for overcoming the deadlock of his libidinal attachment, Tom retreats to his earlier position of patriarchal meaning-making. In Tom's eyes, Carlos is able to confirm Nicole's exchange value by putting his own future as a pilot on the line for her, despite his otherwise lack of opportunity. Their alliance is truly exogamous in that class lines, which initially separate the men, are overcome and Carlos is able to enjoy the full benefit of being the congressman's prospective son in law.

Following in this vein, the final scene of *Crazy/Beautiful* reflects an unsatisfactory alignment. Whereas Carlos is castrated by Tom, who denies him his speech, Nicole is in turn "disembodied", separated from her visible self. The film's final freeze frame shows Carlos at the training airbase in his pilot's uniform, smiling in bright sunlight, while Nicole is not seen but merely heard verbalising her gratitude and longing for him. Their positions reflect a separation in accordance with Lacan's symbolically determined gender spaces. While Carlos gets a mode of being structured by fantasy, Nicole, despite her discursive power, is unable to ground her existence in the signifying network of the prevailing social contexts. Her humble devotion to Carlos, her only source of value and strength ("in the end it comes down to one"), cannot but point to a decrease in her subjective wellbeing, a psychic destitution opposed to Carlos' happiness. Nicole seeks solace in the imaginary world of her love in order to escape the grey terrain she now inhabits, revealing a longing for Carlos' presence that she perceives to be "whole". Furthermore, by conjuring up images of past moments of happiness and harmony, it seems as if she was also replacing her lack with memories. Her photos, which accompany the final title scroll, point to a regression by displaying a childlike quality in that they are covered with infantile scrawls. One of them, showing Carlos in pilot uniform with the words "Pilot Nunez" underneath, she claims to keep with her all the time. Carlos' leading status is also made clear in one of the last scenes depicting the couple in a car, with Carlos in the driver seat and Nicole wrapped tightly around his body. The film may suggest the possibility of fulfilment with the lover filling in for the lack, but this comes across as a tenuous arrangement. Indeed, Carlos is in no better position, serving Nicole as a mute surface for her imaginary projections.

### ***Thirteen and the Missing Signifier***

The film starts with 13-year-old Tracy (Evan Rachel Wood) and her friend Evie (Nikki Reed) sucking up a can of Dust-Off and hitting each other, because "they can't feel anything". They end up knocking each other off the bed, raising welts and drawing blood. The film then cuts back to four months earlier. We see Tracy, demurely dressed and her hair done up neatly at the back, approaching home back from walking the dog. Her mother Mel, who clandestinely puts out a cigarette on the ground before tucking it into her pocket, is already waiting to drive Tracy and her older brother Mason (Brady Corbet) to school. At school, Tracy approaches Mason in the schoolyard, but he and his friends hardly take any notice of her. They are distracted by the arrival of queen bee Evie, who makes a big impact with her long, flowing hair, tight jeans and many assorted accessories. Tracy's reaction to Evie's arrival is an astonished "Shit!"

Already in these first scenes we can foresee the film's narrative development. While Mel hides her phallus - symbolised by the phallic signifier par excellence, the cigarette - under a mantle of motherly affection, the alluring siren Evie teaches Tracy an elaborate masquerade that ultimately has a destructive impact on Tracy's physical and psychological wellbeing. Much of the screen time is devoted to Tracy's physical changes, and we find the female body occupying a central place in the narrative. It is emblematised as a site of phallic agency, visual spectacle, workspace and resistance but also, in Mel's case, containment. I have already put forth the Lacanian theory that phallic sexualisation causes the woman to turn her body into a phallus to veil her lack. I will further show how the narrative exposes the

destructive phallic position to recover the power of the maternal body.

Under Evie's expert guidance, Tracey reworks her body into a work of craftsmanship, a fetish object which Freud regards as a substitute for the maternal phallus, "which the little boy once believed in but does not wish to forego ... for if a woman is castrated then his own penis is in danger" (1927b, p205). Tracey's efforts, which are focused on making the separation from her mother more complete, are brutally enforced by the unequal patriarchal symbolic order. Visual excess and mastery over the body define the girls' value in a patriarchally defined commodity culture which abjects the maternal body<sup>4</sup>. Whereas such excessive beauty endeavours point to an ideologically submissive position, the girls are far from acknowledging this. In fact, Laura Mulvey points out that women construct their "*own sexual surface into an armour of fetishistic defence against the taboos of the feminine that patriarchy depends on*" (1996, p14, her italics). But clearly a girl can only go so far in disavowing the maternal body, since she herself bears its physical signifiers.

Tracey's site of identification follows a negative development, leading to her physical and psychological deterioration, particularly in view of her thinning body shape. Naomi Wolf writes that the anorexic woman is "weak, sexless, voiceless ... the woman has been killed off in her" (Wolf, 1991, p197). Tracey's cut marks and piercings are further indictments of these forced attempts to sever ties with the maternal signifier. One piercing is located in her tongue as if to silence the mother's voice and the other in her naval, close to the

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<sup>4</sup> See Naomi Wolf (1991), Laura Mulvey (1996).

reproductive organs. In fact, it is Evie who pierces Tracey's naval, standing in for the castrator, the symbolic father, who is not fulfilling his mandate. By modifying her body thus, Tracey is overwriting the signifiers of the mother with her own. While reclaiming the body through piercing does not per se imply pathological behaviour, Tracey's self-mutilation - she uses nail scissors to cut into her arms - points to more serious mental health problems, particularly since she does it in secret. The girls' shared beauty culture with its glib assurances does not offer Tracey sufficient basis for expressing her psychic pain, which she manifests physically by cutting into herself.

Here we cannot talk about a positive account of body modification in the sense of "redefining beauty" and "reclaiming the body from patriarchal culture" (Pitts, 1999, p298). Tracey is embarrassed about her cuts and hides them from the gaze of others, even from Evie. Her self-punishment seems to attest to some personal failure that she cannot articulate: her failure to separate from the maternal dyad and the real of the maternal body<sup>5</sup>. But her wounds also express a desire to feel alive in the scene of patriarchal fantasy, to remain in touch with the real, which Lacan defines as the physical evidence that we are not dreaming (1998, p60). Engulfing Tracey's whole body in the form of facial bruises, dark eye rings, a pale complexion and cut marks, the real, in the third instance, also serves as an appeal for help. Tracey's silent wounds are desperately asking for a father with recognisable phallic power to show her the way out of her psychic deadlock.

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<sup>5</sup> See Appendix I for an overview of the three psychic registers: symbolic, imaginary and real.

Brady (Jeremy Siso), Mel's drug-addicted boyfriend and Travis Freeland (D. W. Moffett), Tracey's biological father, represent detached and impotent father figures. Fresh out of the halfway house, Brady arrives on Mel's doorstep with a vacuum cleaner around his neck and a floor-sanding machine in his right hand. With a puppy-dog expression he asks Mel, who stands in the doorway of her house, whether he can put his "stuff" in her garage, thereby symbolically connoting sexual intercourse. The cleaning machinery signifies that he is now "clean", but the two long nozzle tubes arranged near his lower abdomen also attest to the multitude of phallic signifiers that the masculine subject has access to. Pitted against the doorway, a signifier of Mel's "hole", which emphasises the relationship of the vagina, motherhood and the house as figures of domestic containment<sup>6</sup>, Brady seems to occupy a privileged position, but the comic overtones of his display of masculine excess also serve to render such prowess ridiculous. It is because this excessive inscription is found on Brady's side, not on Mel's - she is not the one veiling a perceived lack with an overabundance of signifiers - that the scene marks an inversion of the phallic principle, which results in visual comedy. That the film uses adult men for comedic effect is also demonstrated in a scene that comically contrasts Travis' status as a successful businessman with his incompetence as a father. He arrives at Mel's house in his big silver car to reason with Tracey. As soon as he arrives, he demands to know the problem "in a nutshell" and repeatedly turns to each family member for an answer. But, unsurprisingly, everyone treats him as if he were missing the point. Indeed, the problem is precisely this:

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<sup>6</sup> Another interesting signifying aspect of the womb is proposed by Freud who writes that neurotic men, in a return of repressed childhood anxieties, may regard the vagina as an uncanny (*unheimlich*) place, although it is "the entrance to the former *Heim* (home) of all human beings" (Freud, 1919, p368).

not knowing what is going on. Even Mason understands that whatever is plaguing Tracy cannot be solved in a business-like discussion. The scene's comedic aspects are further heightened when Mason and Brady consecutively tell Travis that he has a nice car, to which Travis appropriately comments, "it's just a silly business tool".

Tracey and Evie socialise with the neighbourhood's black hip-hop gang who offer their own version of power within the larger framework of hegemonic masculinity. With their highly stylised attire, code of conduct, language and music, these boys construct a phallic scene that veils their reality as an excluded and oppressed group. Hip-hop, according to bell hooks, is a cultural creation of "patriarchal boys", "steeped in the politics of fantasy and denial" (hooks, 2004, p150). Moreover, Claire E. Alexander insists that there is a tendency in black communities to objectify white women (who represent a racist hegemony) and that control over these women aligns these young black males closer with the wider power structures (Alexander, 1996, p177). Spurred on by Evie, Tracey dates the rapper Rafa (Ulysses Estrada), who wants little more than to cement his status as a subcultural icon. Their romance, which is of a highly symbolic nature, creates conflict between Tracey and Evie, who continually intervenes in their affairs, always seeking affirmation that she is the one in charge. Nonetheless, Rafa remains a marginal figure in the narrative and Tracey's feelings are superficially engaged, despite her declaration that they are "so perfect for each other". She seems much more affected by the complex relational triangle between Evie, Mel and herself. The scene in which Evie sends Tracey to buy a cola expresses her lack of real commitment. Tracey returns to the street to find Evie and Rafa gone. She spends a long time looking until she discovers the pair emerging from a shop's changing



room. Rather than expressing jealousy, Tracey ignores Rafa and reproaches Evie for being late for Mel and Brady who have been left waiting outside the cinema. After this incident, Tracey does not mention Rafa again.

There is a certain logic in the Lacanian/Freudian theory that woman is more inclined to suffer from hysteria, the physical manifestation of psychic distress, because of her oppressed status in the patriarchal signifying economy. In fact, the female hysteric suffers woman's double complication: on the one hand, she cannot relinquish her connection to the primary object (the mother), which she turns into a repressed kernel of aversion (Lacan, 1992, pp 53-54), and on the other, she suffers disappointment in her desire to be sustained by her father's status (Lacan, 1998, p50). Irigaray similarly observes that when a woman is forced into such a limbo, in which she can neither articulate her primary belonging nor her own sexuality, hysteria is all she has left (1985b, p71). Indeed, Tracey's hysterical outbreaks indicate both the failure of her symbolic politics and her lack of separateness from Mel. In one scene, Mel's friend Cynthia (Cynthia Ettinger) attempts to reason with Tracey, but she and Evie either ignore or rudely cut in on Cynthia's remarks. Cynthia's attempts at conversation are finally completely thwarted when Evie receives a phone call that causes the girls to jump up and down and shriek insanely. After Cynthia's resigned departure, Mel confronts Tracey over her naval piercing but Tracey makes no sense ("I'm a mummy, I was born 2000 years ago").

Tracey's erratic behaviour culminates in the film's final act when Mel and Brooke (Evie's guardian, played by Kara Deborah Unger) question the girls about a number of illegal and stolen items recovered from Tracey's room. Evie blames Tracey who despairs at the injustice of having

to serve as Evie's scapegoat. She sobs, screams and cries out insults, prompting Evie, in a further effort to demonstrate her innocence, to divulge Tracey's self-mutilation scars. Mel is made speechless by the sight of this stark nonverbal message on her daughter's fragile body. Despite Evie's self-servicing and duplicitous conduct, Tracey notably blames Mel more than Evie for her self-destructive behaviour. Most of her insults are directed at Mel for her lack of income and education and thereby her presumed lack of status. Irigaray emphasises that a girl's rebellion is always in the first instance directed at her castrated mother, "because she had brought a castrated child into the world" (1985b, p106).

In the closing scene, the narrative closes down on the mother/daughter relation. With Brooke and Evie gone, Mel kisses Tracey's scars and makes every effort to contain her daughter's overwrought state. She tightly holds on to her daughter who is feebly resisting the forced embrace, mouthing desperate requests to release her ("Get off me!" "Don't hold me!"). Eventually, Mel's insistent and firm presence succeeds at subduing Tracey's highly-strung emotions. With her powerful act of containment, Mel's body takes on a significance that counters her symbolic castration. Yet, at the same time, Jessica Benjamin points out that by putting her strength into the service of the offspring, a woman's potency is legitimised, which is precisely a patriarchal representation (Benjamin, 1988, p88). For Benjamin it is crucial that the child experiences the mother as an independent subject, because otherwise "the girl's attempt at independence would represent an assertion of her power for which she has no basis in identification" (Benjamin, 1988, p79). Indeed, Mel has too much of the sacrificial mother. Earlier in the film she reminds Tracey that she works hard "to pay for all this shit", and in the closing scene, when she

tells Tracey that she and Mason are "her heart", she wears a T-shirt with the sign of a cross in the chest area. A classical Freudian reading invariably suggests that Mel has her *raison d'être* in motherhood, which should also one day become the mainstay for Tracey's identity. Mel surmises that Tracey would fare better if her dad were in her life more. But Travis shares many characteristics with *Crazy/Beautiful's* Tom Oakley and this relation may be subject to a completely different can of worms. The last scene shows Mel holding Tracey tightly as they lie side by side in Tracey's bed. In the morning, Tracey wakes to find her mother still asleep. Her eyes shift from her mother's body to the window through which sunrays flood inside, indicating the wake of a bright new day with new possibilities. And yet the film closes with Tracey in bed with her mother, unable to move.

### **Conclusion**

*Crazy/Beautiful* and *Thirteen* are both films that establish the Oedipal complex, which is organised around the powerful phallus as a meaning-giving principle, as a prerequisite for entering social life. The conflation of the penis with the signifier arguably confers to masculinity a more coveted position, although Lacan insists that both genders are found lacking in that neither succeeds at either having or being the phallus. Nevertheless, the films insist that the fantasy of having the phallus is infinitely more desirable than that of being it. Nicole and Tracey both use their bodies to feel powerful, but they come across as insecure and vulnerable, whereas all male characters have a sense of coherence and continuity about them. Both girls look the worse for wear when their bodies are shown to bear the scars of a signifying system that fails to recognise them properly.

They engage with drugs, alcohol, casual sex and in Tracey's case self-cutting, to express and alleviate their despair at finding a meaningful position in society away from parental authority. For that matter, they are not whimsy girls but brave enough to stage a bitter battle with parents and social institutions.

Oedipal issues of separation and individuation are hard to figure for girls in a culture predisposed towards the phallic symbolic as identifier for the mature gendered being. Nicole is starved for her father's love. Even though he claims he loves her, he cannot think outside his symbolic world of law and order, which functions to prohibit emotions and particularly those of a father to his daughter. Nicole's defiant position towards her father impedes her from making sensible order in her life and accepting authority of any kind (such as school), which would help her achieve independence. Tracey faces a similar although inverted dilemma. Her mother too cannot invest her with value. Despite her good looks and style, Mel affords Tracey very little symbolic value due to her distinct "motherliness"; in fact, the more Tracey becomes embroiled in masculine-aggressive hip-hop culture the more she perceives her mother to be overbearing and self-sacrificing. In seeking separation from her, Tracey steals, takes drugs and plummets on a self-destructive course. In both cases, the girls act out frustration over their parents' failure to provide them with the necessary parental guidance for individuation.

While the films' conclusions push the respective parents to perform the required function - the father to proclaim his unconditional love and the mother to prove her validity - the girls ultimately find themselves in a subjective position that reflects back a culture of feminine repression. In *Crazy/Beautiful*, Nicole attaches

herself to her boyfriend who is shown achieving his dream of becoming a pilot. In *Thirteen*, Tracey ends up in bed with her mother. Nicole's nostalgic lament seems to intone a resignation of sorts and Tracey's dumbfounded stare indicates helplessness. Female subjectivity thus appears relegated to the margins where it can only be articulated in terms of resistance to and dissociation from the wider social and cultural environment. It is yet unclear whether we are dealing with negative stereotyping or the essentialist and inevitable path of female subjectivity, which is why this important point will continue to inform coming chapters.

### III

#### **A Method to the Madness - Passage of the Borderline Subject**

In a mad world, only the mad are sane.  
(Akira Kurosawa)

What is madness but nobility of soul.  
At odds with circumstance?  
(Theodore Roethke)

Have you ever confused  
a dream with life?  
(Susanna, *Girl Interrupted*)

#### **Introduction**

*Girl Interrupted* (James Mangold, US, 1999)<sup>1</sup> is a screen adaptation of Susanna Kayson's autobiographical book (Kayson, 1994) about her time in a psychiatric hospital in 1967, where Kayson, aged eighteen, was admitted after a suicide attempt and spent two years receiving treatment for Borderline Personality Disorder. *Girl Interrupted* is one more in a long line of psychiatric films, the most famous of which is probably *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*<sup>2</sup> (Milos Forman, 1975, US). James Mangold, the film's main screenwriter and director, also refers to the latter when he points out that "it's too easy to call it [*Girl Interrupted*] a *Cuckoo's Nest* with women", emphasising that *Girl Interrupted* is much more than a film about a mental hospital<sup>3</sup> (Mangold, 1999). Allowing himself liberties in adapting the source material, Mangold explains that he modelled the story on *The Wizard of Oz* (Victor Fleming, 1939, US), which is also about the rite of passage of a "depressed young girl":

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<sup>1</sup> See Appendix II for a synopsis.

<sup>2</sup> See also Thomas Szasz (Szasz, 2007, p123).

<sup>3</sup> James Mangold's comments are taken from the Director's Commentary accompanying the 1999 DVD edition of *Girl Interrupted*.

The secret is the journey itself...what made her grow up and made her prepare to return to her life in Kansas and somehow move forward, was the friendships she had made and the way she had changed in this dream-like journey in Oz, and in many ways I felt like those themes, those powerful ideas about moving from childhood into adulthood and in inexplicable ways we come to gain courage and get resolve and begin to learn to deal with some of the compromises we have to in real life, in grown-up life, was very powerfully portrayed in that film and I thought had such significance to what Susanna's book said in its own way about her experiences.

Lest the spectator should be in any doubt about his intentions, Mangold shows a group of female patients watching the pivotal moment of *Oz* on TV, when Dorothy is told that she always had the power to go back to Kansas - an ironic scene given the girls' deadlocked situations.

The thematic preponderance of both book and film is on the question of pathology and in this Mangold stays true to the book's central debate, but he takes away from the thoughtful commentary that marks Kayson's book and makes too light of Susanna's affliction. This is most evident at the end of the film when Susanna is depicted as overly acquiescent, whereas on the last pages of the book she still sounds pessimistic: "I can honestly say that my misery has been reduced to common unhappiness" (Kayson, p154). A similar example can be found in the likewise "tame" film adaptation of Sylvia Plath's *The Bell Jar* (Larry Peerce, 1979, US), which Janet Maslin in her review calls "as sane, cheery and level-headed an account of a nervous breakdown as you could ever hope to see" (Maslin, 1979, C17). Both Susanna and Esther (*The Bell Jar*) have much of their wit stripped off them and appear "tantrummy", while their stories, which are essentially about young women at odds with bigger social realities, are reduced to timeless adolescent experiences. To be sure, *Girl*

*Interrupted* received critical responses to the same effect: Liese Spencer describes the film as a "clumsy cross between an inspirational madness-as-personal-growth drama and a female coming-of-age movie" (Spencer, 2000, p47) and Emanuel Levy writes that "this moderately engaging effort imposes a detached, male perspective on the other's firsthand observations" (Levy, 1999).

Nevertheless, *Girl Interrupted* follows its book counterpart by also drawing from debates surrounding the emerging feminist awareness of the 1960s, suggesting that a girl's disavowal of culturally prescribed womanhood contributes to her psychic ill-being. Phyllis Chesler writes that towards the end of the 1960s, in the US, substantially more women than men were psychiatrically involved (Chesler, 1997, p332) and that sexual repression was one of the key factors responsible for this dramatic increase (p77). According to Chesler, mental illness is primarily a cultural event (p150) and many women, who merely showed signs of madness as a reaction to sexual repression, were "incarcerated without much justification and without much effective 'rehabilitation'" (Chesler, p149, her emphasis). In all, many were deeply hurt by institutional psychiatry and patriarchal therapists<sup>4</sup> (ibid, p4). By tying feminine states of normalcy and pathology to patriarchal ideological rule, the film does not miss questioning the crass polarisation of healthy/pathological set up by certain privileged groups within the psychiatric circuit.

In her book *The Madwoman Can't Speak*, Marta Caminero-Santangelo points out that, while the madwoman in literary narratives has become a feminist symbol of power, she only masks powerlessness and is thus removed from any field of agency (Caminero-Santangelo, p2- p12). Her sentiment is

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<sup>4</sup> In *Girl Interrupted*, Lisa refers to therapists as "the rapists".



echoed in *Girl Interrupted* with the girls marginalised by society and locked up safe and sound. Both book and film conclude with Susanna's decision to "fake sanity" for the sake of freedom, while her thoughts continue to revolve around feelings of alienation. I will argue that Susanna arrives at a typically Lacanian presentation of the "mature alienated subject". To elucidate this point, I will address both D. W. Winnicott and Lacan and attempt to stage a debate between Winnicott's self psychology and Lacan's split subject theory, claiming that Winnicott's therapeutic ideal of lasting harmony between self and society cannot be sustained in the presence of unconscious desire. I will start by outlining Winnicott and Lacan's theoretical approaches, their key differences and commonalities, before moving on to an analysis of the film narrative, which arguably does not allow for a deeper discussion of the technicalities of analytic intervention, but allows, as a heuristic tool, for a productive discussion on the theoretical aspects of the debate.

### **Setting the Psychoanalytical Arena: Self and Subject**

Deborah Luepnitz sums up the fundamental difference in approaches between Jacques Lacan and D. W. Winnicott when she poses the question: "who shows up for analysis - the self or the subject?" (Luepnitz, 2009, p962). In Lacan's theory, the primacy of the subjective position suggests a fundamental split that permeates all facets of human self-perception. He asserts that "the self's radical eccentricity with respect to itself" must not be ignored, because any notion of the self as unity and totality necessarily connotes a fiction removed from actual psychic experience (Lacan, 1957, p435; 1965-66, p726). Lacan further draws attention to the central organising principle

of the unconscious claiming that "...the mere recognition of the unconscious suffices to ground [this division] ... since [the unconscious] also submerges [the subject], so to speak, by its constant manifestation". With this notion, Lacan is far from terms such as "true self" and "false self" - concepts that, by contrast, Winnicott employs to describe the space of human self-perception. For Winnicott "the true self comes from the aliveness of bodily functions, including the heart's action and breathing" (Winnicott, 1965, p. 148); it exists as an affective core, an inner sense of coherence that is developed in an intricate interplay with the mother. When she adequately responds to the baby's needs, the baby develops healthy expectations and can "build up a personality on the pattern of going-on-being" (Winnicott, 1965, pp60-62). Failure to meet those needs results in an interruption of this pattern, while persistent failure leads to a "fragmentation of being" (1965, p60), giving rise to the "false self", which functions to defend the true self (1965, p143) but it is found lacking (1965, p152). In less extreme cases, the false self serves the individual as a mask for facilitating social relations, but when it is felt to be overpowering, it entails a general sense of futility and "unrealness" (1965, pp 142-143, p148). Indeed, feeling real or unreal, authentic or inauthentic, are emotive states that are of central salience in Winnicott's developmental pattern (1965, p148). For him it is chiefly these psychic phenomena that determine our sense of aliveness and integrity with the world, to which we, ideally, and normally, should be unequivocally adapted (1965, p91).

Lacan's theory does not provide a comparable "authentic" psychic organisation that can be recruited in a therapeutic alliance. In contrast to Winnicott's "accidental" estrangement, he perceives the subject's alienation to be a structural problem, not the result of early bad mothering,

despite also pinpointing the inception of the subject's interrelational crisis during the mother/child dyad. Lacan emphasises that during this stage, which he calls the mirror stage, the child first experiences its fundamentally split existence. While it narcissistically identifies with its imago (its perfect mirror image), the imago's effect is that of alienation, necessitated by the fact that the child may conceive of this image only through others (Lacan, 1946, p148). This is why the child directs its demand for self-cohesion at the mother. However, in the most profound and pivotal narcissistic blow of its psychosexual development, the child comes to realise that the mother's desire, her preference, is, essentially, for the father (1958, p582). Consequently, in the child's psychic hierarchy, the mother is symbolically superseded by the father, who, after her, takes the place of the "big" Other (*le grande Autre*)<sup>5</sup>, the dimension of the child's constitutive alienation (1960, p688; 1998, p218)<sup>6</sup>. But rather than succumbing to the father, the child succumbs to the symbolic order of signification - to the "signifier" - of which the father is only representative because of his historical association with the (cultural, social and political) law (1953b, p230). By way of the law's symbolic framework, which is dependent on social pacts, the division between personal and collective expectations is productively mitigated, providing the child with a new basis for anchoring its desire for self-cohesion (1955a, p358). But just as the imago is not real, a "mirage" (1946, p148), so is the law filled with fantasmatic content.

By submitting to the law the child submits to the signifier, which emerges in the field of the Other (in this

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<sup>5</sup> The generalised Other is capitalised to distinguish it from the "small" other, *le petit objet a*, the specific part-objet representative of unconscious desire (Lacan, 1998, p257).

<sup>6</sup> See also the introduction to Chapter 2 in this thesis.

case, the father). The signifier makes it possible for the child to make itself intelligible by developing its personal symbolic networks and history (1998, pp 207-208). The child becomes a subject. At the same time, the signifier eclipses the subject by reducing her/his (the subject is always gendered) to an effect of discourse (1998, p207). This realisation and the resulting alienation invariably determine the nature of subjective consciousness. The subject qua subject perceives the totality of her/his existence as much more than can be articulated in language. Even locating ourselves outside the signifier leads to a reduced existence, because we cannot take part in the intersubjective circuit of social life (1998, pp210 - 211). No matter how we choose, whether we accept or refuse the signifier, we can only ever achieve a restricted mode of being; alienation is always the outcome (1998, p210).

Nonetheless, our desire for self-cohesion determines much of our conscious existence. In the Lacanian world, we self-indulgently aim to recover our lost narcissistic integrity. In the Winnicottian one, we yearn for our true self, which has been replaced and paralysed by the false self. This is not saying that the true self is any less of an illusion than Lacan would have it. Winnicott explicitly writes that healthy individuals live in an area "that is the intermediate between the dream and the reality" (1965, p150). And yet another theoretical proximity arises: Lacanian psychoanalysis is not the pitiless self-analysis it may seem. Michel Tort points out that despite the semblance of being always in a quasi-borderline state, the therapeutic ideal in Lacanian theory is "nondependence" of the subject, which, at least to some extent, "accords with the experience of the self" (Tort, 1999, p252). But can these proximities, on closer look, really be sustained?

### **Sane or Insane? Or Just a Girl Interrupted?**

Susanna's (Winona Ryder) above question, which opens the film to the accompaniment of a melancholic song containing the lyrics "time of innocence, time of comfort", invites the spectator to regard certain irrational tendencies as universal while also indicating her departure from the imaginary moorings of childhood. The song continues to chime when the film shows Susanna sitting with fellow female patients in a rotting, prison-like basement, all of them wearing forlorn, unhopeful expressions. It is a short but important scene, because it underscores the film's wider concerns. Susanna's struggles come to epitomise society's sexist double standards and the institutional ignorance with which women's mental illness was approached in the recent past. "Maybe it was the Sixties", Susanna muses in her narration, suggesting an explanation for her suicide attempt and subsequent confinement in a mental hospital.

The idea that a distinction between healthy and mentally ill girls cannot be made easily, confidently and successfully is an underlying theme of the film. Susanna directly expresses this ambivalence by correlating the world "inside" with the world "outside", calling them both "fucking crazy". There are numerous scenes in the film that similarly subvert or reverse this opposition. On her way to Claymore Hospital (based on the McLean Hospital, the actual institution in a Boston suburb featured in the memoir), the taxi driver tells Susanna that if mental illness is about being sad and seeing things, they should put John Lennon away. And in a later scene, when she and the other girls clandestinely look through Dr. Wick's (Vanessa Redgrave) reports, Susanna reads out loud that "Borderline Personality Disorder means an instability of

self-image<sup>7</sup>, relationships and mood, uncertainty about goals and impulsivity in activities that are self-damaging, such as casual sex", to which Lisa (Angelina Jolie), a sociopath and frequent absconder from Claymore, responds, "That's everybody". Even the black nurse Valerie (Whoopi Goldberg) tells Susanna that she can take "a lot of crazy shit from crazy people" but that Susanna "isn't crazy", she is just "a lazy, self-indulgent little girl who is driving herself crazy".

However, Susanna clearly suffers emotional distress. If nothing else, her suicide attempts and wrist banging - she is under the impression that she has no bones in her wrists - point to a serious psychiatric problem. Susanna also confides in her therapist that she is unable to control time. These symptoms indicate a certain loss or rejection of reality, which, in Lacanian theory, points to a loss of the symbolic-linguistic support undergirding reality. Lacan posits that in a patriarchal (phallic) discourse, because of the non-existence of a feminine signifier, only the masculine subject can perceive himself to be whole (1999, p68). Woman can only "play whole" with the help of phallic signifiers, i.e. engage in a "masquerade" (1998, p193). For Žižek female subjectivity is created on this exclusion, which results in the experience of a terrible void (Žižek, 1994, pp 143-155). Susanna's borderline disorder, and particularly her associated identity disturbance, serves as a trope pointing to this subjective deadlock of which women are all too aware. It also bestows on her a tragic dignity, since mental illness seems to her the only avenue for authentic self-expression. In a related scene, Susanna notes to a teacher that she is not

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<sup>7</sup> The DSM (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders), published by the American Psychiatric Association, describes individuals who match the borderline type as having "a fragile self-concept that is easily disrupted and fragmented under stress and results in the experience of a lack of identity or chronic feelings of emptiness" (APA, 2010).

going to burn her bra or drop acid or march on Washington, but that she also wishes not to end up like her mother. The teacher points out that women today have more options, to which Susanna replies, "No, they don't".

Žižek points out that it is precisely this experience of subjectivity as distanciation that furnishes woman with a "minimal positive identity" (1994, p144). He even calls her the "subject par excellence" (Žižek, 1994, p122). She is made conscious of the fundamental alienation that accompanies all subjectivity, while man, through patriarchal society and culture, erroneously believes in his wholeness. Indeed, when Lisa tells Susanna that mental illness "lets one see the truth", she establishes some positive form of continuity despite all the negativity they see and feel. The film repeatedly encourages sympathy for the girls' position by framing the narrative with Susanna's first-person authorship that sets the girls in solidarity against an ignorant, impotent society. But there remains a strong intimation that the girls' little victories over unfaithful professors and strict wardens actually belie their trapped misery.

In the Winnicottian universe, adaptation is tantamount to maturation. When he writes that society should ideally be "a sample of the self's personal world" (1965, p91), he also acknowledges that synchronisation between inner and outer reality is an achievement (1990, p89) and that in adolescence no easy harmony exists (1990, p145). He even goes so far as to say that the idiosyncrasies of healthy adolescents can be related to that "which shows in various kinds of ill persons" (1990, p153), suggesting that adolescence constitutes a phase of inevitable insanity. Feelings of unreality, which are characteristically associated with depression or depersonalisation (i.e. borderline experiences), are to some extent suffered by all

adolescents (ibid). Nonetheless, a distinction between healthy and ill juveniles can be drawn, however indistinct. Winnicott claims that in healthy juveniles there is not enough "drive behind the tendency to bring the symptom into inconvenient existence" (ibid). While they may suffer something similar to their ill companions, they do so in a diffused way, because they did not suffer a real deprivation during childhood (1990, p154). Conversely, ill adolescents are imbued with the memory of a traumatic past they have failed to re-contextualise from one developmental stage to the next (1990, p177). Unlike their healthy companions, they do not easily move on to identify with society after a doldrums phase (1990, p155). If their symptoms show hope - for Winnicott there is hope in antisocial behaviour (1990, p183) - they may well respond to the artificial nurturing environment of therapy (1990, pp 176-177). Meanwhile, the more extreme cases are best contained by a mental hospital until they start expressing signs of hope (1990, p183).

The film's flashbacks to moments of discomfort are all to the recent past in which Susanna is depicted as recalcitrant yet assertive. There are no scenes referring to a possible traumatic childhood. Susanna's main conflict is primarily with the upper-middle-class society of her family and friends, their role and social values, demands and expectations. For one, Susanna ends a secret affair with a married professor for whom she has lost respect. In another flashback, Susanna dances with a young man who tells her he is going to MIT (Massachusetts Institute of Technology), to which she retorts that she is joining the Krishnas. To her dismay, he takes her seriously and she walks away. All these scenes in which there is discontent but no actual trauma imply an ideological-developmental struggle on Susanna's part, the developmental aspect of



which Susanna herself acknowledges ("Maybe there is a moment, growing up, when something peels back...").

By contrast, Daisy more than meets Winnicott's criteria for mental illness. Daisy suffers from an eating disorder and with the help of Valium disavows the reason for her misery, which is a sexually intimate relation with her father. Despite showing few signs of recovery, she is dismissed from Claymore and put up in a clean and comfortable apartment by her father with whom she continues to have sexual intercourse. She lives the illusion of blissful normalcy with her flowery wallpapers, friendly cat and padded satin dressing gown but still sedates herself and cuts into her arms. Having escaped from the hospital with the view of travelling to Florida, Susanna and Lisa ask to be put up for the night, and Daisy lets them stay on the promise of Valium. An argument breaks out between Daisy and Lisa, during which Lisa accurately lists all the details of Daisy's sad existence, suggesting in a macabre climax that Daisy enjoys having sex with her father. The next morning, Susanna finds Daisy hanged in the bathroom. "Seeing death makes dreaming about it fucking ridiculous", she notes in her narration. Having glimpsed the horror of actual death, Susanna is now terrified of it. Daisy's suicide serves as the catalytic climax, prompting her willingness for change and setting her on the road to a recovery of sorts.

### **Discourses, Truths and Nail Polish**

Winnicott writes that a disrupted self needs a specialised "nurturing environment" - an artificial setting in which the therapist helps the patient retain unity of personality by empathic understanding and positive reinforcement (1990, pp 176-177). Winnicott here talks about child

therapy but this is exactly what takes place in the analytic interchange between Susanna and Dr. Wick (Vanessa Redgrave). After Daisy's suicide, Susanna returns to Claymore and explains in her narration that she saw "the great and wonderful" Dr. Wick three times a week and let her hear "every thought in her head", because this was the "only way back to the world". To be sure, Dr. Wick makes an agreeable impression, embodying a kind of parental ideal, appearing at the same time serene and emphatic. She provides a stark contrast to the other two psychiatrists in the film (Kurtwood Smith and Jeffrey Tambor), who are male, bald, untactful and incapable of making any meaningful connection with patients. After months of therapy sessions, Susanna is shown comfortably recumbent on Dr. Wick's couch, smugly asking her, "Do you think I am gifted?" Dr. Wick, with an expression part motherly concern, part amusement, answers, "Perhaps". Susanna then expresses her wish to be released and Dr. Wick mysteriously responds, "The point is control". Susanna thinks she is in control ("I'm off meds, sleeping sound"), but on the night of her dismissal, Lisa exposes her vulnerability by mockingly reading aloud from Susanna's diary a long list of derogatory remarks levelled at the girls ("Lisa's eyes, once so magnetic, now just look empty"). Susanna is devastated and angry about her embarrassing exposure and at having her attempt at "recovery" so unjustly discredited.

In her first session with Susanna, Dr. Wick stresses that sanity or insanity present two possible courses of action: she has put herself in the institution and she can get herself out again<sup>8</sup>. Although Susanna is already close to the truth by perceiving her painful sense of lack as the organising principle of all existence, her many sessions

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<sup>8</sup> This theme is already introduced when the girls, watching *The Wizard of Oz* on TV, listen to the witch telling Dorothy that she always had the power to go back to Kansas.

with Dr. Wick envelop Susanna in a "master discourse" tending towards the totalitarian and delusional. Lacan emphasises that "mastery of the word" should not be confused with sentient development (Lacan, 199, p56) and that this mode of thinking fails to bring normalisation (1956b, p408). The subject merely maintains her narcissistic image, and even reproduces it in a purer form (1953a, p287). The master discourse relies on the mastery of the signifier, investing language with a positive, empirical reality at the expense of the unconscious, the field of desire, which constitutes the truth of the subject (Lacan, 2007, p130). But the master is not completely ignorant of his desire, in fact his desire is for the Other's desire, which means that by imposing his will on the Other - who is expected to affirm his fantasmatic identity (2007, p38) - he experiences satisfaction without conscious appraisal of how he comes about it (2007, p34).

During Susanna's climactic confrontation with Lisa, her narcissistic defences are put on the line and evacuated of significance, but by crying out, "Maybe everybody is a liar, and maybe the whole world is ignorant and stupid, but I'd rather be in it than down here with you", Susanna for the first time identifies with the singularity of her desire. She is no longer fixed upon the image she carries of herself but on her willingness to take part in life. In fact, her change in identificatory positioning is foreshadowed in an earlier scene when Susanna talks to a boy called Tony, who tells her about a friend who was taken away because he saw purple people. After some treatment, the friend claimed he stopped seeing them and was released. Susanna asks whether he got better, to which Tony replies, "No, he still sees them". The point is not being in control, as Dr. Wick would have it; it is knowledge of one's desires, which for Lacan is the only knowledge at the place of truth and the path to subjective liberation.

Figuring the relations of knowledge and desire is what characterises Lacan's definition of the analyst's discourse. Yet what is required of the patient is the experience of an affective destitution; otherwise a new master signifier is produced when the patient turns knowledge of desire into the desire for knowledge (Lacan, 2007, p176)<sup>9</sup>.

What is actually involved is the renunciation of the hegemonic aspect of the master signifier, since the subject's enjoyment and representation in the intersubjective network can only be assured by the presence of signifiers<sup>10</sup>. Renouncing the hegemony of the master signifier, "the original true self", letting the master signifier become something other than itself, leads to an abundance of potential identities. Lacan himself specifically mentions that there is more than one signifier and that the subject derives his/her intelligibility by part/whole syntheses that are contextually revisable, i.e. the subject can occupy different places (1998, p209)<sup>11</sup>. Feminine resistance is ideally reconfigured that way but not disabled or left in the lurch - as Žižek points out, renouncing renunciation (of the socio-symbolic) leads to a complete subjective destitution that has nothing liberating about it (2001a, p43). The only way forward is to embrace the Other all over again in an act of "serious" impersonation (2001a, p59). In fact, the big Other, as a dead scheme, an empty place, a void that merely serves the subject as a projection plane for her identifications, provides an ideal reference point for this identification

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<sup>9</sup> Lacan declares that it is "easy after all to spin off into the discourse of mastery" (Lacan, 2007, p79).

<sup>10</sup> Lacan cautiously mentions the possibility of "a new style of master signifier" - a new social bond - produced by the Lacanian analytic discourse (Lacan, 2007, p176).

<sup>11</sup> This notion arguably conflicts the theory of the gendered subject by questioning the role gender effectively plays in the construction of one's subjectivity.

process (p52). This is because, for Lacan, despite its semblance of emptiness, the symbolic order actually provides the individual with a way out of the imaginary deadlock (1988b, p326). Only the symbolic encapsulates movement and therefore life, via the sliding from signifier to signifier, in the production of possibility and meaning (Lacan, 1957, p429). It is precisely because of this, in Butler's words, "perpetual displacement" (1999, p176), that identities can be created and established by way of repeated social performance (p180).

Upon her dismissal, Susanna apologises to the girls about the diary remarks she claims to be "just thoughts" and looks ahead with optimism. The forgiveness she reaps further underscores the positive momentum of her release. But despite the ending, which in the first instance appears exceedingly congratulatory, Susanna's final scene with Lisa contains a marked ambivalence that upsets the potential freedom of her new symbolic mandate. Lisa lies restrained in her bed with cuffs on her wrists and ankles, beautiful and tearful, a martyred body. "I am not dead", Lisa breathes sorrowfully, referring to Susanna's earlier accusation of her being "dead already". Susanna replies, "I know", and applies pink nail polish to Lisa's fingernails in a bizarre performance endured by Lisa with sadness and resignation. In fact, Lisa has always been quite the opposite of dead, since, in Žižek's words, to be "dead while alive" means to be "fully colonised by the 'dead' symbolic order" (1997, p89). Throughout the narrative, Lisa signals a radical subjectivity by resisting socio-symbolic entrapment. And even in this final scene, tearful and strapped to her bed, Lisa emblematises the fascinating spectacle of subjectivity in conflict with itself and the outside world. Lisa may be wavering on whether to follow Susanna by "renouncing renunciation", which would pave her way to a new symbolic mandate, but

Lisa's final image - signalling the feminist martyr in a patriarchal society - also serves an important cause in directing attention to women's socio-cultural repression.

Susana, meanwhile, has come to identify with a signifier of her own choosing, and a non-gender one at that, "the writer", and her new symbolic mandate means that she now creatively engages with the world, making it her own. On her way home in the taxi she muses:

SUSANNA (V.O.)

Declared healthy and sent back into the world. My final diagnosis: a recovered borderline. What that means I still don't know. Was I ever crazy? Maybe. Or maybe life is. Crazy is you or me amplified.

### **Conclusion**

I have argued in this chapter that the film *Girl Interrupted* demonstrates that acknowledgement of her fundamental dividedness along with the ability to organise herself in a symbolic world that may sometimes be hostile to her needs, can lead an individual to a liberation of sorts. While both Lacanian and Winnicottian theory posit the ideological space of the Other as an uncircumventable contingency, it is Lacan's claim that pathological drives can be normalised via a symbolisation process that despite its fantasmatic framework is also full of possibility, providing the subject with a flexible enough space for self invention in a patriarchal world of tenuous distinctness.

The film describes a process whereby girls may "recover" by placing themselves in an open play of signification. The subject here is primarily the subject of desire that inscribes itself with signifiers as it sees fit.

Winnicott's "true self" here also turns out to function as a signifier that, particularly in adolescence, can turn into an uncompromising search for authentic selfhood that hinders subjective synchronisation with the external world. For Winnicott, ideally, the true self mirrors the social world and effortless harmony exists between inner and outer reality - a notion that is not far from Lacan's view on the individual's need for socialisation, and yet he offers a way out of the ideological-developmental deadlock by emphasising that symbolic recognition also works if the individual just pretends to accept society's "musts". The film affirms that the benefits of symbolic recognition thus made potentially available to Susanna (e.g. her release from Claymore hospital) outweigh the tortures suffered by rejecting social reality (e.g. having to stay in the hospital). In Susanna a subject is created with transgressive as well as accommodative potentials in that she does not think herself "cured" but embraces the world in its potentiality for creative expression. Right to the end, the film portrays the girls with empathy - even Lisa's persisting resistance evokes understanding despite concerns over her wellbeing - and Susanna's final narration once more calls attention to the story's main theme, which suggests that, all things considered, the girls are no crazier than the society they live in.

## IV

### **The End of Dreams: Ironic Nostalgia and Phallic Fantasy**

Every good film is a bit like a dream.  
(Pawel Pawlikowski)

#### **Introduction**

The above quote by Pawel Pawlikowski, screenwriter and director of *My Summer of Love* (2004, UK)<sup>1</sup>, appeared in an interview with the BBC, during which he also announced that he was not interested in film as a social document (Foley, 2004). In adapting Helen Cross' novel (Cross, 2004<sup>2</sup>) of the same name, which arguably gives a more sober and differentiated picture of the girls' ill-fated friendship, he made substantial changes to the story material and added a nostalgic, dreamy quality, hence realising on screen a very personal vision. In this chapter, I will discuss some of the drastic changes undertaken in adapting the book and provide an analysis of the resulting narrative in terms of ironic nostalgia and phallic fantasy, again using a Lacanian psychoanalytic framework. I have chosen these interlinked areas of investigation because they are not only of distinctive interest in *My Summer of Love* but also similarly determine other rite of passage narratives examined in this thesis. The nodal point in these areas is the theory that the film-maker moulds adolescent experiences to gratify some aspect of him or herself, which helps explain frequent discordances between adolescent experiences and the film's underlying themes<sup>3</sup>. In fact, youth films serving adult nostalgia have been widely criticised. Timothy Shary points out that one of the

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<sup>1</sup> See Appendix II for a synopsis.

<sup>2</sup> This is the film tie-in edition.

<sup>3</sup> The films in this thesis are almost exclusively written and directed by adults, with the exception of *Thirteen*, which was co-written by a 13-year-old.



"telling dilemmas" of youth films is that "screen images of youth have always been traditionally filtered through adult perspectives" (Shary, 2003, p2), and Lesley Speed maintains that a perspective "that is outside youth" effectively dispossesses the youth audience, who is asked to identify with adult desires (Speed, 1998, pp 28).

Pawlikowski freely admits to pursuing personal desires with *My Summer of Love*, for which he creates a nostalgia-infused adolescence at the expense of authentic context:

If you wanted to make a film about British teenagers it would be...well it wouldn't interest me...they'd be listening to music I hate, watching TV all the time, and talking about Big Brother ... so the main thing was to make these teenagers the sort of teenagers I could relate to myself, slightly more timeless and removed from now.

With this statement, the director freely admits to indulging in what seems a guilty pleasure. However, as well as giving an experience of nostalgia, *My Summer of Love* also provides enough irony to compromise its glamorised iconography and concludes, not with a peaceful transition into adulthood, but with frustration and disappointment. The frustrated lesbian desire experienced by the film's tomboy protagonist Mona (Natalie Press) is similarly not so much a comment on her sexual orientation but on Pawlikowski's notion of adulthood as disillusionment.

Sexual orientation is a major theme here, which I will explore in some detail. I will argue that despite having a lesbian romance at the core of the narrative, *My Summer of Love* is not a lesbian film, because it fails to thematise the specificities of lesbian sexuality. On the contrary, the girls' pastel-toned amour is depicted as a fetishised fantasy, revealing the voyeurist pleasure of the male gaze.

This reading becomes particularly evident in the ending (which is different to the book), when the love bubble bursts in the finale and both girls are deprived of love and dignity, constituting them as lacking bodies - a move Elisabeth Grosz defines as serving patriarchal interests (Grosz, 1994, p60). In this vein, I will treat the lesbianism in this film as a trope serving Pawlikowsky's interests, which are both masculine and nostalgic.

Nevertheless, and despite this overarching phallic regime, the narrative encapsulates a certain ambiguity, which goes some way in suggesting sexual ambivalence in the characters. And, by telling the story from Mona's perspective, the spectator is sensitised to her point of view, which at least represents a lesbian subjectivity, while even the scheming Tamsin cannot help but admit to an honesty of desire.

### **Ironic Nostalgia in My Summer of Love**

*My Summer of Love* starts with a later scene in which Mona (Nathalie Press), held captive by her brother Phil (Paddy Considine), scrawls a portrait of Tamsin (Emily Blunt) on her bedroom wall. Already a distance is created between the girls and emphasis is placed on Mona's mental picture of Tamsin, a romanticised and idealised image. The narrative then jumps back to the girls' first encounter on a bright, hot summer's day, when middle-upper-class Tamsin, high on horseback, invites Mona, who lies stretched out in the grass below, back to her parents' picturesque country mansion. Mona then becomes embroiled in Tamsin's warped world of exaggerations, lies, false promises and factual errors (contrary to her statements in the dialogue, Nietzsche was not a Greek philosopher and Edith Piaf did not kill the boxer, who was not her husband, with a fork).

The girls' brief summer romance, which is played out in a rich nostalgic setting, ultimately turns sour when Tamsin forsakes Mona for school life.

Lacan's theory of the desiring, lacking subject proves useful in explaining the concept and effects of nostalgia. For Lacan the subject is first and foremost constituted by an uncontrolled, irrational desire originally experienced by way of the infant's first encounter with an Other, the mother (Lacan, 1998, p218). The infant is unable to understand and even less articulate its desire and thereby experiences itself as lacking. But this move also affords it for the first time a sense of separateness and difference. It is then that the infant synchronously learns about a number of signifiers in the field of the Other that may guarantee its unity, i.e. promise fulfilment of its desire, but which are bound up with the elusive play of language. As will become clear, this double-edged alienation comes to structure the adult subject's nostalgic expressions. Significantly, this ordering of imaginary ties - Svetlana Boym calls it a "romance with one's own fantasy" (Boym, pxiii) - can achieve a large symbolic gamut: nostalgic texts, actions etc. may be used to somewhat melancholically point up the tragedy of human self-experience, but they can also serve as crude ideological weapons. Boym considers this very conflation of "the actual home with the imaginary one" as a "danger" and goes on to cite phantom homelands that people are prepared to die or kill for (Boym, xvi). Such extremes obviously do not feature in the case at hand. Nostalgia here is played out in a much more subversive and self-conscious style.

Boym distinguishes between restorative and reflective nostalgia, identifying the latter as a lingering "on ruins, the patina of time and history, in the dreams of another

place and another time" (Boym, 2001, p41). Nostalgics of the second type do not try to recreate the past but establish a creative link between memories and the present by creating "multiple planes of consciousness" (p50). Reflective nostalgia is "ironic" in that it "reveals that longing and critical thinking are not opposed to one another" (pp 49-50). Here, Žižek helps to characterise "critical thinking" in the context of socio-symbolic stratification by calling it a "benevolent ridicule from above" (Žižek, 1997b, pp12-25). In the Žižekian view, the subject, who functions from an elevated position inside the symbolic order to maintain that order, uses irony as an acknowledgement of the vanity of others. Similarly, Pawlikowski's sophisticated filmmaking, subversively and with a self-legitimising logic, speaks to the critical faculties of the spectator who does not wish to recognise his passion for nostalgia, who is too vain to do so. In effect, then, Pawlikowski obscures his shameless invocation of nostalgia's affective, visceral power that engulfs almost his entire filmic project.

Pawlikowski admits that he is arrested in his "adolescent emotions" and that the film is "very personal" (Foley, 2004). In his film adaption, he adds a number of nostalgically charged symbols and spaces, cocooning the two protagonists in a visually spectacular pastiche governed by a personal, creative temporality. While the book opens with a precise date reference (May 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1984), the film remains ambiguous as to its historical setting. Fragments of a nostalgic past are inserted into a timeless present. In the first instance, it takes places in North Yorkshire with locations of rural-nostalgic Englishness: an old, ivy-overgrown country mansion and *The Swan*, a pub which is no longer used as one. In addition to the haunting soundtrack by Goldfrapp, a song by Edith Piaf invokes Paris in the 40s and 50s, while Tamsin plays *The Swan* by Camille Saint-Saëns

on her cello, an enduring classic, which is also true for the popular "Sway"<sup>4</sup>, sung by Ricky at the Karaoke bar. At the same time, hairstyles, clothes and cars generally appear contemporary for the time the film was shot (early 2000s), despite hinting at the 1980s with Mona's high ponytail and rolled-up jeans (a look that itself was revived from the 1950s). The title itself, while taken from the original novel, evokes the summer of 1967, which became known as "the Summer of Love" when tens of thousands of hippies gathered near San Francisco (Cavallo, 1999, p139). Pawlikowski's dynamically temporalised space is further extended by his addition of a gigantic cross, an arguably significant historical and mythic motif, erected mid-story up a hill by Phil, an ex-convict turned born-again Christian.

The cross contributes to the cornucopian aesthetics of Pawlikowski's creative, imagery-laced adaptation. His conspicuously personal choice in iconography and soundtrack structure the film's "reality", leading to a shift in story emphasis, from Mona's insightful coming of age narration to the doomed naivety of adolescence. Pawlikowski smooths out the intensity - the murders and madness - of Helen Cross' novel and omits all the horrible, indelible marks left on people and scenery (e.g. in the novel Tamsin besmirches her parents' house with pink paint (Cross, p118) and cuts off all her hair (p89), while on a more gruesome note the girls kill "Porkchop", Mona's brother in the book, in a tense and highly charged finale). Save for a violent yet comparatively restrained physical attack by Phil on Mona perpetrated to "save" her from Tamsin, the cinematic narrative appears much tamed down. In fact, the story is turned into a daydream or incomplete memory; everything in the narrative is replaced by a sanitised aesthetics.

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<sup>4</sup> "Sway" was composed by Pablo Beltrán Ruiz and recorded in English by Dean Martin in 1953.

Pawlikowski makes his adolescent universe speak to adult desires for a time of innocence, for simple beliefs, for freedom of movement. His mission, however, is not to idealise the past or transcend a loss but to stage the nostalgic gaze as such. By manipulating the gaze in the narrative he empties the concept of adolescence of meaning and constructs a screen for the adult subject's melancholic self-mirroring. Crucial to the film's approach is Mona's ignorance and blindness to Tamsin's manipulations, whereas in the book she is portrayed as wily and wary. This is evident in a number of comments she makes about Tamsin and the Fakenhams:

Right from the beginning there was an air of loon about the place (Cross, p17).

From day one I felt I was related to her, and I realised later this was exactly the reason I never quite trusted her (p87).

I knew for sure that her words were like the church clothes Lindy wore - they did not in any way show the person she really was. Rich, successful people never reveal what they think. This is a key to their success (p87).

Deprived of the subjective, critical boundaries of her first-person narration, Pawlikowski's Mona appears a dupe. What is more, Tamsin and Phil also embody this move away from the novel's individual subjectivism, with Tamsin's ignorance of the damage she is doing and Phil's uncritical devotion to God. The director achieves what Žižek terms "the gaze of the naïve other", a trope often employed in nostalgic films to conceal the fact that our gaze is disharmonious and incomplete (Žižek, 1992, p114). This is because the Lacanian gaze is not seen but imagined by the subject to be directed from the field of the Other. Lacan writes that the gaze orders "my world...from the point of nothingness where I am" (Lacan, 1998, p84). It is there,

outside my own "disavowed" vision, where I mediate my becoming.

The last scene further expounds this notion. Upon learning that Tamsin's love and promises were but a mere sensual caprice and during which we again listen to the dramatic voice of Edith Piaf, Mona walks away from the camera, her hurried steps indicating anger and sadness, her gaze hidden from the spectator. This shot marks a contrast to the closing image in Truffaut's *Le Quatre Cent Coups* (Truffaut, 1959, France) when the boy Antoine stares directly into the camera in a move that breaks with the continuity of the gaze as invisible and impassive. Antoine emerges from a traditional cinematic space and turns to the startled spectator on the other side of the screen, as if ready to "take him on". This confrontation arguably produces uneasy feelings in the spectator, and when the image freezes it is as if the filmmaker comes between Antoine and the spectator for the latter's rescue. Lacan asserts that the notion of being-looked-at-ness is uncanny for the subject and causes castration anxiety, because the subject realises that there is more to the appearance than he was able to fathom, i.e. he is made aware of his subjective limitations (Lacan, 1998, p77). This is not to say that Mona emerges any less of a subjective being - indeed her face in the final moments is full of private thoughts - but there is no such radical break with the film's underlying voyeurism, which may alert the spectator to Mona's hidden subjectivity.

Despite the continuity of a certain harmonious viewpoint, the final moments reveal that we have missed out on Tamsin's duplicity, which has a similarly unsettling effect. This said, by having consistently subjected Mona to the scrutiny of the spectator's gaze, the film ultimately spares the latter the full traumatic (identificatory) effect of Tamsin's betrayal. Equally,

Tamsin's persistent naïveté regarding the full extent of her actions simplifies the plot somewhat and when she blankly beholds Mona's outrage, she even appears the dupe of her own projections. In true Lacanian fashion, the morality of Tamsin's utterances is - although unavoidably questionable - depicted as a mirror of society in general, which is everywhere based on acts of deception and self-deception<sup>5</sup>. With this, the film takes on an ironic<sup>6</sup> twist in exposing the inevitability but also impotence of such insidious efforts, especially when Tamsin eventually admits to her (after all) genuine attachment and Mona is left with little more damage than her broken pride. At the same time, this ironic take on the plot cannot quite do away with the fantasies of unconscious exploitation by the class enemy the film provokes and which come to interfere with the sentiment of (nostalgic) bittersweet suffering prompted by the film's portrayal of human ineptitude in the face of nobler ideals.

The disempowerment that Mona undergoes as victim of Tamsin's manipulation reinforces society's hierarchy and Tamsin's higher socio-economic standing. This conclusion is far from the novel's, which ends with the girls sealing their bond with a random act of murder. They cold-bloodedly drown PorkChop before relocating to the pub. Mona's last words ("...everyone looked at us, in horror, and we seemed to sparkle in the dark") underline the girls' proximity (Cross, p248). By jointly committing a murder they cut themselves off from their unequal social relations to become one and the same: outcast, criminal, madwoman. Moreover, this act prevents them from returning to their previous symbolic identities, i.e. they commit symbolic

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<sup>5</sup>For one, the infidelities in the film span the class divide with Tamsin's father and Ricky both cheating on their wives.

<sup>6</sup>Žižek elaborates a useful definition of the term when he deems the ironist as given to suspect a deeper commitment where there is deceptive surface (Žižek, 2005, p281).



suicide. The reader is left with a feeling of horror at their random brutality and grim fate, which Pawlikowski eschews by returning all characters to their previous status. Even Phil overcomes his religious fervour to again become the brother Mona thought she had lost. The fleeting nature of the characters' imaginary involvements somehow mirrors the spectator's brief foray into her nostalgic imaginings. And by having the nostalgic narrative conclude with disillusionment and humiliation, the adult spectator is asked to strip away his imaginary desires long repressed.

### **Pawlikowski's Phallic Fantasy**

How does Pawlikowski imbue the narrative with his phallic masculinity? On the level of the image there is clearly a plethora of phallic insignia: the girls' elongated and often near-naked bodies, their long, flowing hair, the cello between Tamsin's thighs and the picturesque settings, e.g. the stately mansion overgrown with ivy or the forest waterfall. On the level of the characters, what strikes immediately is the focus on men as sex-driven: Tamsin's father has an affair with his secretary, Mona's lover Ricky has a wife and Tamsin exposes Phil as easily seducible. What is more, in this respect they are also on par with their objectification of women. Ricky's words, when about to end his affair with Mona ("I can't be bothered anymore"), exemplify this position. While the men are clearly not sympathetic characters, their depictions correspond to a traditional portrayal of men as sexually assertive and unemotional (Epstein, Calzo, Smiler & Ward, 2009, p415). Even Phil's surprising transformation does not shake this stigma. On the contrary, Tamsin's sexual teasing exposes him as a violently domineering young man

and he resigns himself to this truth, leaving well behind Christianity's teachings.

What these male characters lack is any show of real pleasure, especially one transcending their own sexual organ (Lacan, 1999, p7). Ricky's statement that he "can't be bothered anymore" underlines this typically disappointing experience of phallic enjoyment as something that exhausts itself quickly and always falls short of the promise it proclaims to hold. Since the phallus permeates our signifying system as a whole, the Other's *jouissance*, which Lacan designates as "feminine", cannot be articulated and lacks coherence (1999, p74). And yet, as Žižek notes, this Other *jouissance* of which the phallic subject is deprived is of intense interest to him<sup>7</sup>, since his fantasy narrative purports that the Other stole it from him (Žižek, 1997, p32). This fantasy narrative needs to be traversed in order to show that this very coveted pleasure is indeed not amassed at some other location he has no access to (p33). Therefore, fantasy narratives of lack make a story meaningful to the phallic subject by provoking his libidinal investment. In this vein, Laura Mulvey, in her seminal and much quoted essay "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema", notes that constructing the other sex as lacking produces pleasure for the male onlooker (Mulvey, 1999, p58). Indeed, Tamsin and Mona stand in contrast to the male characters by experiencing pleasure up to the point of hysterics only to awaken into the gap that separates them (symbolised by the class signifier) and find their intense passion rendered delusional by Tamsin's deception. Tamsin's cynical remark "You can't tell me we didn't have fun", makes Mona speechless and angry. Her ignorance is met by Mona's hurt in their depiction as lacking.

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<sup>7</sup> I use the male gender here since I am writing about male characters and a male filmmaker.

In one of the film's key moments, Tamsin teases Phil by pretending sexual availability, thereby exposing him as "a fraud" (her words). This leads to Phil later sending his Christian entourage out of the pub with the words "you're all fakers". As well as realising his own mistaken perceptions, he also becomes aware of Tamsin's scheming ways, claiming that "there is something wrong with her" and that "there is something driving that girl". It is almost as if he sees her from the position that she sees him, but what he does not see is that there is no Other, that there is nothing driving Tamsin, that she is merely a scheming manipulator and even something of a pervert. In her last plea with Mona ("You know me, I'm a fantasist", "Sadie was just poetic license"), Tamsin aims to provide a cogent rationale for her actions but instead reveals a perverse scenario in which she has taken advantage of Mona's vulnerability. What is more, she shrugs off Mona's deep emotional hurt that she allegedly unwittingly provoked and reduces their entire involvement to childish play. Žižek claims that this reduction of everything to a purely symbolic world, in which actions can have no consequences, is indeed characteristic of the pervert (Žižek, 1999, pp 24-25). In his self-legitimising logic, the pervert considers himself servant of his partner's fantasies, but at closer analysis he is only seen serving his own narcissistic interests. For Žižek the pervert disavows his castration, not by defying the law, but by taking it into his own hands (Žižek, 1997, p14). Much like a normal phallic-narcissistically oriented person, Tamsin also acts to establish the law; she in no way undermines it. Wholly unable to understand Mona's hurt and anger, she maintains the pathetic lack of intersubjective engagement that is so characteristic of a phallic-sexual economy.

### **My Summer Lesbians**

Kara Swisher writes that the old stereotype of the lesbian was a "hairy-legged, granola-eating, women's-music-festival-having, anti-man harpy who preys on innocent girls at summer camps" whereas the "new improved lesbian is a party girl of much sex, lingerie and sophistication", who "looks like a combination of early Kate Hepburn and an international model" (Swisher, 1993, C1). Certainly, Nathalie Press and Emily Blunt, with their slim and curvy bodies, immaculate skin and healthy, shiny, long hair, have model looks and on that point do not suffer any otherwise typical adolescent skin and weight problems. Their skimpy summer clothes reveal much bare leg and there is some topless sunbathing - all very tame and visualised in an aesthetically pleasing image. Barbara Creed writes that in the representation of narcissistic lesbianism, the lovers very often appear as a reflection of one another and this doubling up of the lesbian image serves to create a "perfectly sealed world of female desire from which man is excluded" but which therefore functions as titillation for man's voyeuristic gaze (Creed, 2005, p112-113). Indeed, the phallus (symbolic or otherwise) is mostly absent in the film's construction of lesbian sex, which, instead, is portrayed with a gentle, "feminine" sensuality, away from potentially unsavoury or unsettling displays of or allusions to coitus, such as is evident in the copulation scene involving Ricky and Mona, during which Ricky is shown taking Mona brusquely from behind.

Laura Mulvey regards cinema with its surface fascination as an ideal vehicle for fetishistic looking (Mulvey, 1996, p79). The pleasing surface, she writes, easily distracts the male mind from darker associations with the signifier woman (Mulvey, p94). This particular threat-allaying capacity of cinema (fetishism in cinema as a defence

against femininity) reinforces an unequal construction of sexual difference. Man territorialises visual space and woman has little choice but to go along with the undifferentiated presence ascribed to her. On this point, considering the lack of a specific feminine otherness in phallic cultural terms, it is just as well to use the Irigarayan term "sexual indifference", which denotes woman's sexuality as missing (Irigaray, 1985b, p28). For Irigaray, the phallic order functions to deny woman her sexuality in order to assure supremacy of the phallic signifier, and what follows is that any other positive representation of woman's sexuality, or homosexuality, is taken as a threat. Even Freud's analysis of bisexuality in children is based on his view that all sexuality is male. To achieve phallic heterosexual adulthood and become a "fit" partner for the male, Freud theorises that the girl has to renounce her active male sexuality, i.e. her clitoral pleasure (Freud, 1938, p612-613). This is a bit like dying, but as mentioned elsewhere in this thesis, Lacan has both genders suffer castration within the phallic separation. They are both "dead", killed by the signifier, while non-sexed beings are not quite as dead (Lacan, 2007, p75). Lacan does not explicitly refer to homosexuality in this section, but his point goes some way in explaining why the lesbian image is mollified to alleviate its threatening potential. Indeed, Barbara Creed points out that women who refuse to be castrated by the reigning phallus, who spurn the masquerade, often bear the stigma of lesbian simply because there is no way for accounting for an active, masculinised heterosexual female (Creed, p112-118).

Judith Butler challenges Lacan's theory of the phallic signifier as privileged by pointing out that the signifier remains too close to the biological organ (2004, p135-137). In her view the presence or absence of a penis (binary model) does not account for the many variations of desire

experienced by the human subject. What is more, it is the very nature of symbolic signifying systems that allows for a "fluidity" of sexed identities and these are ongoingly assumed by the human subject in performance and play (1999, p176). Butler calls the effect of humans trying but failing to fit into a phallic category of sexual difference parodic (1999, p155). Indeed, in one notable scene in *My Summer of Love*, during which Mona lounges in bed with Tamsin, Mona parodies the penis in heterosexual intercourse by imitating Ricky's comically quick and hectic movements. However, Mona's parody hides a deep hurt at Ricky's arrogance towards her, which also reinforces the myth that women become lesbians out of heterosexual disappointment. As Adrienne Rich argues, it is simply not true that women turn to each other just out of hatred for men (Rich, 1999, p216). Mona's fluid transformation further remains unthematized in the narrative; there is no wrestling with personal inhibitions or self-doubt, or cultural prohibitions, which otherwise define lesbian-coming-out narratives<sup>8</sup>. It would seem, instead, that Mona's attachment to Tamsin is down to her lower social standing and parental neglect, while Tamsin's sadistic play turns the entire homosexual storyline into mockery.

Creed writes that a typical lesbian "rite of passage" storyline involves the active, masculinized tomboy who eventually gives up fooling around with women to enter proper heterosexual womanhood. Significantly, Creed likens the tomboy's stage to that of the clitoral eroticism and calls it "a narrative about culture". The clitoris here signifies a lost autonomy by operating outside the reproductive context and thereby, it would be fair to assume, comes to represent this aspect of adolescence. The role of the narrative is to show women the way to the

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<sup>8</sup> See, for example, *Show me Love* (Lukas Moodyson, 1998, Sweden).

"proper" female sexuality afforded them by a phallogentric economy of representation (Creed, p112-118). Following in this tradition, lesbianism in *My Summer of Love* is a trope suggestive of the adolescent's solipsistic world, which is then subjected to normative constraints serving reproductive purposes. The normalising, heterosexist narrative functions to place both tomboy girls back inside a heterosexual family context. Mona enters the Fakenham house with her suitcase to find the entire family there and Tamsin sitting silently on her bed, demurely dressed. Mona, on the other hand, has little family to go back to, and she appears deeply hurt when she steps away from the camera into the summery countryside. Her brother, however, has changed back into the person she once loved, providing, as it were, a family reunion on a smaller scale - a family that is notably made up of the (only) two genders.

The film offers no space of lesbian culture or lesbian characters outside its two principles. There is no sign of either of the girls having had same-sex partners before and most of their time together is spent in the house of Tamsin's father, a strong metaphor for the boundaries-setting paternal function. In fact, there is a consistent male presence impacting on and "heterosexualising" the girls' encounters, if only from a distance. Even at the height of their ecstatic affair, when the girls take Mona's motor scooter into town and dance, high on magic mushrooms, at a karaoke bar, Goldfrapp's haunting and evocative soundtrack fades and gives way to Ricky's singing. On that note, the plentiful consumption of alcohol and mushrooms further underscores the perception that lesbianism is but a mere confusion of the senses, a hallucinatory effect.

Nevertheless and despite appropriation of lesbianism as a fleeting performance, there is indeed a real of homosexual desire reaching into Pawlikowski's heterosexist,

phallographic scheme. Mona's lesbian intentions are always shown to be genuine, while Tamsin does not seem truly cold when she contritely pleads with Mona to absolve her of responsibility ("Please don't be angry with me") and even reveals a sincerity of feeling by remarking, "I've never met anyone like you." It is this very brevity of statement, accompanied by a look on Tamsin's face spelling her failure to explain more, that reveals the unsymbolisable real<sup>9</sup> of her desire. In fact, it is when Tamsin buys an engine for Mona's motorbike that her desire is made visually manifest. This gesture expresses an active desire on Tamsin's part and the engine beautifully signifies the libidinal energy she awakens in Mona, as well as connoting sexual complementarity (there is a hole in the bike where an engine should be).

### **Conclusion**

It is revealing to observe how Pawlikowski invests Helen Cross' story about the intimate friendship of two adolescent girls with personal meaning. His changes are substantive and involve the erection of a phallic fantasy that functions to sustain the libidinal interest of an adult and particularly male adult spectatorship. In other words, a tentatively seductive surface is added to make the potentially castrating intersection of adolescence, woman and homosexuality into palatable enjoyment with the goal of reinforcing the dominance of the phallus. To be sure, phallic narratives require signifiers of castration in order to give meaning and order to the phallic economy.

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<sup>9</sup> See Appendix I for an overview of the three psychic registers: symbolic, imaginary and real.



What strikes first and foremost in this re-appraisal is the construction of a nostalgic form. Adolescence is likened to the dreamy quality and fleeting nature of a hot summer, an enjoyable and exceptional time, while all seriousness is played down. It is also striking that the film characters express little self-awareness and critical capacity. Significantly, Mona is denied her insightful first-person commentary that drives the book but which is taken to disturb the nostalgic gaze of the adult spectator. In the same vein, Pawlikowski eliminates all traumatic intrusions of the real, i.e. the murders and the many acts of destructive madness that define Cross' novel. He creates an impossibly pure context, which is required for nostalgia to occur, but with the result that he establishes an overly symbolic space with little fixity or stability.

Emphasis is also placed on adolescence as an experimental phase in which the maturing girls may take up different sexual subject positions in play. Mona and Tamsin are not shown to be "proper" lesbians; Pawlikowski provides no cultural or personal context to support such a reading. Rather, they have the repressed desires and fears of a masculine ego projected onto them by becoming titillation for his voyeuristic gaze. In fact, there is no construction of sexual difference in terms of homosexuality and heterosexuality at all, there is only one in terms of woman/man, where there is woman and her mirror image as beautiful but deficient to further intensify the fascination. Not even the trope of class difference functions to diminish this reading; it is rather that class is used to construct the girls as lacking in different areas.

The phallic narrative here is nothing to do with heroic progress. Here, characters awaken into consciousness of lack and the continuance of desire, with the result that

the spectator is prompted to abandon the fantasy of an object that can satisfy desire. Significantly, homosexuality is treated as a flight of fancy, and the narrative development serves to finally reassure the spectator that there is no lasting pleasure to be obtained outside, nor indeed inside the confines of normative heterosexuality. The film's nostalgic affects rely on putting the impossibility of fulfilment to the forefront. While the bulk of the nostalgic narrative works in celebration of phallic omnipotence, the true nature of the phallus as lacking is a fundamental issue in nostalgic representation. The effect of this in *My Summer of Love* is deeply unsettling, since everything in the story is reduced to deception, while the spectator's narcissistic yearning for primal fusion with the fantasmatic object of pleasure is constitutive of his subjectivity and experienced as real. The lesbian trope here is used to represent an identity before sexual difference, when the girl is still allowed to entertain a coherent sense of self, supporting the conventional Freudian developmental schema by which the adolescent girl is forced to acknowledge her castration. The transition into adulthood is shown to be humiliating, painful. Pawlikowski reveals his own disillusionment with the idea of adulthood, which broods at the heart of youth nostalgia, by admitting to identifying with Mona to an unhealthy degree (Foley, 2004).

## V

### **Beyond the Crush: Mature Efforts at Mutual Recognition**

You boxed with me like I was some  
other guy, you showed me respect!  
(Diana Guzman, *Girlfight*)

#### **Introduction**

Luce Irigaray's philosophical/psychoanalytic theories are fuelled by her criticism of deterministic meanings levelled at the feminine body by Lacan's phallogocentric bias, which is exemplified by the films in chapters II, III and IV. In this chapter I will turn to a wholly different film that despite its phallogocentric setting parallels the Irigarayan project by thoughtfully revising the marginalised position of woman and the cultural norms of desire that shape romance. Contrary to Lacan's ahistorical master signifier, Irigaray outlines a dialectical account of intersubjectivity that is essentially a dialogue in difference giving way to a new socio-political economy. Intersubjectivity, according to Irigaray, requires two subject positions to engage with each other on an equal basis, not least to assure production and reproduction (Irigaray, 1993, p12). Irigaray gives to the possibility of a relational becoming of the two sexes and stresses the recognition of each other's equality and difference as an essential condition for each to emerge in their own right (Irigaray, 2002, p82).

Penelope Deutscher emphasises that Irigaray has wrongly been criticised for favouring discourses on sexual difference over equality issues, that, in fact, Irigaray's primary concern with restructuring the conceptual language of difference lies at the core of the very possibility of

change. It follows that, without a more egalitarian understanding of gender relations, equality for women will always mean assuming a masculine identity (Deutscher, 2002, pp9-11). Judith Butler, while maintaining that sexual difference can be no basis for a feminism, also affirms that one cannot wish away the structuring reality of sexual difference and even describes Irigaray's metaphysical enquiry into the implications of bodily realities as an important and ongoing interrogation (Butler, 2004, pp 176-178). In fact, Butler seems more worried about the construction of models that constrain the body in socially acceptable ways (Butler, 2004, p26), which is clearly not the intention of Irigaray's project with her emphasis on dialogue. It is in this vein, and notwithstanding possible essentialist or reductionist assumptions on Irigaray's part, that I will carry out my research in this chapter<sup>1</sup>.

*Girlfight* (Kusama, 2002, US) can be placed in a tradition of films featuring tough, independent heroines. Yvonne Tasker writes that Hollywood, "always eager to cash in on the emergence of new markets", responded to the feminist movements of the 70s with films featuring women who are "independent of men, who are sexually free and who, to a certain extent, determine their own lives", despite telling stories about the difficulty and cost of achieving this independence (Tasker, 1993, pp 18-19). What is worse, there has also been a tendency to show challenging women as delinquents, e.g. in the film *Thelma & Louise* (Ridley Scott, 1991, US), in which the protagonists also suffer a narrative death. Timothy Shary points out that tough

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<sup>1</sup> A major criticism levelled at Irigaray, here expressed by Drucilla Cornell, concerns the loss of imaginative possibilities for a woman to articulate her individual sexual identity that an emphasis on a universal sexual difference invariably entails (Cornell, 1998, p122). This very possible scenario does not open up in the film of this chapter, which instead encapsulates Irigaray's vision of a heterosexual exchange through which the lovers are able to articulate their respective becoming.

teenage girl protagonists initially suffered the same fate, populating at first the juvenile delinquency genre from where they spread to other genres towards the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, resulting in the emergence of a number of confident adolescent female characters in a wide variety of films portrayed as being more in charge of their destiny (Shary, 2003, 122). He cites *Girlfight* as one of the films that gives hope of continuing the process in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Probing into the significance of bodily differences forms the crux of the narrative in *Girlfight* (Karyn Kusama, 2000, US)<sup>2</sup>, which plays out the drama of a girl laying claim to the traditionally masculine terrain of boxing. Diana's (Michelle Rodriguez) road to becoming a featherweight champion is fraught with many challenges, most notably the confrontation with her alcoholic and bullying father Sandro (Paul Calderon) and the negotiation of her romance with fellow boxer Adrian (Santiago Douglas). The persisting phallogocratic culture sweeping the Latino boxing scene hides feelings of disempowerment in men lacking economic potency, and the cultivation of stereotyped gender roles in this richly symbolic environment underscores the close link between masculinity and sexuality. The film foregrounds questions of sexual difference in a patriarchally organised and culturally homogenous setting that typically excludes women and pits men against each other.

Lacan insists that there is a necessary antagonism accompanying the sexual encounter, because otherwise desire could not be kept alive (Lacan, 1999, p6). But are we really talking here about two equally disadvantaged antagonists, which is what Lacan would have us believe? The boxing ring is a patriarchal space reserved for men and

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<sup>2</sup> See Appendix II for a synopsis.

serves as an analogy for the sexual relation under patriarchy. The traditional patriarchs in this film will not allow women in the ring, most likely because a boxing match demands the symbolic castration of one of its opponents. What is the point in fighting women who are already castrated in their phallogentric imagination? Even Adrian tells Diana, "I've not trained all this time to be stuck in the ring with a girl!" When Diana and Adrian are pitted against each other in the fictional New York Gender-Blind Boxing Championship<sup>3</sup>, her victory leaves Adrian subjectively emasculated and symbolically subordinated. Thus the film asks how the sexes can possibly find a common ground of equality.

Before I analyse Diana and Adrian's efforts at dealing with gender stereotypes and personal insecurities, I will outline the other important male relations in Diana's life, particularly those with Sandro, her brother Tiny (Ray Santiago) and boxing trainer Hector (Jamie Tirelli), who becomes a father substitute. In each of these interactions, the construction of sexual difference, and by extension the definition of masculinity within this equation, is subject to intergenerational, interfamilial, as well as interpersonal particulars that help explore a wider view on the issue. Diana's relations with men, rather than women, are also the main driving force of the narrative and lead to the fulfilment of her personal ambitions. The film celebrates the advances made in the name of gender equality in the supremely hierarchical and patriarchal world of boxing. Old patriarchs are exposed as

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<sup>3</sup> The Gender-Blind Boxing Championship in the film is a fictional construction and, in an interview with Dinitia Smith for the New York Times in 2000, Kusama admits that they are unlikely "at the moment" (Smith, 2000, AR13). However, advances in women's boxing are made all the time and in August 2009, in a major breakthrough and for the first time, women's boxing has been included in the Olympic Games 2012 by the International Olympic Committee (Gibson, 2009, p5).

false authorities by more progressive ones and Adrian cannot but acknowledge his affection for Diana, even after losing to her.

### **Growing Pains of a Boxing Girl**

Diana first enters the boxing club when Sandro sends her there to pay for Tiny's boxing lessons. Her first impressions are of a large, dark space with paint coming off the walls, a sign that says "When you are not training, someone else is training to kick your ass!", young boxers being tutored by old, seasoned boxing trainers and oil being spread on a muscular torso and biceps. In an interview for the film magazine *Cineaste*, *Girlfight's* writer/director Karyn Kusama explains that "when she [Diana] walks in, there's a sense of entering a sort of secret or separate world", but also one that is "real in those gyms" (Baker, 2000, p25). Furthermore, the crummy, decaying, handcrafted training environment (Kusama's adjectives) heavily features in iconic films of the genre such as *Raging Bull* (Martin Scorsese, 1980, US) and *Rocky* (John G. Avildsen, 1976, US), which contributes to a strong sense of authenticity and places the film in the tradition of these classics. The vastness of the boxing club with its dimly lit, indefinite spaces somehow provides a contrast to Diana's conspicuously small family apartment, particularly the kitchen, where all family business is discussed. This marks the gym as a place of opportunity away from the contained and intimate sphere of family life.

In trying to explain Diana's attraction to the boxing club Kusama maintains that the boxing environment is a rarefied space that provides a unique way of dealing with "hurt" (Baker, 2000, p24). The pain delivered in the ring is constrained by rules, while trainers and referees make sure

these rules are carried out. Diana is a wounded character, which is why in Kusama's opinion she takes up boxing with such commitment. It may seem odd that she should find comfort in a sport that is so stringently tied up with a patriarchal logic, but then it is precisely patriarchy that provides solutions for the fear and hurt it instils in its victims. Allan G. Johnson writes that patriarchy is all about fear and control and that it provides a multitude of possibilities in which "men" (my emphasis) are able to increase their own sense of control (Johnson, 2005, p54). Sandro wants Tiny to have boxing lessons, because of his yet unproven fear that "the other kids will eat him alive". Incidentally, Sandro has a personal history of violence, particularly domestic violence (he beat his wife causing her suicide), providing a context for Diana's hurt and her attraction to the sport. In one of the film's climaxes, Sandro subsequently sees his logic turned on him when Diana beats him to a pulp.

Women and girls appear on the periphery and tend towards the cliché. "Dolled up" (Diana's words), manipulative and jealous teenage girls are joined by stern and moody teachers. The general lack of seriousness and competence ascribed to girls becomes particularly evident in a scene depicting their struggle to complete the Presidential Fitness Exam, which is played for comic effect. In all disciplines, Diana performs in a league of her own. She also stands out in her sobriety, generally appearing calm and unperturbed, unless she is provoked into a fight. But rather than appearing particularly boyish, Diana frequently wears tight-fitting tops and has her long hair skilfully braided or left flowing in thick waves over her shoulders. More importantly, her dress in hip-hop style (baggy trousers, trainers, hooded sweatshirts), with its particular fusion of ethnicity and masculinity and its emphasis on provocation and transgression of traditional



norms, places her in a wider discursive space. Without delving further into the many intricacies of this field, it serves to point out that the symbolic inscription of sexual difference here is reversed (e.g. boys wear jewellery, girls wear army trousers), despite the many misogynist undertones prevalent in this genre. Diana freely appropriates symbolic aspects of blackness (e.g. braids) to serve her own means, her own search for autonomy, with her style also, unwittingly or not, encapsulating a silent critique of traditional femininity. Helena Wulff points out that girls may internalise a claim to "ethnic equality with their femininity through bodily consumption of youth styles and music" (Wulff, 1995, p77). This clearly has an unsettling effect on Sandro who would rather see Diana look and behave more like a girl ("Would it kill you if you wore a skirt once in a while?"). His insistence that she occupy a more feminised position marks him as a traditional patriarch, authoritarian and prohibitive.

The teasing rapport and wrangling common among siblings shape Diana's relation to Tiny, her younger artist brother. We first see him boxing badly in a match. Then, moments later, out of the ring, his opponent catches Tiny off guard and boxes him unprovoked in the face. Diana responds by giving him a taste of his own medicine ("That's my brother you little shit!"), which provokes Tiny's complaint that she makes him look like a "pussy". In another scene, Tiny shrugs off Diana's threat that she will "fucking kill him" should he mention her training to Sandro. Their loyalty and support for one another is emphasised in a later scene when Tiny gives her the money meant to pay for his boxing lessons. He also turns up at Diana's matches and cheers her on. During the Championship final he smiles proudly when he overhears another audience member expressing wonder that there is a girl in the ring. The interaction of brother and sister as two "free" personalities could be

taken as an ideal constitution of sexual difference, but for Irigaray this notion is no more than a "consoling fantasy", given that both sexes have already "yielded to a destiny that is different for each" (Irigaray, 1985b, pp 216-217). The brother has a value for the sister, which she simply cannot offer him in return. Tiny's words carry a certain weight when he tells Diana that she "looked good in the ring". What women or girls think of Diana as a boxer is clearly not deemed equally important. Quite the reverse, the comic character Marisol (Elisa Bocanegra) becomes squeamish and anxious as she watches Diana taking hits ("I don't have the stomach for this").

While Diana's boxing trainer Hector, not unlike many other male characters in the film, initially doubts a woman's chances of becoming a successful boxer, he at least acknowledges Diana's presence by crying out: "You're Sandro's kid as well, how come I never heard about you?" His question underscores the historical invisibility of woman in patriarchal discourse and by extension in boxing clubs, where, according to John Sudgen, there has been something of a "ritual dislocation between the worlds of men and women". Sudgen compares this to religious practices in which men are seen engaging in a "secret task...of a higher order", but he also maintains that gender stereotyping in boxing has seen significant changes since the 90s, when women slowly started invading the clubs, "chipping away at the popular perception of boxing as a sport for men only" (Sudgen, 1996, p193). The beginning of this recent development is reflected in *Girlfight*, which only initially depicts the boxing club as a domain of exclusionary masculinity, allowing women visitors only in the role of wives or girlfriends. It takes some effort on Diana's part to persuade Hector to train her, but when he does, it is not long before he becomes enthusiastic about the idea of women's boxing ("Girls, excuse me, I mean

women, have a lower centre of gravity, maybe...they're a different kind of boxer..."). Hector's words here have Irigarayan connotations in that he describes a separate yet equal feminine boxing identity. When Hector reads about New York's first Gender-Blind Amateur Boxing Championship, he has few qualms about letting Diana compete with men.

I have already discussed in Chapter II that in Lacanian theory the father's main purpose is to precipitate the child out of its undifferentiated existence by attaching it to his law, thus enabling it to symbolise its existence with an arrangement of rules, maxims and interdictions. Gladly, Diana accepts the subject position interpellated by Hector through his commanding language, because it is one that is active and purposive. Indeed, Hector's club is littered with hand-scribbled signs sporting various slogans, "Boxing is brain over brawn", "It's not the size of dog in a fight, it's the size of the fight in a dog", "No personal business in the gym!" etc. Clear values and firm judgment make Hector an ideal trainer and mentor but, by instilling a sense of value and appreciation in Diana, he also assumes the role of the ideal or imaginary father. At no time is this truer than after Diana's victory in the gender-blind finals, when Hector exclaims, "In all my life, I have never been more proud!" Given that Diana has to hold her own in a household abandoned by a dead mother, it seems little wonder that she becomes attached to a paternal substitute who not only offers structured support for her identifications but also meets her desire for personal closeness<sup>4</sup>.

The symbolic function of the father to separate the child from the imaginary dyad with the mother (Lacan, 1955b,

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<sup>4</sup> Kusama emphasises that the emotional contact with trainers is indeed a major aspect for boys coming from underprivileged homes (Smith, D 2000).

p481) takes on significance in the triangular relations between Diana, Hector and Sandro. Perhaps also it is no coincidence that Hector and Sandro are closely affiliated in that they are friends and belong to the same generation of Latino men, thus symbolising the two sides of the same paternal coin. Lacan explicitly emphasises the metaphorical nature of the paternal function, which subsequently requires no biological affiliation (Lacan, 1955b, p481). Hector helps Diana break out of her stultifying emotional embroilment with her biological father, who, as the sole parent, also stands in for the absent mother. Sandro's character is indeed split in two, at the same time embodying the traditional patriarch who has lost his guiding authority, as well as remnants of the nurturing mother (he is associated with the kitchen, even washing the dishes in one scene) who has lost her ability to love. Blame (for her mother's death), narcissistic hurt, genuine dislike, and familial dependence characterise Diana's relationship with Sandro, resulting in an undifferentiated mess of emotional ties. Although Hector also establishes himself as a patriarch, it seems he pursues a "benevolent patriarchy", which at least in terms of acknowledgement and resources serves Diana well. Hector unwittingly prepares Diana for her aggressive confrontation with Sandro during which Diana, now stronger and more adept physically, brings Sandro under her control, turning their power relations upside down ("I could kill you, if I wanted to. Mum begged, did you stop when she said please?"). After this climax, which results in the trio's Oedipal conclusion, Sandro slips from the narrative, an event which is marked by a heavily symbolic motif: the chair reserved for him at Diana's finals stays empty.

As agent of familial repair and the social link, Hector exhibits a conflation between patriarchy and paternity that in the narrative logic of the boxing film provides the

legitimising discourse for Diana's identification. He is a compensatory character in that he responds to the film's patriarchal hypocrisy by not only allowing symbolic change but by himself undergoing an important transformation. However, the heroic masculinity that typically informs boxing films such as Oscar winner *Million Dollar Baby* (Eastwood, 2004, US) - despite the film supposedly being about a female boxing star - is represented by Hector only in diluted form. Unlike Eastwood's boxing film, which according to Kath Woodward uses the female boxing star as a vehicle for exploring the trainer's life and problems (Woodward, 2007, p138), Hector remains relatively marginalised and no longer appears in the final scenes, which are played out between Diana and her love interest Adrian. In fact, Diana herself comes to embody the law, which, according to Tasker, sees her acting in lieu of the father, a move not untypical in the cinematic portrayal of female action heroines (1993, p31). This is particularly evident when Diana, more so than Adrian, is able to follow Hector's maxim "No personal business in the gym!" Unlike him, she is able to separate her boxing identity from her romantic interests.

When Diana first meets Adrian, he is sucking a red lollipop dressed in a yellow sleeveless top baring his arm muscles, while she appears fully dressed in green army fatigues, her hair tied back in a bun. Several scenes later, when Adrian gives Diana a lift home in his car, the camera picks out a keychain adorned with the image of the Virgin Mother and a small nodding dog on the dashboard. The film thus offers symbols of infancy and feminine nurturance for Adrian and over the course of the narrative repeatedly references and questions his manliness. When Diana first tells Marisol about him, Marisol knots her face and cries out, "Adrian,

what kind of a girly name is that?<sup>5</sup>" Diana answers, "Hey, 100% man if you know what I mean", which later, after their big fall-out, turns into "ex-100% man", suggesting that emotional fickleness equates to a lack of manliness. In another memorable scene, Adrian orders soup and salad, while Diana asks for a deluxe bacon cheeseburger with extra bacon. It makes for an interesting gender spin that Adrian's featherweight boxing ambitions demand that he keep his weight down, while Diana is free to eat what she likes. But, to give him his due, Adrian trains hard persistently and is by no means a weak opponent for Diana.

The lack of a functioning symbolic exchange network that can both create and mediate between their psycho-sexual identities hangs like a cloud over Diana and Adrian's encounter. Frustrating though it may be, the advancement of their relation is marked by the seesaw pattern of withdrawal and attack, confession and confusion, so typical in sexual courtship. Adrian is still dating "dolled up" Karina when he makes a pass at Diana. He explains, "She's gorgeous but sometimes we don't have much to say to each other" and "...guess I don't know what I'm supposed to be looking for anymore." On another night, Diana and Adrian kiss outside Diana's housing block. "What exactly is this?" Diana asks, wondering about Adrian's intentions. "Who knows", he replies. Diana's initial passive curiosity changes when Adrian turns up at Hector's party with Karina in tow. She watches them kissing and fondling, prompting her to leave the party angry. The next day, Hector pits Diana and Adrian against each other in the ring for a warm-up session. As they fight, Diana, resolutely and effectively, confesses her love to Adrian. Afterwards, she quickly walks away, still angry and hurt.

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<sup>5</sup> It may be no coincidence that Adrian shares his namesake with the quiet and shy pet store clerk whom Rocky falls in love with.

Throughout the film, Diana and Adrian express a longing for harmonious mutuality with much screen time dedicated to the couple's attempts at figuring out their inter-subjective relations. Despite their many conflicts, they seem to be strongly drawn to each other and unable to stay apart for long. In particular, Adrian, who seems much less secure about his identity than Diana, keeps returning to her company. "I finally met somebody that made something happen to me...and just because it's you I don't know what do to about it", he confesses to her, after dumping his trophy girlfriend. But Diana also seeks him out. After having beaten him in the finals, she turns up at the garage belonging to Adrian's father, secretly watching Adrian working underneath a car bonnet. He may find her overpowering at times ("I feel pretty fucking small around you"), but Diana feels equally inadequate ("I guess I'm not prime trim") when he refuses to have sex with her following his boxing trainer's advice. Adrian's sexual abstinence points up his self-discipline, challenging his apparent volatility. In fact, in relentlessly pursuing her, even after he is beaten and hurt, Adrian reveals a stubborn nature that is no small match for Diana's fierce pride.

To a significant extent the lovers mirror each other in their experiences and approaches, resulting in a persisting mutuality that is not obvious at first in view of their inability to sustain a mutually gratifying relationship. This mirroring has Lacanian implications in that he situates love in the field of narcissism (Lacan, 1998, p193). For Lacan, love is one's own ego projected onto others via the construction of a fiction. What is at stake is the belief in an imaginary "oneness" that, on the one hand, constitutes a central dimension of human self-experience, and on the other is always a complete lie. Crucially, this misrecognition occurring in love is regulated by a phallic sexual difference that functions to

place the two sexes in separate spheres. As the pure signifier of imaginary wholeness (which for Lacan is not linked to power or ideological motivation<sup>6</sup>), the phallus also signifies castration, therefore setting the limits of love, even making true love somewhat impossible. Love gives rise to the fear of castration. This tension determines the subject's perceptions, which, as a result, are never unsullied but always divided.

While Lacan does not foreclose the possibility of a dialectical relationship of exchange - in his view the process of psychoanalysis constitutes precisely such a mode of communication (Lacan, 1951, p176) - he does not have an end to the battle of the sexes in mind: "when one gives rise to two, there can never be a return" (1999, p86). For Irigaray, however, the incommensurability of two positions does not imply that they must conflict. In her book, *The Way of Love*, she theorises a language of exchange that goes beyond oppositions and hierarchies (Irigaray, 2002, pp 42-43). Conflict, in her view, only occurs when one position claims absoluteness and unconditional authority over the other, a position that has traditionally belonged to the masculine subject, who left behind women and children by practising a self-serving monologue (p6). Each subject in Irigaray's view "must come to a standstill before the other, respect the irreducible alterity of the other" (p113). Only by relating to each other in difference can the human subject fathom her or his totality of being as an unfinished process, a sum of past experiences and future potential (pp 139-141).

Irigaray theorises the real of love to be threefold, one corresponding to each gender and one corresponding to their

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<sup>6</sup> This notion is somewhat paradoxical. In fact, Žižek himself points up the central role assumed by the pure, empty signifier in ideological thinking (Žižek, 1989, p99).



relation. Ideal mutual tolerance and inclusion can be achieved by seeking out this initial real that defines the relation of the sexes to each other on a non-hierarchical basis (pp111-113). Irigaray admits that this means treading new territory, since parental relations offer no conducive templates as they are always hierarchical (p76). Even the maternal relation, in her view, needs to be dialecticised anew, because it encompasses the possibility of "forgetting difference" (p75). In her book *Je, Tu, Nous*, Irigaray nevertheless uses the womb metaphor as an ideal "natural model" for showing the way out of the patriarchal symbolic. She points out that the female body is able to nurture an "other" inside herself without causing harm to either herself or the other, whether it be boy or girl, concluding that the female body thus symbolises an engendering "with respect for difference" (Irigaray, 1993, p45)<sup>7</sup>.

*Girlfight* concludes with Adrian turning up at the boxing club where Diana is sorting out her locker. He worries about having lost Diana's respect to which Diana gracefully replies, "You boxed with me like I was some other guy. You showed me respect!" Adrian looks unconvinced. Moreover, despite the honesty of her words, Diana also seems to acknowledge the inevitability of their strained relations. When Adrian mentions that life with her is war, Diana replies, "Maybe life's just war period". Diana then promises to dump him, but her intentions are questionable not least because she proceeds to kiss him on the mouth (as if to indicate that language is not going to get them anywhere) and then enclose him in an embrace, which, strictly speaking, also offers no real proximity. With the physical space between the lovers reduced to nil, they are

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<sup>7</sup> Somewhat similarly, Irigaray refers to lesbianism as something equally "real" and excluded by phallogocratic culture and which, as a different economy of desire, also offers an alternative way of exploring gender relations (Irigaray, 1985a, 196-197).

unable to lock eyes with each other and are required to look in diametrically-opposed directions. And yet a hug is a sign of devoted affection, of love, and while the lovers seek a subjective proximity they always fall short of, there is much mutuality and respect in their encounter.

By unequivocally following Hector's boxing maxims and winning the final, Diana becomes representative of the law. But Diana's initiative here invokes precisely Irigaray's womb metaphor when she kisses Adrian and safeguards him in her loving clasp. With this, she shows an active maternal-like love towards Adrian, but her attention is not undivided. During their long, tender embrace, Diana gazes focused out of the window, her mind set on something else, while his gaze remains averted, buried into her shoulder. Diana's determined expression indicates that her quest for self-actualisation has only just begun, while her tenderness towards Adrian transcends her raw physicality, marking an emotional maturity that signifies her successful passage through adolescence. It would also seem that Adrian's masculinity has not been altogether compromised. Masculinity, as it emerges, is not something that needs to be proved in the ring. Adrian's fascination with Diana is greater than the anxiety and frustration about his masculine performance. This, it has to be pointed out, is no less due to Diana's emphasised body. Much like Maggie in *Million Dollar Baby* - Woodward asserts that Hilary Swank's bodily transformation in the film was taunted as a beauty project in women's magazines (Woodward, 2007, p141) - Diana manages to increase her sex appeal, which is in part due to her improved self-esteem but foremost to the eroticised spectacle of her boxing body. Yet while Diana's training clothes reveal enough to draw attention to her well-toned muscles, she is never overtly sexualised. In fact, while Tasker notes that women have traditionally been depicted as bearers of a "lack of definition" to underscore

their penetrability and sexual availability, this is clearly not the case with Diana and her clearly defined and controlled physique. And while a black eye - somewhere in the film Diana asks Adrian, "You still like me with my black eye?" to which Adrian replies, "I like you more" - arguably signifies the threat of castration (the broken body, the broken self)<sup>8</sup>, it brings a disruption into the heterosexual matrix by challenging the female boxer's reproductive viability<sup>9</sup>. Woodward summarises that the boxing film, with its very focus on bodily excess and struggle, essentially brings a disruption into the heterosexual matrix and highlights its contradictions (Woodward, 2007, 64-67).

### **Conclusion**

The boxing ring in *Girlfight* initially functions as an analogy for the impossibility of the sexual relation in a patriarchal world, which excludes women from culture and discourse. But over the course of the narrative, and in an Irigarayan vein, the equation of strength and masculinity is destabilised and the possibility is given of escaping the patriarchal masquerade in which femininity is identified with weakness and sexual availability. Luce Irigaray insists that sexual difference cannot be explained away by resorting to Lacan's universal phallographic formula. Rather, she maintains that there is a natural difference beyond hierarchical relations that needs to be dialectically explored by both masculine and feminine subjects as they practice a relational becoming.

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<sup>8</sup> Woodward writes that it is precisely this tension - the boxing body as both the site of strength and commitment and of fear of castration - that haunts boxers and defines a very particular agentic type of masculinity (Woodward, 2007, 64-67).

<sup>9</sup> Judith Halberstam points out that representations of female masculinity have been considered a threat to the institution of motherhood, since there is a general opinion that women have to be forced into the latter through the persuasive use of gender symbolism (Halberstam, 1998, 273).

What the film shows up is the paradoxical and arbitrary nature of symbolic identifications and exchange. Having been drawn together repeatedly throughout the film by a persisting attraction, Diana and Adrian ultimately lock bodies in their respective physicality, their biological duality as male and female, with their difference always already apparent. Maybe Adrian's acquiescence here proves that his fear of emasculation through defeat was unfounded. He, after all, still remains a man, even after losing out to a girl. What is more, by opening up and confiding in Diana - and arguably fighting her "like she was some other man" - he shows a sensitivity and trust that also earns him respect. Both he and Diana share a complex blend of "masculine" and "feminine" traits that give a much more differentiated picture of gendered subjectivity. Diana's maternal gestures and emotional needs likewise do not take away from her powerful physical presence and her unbroken determination.

Various male characters respond to the film's theme of defining masculinity in the sexual economy. Sandro epitomises the traditional patriarch at his worst, misogynist and unrelenting in his reluctance to accept the true character and destinies of his children. After witnessing Diana's remarkable progress and will, Diana's boxing trainer Hector turns into a more progressive patriarch and becomes an avid supporter of women's boxing. Crucially, for him female boxers are different but equal, which is why he has no concerns over letting Diana and Adrian fight together. Hector's guidance and acknowledgment help precipitate Diana out of the deadlock relationship with her father, and Hector's "law" (his language and morality) provides her with a field of significance and agency in which she is able to "re-symbolise" herself.

Boxing is taken out of the context of masculinity by establishing that successful boxing is down to willpower ("brain over brawn") and in a reversal of roles it is the man who lacks the single-mindedness needed to leave private matters aside, at least for the duration of the match. Significantly, Diana herself comes to embody the law, a position that is affirmed by her victory over Adrian. She doggedly follows Hector's maxims, which help her to success, and in the last scene she expresses a very similar philosophy ("maybe life is just war period"). With the boxing personality as a symbol for self-assertion and independence, the film comes to impose a positive attitude towards the brutal and unforgiving sport that boxing is, while also repeatedly referring to boxing as a ticket out of poverty and misery. While the ambiguity of this assumption is referred to - Hector points out that they all lose in the end - the film valorises a traditional model of masculinity that not only requires physical strength and emotional detachment but the fight for hierarchical supremacy, which somehow goes against the notion of existing in parallel.

This said, when the lovers embrace as one, mutual in their affection and recognition of a lack-in-being governing their desire, the film suggests that in the metaphorical locker (in a private space beyond the ring) it is the real of love that prevails - the "unmasculine" experience of love ultimately challenging the masculinity of the sport.

## VI

### The Writing of *Lullaby*

Film writing and directing cannot be taught, only learned, and each man or woman has to learn it through his or her own system of self-education.

(Alexander Mackendrick, xiii)

#### Introduction

This is perhaps the most important stage in this thesis, when I put my findings to good use. To recapitulate, my ambition was to write a rite of passage screenplay that steers away from patriarchal assumptions about gender, an area on which I have been largely concentrating in my interpretative analysis of seven rite of passage films with female protagonists. My research results should serve both to delineate the characteristic features of this genre and - with regard to basic choices about plot, location and time, as well as character and story development - offer an inspirational template against which to assess my feature screenplay *Lullaby*<sup>1</sup>. As a result of this approach, I am now able to put to the test my own appropriation of adolescent-feminine cultural space and identity and examine how *Lullaby* ties in with the film material discussed so far, particularly with regard to the ideological objectives, tensions and discrepancies that form the core of the debate.

In this chapter, I will present a comparative analysis between the seven examined films and *Lullaby*, detailing commonalities and differences, as well as parallel discourses within the genre in keeping with my feminist commitment. I will also provide background information to the story of *Lullaby*, as well as craft issues and practical

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<sup>1</sup> Attached as Appendix IV.

requirements faced by the screenwriter in writing a feature-length screenplay - useful facets for a practitioner-oriented discussion as they point up restrictions and requirements imposed by common screenplay structure. The focus then shifts to areas determined by story contexts specific to *Lullaby*. In my search for a story about the growing pains of an adolescent girl that would at least sustain the illusion of authenticity while encompassing dramatic actions and developments, I decided to interview Lucy S. whom I have known for many years. Lucy had been a UK teenager in the 1980s and grew up with an Indian mother and a white English father in the suburban hinterlands of a minor English town. The challenges she faced in negotiating her identity as a mixed-race teenager on the borderline between two cultures gave rise to my interest in turning her account of adolescence into a feature script. Her true story provided me with a plethora of information mirroring the complexity, diversity and indeterminacy of her personal world at that crucial time<sup>2</sup>. But I have also added my own voice and ideas, and my consultation of screenwriting resources was no less instrumental in shaping the story<sup>3</sup>.

Writer and director Alexander Mackendrick, who has also taught the craft of filmmaking for many years at the California Institute of Arts in Valencia and whose book *On*

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<sup>2</sup> Personal experience has in manifold ways informed the films in this thesis. Karyn Kusama admits that she could not have made *Girlfight* without her first-hand knowledge of the boxing sport (Baker, 2000, p24).

<sup>3</sup> My interview with Lucy S. was carried out over the course of a week in early summer 2004 and transcribed into six pages of type (she was aware of my research goals and I did not interview anybody else for either screenplay or thesis). Despite my liberal adaptation of the interview material (e.g. all characters are given fictional names), I have made Lucy S. sign an Interview Consent Form as a formality for the purpose of this thesis (attached as Appendix III). If the screenplay is optioned or bought, then the film's producer will also need to obtain a signed "Life Rights Consent" granting her/him the rights to portray elements of Lucy's life story and to fictionalise and modify these (Crowell, 2007, pp 97-98).

*Filmmaking*<sup>4</sup> I will be frequently referring to in this chapter, writes that the screenplay is a blueprint and should be treated as such in focussing on "dramatic tensions, incidents, actions, reactions and situations" (pp 72-73). The practical purpose of this approach becomes evident when considering the nature of a screenplay, which consists of only words on pages. Quite clearly, the entirety of a film's symbolic system cannot be reflected at this level, since the many additional codes, such as editing, scenery, actors, music etc. can only be suggested at screenplay stage, and it is to this effect that Mackendrick considers the final form of the screenplay to be the finished film (p66). Thus, my research project necessarily remains incomplete as long as *Lullaby*, which I, as a matter of course, have written with the aim of selling for production, exists as a screenplay only.

The other conundrum my research poses is that my mainly psychoanalytical approaches point up not only the close link between films and larger narratives at play in society but also the difficulty of breaking out of established patterns and norms. While my readings suggest that adolescence affords the girl a position of relative freedom in terms of self-exploration and expression, the films give expression to the Freudian/Lacanian definition of female adulthood, which seems to involve the girl's capitulation and withdrawal. The peripheral position of resistance is likewise untenable as the girl's lack of social connectedness and approval - when she becomes a girl that

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<sup>4</sup> *On Filmmaking* is a collection of Mackendrick's writings spanning 25 years of teaching until his death in 1993. Philipp Kemp remarks that Mackendrick never intended to publish a book, as he "hated the idea of finality" (Kemp, p10). His avoidance of fixed rules (for him there are only "tools") gives his book a timeless appeal much valued by contemporary film practitioners (see e.g. Zoë Green, 2004), while his analyses of classic Hollywood films, i.e. the traditional narrative cinema that David Bordwell argues remains firmly in force despite historical innovations and advancements (Bordwell, 2006, p16), in my view still continues to provide useful insights into the politics of mass appeal.



has "gone off the rails" - ultimately ends in misery. But films like *Girlfight* do show up advances made in the name of gender equality and women's empowerment by addressing through dialogue the social and cultural fears of both masculine and feminine subjects that determine gender bias and exclusion. Thus it would appear that the power of dialogue dynamics inherent in film provides a propitious environment for resolving cultural impasse and catalysing understanding and change.

Mackendrick asserts that films are a means of primary societal communication, that they are successful when they fulfil a need in the audience (2004, p11). He, much like I have attempted to do in Chapter I, likens films to archaic rites by pointing out that they help us, "the primitive mind", grasp and explore what would otherwise remain a "disturbing and fearsome mystery". This tendency to address and, to some degree, dispel fears is arguably a crucial aspect of film and one that is particularly potent when it addresses the maturation process of a young girl for whom, mysteriously, both her body and boys appear as both destiny and enemy. Other films discussed in this thesis also make clear that the fear of not fitting society's image of the perfect girl or woman, of not looking good or being thin or clever enough, is indeed closely caught up with the value that boys, and by extension a paternal society, afford them. As a result, what is often at stake is the girl's psychic separation of identity and sexuality. The hypothesis that lies at the heart of *Lullaby* is that by addressing these and related growing-up issues with the theories and goals of psychoanalytic theorists in mind (Jacques Lacan and Luce Irigaray in particular), an empowering narrative can be created that helps the hypothesised spectator shed psychic tension and broaden her vision.

### An "Open" Approach

The screenplay of *Lullaby*, included as Appendix IV, is a first "polished" draft, superseding a number of treatments that progressively fleshed out story and character. Further drafts are arguably not effective before the script has become part of an ongoing production process involving the interests of producer and other departments<sup>5</sup>. Kathryn Millard notes that screenplays are all too often "over-developed", i.e. lose "momentum and energy" by constant rewriting (Millard, p12), and that it would be more productive to consider the screenplay an "open text that sketches out possibilities and remains fluid through the film-making process" (p15)<sup>6</sup>. J. J. Murphy similarly notes that cinema cannot be innovative if the notion of what constitutes a screenplay is not challenged and made fluid and adaptable to the demands of the specific project (Murphy, 2010, p193). *Elephant*, by Gus van Sant (2003, US), for example, is based on a 30-page story outline but runs for 81 minutes (Murphy, p185)<sup>7</sup>. Van Sant improvised scenes with actors and experimented with visuals, e.g. he used long tracking shots. While, for now, *Lullaby's* screenplay follows an established format it can be potentially developed further in as yet inconceivable ways<sup>8</sup>.

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<sup>5</sup> See e.g. Bordwell, 1997, p18.

<sup>6</sup> The Australian filmmaker Kathryn Millard is a writer/director and as such is not an unusual case: all directors of the films in this thesis have been credited as writers or co-writers with the exception of John Stockwell.

<sup>7</sup> The Academy of Motion Picture, Arts and Sciences defines as "feature-length" a film running for more than 40 minutes (AMPAS, 2011). Paul Argentini, in his book *Elements of Style for Screenwriters*, suggests that an acceptable length for a feature screenplay is 90 to 130 pages: one page equalling one minute of film time (Argentini, p84). The seven films analysed in this thesis run between 86 and 127 minutes.

<sup>8</sup> *Lullaby* was written with Final Draft, the film industry's standard software for screenwriting formatting, which helps screenwriters write according to industry standards (see e.g. Argentini, 1998). But, as Millard notes, a number of new programs allow users do much more, e.g. add images to the screenplay (such as Celtx, 2011); or one can go further and create a graphic novel, the likes of which have gained increasing popularity as a template for films (Millard, p21).

Screenwriting, it must be noted, has historically received scant academic attention. Only recently have scholars begun to explore this field<sup>9</sup>, sparking a now lively debate, which adds an academic investigative dimension to the study of the screenplay so far generally limited to the domain of "how to" books (Vogler et al). This notwithstanding, the thesis objective is not to theorise the role of the screenplay in filmmaking but to launch a personal creative project in accordance with certain feminist criteria. Thus my inquiry has been grounded in complex understandings of human identity formation. Similarly, the decision to analyse films rather than their preceding screenplays is determined by my effort to understand narrative in its "cinematic form" (with actors, camerawork, music, locations etc.), and to theorise spectatorship as an activity<sup>10</sup> and, not least, an aesthetic experience and to uncover the seductions implicit therein, which arguably significantly determine the impact of causal narrative structures<sup>11</sup>. With this said, screenwriting resources would no doubt be more extensively consulted during *Lullaby's* rewriting/development process.

### **Story and Plot**

Distinguishing between story and plot is one of the main tasks in screenwriting. David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson explain that the story is a much more extensive

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<sup>9</sup> Kathryn Millard and J.J. Murphy work as both filmmakers and academics, weaving together practical and scholarly study. The same applies to Jill Nelmes, who is principal editor of the *Journal of Screenwriting* (Intellect, 2010/2011). Steven Maras's interests, on the other hand, are concentrated in the academic register. His book "Screenwriting: History, Theory and Practice" (Maras, 2009) has already established itself as a seminal publication in this young field (e.g. Ganz, 2010).

<sup>10</sup> Bordwell and Mackendrick both regard narrative as an open process, as much determined by the spectator as by the filmmakers (Mackendrick, pXXXV; Bordwell, 1985, p33).

<sup>11</sup> For example, the presence of nostalgic beauty in *My Summer of Love* can be taken to remove and sweeten the effects of Tamsin's betrayal.

concept and contains all events directly or indirectly referred to by the narrative, while the plot amounts to a careful selection of a few events to illustrate the story purpose (Bordwell & Thompson, p93). Evidently, the one precedes the other, and during my interview with Lucy S. I was keen to note down as many events, characters and experiences as she could remember within our given time frame. My next task was to distil from this unordered mass of facts - in Mackendrick's words - a "single and strong narrative line" (p50). Aiding me with this was my work in Chapter I, which shows how Victor Turner's anthropological social drama model can be applied to a rite of passage film featuring a girl protagonist. On a basic level, Turner's model is subdivided into four stages, which are breach, crisis, redress and either reintegration or schism. His more complex ideas on liminality build on this rudimentary narrative pattern and involve putting the liminar (protagonist) through key experiences outside social processes and norms, which ultimately function to help her back into social structure but at a different level. Social structure in Turner's view is signified by, among others, parents and it is the breaking apart of the family home that catapults Rain, the protagonist of *Lullaby*, into the creative arena of liminal wilderness. Only by repairing and modifying relations with her parents can she recover her connection to a sense of self and purpose, which then allows her to move on, away from the family unit. This idea culminates in Rain receiving the support of her parents in setting out by herself on a journey to India<sup>12</sup> - a move that significantly contrasts the final scenes of *Somersault* and *Thirteen* which locate the girls back in their mothers' care, while *Crazy/Beautiful* concludes with Nicole being sent away and disappearing visually from the film.

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<sup>12</sup> Lucy S. went on her own to India when she was 18.

The romance plot emerges, in one form or another, as a dominant narrative in most of the films in this thesis<sup>13</sup>. The girls may or may not have entertained sexual relations prior to this event, but they have certainly never been so much in love. This grand psychic experience of a first catalytic love shakes up their adolescent identities and lets them emerge as sexual adult beings. To this effect, they are seen suffering the toils of such romantic liaisons, which they, crucially, survive. All films critique the myth of love as fullness and attempt to give a realistic portrayal of the awkwardness of this first experience of overwhelming fusion. *Lullaby*'s heterosexual romance between Rain and Harry follows most closely the story of Heidi and Joe in *Somersault*. Like Heidi, Rain also expects her boyfriend to fill the space left by her absent mother, i.e. to compensate for a lost feeling of belonging and containment. Initially, Harry acts gallant and loving but after his mother dies, he, as does Joe for other reasons, withdraws his attention from the relationship. Rain does not understand his dismissive behaviour towards her and feels abandoned. Harry, like Joe, is himself unsure of his motives and intentions - he too "does not know what he wants"<sup>14</sup> - which results in a passive introversion on his part. Both characters wait expectantly for the other to fulfil their needs<sup>15</sup>.

Over the course of the thesis, I outline Lacan's subject theory, which defines an individual's subjectivity as centring in the field of the Other. While imaginary relations such as love signify an all-powerful Other, in the symbolic this Other is substituted with the castrated

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<sup>13</sup> This is certainly true for five of the seven films in this thesis: *Somersault*, *27 Missing Kisses*, *Crazy/Beautiful*, *Girlfight* and *My Summer of Love*.

<sup>14</sup> This is what Richard tells Joe in *Somersault*.

<sup>15</sup> Lucy spoke amicably of her first relationship, emphasising that her boyfriend's presence helped her cope with familial issues, but she also mentioned that the eventual split was triggered by her jealousy.

Other, which means that the subject acknowledges that the Other, i.e. the lover who takes the place of the Other, is also lacking. The change in psychic registers from imaginary to symbolic subverts the romantic ideal of love but also places both parties on an equal footing. Crucially, this Oedipal movement from imaginary to symbolic is a recurring event that produces the tension characteristic in romantic relationships. Again and again we are made to acknowledge the futility of our fantasy demands, but we can never quite relinquish the idealisation that love provokes or free ourselves from our emotional vulnerability to the lover. In this vein, the films in my selection do not offer a solution to love's impasse but instead offer narrative trajectories with mediating effects. Knowledge of the lover as lacking and suffering the same unconscious processes paves the way to a liberation of sorts. In this vein, the romance in rite of passage films is typically depicted as a learning process. To be sure, Žižek emphasises that there is no way around this mutual enlightenment process if the character is to "accede to the true nature of the other" (Žižek, 1989, p63). During their heated climax, Heidi and Joe make each other aware of their respective failings, bringing a sobering feel to their strongly romanticised encounter. In *Girlfight*, the lovers confess their inferiority issues to each other, thereby emphasising their mutual experience of lack-in-being. In both cases the lovers create rapport by entering into dialogue with each other and by acknowledging the other's reality as an incomplete human subject. This, crucially, does not occur in *Crazy/Beautiful*, since Nicole continues to harbour an idealised image of Carlos to the effect that the lovers appear physically and conceptually separated (i.e. Nicole is heard, Carlos is seen). Bringing Rain and Harry face to face in a dialogue situation during which they come to address their relation in terms of self-doubts and misconceptions (about the other) highlights

their advances made in the perception of close relationships.

### **The Main Subjective Positions (Characters)**

Rain, *Lullaby's* 15-year-old protagonist, is confused about her status, wavering between the demands of childhood and responsibilities of adulthood. Her ambiguous position is manifested in a scene with Tony, her father, who has become self-absorbed and neglectful of his duties as a father and "homemaker". He forgets about his eggs and bacon on the cooker and when Rain arrives, she removes the burnt food remains and tells Tony to "pull himself together". She is thus unwillingly inducted into the position of mother (to her father). But Rain is not able to fill the gap left by her mother, Savarna, who abandoned Tony to live independently. Notably, Tony's subjectivity is construed as destitute, while Savarna is given a full phallic presence in the sense that "being the phallus" affords her a position of power over men, securing her subjective identity (she wears lipstick in bed!). This position is similarly occupied by blonde bee Shelley, who raises Rain's envy but breaks under the demand for the absolute imposed by phallic law (she cannot make Harry fall in love with her). Rain realises that the greatly admired blonde is also subject to the Lacanian law of symbolic castration, which brings her to a different self-identification. Crucially, the presence of lack is felt everywhere; each character, both female and male, experiences a subjectively destitute moment. In fact, only Derek displays adequate self-containment by accepting the law at face value, i.e. by being matter of fact about the absurdity of the symbolic image. He expresses the condition of the law perfectly

when Rain demands to know why he always stares at Shelley:  
"I look at cripples and alcoholics too".<sup>16</sup>

### **Time, Place and Nostalgia**

In Chapter IV of this thesis, I discuss the way in which nostalgia is encapsulated in *My Summer of Love*, a rite of passage film about a same-sex affair. In this particular narrative, the screenwriter/director employs tropes of lesbian and adolescent self-containment and fullness to create an aesthetic, solipsistic environment for the girls that leads to a brutal, uncompromising climax. It is the very dreamlike nature of the girls' encounter that creates the impression of a delusional space or mental picture requiring a corrective. In this sense, the rite of passage film offers a platform for working through imaginary longings that for the adult generation come to be associated with the earlier time of adolescence. The sensation of nostalgia is arguably particularly strong with films that are set in the past, which is the case in commercially successful teen films such as *Donnie Darko* (Richard Kelly, 2001, US). I had no qualms about setting *Lullaby* in the 80s, despite realising that this construction of a nostalgic site may invite criticism of sorts. But the creation of a teen site to meet adult needs may not necessarily interfere with adolescent interests. In fact, the personal frustrations suffered by adolescents in nostalgic teen films have something of a universal significance, which is what my psychoanalytic reading of these films relies on<sup>17</sup>.

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<sup>16</sup> Shelley and Derek are fictional characters not based on real people.

<sup>17</sup> Since theorists have pointed to the universality of the Oedipal form in mainstream narrative cinema (e.g. De Lauretis, 1984, p125), it would appear that working through Oedipal issues is - particularly with regard to the movement backward to a "paradise lost" (De Lauretis, 1984, p125) - not restricted to a particular age group.



*Lullaby* is set in a drab suburban area of Southampton. Karen Brooks defines the suburbs as liminal zones, "as spaces where the antithetical geographical and imaginative sites of country and city are both separated and blurred" (Brooks, 1998, p88). For Roger Silverstone the feminine suburban landscape is opposed to the phallic masculine city (Silverstone, 1997, p3-7). But Southampton in its entirety is nowhere near representing this idea of phallic superiority and rather signifies a castration that has already taken place. While Southampton is a city best known as the departure point for many historical journeys such as the Titanic's maiden voyage, its urban geography now hardly reveals any links with its grand historical traditions. Penny McGuire notes, "When you look at modern Southampton, it is hard to imagine its romantic past". She connects her reflection with the destruction of much of the city's historical fabric during the Second World War and the decline of its seafaring spirit (McGuire, 1995, p87). The well-known tragedy of the Titanic, a ship that initially signified the ultimate in unsinkability and grandeur, can only but contribute to the sense of anti-heroism that sweeps the town. Rain is last seen outside of Southampton at an airport, a busy, bristling high-tech space signifying not only the fantasy of phallic mastery but also hope and opportunity away from unproductive imaginary fixations, which is in line with Rain's reconfiguration of her imaginary/symbolic reality. India in its "aliveness" - a dialogue scene between Rain and her parents cuts away briefly to a colourful, busy Indian street scene brimming with diversity (a heaving mass of cows, dogs, rickshaws, cars and people) - likewise presents an "other" to the Southampton captured in the screenplay.

### **Blondness and Personal Value**

The fetish, which I have introduced in Chapter II, is employed as a collective cultural fantasy to re-enforce the (white) masculine fantasy of wholeness and mastery, and one of the most conspicuous fetish signs in the Western media of recent decades is that of blondness. Richard Dyer notes that blonde as a sign of whiteness and visibility functions as a "major currency of communication and power" (Dyer, 1997, p44). The ideological function served by this phallic fantasy is explored by Holiday T. Day in his discussion about the blonde icon Marilyn Monroe. Day writes that by culturally foregrounding such a sign, "the identification of blonde with purity, superiority, or happiness becomes not merely cultural preference but a powerful fetish that subjugates and devalues those who are not blonde" (Day, 1991, p13). Based on Lucy S.' real-life recollections, Rain also becomes obsessed with the idea of blondness and whiteness and dyes her pitch-black hair blonde while also applying *Fade Out* cream to lighten her olive-brown skin. With this investment in her appearance, Rain, suspecting Harry of secretly favouring Shelley, hopes to cement his love and respect. As Lacan puts it, "for what she is not that she expects to be desired as well as loved" (Lacan, 1958, p583).

In *Thirteen*, Tracey's obsession with her appearance is divorced from romance issues and related to maternal and paternal stereotypes, which interfere with Tracey's development into a self-determining and loving woman. Her family situation follows a typical capitalist-Oedipal scenario by leaving her with a materially successful but physically absent father and a mother who is barely able to make ends meet but present as a loving and giving body. Tracey debases her mother's efforts and, in an attempt to separate her identity from that of her mother, she engages

in hyper-masculine hip-hop culture, strenuously turning her body into a masculine fetish. But unlike her friend Evie, she cannot immerse fully in the play of the phallic function, because she continuously experiences the vacuity of its content. As a result, her behaviour becomes more and more self-destructive. This psychic tension in Tracey is also present in Rain. While Rain equally refashions her body after a beauty stereotype in the hope of becoming more of a presence - you cannot be loved when you're not really there - she also realises that her efforts do not satisfy her desires. What is apparent in this development is that Rain's disappointment, in the first instance, is not dependent on a foreclosed impossibility of sexual rapport but on her acknowledgement of the subjective gap between body (real) and symbolic signification (reality) that marks all human existence.

To be sure, it is symbolic play that keeps the lovers apart by redirecting their demands for love. Rain not only offers herself to Harry in disguise, she also cannot simply love Harry for what he is or is giving her, despite showing true dedication by attempting to erase herself. While Harry in his narcissistic self-absorption shows the typical blindness of men towards the phallic function (nearly all male characters in my film analyses do this), Rain's desperate attempts at establishing rapport with the phallus marks her developing subjective awareness, culminating in a scene where she cuts all her hair off, a symbolic substitute for castration (in as much as hair, at a very basic level, signifies a woman's beauty). This radical act is sparked by Rain's realisation that Harry is not into blondes after all, that she has suffered under a misconception. By Slavoy Žižek's definition, such an indeterminable act (Rain effectively has no reason to cut her hair off) temporarily suspends the field of ideological meaning (2001a, p35). This moment, which also signifies

the return of a repressed real, may not invite the audience's identification and this also goes for Shelley's suicide attempt - although the removal of Shelley from Rain and Harry's romantic scene appears favourable in some respect. What is involved in Rain and Shelley's acts is the recognition that in following symbolic law their needs are not met, and while they cannot change it, they can at least do something to change their position towards it.

Shelley's presence in the narrative serves up an important trope subversion that not only contributes to the screenplay's agenda of demystifying phallic symbolic structure but also, like Lisa in *Girl Interrupted*, sets the limits to the protagonist's universe. Her tragic journey ends with her in a coma on the hospital bed, mirroring to some extent Lisa's fate. Both are damaged, beautiful, blonde and unable to move, intimating at the same time the impotence and tyranny of phallic symbolic law. They emblematised the ideal screen for the projection of man's repressed lack but their resistance to symbolisation implies a subjectivity that is well opposed to their status as social beauty ideal. Consistent with this, they evoke associations with the sexually assertive femme fatale figures of the film noir period who were by convention murderous blondes (Tuska, 1984, p173). Incidentally, Lisa is portrayed by a dyed-blond Angelina Jolie who looks beautiful even with bags under her eyes. By contrast, in the book Lisa is described as having, among other unfavourable traits, dark, dull hair (Kayson, p20).

### **Goth Subculture**

Spurred on by Harry, who is singer in a fictional goth rock band (conceived of after the popular British goth band *The Cure*), Rain adorns herself with the melancholic signifiers

of goth subculture (dark mascara, black clothes, netting, lace, flowers), which I took from Lucy S.'s recollections. My discussion of subculture so far has been largely restricted to the analysis of hegemonic masculinity in the hip-hop and Latino boxing scenes and, following in this context, goth subculture also serves up a male-favouring tradition. Not unlike hip-hoppers, goths have also engaged in the cultivation of transgender identities, but Goodland and Bibby point out that men have tended to adopt a more active goth presence (Goodland & Bibby, p23). Even so, the spectacle of Harry's gothic posturing and selfishness arguably offers titillating material for feminine eyes, and this potential effect is illustrated by Edward's example in *The Twilight Saga*, a series of novels centring on the romance between a vampire and an adolescent girl that has seen the beginning of a film franchise in 2008<sup>18</sup>.

Harry's character to a significant extent mirrors the idealised, stylised and feminised appearance of the lover/vampire Edward (Rob Pattinson). In her review of *New Moon*, Nancy Gibbs emphasises that it is Edward's presence that accounts for *Twilight's* massive female following, but Gibbs also notes in surprise that the "hot, brooding vampire" is effectively portrayed as "cold, bloodless and trapped in his head" (Gibbs, 2009). Demonstrably, this character is all about restraint and the fear of falling into a killing frenzy through sexual arousal. Carol Siegel offers a perspective on this by suggesting that the female voyeur is attracted to the spectacle of male eroticised powerlessness thus presented in gothic fiction (Siegel, 2007, p355). Any destructive impulses with the gothic male seem to be directed inwards, whereas outwardly he appears tame and loving, adding to his already alluring appearance.

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<sup>18</sup> The *Twilight Saga* comprises to date the following films: *Twilight*, Catherine Hardwicke, 2008, US; *Twilight: New Moon*, Chris Weitz, 2009, US; *Twilight: Eclipse*, David Slade, 2010, US.

This lure projected by the vampire/goth is verbalised in *Twilight*, the first film in the franchise, when Edward tells Bella (Kristen Stewart) "everything about me invites you in". Picking up Lacan's notion of the empty signifier, which I have discussed in Chapter IV, the figure of the vampire perfectly points up the void behind the lure. To this effect, plenty of allusions are made in *Twilight* that Edward is truly dead, i.e. pure semblance.

Fred Botting notes that the vampire marks the "erosion of all boundaries" and with this no longer evokes the horror it once did in a society riddled with symbolic prohibitions (Botting, p68). The goth also aims to connote ambiguity, particularly with respect to gender polarities, but Lauren M. E. Goodland notes that what goths actually represent is but a desire for androgyny that cannot be met (2007, pp93-94). She writes that the particular form of pain cultivated by the goth male of the 80s is expressed in *The Cure's* lyrics: rid of the hunger for the female object, pain becomes the signifier of a mutilated subjectivity. In this sense, what becomes central to the experience of the goth male is his negation of a proscribed masculine mandate with which all men are expected to comply. But more than articulating a progressive notion of identity, the spectacular theatrics with which the fractured and alienated goth male identity is expressed accents a certain self-involvement at the expense of reflection and relationships. It is very much this premise that drives Harry's character and encloses him in a world unto himself filled with mysterious longing. Rain frequently gazes in fascination at Harry's carefully fashioned and self-absorbed façade - her gaze is privileged over Harry's - which offers her inspiration for negotiating her own identity struggle.

The carnivalesque mode of representation typical of the vampire/goth certainly gives him a presence, even if a disruptive one, which counterposes the girl's perceived invisibility. In trying to create meanings for her body, Rain applies goth expressions first associated with Harry, which also suitably function as liminal symbolism, i.e. indicate her ambiguous social status and fluid identity<sup>19</sup>. But Rain differs from Harry in that she is all identity anxiety whereas he represents a much more coherent picture of goth adolescence in confrontation with traditional socialising influences. While both use goth culture to stage their desires, it is their desires that are different; he longs to remain who he is, while she - through her subjection to patriarchal codes - longs to become someone else. These differing identity politics of disconnection and attachment typically emerge in the films discussed in this thesis (usually but not exclusively exacerbated by the romance plot<sup>20</sup>). However, emphasis must be placed on the constructive gain for the girl in appropriating goth, which not least signifies a break with the normalising images of a patriarchal adult world. To be sure, Rain's body becomes a site of struggle between elements of a hierarchically privileged white community (e.g. blondness) and resistance to a traditional feminine iconography (goth). It is also worth noting that the appeal of the goth movement has not waned since its inception in the 1980s and is still present on the margins of late-capitalist post-millennium societies (Goodland & Bibby, 2007, p7). The popularity of *Twilight* attests to this "undead" nature of goth and may go some way in indicating the contemporary appeal of *Lullaby's* goth attributes.

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<sup>19</sup> See Chapter I for an explanation of liminality in the adolescent context.

<sup>20</sup> *Somersault* is one such example that sees Joe frequently cutting himself off from Heidi while she seeks out other men in her search for containment.

### **Ethnic and Racial Issues**

While goth subculture easily accommodates all kinds of sexuality, facial pallor is not something easily adopted by black-skinned goths (who do exist) despite emphasis on the otherwise dark goth aesthetic (Goodland & Bibby, p25). This notwithstanding, Goodland and Bibby emphasise that goths primarily aim to emulate death and that pale skin is not the result of any racial bias. Incidentally, *Twilight* also features a black vampire, although as a minor figure. While every film in this thesis encapsulates some racial diversity, these racial issues are imbricated with questions of sexual identity. Even in *Girlfight*, with the only girl protagonist of (at least some) colour, aspects of feminine oppression are brought to the fore. The same goes for *Crazy/Beautiful* where the Latino boy actualises his love and career ambitions, while the white girl, Nicole, is left languishing in his shadow. In *Lullaby* questions of race are mainly related to a cultural, hierarchical and, as the film comes to show, nonsensical beauty ideal. In a sense, what is at play here is the compelling suspicion that pleasure is achieved somewhere else, which is typically ultimately disproved in a phallic narrative<sup>21</sup>. *Lullaby's* narrative is therefore arguably phallic, but what is disproved is not - as is the case in *My Summer of Love* - the (suspected) hidden pleasures enjoyed by a minority group, but those of the socially privileged.

Another pertinent issue here is the assumption that minority groups have privileged access to special knowledge in virtue of their marginalised position. This point is made by sociophobe Lisa in *Girl Interrupted* who claims to "see the truth", i.e. the tactics of deception by which society sustains itself. Although the film evokes empathy

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<sup>21</sup> This point is discussed in Chapter IV, p87.



for her, it concludes with the argument that playing along with society's expectations is a more beneficial arrangement. Here the truth rests on the Lacanian notion that society is no enemy (evil Other) as such and that the only truth worth defending is the truth of the subject's desire (e.g. to be happy). *Lullaby's* Derek to some extent takes on Lisa's role as "truth monger". He is a proponent of hip-hop, a symbolic field of black identity that much like goth subculture creates a new economy of desire"<sup>22</sup> and therefore new kinds of knowledge, particularly with regard to dominant group practices. However, what mostly sets Derek apart from Lisa is an almost "ascetic" contentedness with this position, which is not unlike that of the black boys in *Thirteen*, suggesting that their particular subcultural arrangement (which also provides a homogenised fantasy space) to a significant extent enables them to live by their desires<sup>23</sup>.

Miss Evans, the black art teacher<sup>24</sup> and Harry's object of desire, comes to occupy a more complex position. By being adult, female and black, she symbolises the "radical" Other of Harry's own body. The attraction of opposites is a recurring theme in the films of this thesis with love affairs crossing class (*Somersault, My Summer of Love*) and age (*27 Missing Kisses*) lines. Indeed, Harry and Rain also form such an antithetical pair, but in her effort to become both like him (goth) and like Shelley (blonde), she achieves a diminution of their differences, which contradicts Harry's obsession with difference carried out at the expense of any real unity or meaningful communication. Indeed, Harry's psychic organisation is indelibly phallic in that he seeks to be close to a woman

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<sup>22</sup> Dick Hebdige maintains that the subcultural creation of new structures of desire functions to contest given social codes (Hebdige, 2002, pp212-213).

<sup>23</sup> See my analysis of hip-hop culture in *Thirteen*, Chapter II.

<sup>24</sup> Miss Evans is another fictional character not based on a real person.

but misses her, or rather, as Lacan would have it, will not know about her (her particular subjectivity and vulnerability), preferring the mystery of the Other to remain as such in order to fuel his passions (Lacan, 1999, p121). In *Somersault* Heidi berates Joe for his disloyalty, which is also the accusation levelled at Harry by Derek during the church scene ("You're responsible for people you hang out with, mate"). Crucially, the climactic scene in which Rain secretly watches Harry's unsuccessful attempt at seducing Miss Evans (although perturbed, she pushes him away) extricates Rain from her emotional bind to him, not least by realising Harry's helplessness in the face of his desires.

### **Rain's Passage into Adulthood**

For Mackendrick "a story is driven by character progression, something that can take more than one form" (p17). His statement rings particularly true for the adolescent rite of passage film with its manifold perspectives on character maturation. In the narratives discussed in this thesis, the girls' passage into adulthood involves any number of interconnected personal and situational variables pertaining to appearance, romance and career, although parental conflict usually emerges as the common determining factor underlying these. This is even true when parents are largely absent from the narrative, as in *Somersault*, but where the story is effectively driven by the need for a mother-daughter reunion. In Chapter II, a Lacanian framework proved fruitful in determining paternal and maternal issues the girl typically faces in a patriarchal society and which have a stultifying impact on her development. Despite the difficult endings, the girls in the examined narratives manage to reconfigure the parental relation according to their own terms. This is an

important development in their self-determination and not actually dependent on actual reconciliation with parental figures, although Diana in *Girlfight* is dependent on a parental substitute to instil her with his law, i.e. value and respect. Furthermore, the lovers' dialogue in *Girlfight* also shows how a sense of self-determinacy and agency in the paternal relation is carried over into the protagonist's romantic involvement.

As Rain becomes more assertive, her personal relations become distinctly different, reinforcing the dialectical process of her identity work. Rain's parents come to trust her to be independent and her dialogue with Harry not only reconciles the lovers but also rescues Rain from the stupor of her self-denial. Importantly, she turns her focus back on her body (she kisses her knee while taking a bath) as a site of coherence and continuity with a more dispassionate understanding of how her body image relates to extra-personal, cultural space. By cutting her blonde-dyed hair off to its black roots, Rain explicitly signals her difference from Nordic beauty norms, having reached the impasse of cultural impositions and inner experience. Her new anatomical language mirrors the androgyny of Susanna in *Girl Interrupted*, who throughout the film sports cropped, black hair. Importantly, Susanna eventually exercises agency in appropriating the writer's symbolic identity to express her distinctiveness, her aspirations and context, beyond gender. Rain, who is encouraged by her art teacher to develop her drawing skills, takes a sketchbook to India. Moreover, in the airport scene a number of signifiers point to possibility and movement: the bird tattoo, the plane and not least the female Asian pilot walking towards her - all signify Rain's active engagement in the project of selfhood.

## Conclusion

Mackendrick emphasises that a good writer will "let his audience pick and choose their own themes and 'messages' from the story he is telling" (Mackendrick, p101). For him good-quality writing is determined by a strong but unobtrusive theme and subtext (the film's implicit meanings). Similarly, the feminist screenwriter should rely on the audience's interpretative capabilities to "discover" intended messages of empowerment. Inevitably, her task to subtly configure and contain a story in its representational and expressive totality is further complicated by the incompleteness of her work, given the collaborative effort of filmmaking. But it is also the very nature of film as a visual and dialogue medium - which encapsulates the potential of character development - that provides her with invaluable tools.

In writing *Lullaby*, I have paid attention to film as a constructed space with political-narrative possibilities. My thesis analysis of seven films shows that the complex interdependency of gender, desire and social symbol that plays out in key settings (parental home, romance, subculture) makes it hard for girls to practise self-determination. Rain undergoes as much of a struggle for control as any other girl protagonist examined in this thesis. She comes up against a tidal wave of prescriptive stereotyping pertaining to the female body, prompting her to use her body as her main mode of expression. Further, she is denied personally satisfying relations with her parents and lover respectively, all because of her lack of an independent, coherent notion of self-identity.

Rain's body as a site of conflict between commodified beauty standards (the hackneyed trope of white beauty) and subcultural expressions of resistance - she goes from dark

Asian looks to blonde goth and back - points to her ongoing struggle for self-discovery. But only once she becomes assertive enough to show serious autonomy during dialogue confrontations with her parents and lover is she able to successfully cohere as a continuous "I". Her advancement in the name of self-determination is further underscored by her proximity to signifiers that stand for movement and potential beyond the confines of gender binaries, and her geographical placement away from the family unit in the final scene further indicates her progression into autonomy.

Rain's involvement with Harry turns out to be a particularly valuable learning experience. Not only does he, by being a goth, offer her inspiration for negotiating her identity visually, but also his own rite of passage exposes his selfish helplessness in the face of his desires, which helps her adjust her perspective on the relationship. Initially trying to fill the "parental void" by looking for an attachment object, Rain learns to confront Harry in dialogue and, crucially, to extricate her identity from her desire for his unwavering devotion. Moreover, racial questions of colour and value, which plague Rain for the better part of the story, are largely resolved with blonde bee Shelley's near suicide and Rain's witnessing of Harry's failed attempt at seducing the beautiful, black art teacher Miss Evans.

*Lullaby's* setting in the 1980s may invoke feelings of nostalgia, but rather than depicting adolescence as a time of carefree rebellion in want of a sobering denouement, the process of maturing into a young adult is shown to be a liberating process involving the girl's shedding of emotionally-stifling dependencies followed by an increased competency in her articulation of self. She no longer perceives of a monolithic patriarchal universality

enveloping every part society and culture, but finds potential for being herself in a world that is rich with the plurality of meanings. As I have shown in this chapter, *Lullaby* is already a story about female empowerment, but the rigorous process of distilling the screenplay down to its essential qualities is an ongoing task. There is always more that can be done to streamline the story's main implications summarised here in the conclusion. Identifying these for subsequent rewrites has been a major practical outcome of this chapter.

## Conclusion

The power of politics resides in the production and dissemination of ideology, which in turn can rest on an ability to represent the personal within a specific visual realm.

(Maggie Humm, 1997, p179)

Equipped with a pragmatic feminist agenda, I have directed my theoretical focus towards the often-contradictory ways in which patriarchy is reproduced in rite of passage films about adolescent girls at the low-budget end of the mainstream, following the central hypothesis that an understanding of these mechanisms would prevent my own unwitting reproduction of oppressive gender distinctions in writing a feature film screenplay with a similar storyline. (Significantly, problematic images or messages are often buried in a film's many-layered significance, meaning that both messages of empowerment and disempowerment can be coded into the same scene giving way to a plurality of possible interpretations that, while arguably realistically reflecting the indeterminate process of adult becoming, may also significantly undermine the protagonist's advances to self-determination and autonomy. In *Girl Interrupted*, for example, Susanna is last shown in a taxi on her way home from the mental institution where she has spent two years. This last shot mirrors her transfer to the hospital earlier in the film - even the taxi driver is the same person - indicating a return to her status quo, a regression of sorts, while her narration points up a distinctly different, life-embracing attitude.)

The seven rite of passage films examined in this thesis define the genre in its contemporary manifestation. From these narratives, I have gleaned common issues emerging as complications, inhibitions and stimuli for the girl's process of adult becoming. Notably, each film stages the

identity uncertainties of girls growing up in a changing yet still patriarchally-inclined universe of discourse while explicitly rejecting subordinated notions of femininity circumscribed by said ideology. In each case the girl's struggle for identity is dramatised as an arguably valid bid for taking on the system and traits traditionally viewed as masculine, e.g. rebelliousness, toughness, physical strength and competitiveness are valorised. This is particularly true in *Girlfight* where Diana is all this, while other female characters are portrayed as man pleasing, glamorised and beautified or squeamish and physically weak.

In each of the films analysed, the drama of the Oedipal scenario is played out to full effect, which means that the girl's parents play key roles in shaping the her subjectivity. Emphasis is placed on the contribution of the father to the girl's separation/individuation development, while mothers are left in the shadow - they are absent (*Somersault*, *27 Missing Kisses*), dead (*Crazy/Beautiful*, *My Summer of Love*, *Girlfight*), bigoted (*Girl Interrupted*) or self-sacrificing (*Thirteen*). Even in the conclusion to *Thirteen*, where the mother/daughter conflict is at the core of the narrative, Mel says that Tracey's father should be more in her life. The father trope sees him as representative of the girl's external world - social hierarchy and symbolic relations - from which women's historical exclusion is reflected by a lack of politically and socially powerful female characters able to provide the girl with a means of identification away from infantile indeterminacy and/or maternal cushioning.

The different contextual conditions of the films provide diversity in paternal-symbolic involvement. In an ideal scenario, Diana in *Girlfight* receives satisfaction with a father substitute when her trainer Hector, having undergone



something of a feminist conversion, instils her with a sense of worth and purpose. The idea of the symbolic father occupying the higher rungs of the social hierarchy comes into play in *My Summer of Love*, where the castrating agency of Oedipalization comes in the guise of upper-middle-class Tamsin, who deviously subjects orphaned working-class Mona to a flight of fancy. *Thirteen* also sees a girl substituting for the castrating father: Evie embroils Tracey in a heavily stylised, patriarchal fetishistic world in which transgressive and disruptive behaviour provides the only pleasure. However, the most subversively problematic rendering of the father/daughter tie is presented in *Crazy/Beautiful* where Tom and Nicole's celebrated reconciliation (following his disavowal of her) effectively undermines her sense of autonomy and subjective wellbeing. Nicole's repudiation of her defiant stance casts her into the shadow of her lover Carlos, and although Tony denies Carlos his speech in a move that similarly reflects the burden of paternal law as always leaving a remainder (denying access to fullness of being), Carlos seems a lot happier than Nicole who concludes the film with a wistful narration.

Both gender positions are shown to be lacking, but what emerges distinctly in this thesis is a collusion of narrative and pictorial strategies in the fantasy of adult male autonomy and power. This is most evident in the nostalgic strategy deployed in *My Summer of Love*, which unifies masculine subjectivity by functioning within the constraints of male narrative pleasure. The purported lesbians of the film are aestheticised into objects of fascination and their romance is reduced to play by the film's conclusion, confirming that there is no lasting pleasure to be obtained outside normative, heterosexual arrangements, which are - in true phallic fashion - also

constructed as lacking but given a sense of institutionalised inevitability.

Yet the girls, unlike the male characters (who are portrayed as sexually devious but paralysed with ennui), are not completely subjected to the phallic principle, which substitutes authority and (displaced) desire for pleasure, situating all characters, regardless of class, in the context of deception and self-deception. In fact, the film concludes with evidence of genuine affection between the girls despite the overarching phallic framework. This contributes to the nostalgic/ironic sentiment concerning class, hierarchy and, by extension, adulthood, which pervades the film and constructs society as "a big fake" stopping humans from realising their deeper commitments. However, the film - which to a significant extent encompasses Pawlikowski's self-proclaimed outsider view - arguably gives rise to fantasies of class exploitation that belie the light-hearted manner in which the ill-fated, class-divided adolescent romance is otherwise portrayed.

To be sure, Pawlikowski's totalising phallic paradigm seems in itself a nostalgic construction, given the increased feminisation of modern capitalist culture, which, significantly, affects both sexes. Rita Felski points out that contemporary culture is all about "hedonism, abundance and pleasure" and that "capitalism is increasingly portrayed as the good mother rather than the repressive father" (Felski, 1997, p136). From this perspective, the opposition of adulthood and female adolescence in *My Summer of Love* can be seen to function as an allegory of (traditional) phallic wisdom and "feminine", hedonist naïveté - the film's nostalgia of youth ultimately marking a resistance (and ignorance) to change, because these stereotypical attributes of femininity (pleasure, abundance etc.) are associated with a time in life that needs be

overcome. Further, positions of resistance to society's ostensible entrapment into blind, pleasure-seeking androgyny can involve fears of "undifferentiation" with the loss of phallic significance (the phallus as the signifier of difference). Although Pawlikowski himself claims that the girls are "totally different types" (Anderson, 2005, p6), their differences are to a significant extent obscured by the feminine signifiers of their long hair and slender bodies<sup>1</sup> that set the girls a world apart from the male characters.

Ideas about the superiority and omnipotence of the phallus as ordering principle are so far-reaching that only one film, *Girlfight*, arrives at a more or less constructive outlook for addressing gender imbalances. By following along the lines of an Irigarayan economy of dialogue, the film works through bias and resistance with the aim of naturalising the concepts of gender and love in respect of a fundamental biological difference, which for Irigaray is not subjected to hierarchical relations. The lovers in *Girlfight*, who are both featherweight boxing champions, are bonded together by a mutual affection and respect that gives them the impetus for continuously seeking out each other's company, every time attempting to move closer in dialogue. Furthermore, both characters carry a complex and individual mixture of "feminine" and "masculine" traits that detracts little from their physical identification as female and male respectively (and this despite their very similar muscular physiques). However, it must be noted that this sexual equality narrative is set against the traditionally masculine backdrop of the boxing world in which values such as competitiveness and emotional detachment, as well as the readiness to beat one's opponent to a pulp, are left intact.

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<sup>1</sup> In his article on *My Summer of Love*, Jason Anderson is aware of the "physical allure" of both female leads (Anderson, 2005, p7).

The patriarchal phallus, which continues to penetrate into every part of society, is also discernable in subcultural movements that aim to break with normative gender constructs. Hip-hop culture (in *Thirteen* and *Girlfight*) may show up gender-indifferent practices when it comes to clothing styles but reproduces patriarchal misogyny in its key performance of black masculinity. Ambiguous subversiveness is also expressed in the eccentric modality of goth subculture, which feminises man but sets him apart from his female consort into the isolated space of solipsistic reflection. In *Girlfight*, Diana appropriates pictorial signifiers of hip-hop to designate her body as a site of resistance, while she also struggles to free herself from oppressive control. In *Lullaby*, Rain similarly fashions her body into a contradiction with the help of goth signifiers, challenging normative standards, while going after the hackneyed trope of white beauty.

To be sure, the use of different and sometimes contradictory pictorial and literary signifiers can well serve the girl in her effort to affirm an autonomous identity. *Girl Interrupted* provides a good example of this move when Susanna's identification with the trope of "writer" (as outside society but embedded in it) helps her negotiate her "borderline personality", which in turn serves as a trope for female subjectivity as the constitutive impossibility in patriarchal society. The film questions institutional distinctions of pathology and normalcy and follows a Lacanian logic in pointing to the inherent "madness" of society and its symbolic reality. Susanna's recuperation is dependent on her recognition of the emptiness of signification as possibility (perceptions of opposition are, despite addressing feminist issues, concluded to be self-imagined) and, by synecdoche (the signifier in its idealised dimension), of the means of identifying with a small part substituting for her fuller

self. This way of entering the language-symbolic through identification with selected non-gender signifiers arguably represents a fair solution to the problematic existence of dissident femininity. But what is lacking here, in the context of the film, is the sign of any kind of feminine agency that would impact on society.

*Lullaby's* analysis in Chapter VI explores my initially intuitive attempt at steering away from scenarios serving to undermine the girls' efforts at articulating an independent adult social identity. While the absence of connotative ambiguities clearly cannot be precluded given the unlimited intertextuality of film, *Lullaby* by all means indicates a fruitful direction. In fact, *Lullaby* can be seen embracing the view of a person's ever-evolving diversity of identificatory experience. After her journey through liminal experience, Rain is located in a space different to that occupied by her parents - a marked change from the more common rite-of-passage trajectory found in other films in this thesis that locates the protagonist back in the family circle. Much like Sybilla in *27 Missing Kisses*, who becomes disillusioned with her community of elders, Rain is last seen leaving familiar boundaries behind to actively search out new territory. Her visual proximity to signifiers of movement and independence further give a sense of her fullness of being (similar to Carlos in *Crazy/Beautiful*, Rain is shown close to an aeroplane). And there are other non-gender signifiers capable of manifesting her particular subject identity ("India", "artist"), which bring about the rejection of the notion of phallic difference as superior meaning-giving principle.

*Lullaby* further displaces the hegemonic logic of interconnectedness of language, father and phallus by destabilising the relationship of these constitutive

elements to each other. Female subjectivity is not constructed as the (resisting) Other to a patriarchally-inclined society since each character in the film, both male and female, adolescent and adult, comes to experience a subjectively destitute moment. Crucially, the female stance of "being the phallus", initially shown to secure her subjective identity by affording her a position of power over men, turns out to be just as flawed as the male position of "having the phallus", i.e. of existing as normative subjects without the need for masquerade. And while Rain's emancipatory unfolding involves acknowledgement of the fundamental emptiness that accompanies all modes of subjectivity, she also discovers, by the same move, the possibility of her nondependence as subject.

To conclude, fictional mainstream films continue to suffer the paralysing effect of a patriarchal symbolic system by which reality is constructed on screen and which therefore arguably still exists lodged in the spectator's unconscious and desiring gaze. But despite this sobering analysis, films such as *Girlfight*, as well as the possible film project *Lullaby*, offer a number of transgressive possibilities towards the cinematic reproduction of a gender synergy in which feminine identity is not constructed in opposition to an overpowering, inescapable patriarchal authority. This trend is also discernable in recent films such as the critically acclaimed, Academy Award winning *Juno* (Reitman, 2007, US/Canada). Desson Thomson in his *Washington Post* review brands *Juno* screenwriter Diablo Cody a "real hero", claiming that she will "make audiences think forever differently about such fuzzily defined notions as 'girls', 'knocked up' or 'young people'" (Thomson, 2007). His observation clearly points to an acute demand for such films.

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*Thelma & Louise* (1991) Ridley Scott, MGM: US.

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*27 Missing Kisses* (2000) Nana Dzordzhadze, Arthaus:  
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*Twilight* (2008) Catherine Hardwicke, Summit: US.

*Twilight: New Moon* (2009) Chris Weitz, Summit: US.

*Twilight: Eclipse* (2010) David Slade, Summit: US.

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## **Appendix I**

### **The Symbolic, Imaginary and Real**

Lacan introduced a system of intrapsychic registers to account for the different levels of psychic phenomena related to human subjectivity, the imaginary, the symbolic and the real, which are initially aligned during the Oedipal complex and continue to determine the workings of the post-oedipal psyche.

The paternally inscribed symbolic, the "world of speech" (Lacan, 1988a, p80), is constitutive of the subject. It is only as subject that humans can articulate and locate themselves in relation to others (1988a, p140), because "only a subject can understand a meaning" (1948, p83). Thus configured, humans come to suffer the objectifying effects of language, which Lacan considers useful for such pursuits as "the common task of science" (1989, p77), but less so for the search for "the meaning of life" (1989, pp 76-77). Lacan points up the fundamental emptiness of the signifier in language but argues that in creating meaning effects the symbolic is not per se deceptive (1992, p12), since "every truth has the structure of fiction" (1992, p12). More to the point, the symbolic can be used to assert authority over one's life history by significantly re-constructing it in language.

Deception proper belongs to the imaginary which, according to Lacan, is bound up with the "mirror stage", a developmental stage in early infancy during which the child first identifies with the visual image of its own body. This image is perceived as coherent, bounded, "an ideal unity", far removed from the child's lack of motor co-ordination (1948, p92). The resulting "relational discordance" heightens the value that the child places on its mirror image, producing an imaginary identification that structures the ego. This essentially

narcissistic model of recognition (1992, p98) can be found in love, which always actuates a regression to the imaginary. Indeed, love provokes a "veritable subduction of the symbolic, a sort of annihilation", which creates a productive tension (1988a, p142). Without this challenge, Lacan suspects that human subjects may become too sure of themselves, too comfortable inside the frame of a "self-serving" symbolic politics (1953b, p233), and he also emphasises that human progress owes much to the subject's narcissistic delusions (1950, p122). In this sense, the imaginary, despite being subordinated to symbolic expression, furnishes human subjects with the impetus for their self-conscious explorations (1956a, p388; 2003, p302). To be sure, we make use of language to express and give shape to our imaginary fixations. And we do this because our delusions are not concomitant with the real of our existence.

While the symbolic encapsulates the instability of the signifier and the imaginary delusions of superiority, the Lacanian real is always in its place (Lacan, 1992, p70). It is a paradoxical concept that stands for stability and unrepresentability and tends to reveal itself to us as an object of anxiety or disruption, which can be a form of trauma (1998, p55) but also a simple material manifestation such as a noise - in fact anything that reminds us "that we are not dreaming" (1998, p60). It is exterior to the subject, but, to give it shape, we imagine the real to be a primordially repressed "thing" (1992, p67). Therefore, essentially, it is an empty place (1992, p129), which is why we are always under the impression that we are missing something, but cannot properly conceive of this thing we are missing. Crucially, we cannot escape the real. Even when we do our best to repress, displace or foreclose the unsettling presence of this nameless "thing" with art, religion and discourse, it does not simply go away (1992, pp 130-131). Repeated encounters with the real constitute a primary process for the subject - Lacan asserts

that to feel conscious and "awake", the subject needs to experience the gap between fantasy and another locus, to which the real inevitably points (1998, p56). Even so, we make every attempt to keep the real at bay by constructing comforting fictions to frame our everyday reality (1999, p95). When we are asleep, however, we are exceedingly vulnerable to the real, because we are unable to actuate our symbolic defences. This is why Lacan argues that when we wake up from our sleep, because our dreams are too horrible to bear, we go on dreaming (1999, p65).

## **Appendix II**

### **Film Synopses**

***Somersault*** (Cate Shortland, Australia, 2004)

Writer: Cate Shortland

16-year-old Heidi leaves home after getting caught kissing her mother's boyfriend. She travels to Jindabyne, a remote ski resort, where she is left to fend for herself. Again and again she tries to attach herself to a man but is consistently let down. Her feelings for Joe, a handsome and wealthy farmer's boy, are returned, but he is unable to own up to his love for her. Because she is hot-headed, Heidi meets every drawback with a destructive action. Having disappeared for a couple of days after a serious argument, Joe finds Heidi in her room with two boys, naked, drunk and drugged. As a result, Heidi's landlady Irene demands that Heidi leave without delay. Heidi deplores her bad girl image and asks Irene for help. Irene, whose son is locked up in jail, assures Heidi that her mother will want her back. The next morning Heidi makes up with Joe and is taken home by her mother.

### ***27 Missing Kisses***

(Nana Dzhordzhadze, Germany/Georgia/UK/France, 2000)

Writers: Nana Dzhordzhadze, Irakli Kvirikadze

14-year old Sibylla travels to a small Russian town to visit her aunt. There she falls in love with 41-year-old womaniser Alexander. At the same time, his son Mickey, who is also 14, falls in love with her. Sibylla tries hard to win the attention of Alexander but to him she is merely a troublesome child. In fact, most people in the village



think so, although their behaviour is morally deplorable. One night, a French captain arrives in the village pulling a boat with a tractor and looking for the ocean. He cannot bear the villagers' frivolous attitudes and leaves in the middle of a party to continue his search. Mickey becomes jealous of his father. One night, Sibylla visits Alexander and surprises him in his sleep with a kiss. But Alexander realises who his nightly visitor is and turns away. Mickey watches an upset Sibylla dash out of the house. A moment later, Sibylla hears a shot. The captain finds the ocean and Sibylla joins him on his journey.

***Crazy/Beautiful*** (John Stockwell, US, 2001)

Writers: Phil Hay, Matt Manfredi

Nicole, the 16-year-old daughter of exemplary congressman Tom Oakley, is a pretty party girl and unable to stay out of trouble. At her school she meets Carlos, a poor Hispanic boy with ambitions of becoming a pilot, and they fall in love. It soon becomes clear that Nicole's reckless lifestyle endangers Carlos' chances of a scholarship. Tom urges Carlos to stay away from her and Carlos upsets Nicole by taking time off the relationship. Carlos has second thoughts, goes in search of her and finds Nicole very drunk at a pool party, kissing a stranger. He drives her home and gets pulled up by the police who escort the adolescents to Nicole's home. Tom meets them outside and Nicole makes a scene. The following morning, Nicole tells Carlos that she is being sent away. They decide to run away and spend the night at a motel, but Nicole changes her mind and decides to go home and confront Tom. They make up and Tom thanks Carlos for showing him how to love his daughter.

***Thirteen*** (Catherine Hardwicke, USA, 2003)

Writers: Catherine Hardwicke, Nikki Reed

13-year-old Tracy Louise Freeland lives with her mother Mel, a recovering drug addict, and her older brother Mason in a low-rent section of Los Angeles. Tracy is envious of the school's belle Evie and sets out to win her approval and friendship. Before long, Tracy is stealing purses, taking drugs and hanging out with the local black hip-hop gang. Evie moves in with Tracy, and Mel finds it increasingly hard to keep her daughter in check. When Tracy, thin, pale and scarred, discovers that she will have to repeat a year at school, she and Mel decide that Evie should move out. Evie immediately turns her back on Tracy. Worse, Mel and Brooke, Evie's guardian, confront the girls after discovering drugs and stolen money in Tracy's possessions. Brooke blames Tracy for being a bad influence on Evie. Tracy throws a fit but Mel, standing by her daughter, holds her tightly until they fall asleep.

***My Summer of Love*** (Pawel Pawlikowski, UK, 2004)

Writers: Helen Cross (novel), Pawel Pawlikowski,  
Michael Wynne

Working-class 16-year-old Mona strikes up a friendship with upper-middle-class Tamsin, who spends summers in her parents' mansion. The girls' intense bonding leads to a lesbian affair and they decide to elope. But Mona's brother Phil, a former convict turned born-again Christian, becomes wary of Tamsin and drags Mona away from the mansion, locking her inside her room at the pub. Mona acts insane and Phil, in resignation, lets her out. Without delay, Mona packs her suitcase and goes looking for Tamsin. Tamsin, however, is getting ready to go back to boarding school. When Mona learns that Tamsin was dishonest about a

number of things, she is upset and leaves in tears. Tamsin finds Mona down by the river and tries to soothe her, but Mona takes Tamsin by the throat, almost drowning her.

***Girl Interrupted*** (James Mangold, Germany/US, 1999)

Writers: Susanna Kayson (novel), James Mangold, Lisa Loomer, Anna Hamilton Phelan

After her suicide attempt, 18-year-old Susanna Kayson is hospitalised at a Boston psychiatric hospital. She strikes up an uneasy friendship with sociopath Lisa who keeps escaping and, by force, returning. When the doctors give Lisa shocks, she asks Susanna to escape with her to Florida. The first night they are put up by Daisy, a girl with an eating disorder related to her father's sexual abuse. Lisa provokes Daisy into committing suicide. The next morning, Lisa steals Daisy's money and disappears. Shocked at Lisa's behaviour, Susanna decides to return to the hospital and work at her rehabilitation. Before long, Lisa is also found and returned. Before Susanna's release, Lisa and the other girls read out loud her diary, which provides harrowing accounts for each of them. Susanna realises her mistake and manages to make up with all of them, including Lisa, before leaving the hospital.

***Girlfight*** (Karyn Kusama, US, 2000)

Writer: Karyn Kusama

18-year-old Diana Guzman catches the boxing bug when she is asked to pick up her brother Tiny from a Brooklyn gym. She asks Tiny's trainer Hector to train her and, despite reservations, he gives in. He becomes like a father to Diana who in a later scene beats her abusive biological father to a pulp. Diana falls in love with Adrian who is

also training to become a featherweight boxing champion. Slowly they fall in love and Adrian abandons his feminine "trophy" girlfriend to be with Diana. But their love is tested severely when Hector decides to let them compete against each other in New York's "first" Gender-Blind Amateur Boxing Championship. Diana wins and Adrian feels emasculated. Yet they still find it in themselves to utter words of appreciation and come together in an embrace.

## Thesis Interview Consent Form

Researcher and Screenwriter: Esther Jo Steiner,  
PhD Candidate, Royal Holloway University of London  
([estherjo@cinetop.at](mailto:estherjo@cinetop.at), ++43 650 526 8695)

### 1) Brief Project Description

Esther Jo Steiner's doctoral thesis entitled "Girls on the Borderline: Rewriting the Rite of Passage Film" analyses the rite of passage narratives of independent feature films featuring adolescent females. The thesis goal is to write a screenplay for a feature film of a similar nature that is empowering for the girl and circumvents the patriarchal bias found in the films analysed.

### 2) Your Involvement

Your participation involves the recording of an interview about events in your life as an adolescent girl that will be transcribed into a Word document and adapted into a screenplay.

### 3) The Agreement

Your participation is voluntary. You are free to withdraw your participation at any time.

\*

Any information you provide for the project will be treated as confidential. Any names given during the interview will be changed in the thesis and screenplay. The audiotapes and transcribed Word document will be kept secure and separate from any published material.

\*

The use of the interview includes the PhD thesis and associated screenplay and may include a published paper or a published book based on the PhD thesis. Any other use, e.g. producing the screenplay into a film, is subject to a separate agreement.

\*

Esther Jo Steiner may creatively adapt material assimilated through the interview for use in her screenplay, such as adding or removing characters and situations.

\*

The research is carried out along the ethical guidelines of the Royal Holloway's Code of Good Research Practice.

I approve of the use of my personal information as agreed upon with the above conditions.

Name

[Redacted Name]

Signature, Date

[Redacted Signature and Date]

LULLABY  
by  
Esther Jo Steiner

[estherjo@cinetop.at](mailto:estherjo@cinetop.at)

FADE IN

EXT. SOUTHAMPTON CHURCHYARD 1990 - DAY

The sky is a sullen grey. Against it, the blurred figure of a GIRL balances perilously along the church roof.

We are a bit closer now and see the back of the girl who is now in focus. She has long, dark hair and wears a tracksuit. We do not see her face.

We follow the girl's unstable gaze downwards and notice a tatty OLD HOMELESS WOMAN with her shopping cart looking up at the girl open-mouthed and with an expression of horror...

INT. HEATHROW AIRPORT GATE - DAY

Through the huge glass wall we see the re-fuelling of an *Air India* plane. The sun plays brightly on the plane's metal.

The back of a young, female hand with a black henna tattoo of a delicately-drawn bird is placed on the glass wall.

INT. TONY'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

RAIN MARSHALL, 15, a petite half Asian and half English girl with sleek black hair and olive skin, makes herself a cocoa, slowly blending the dark chocolate and milk.

She takes her drink and, careful not to spill it, strolls through the kitchen door which has a badly-designed poster taped to it promoting a gig on the 16th of March 1990 by the band *Rotten Lover*.

INT. TONY'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Rain takes her drink into the room and sits down on the old, flowery sofa next to TONY, 47, her white, stocky and red-headed dad who with sad eyes watches the TV news.

Rain rests her dark head on Tony's white, fleshy shoulder. Tony smiles lovingly and cradles her with his arm.

INSERT: TV footage of Lithuanian and Russian politicians.

NEWS PRESENTER (O.S.)

Today, the Soviet Union announced that Lithuania's declaration of independence is invalid...

Drinking her cocoa, Rain's gaze wanders to the tatty armchair opposite.

Rain fixes her eyes on the empty chair.

INT. TONY'S KITCHEN - DAY

Rain hurries into the kitchen wearing her school uniform, coat, shoes and bag - ready for school.

Tony sits absentmindedly sloped over the kitchen table. His bacon and eggs burn on the cooker.

Rain grabs the pan in a routine manner and takes it off the heat. With a stoic expression she chucks the charred remains into the bin.

RAIN

Dad?

Tony notices Rain and stares at her distractedly.

RAIN (CONT'D)

I'm off.

Rain waits patiently for his acknowledgement but Tony is elsewhere with his thoughts.

TONY

My little girl can't be going on sixteen, can she?

Rain shrugs her shoulders.

RAIN

Why not?

A sad smile creeps across his face.

TONY

That's what your mum says. Sixteen.

RAIN

She's right.

Rain examines Tony's sad expression.

RAIN (CONT'D)

(matter-of-factly)

You two were arguing again.

TONY

(quietly)

We had a squabble. But there was no bloodshed.

Tony holds his arms out and Rain moves with some reluctance into his embrace.

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED:

RAIN

Pull yourself together, dad.

Tony briefly tightens his embrace and Rain lovingly kisses his forehead.

EXT. TONY'S HOUSE - DAY

Rain saunters out of the simple, semi-detached family house and notices JODIE, 40, the milk lady impatiently carrying two milk bottles towards the house. She is a stern, hardworking woman with red hair and freckles.

EXT. CORNER SHOP - DAY

Rain is about to open the shop door but HARRY, 18 - a handsome "Goth rocker" with dark-brown hair styled in a messy shag and a torn black leather jacket - beats her to it from the other side. He seems in a hurry but politely holds the door open and waits.

Rain stares at Harry, transfixed, palpitating, locked into his intense brown-eyed gaze.

Harry grows slightly impatient.

HARRY

In or out?

RAIN

Out? I mean, in.

Rain nervously moves past Harry into the shop.

INT. CORNER SHOP - DAY

Rain stands by the window and watches Harry get on his motorbike. He hits the accelerator a few times before speeding away.

Rain takes a *Secret* chocolate bar from the counter and hands it with a pound coin to RAJID, 22, a lively Indian with big, friendly eyes wearing a Madonna T-shirt.

EXT. BUS STOP - DAY

Rain waits with a mixed-aged crowd of SCHOOL KIDS IN UNIFORM.

She notices DEREK, 14, a black "Hip Hopper", approach the bus stop. He stops by a homeless TEENAGE JUNKIE, who sits with his back against a house wall, his face bearing the familiar signs of drug addiction.

Derek drops a 20p coin into the junkie's shoddy cap and looks pleased with himself as he approaches Rain.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DEREK  
(proud)  
Could be Jesus, innit.

Rain smiles. She likes Derek.

The bus arrives and the flock of schoolchildren squeeze into the red single-decker.

INT. BUS - DAY

The bus is crowded. Rain and Derek stand holding on to the same pole. Derek oddly cleans his ears with a cotton bud stick. Rain watches him, amused.

Rain notices SHELLEY, 16, a trendy blonde sitting in the back row with her almost equally attractive girlfriends laughing hysterically. Among them is Derek's sister CHENILLE, 16.

EXT. SCHOOL GATES - DAY

A crowd of GIRLS IN UNIFORM stream through the gates towards the large Victorian school building.

MISS EVANS, 32, the beautiful and always smiling black art teacher from Kenya, HOLLY, 15, a small girl with a dull, blonde bob and her dark-haired, wan-looking mother MARY, 43, who wears an African art jumper, are engaged in conversation outside the ornate entrance.

As Rain saunters towards the gates, she notices Holly looking nervous and insecure.

RAIN  
Morning miss.

MISS EVANS  
(with an enormous smile)  
Morning, Rain.

INT. ART DEPARTMENT - DAY

Rain sits alone at a table and spreads her drawing utensils out on the surface.

Miss Evans arrives in class with Holly in tow. She encouragingly points Holly to Rain's table. Holly seems a little tense as she moves towards Rain.

RAIN  
I'm Rain.

HOLLY  
(smiling)  
Holly. From London.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

An awkward pause. Rain tries to think of something to say.

RAIN  
I saw you by the gates.

HOLLY  
I saw you too.

LATER

Holly and Rain sit on opposite of the table sides drawing portraits of one another. They both look busy and relaxed.

HOLLY  
I can't draw to save my life.

RAIN  
I like drawing.

HOLLY  
You want to be an artist?

RAIN  
My mum would kill me.

HOLLY  
Of course.

RAIN  
And you?

HOLLY  
(laconically)  
No idea. Maybe psychology or archeology. I told my parents and they were like, oh, I could see you as an archeologist, but neither of them is that serious...

The girls are interrupted by Miss Evans who stands behind Rain and looks down at her drawing.

INSERT: Rain's drawing. It is in fact not a bad portrait of Holly, even flattering.

MISS EVANS  
(genuinely pleased)  
Well done, Rain.

Miss Evans walks behind Holly and rather familiarly puts her hand on Holly's shoulder. She looks at Holly's drawing.

INSERT: Holly's drawing. Rain's face is far too black.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MISS EVANS (CONT'D)  
(forcing a smile)  
And you, Holly.

Miss Evans turns her attention to Chenille who guiltily looks up from painting her toenails. Miss Evans frowns and elegantly moves further down the classroom.

Rain looks questioningly at Holly.

HOLLY  
My mum and Miss Evans are, like,  
best friends. They went to this  
school, like, a thousand years ago.

Rain continues to embellish Holly's picture.

HOLLY (CONT'D)  
My mum wanted back to her roots.  
So, she bought a B&B. The  
Strawberry Cottage. You know it?

Rain shakes her head.

RAIN  
You like being here?

HOLLY  
(smiling)  
I'll get used to it.

Rain puts her pencil away.

HOLLY (CONT'D)  
Let me see!

Rain turns her drawing around to show Holly. Holly's face lights up like a bulb.

HOLLY (CONT'D)  
How cool is that! You're amazing!

Holly also turns her picture around and Rain tries hard to downplay her dissatisfaction.

HOLLY (CONT'D)  
(with unabashed honesty)  
Sorry, I know, you're not really  
that dark.

Rain smiles with discomfort.

EXT. PARK - DAY

Rain and Holly sit underneath a tree and watch Shelley talk to Harry and HARRY'S FRIENDS, among them RAUL, 18, a jolly, Mediterranean-looking boy and JAMIE, 17, a stocky, confused pothead. Shelley plays incessantly and annoyingly with one of her perfect curls.

Holly watches Shelley intently.

HOLLY  
(quietly in awe)  
God, she's amazing!

RAIN  
Shelley?

HOLLY  
They're like made for each other.

Holly points her finger at Harry.

HOLLY (CONT'D)  
(with light irony)  
That's my brother, Harry. He's into blondes, you know, like Marilyn Monroe. The blonde bombshell. And who wouldn't be. I mean, that woman, like, really "glowed"!

Holly looks to Rain for verbal support, but Rain appears puzzled, unable to figure out whether Holly meant what she just said.

A gust of wind stirs up dead leaves and one becomes entangled in Shelley's hair. Harry helps her get it out. Shelley smiles flirtatiously.

HOLLY (CONT'D)  
They're like Ken and Barbie.

Rain stares grudgingly at the "perfect" couple.

INT. TONY'S KITCHEN - DAY

Rain pops her head through the kitchen door and leaves Holly standing behind her. She is surprised to see SAVARNA, 37, her tall, elegant, make-up-heavy Indian mother, stuff clothes into the washing machine while Tony looks through the cupboards.

RAIN  
(puzzled)  
Mum?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SAVARNA  
(gushing forth)  
Droplet!

Savarna spreads her arms out towards Rain and snaps her fingers impatiently.

Rain unwillingly succumbs to Savarna's tight embrace. Savarna buries her head deeply into Rain's shoulder.

SAVARNA (CONT'D)  
I've missed my little droplet.

RAIN  
How come you're here?

SAVARNA  
(dramatically)  
My washing machine is giving me a headache. Its brain's gone funny.

Tony gives Savarna a mixed look. Her presence somehow disconcerts him but he tries to act playful.

TONY  
(mockingly)  
So much is so vivid to you.

SAVARNA  
(in the same vein)  
You're so rude, you slithery, slithery man.

Tony shows Savarna an empty washing powder carton.

SAVARNA (CONT'D)  
You're such an arse.

Tony grins. He and Savarna enjoy their verbal fights. Then, with his attention back inside the cupboard, he produces an old bottle of shampoo, which he holds up for Savarna. She shakes her head and sits down with faked movements of pain.

SAVARNA (CONT'D)  
You do it.

Tony pours some shampoo into the receptacle and sets the washing load going.

SAVARNA (CONT'D)  
(to Rain)  
I want you to come out with me and Craig on the weekend for a long healthy walk. Let's get some colour back into those cheeks...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

RAIN  
(deploringly)  
Oh, Craig...

SAVARNA  
(with emphasis)  
Craig is really nice.

Tony's face flashes with pain. He looks down.

SAVARNA (CONT'D)  
(ignoring Tony)  
You should make an effort and get  
to know him. Act more grown up.

Rain rolls her eyes to the ceiling.

Holly watches Tony intently and he notices her.

TONY  
Hello there.

HOLLY  
(fetchingly)  
Hello, Mr Marshall.

TONY  
(smiling innocently)  
Tony.

INT. RAIN'S ROOM - DAY

Holly inspects Rain's room, which is sparsely decorated and a cold blue. A tall statue of the Indian god Vishnu sits peacefully in the window.

HOLLY  
Who's the funny guy?

Holly points to the Vishnu statue.

RAIN  
Vishnu. He's a god.

Holly detects Rain's henna kit next to Vishnu.

HOLLY  
Are you any good at this?

RAIN  
I guess so.

HOLLY  
Do me one.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RAIN  
I can do you a bird.

HOLLY  
Okay.

Holly rolls up her shirt sleeve and Rain starts painting a henna tattoo of a bird on her upper arm.

RAIN  
In India the bride's hands are tattooed all over for luck.

HOLLY  
You been to India?

RAIN  
No.

HOLLY  
But you're kind of Indian.

RAIN  
(laconically)  
Just cause of my mum.

Holly looks down at the emerging tattoo. A moment of silence.

HOLLY  
Your dad looks a bit sad.

RAIN  
(as if it was self-explanatory)  
He's a singer.

HOLLY  
What kind of singer?

RAIN  
Jazz, well, like, he says he's left of Jazz.

Holly nods, pretending to know what that means.

HOLLY  
What's his band called?

RAIN  
(hesitantly)  
*Rotten Lover.*

HOLLY  
Rotting lover??

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED: (2)

RAIN  
No, rotten.

HOLLY  
Cool name.

RAIN  
He's on tonight.

HOLLY  
(all excited)  
Let's go!

RAIN  
(laconically)  
Okay.

Holly smiles at her tattoo.

HOLLY  
My brother's in a band. They're called *Last Aid* and do, like, Goth rock, like, the outer progressive edges of Goth rock.

RAIN  
What's Goth rock?

HOLLY  
You know, it's like punk rock but darker. Icky, who's on drums, has permanent vampire fangs - yuck!

Holly notices a spider on the wall in front of her. She jumps up, takes Rain's slipper and hovers it above the peaceful arachnid.

RAIN  
Don't kill it!

HOLLY  
Why not?

RAIN  
It's a house law. We don't kill spiders.

Holly unwillingly lets go of her slipper. It falls to the ground.

INT. THE ENGLISH ROSE PUB - NIGHT

Tony and his guitarist DANIEL, 45, who looks like a character in a Robin Hood spoof movie, play *Nights in White Satin*, giving a very brisk, flamboyant, skillful and jazzy interpretation of the song.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The crowded audience drink and clap.

TONY

Nights in white satin,  
 Never reaching the end,  
 Letters I've written,  
 Never meaning to send.  
 Beauty I'd always missed  
 With these eyes before,  
 Just what the truth is  
 I cant say anymore.  
 'Cause I love you,  
 Yes, I love you,  
 Oh, how I love you...

Rain and Holly languish minx-like at a table.

Holly has her dreamy eyes focused on Tony.

Rain looks around the room.

Rain notices Jodie watching Tony with a strange, calculating stare. She has too much rouge on her cheeks and wears crass colours.

RAIN

(to Holly, nodding in  
 Jodie's direction)  
 The milk lady.

Holly's gaze wanders from Tony to Jodie and back.

HOLLY

(consternated)  
 The milk lady!

There is certainly a palpable attraction noticeable with Jodie. Rain keeps staring at her, worried, touched by an unpleasant forboding.

Tony merely concentrates on his music and turns the end of *Nights in White Satin* into a wild harmonica solo.

EXT. SCHOOL COURTYARD - DAY

Rain, Holly and several girls in uniform languish on benches or on the grass. Some create friendship bracelets with brightly coloured yarns.

Rain paints a henna tattoo of a bird on ANNE, 15, a tall, black-haired Russian girl.

Holly lies on her cardigan in the grass, intently watching Shelley talk across the fence to Jamie.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Shelley laughs out loud and Jamie saunters away, hands in pockets.

Everyone except Holly looks away as Shelley approaches the group with a self-important air.

HOLLY

Hi.

Shelley looks down at Rain.

SHELLEY

Henna can scar you for life. I read it in, like, a really important newspaper.

ANNE

(worried)

Oh.

Anne is horrified and pulls her arm away from her. Rain gives Shelley a hard look.

HOLLY

(confidently)

That's nonsense! Henna's been an Indian tradition for, like, thousands of years.

SHELLEY

(self-importantly)

Well, have you thought that maybe we don't have suitable skin? I mean, Rain should be all right, she's dark, but the rest of us, we're just too pale!

Shelley smiles victoriously and the girls watch her stroll away showing off her slim and well-rounded figure.

HOLLY

(declaring)

She's a Nazi.

Anne is deeply unsettled and frowns at her tattoo. She grabs her cardigan.

RAIN

Don't leave it like that.

Anne hurries away. Holly feels sorry for Rain.

HOLLY

Her loss.

Rain puts her henna kit in her bag.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

HOLLY (CONT'D)  
What are you up to on the weekend?

RAIN  
I've got to see my mum. And her  
boyfriend.

HOLLY  
What's he like.

RAIN  
(critically)  
He's much younger than her and he  
never speaks.

HOLLY  
Like her toy boy.

Rain shrugs her shoulders. Holly gives Rain a long, hearty hug, which surprises Rain.

HOLLY (CONT'D)  
If you wanna get away, you know,  
just come to mine. We could, like,  
discuss art or something.

Rain smiles gratefully.

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE - DAY

It's a typically English day with an almost seamless grey sky and a constant, almost imperceptible drizzle.

Savarna, Rain and CRAIG, 32, a simple man with a deeply-furrowed, serious face and a muscular body, walk up a grassy incline, all wearing wellies.

Craig has his hands in his pockets and his head fixed silently to the ground. He walks fast.

Savarna looks back at Rain who lags behind.

SAVARNA  
(sweetly)  
Drooplet!

Rain waves at her. Savarna turns back to Craig. Rain stops.

Savarna and Craig move further...

...and further away.

Again, Savarna turns to look at Rain.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SAVARNA (CONT'D)  
 (displeased)  
 Rain!!! Hurry up!

Savarna turns back to Craig and disappears with him over a hilltop.

Rain puts her hands defiantly in her pockets and stops still. She turns round and strides back in the other direction.

EXT. COUNTRY BUS STOP - DAY

Rain reads the bus times. She sighs and sits down on the waiting bench, a lonely shape in the deserted rural area.

Rain notices a daddy-long-legs walk up her boots and focuses her attention on it. She takes it into her bare hands and puts it on the ground.

A motorcycle halts at her side. Rain watches the driver take his helmet off and is suddenly locked into the dark, brown eyes of Harry, mesmerized by his presence.

HARRY  
 (with cool)  
 Hey!

Harry hands Rain a flyer and she reads it. The flyer promotes a gig by the band *Last Aid*. The band's looks and flyer design are reminiscent of the popular British band *The Cure*.

HARRY (CONT'D)  
 I know you, right?

RAIN  
 I'm Rain.

Harry looks at her blankly.

RAIN (CONT'D)  
 (explaining nervously)  
 Holly's friend.

HARRY  
 (pretending to remember)  
 Ah, yes. I'm Harry.

Harry points down at the flyer.

HARRY (CONT'D)  
 My band.

RAIN  
 I know.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Harry is impressed.

HARRY  
You're into Goth rock?

RAIN  
(lying)  
Yeah.

Rain folds the flyer and puts it in her pocket.

HARRY  
What are you doing out here,  
anyway?

Rain shrugs her shoulders.

RAIN  
Not much.

HARRY  
Right.

Rain cannot bear his intense eyes any longer and looks down both directions of the road. Harry grins.

HARRY (CONT'D)  
You're going to grow old waiting  
for that bus. I can give you a  
ride, if you like.

Rain looks nervous but thrilled.

RAIN  
(with flushed cheeks)  
Um, yes please.

Harry helps Rain get up behind him.

They drive away, beautifully.

Time slows down...

Rain closes her eyes...

EXT. TONY'S HOUSE - EVENING

The golden, evening sun has broken through heavy rain clouds.

Rain nervously shifts her weight from one foot to the other.

Harry grins amicably and in a demonstration of his male prowess hits the accelerator hard before screeching down the road.

INT. TONY'S LIVING ROOM - EVENING

Rain looks through the open living room door. The room is lit with golden sunlight.

Tony sits on the couch playing *Nights in White Satin* on his harmonica, slower and with much more feeling as though he had just fallen in love himself.

TONY  
Nights in white satin,  
Never reaching the end,  
Never meaning to send.  
Beauty I'd always missed...

Rain sits down next to Tony and stares dreamily into space.

TONY (CONT'D)  
With these eyes before,  
Just what the truth is  
I cant say anymore.  
'Cause I love you,  
Yes, I love you,  
Oh, how I love you...

Tony stops playing and, content as a well-fed cat, picks a few strings.

TONY (CONT'D)  
(dreamily)  
Your mum's furious. In her typical  
way. She blames me.

RAIN  
(also absent-minded)  
You? Cause I walked away?

TONY  
(smiling dreamily)  
She always blames me...

Rain glances out of the window at the golden, sunset-coloured houses.

INT. GREASY CAFE - DAY

Rain and Holly sit in a corner drinking tea out of large mugs. There are a few sturdy old men scattered around the room eating ample, greasy dinners.

Derek arrives with a random mixture of LOCAL UNDERDOGS.

Derek spots Rain and gestures the others to follow him to Rain and Holly's table.

Rain smiles at Derek while Holly looks him up and down.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RAIN  
Hi, Derek.

DEREK  
All right?

RAIN  
That's Holly.

HOLLY  
(ironically)  
Derek the Viking!

DEREK  
It's Eric, innit?

Holly rolls her eyes up to the ceiling. He obviously didn't get the joke.

DEREK (CONT'D)  
Erik the Viking.

HOLLY  
You're making me laugh. Well,  
chuckle.

Derek ignores Holly and winks flirtatiously at Rain, which clearly upsets Holly.

HOLLY (CONT'D)  
Look, Derek.

DEREK  
What?

HOLLY  
We're kinda busy.

DEREK  
Doing what?

HOLLY  
(sarcastically)  
Discussing the role of terminology  
in successful communication.

Derek grins even wider and again winks at Rain before leaving with his troupe. Rain looks sorry for him.

HOLLY (CONT'D)  
(contritely)  
Thank god for that.

RAIN  
But Derek's nice.

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED: (2)

HOLLY  
You're saying that cause he fancies  
you.

RAIN  
(defiantly)  
I'm not.

Holly is clearly not happy and looks around for a means of diverting her jealousy.

HOLLY  
This place is so random.

RAIN  
Where does your brother hang out?

HOLLY  
Why?

RAIN  
Just, you know, you said he was  
cool.

HOLLY  
You fancy him?

RAIN  
Um, no!

HOLLY  
Good, cause he and Shelley, you  
know, there's been developments.  
Like, you know, looks, little  
gestures and stuff. She hangs out  
with him, like, all the time...

Rain stares at Holly as her voice fades away, leaving her mute mouth moving agitatedly.

EXT. SHOPPING STREET - DAY

Rain walks by a series of tatty old shop windows and sadly studies her ever-changing reflections.

INT. CORNER SHOP - DAY

Rain takes a *Secret* chocolate bar and a girlie magazine and joins the queue which consists of a BOY, 7, in his school uniform carrying as many sweets as he can. He is accompanied by his MOTHER.

An OLD MAN looks slowly for his wallet.

Rajid talks fast and furious Urdu into his landline phone while serving the customers.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The boy turns around and stares at Rain.

BOY  
Where you from?

RAIN  
England.

BOY  
You don't look English.

BOY'S MOTHER  
Stop asking silly questions!

Rain smiles uneasily.

It is Rain's turn. Rajid stares at her sandals still talking agitatedly into his phone. Rain also looks down at her sandals.

There seems to be nothing unusual about them.

INT. TONY'S DOWNSTAIRS CORRIDOR - NIGHT

Rain walks through the front door and notices a tape lying on the floor. The CLATTER OF POTS AND PLATES is heard from the kitchen.

Rain picks up the tape and studies the label.

Somebody wrote "*Last Aid*" and underneath "*Head on the Wall*" across the ruled paper.

Rain is puzzled.

TONY (O.S.)  
RAIN? YOU HUNGRY?

RAIN  
NO!

Rain hurries upstairs.

Tony appears in the corridor wearing an apron saying "Kiss the Cook". He looks upstairs but there is no sign of Rain.

He shakes his head and returns to the kitchen, smoke billowing out if it.

INT. RAIN'S ROOM - EVENING

Rain puts the tape in her tape player and turns up the melancholic beats of *Last Aid*, who sound much like *The Cure*.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Rain lies down in her bed and stares at the ceiling with a look on her face that spells the wonder and joy of being in love.

TONY (O.S.)  
(from downstairs)  
RAIN, I'M OFF!

RAIN  
(distractedly)  
OKAY!

TONY (O.S.)  
I'M GOING TO BE LATE!

RAIN  
(distractedly)  
FINE!

Rain grabs a girly magazine from the bedside table and leafs through it.

She stops at an article with the title "*How to develop your own style*".

RAIN (CONT'D)  
(reading)  
Know who you are on the inside...

INT. CHEMIST'S - DAY

Holly and Rain walk down the cosmetics aisle scanning the shelves with much concentration.

Holly walks past a mirror, stops, takes a few steps back and checks her hair.

Rain finds a hair bleach product and studies the instructions.

Rain shows Holly the bleach.

HOLLY  
(laughing)  
You, like, serious?

Rain shrugs her shoulders studying the platinum blonde bimbo creature on the packaging.

HOLLY (CONT'D)  
Your mum would never allow it,  
would she?

RAIN  
My mum wears lipstick in bed.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HOLLY  
How cool is that! She must be  
amazing.

Rain puts the bleach back. Holly looks relieved.

HOLLY (CONT'D)  
Trust me, you'll only regret it.

INT. POST OFFICE - DAY

Rain stands in front of a cashier window. Behind it we see Tony working as a postal clerk.

RAIN  
I need a fiver.

TONY  
Sure. What for?

RAIN  
(earnestly)  
Hair bleach.

TONY  
HAIR BLEACH?

RAIN  
(embarrassed)  
Keep it down, dad.

TONY  
(jokingly)  
What if your hair turns out orange,  
or green?

RAIN  
Dad!

Tony notices an OLD LADY, who is clearly in pain, impatiently waiting for her turn.

TONY  
Can we discuss this at home?

RAIN  
Please.

TONY  
(unhappily)  
I don't understand. You've got  
lovely hair...

Both Rain and the old lady look imploringly at Tony.

Tony reluctantly hands Rain the money.

INT. CHEMIST'S - DAY

Rain walks down the hair products aisle and grabs a packet of hair bleach.

She moves towards another shelf on which are face creams, takes one labelled *Fade Out* and studies it.

Rain becomes aware of two girls on the other side of the aisle.

SHELLEY (O.S.)  
They're doing this gig, right, and they want me to be involved.

CHENILLE (O.S.)  
(impressed)  
God, that's so cool!

SHELLEY (O.S.)  
I might do something, like, backing vocals, or something.

CHENILLE (O.S.)  
(even more impressed)  
Oh my God!

Rain watches Shelley and Chenille idle towards the counter. She waits until the girls leave the shop before moving away from the shelves.

INT. TONY'S BATHROOM - NIGHT

RAIN sits in front of the mirror and studies the instructions on the hair bleach carton.

LATER

Rain puts bleach on her wet hair...

and more...

LATER

Rain has her head in a towel turban and shaves her armpits...

and shaves...

We hear a few tentative KNOCKS on the door.

TONY (O.S.)  
It's just me.

RAIN  
(annoyed)  
I'm not finished!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TONY (O.S.)  
(jokingly)  
You've been in there over two  
hours. I was worried you might  
have disappeared down the plug  
hole.

RAIN  
DAD! PLEASE!

LATER

Rain applies the Fade-Out cream to her face...

and more...

LATER

Rain blow-dries her hair...

and blows...

We hear a few LOUD KNOCKS on the door. Rain stops the hair  
dryer.

TONY (O.S.)  
I thought I could brush my teeth.

RAIN  
(annoyed)  
DAD!

A pause.

TONY (O.S.)  
I might just go to bed then.

RAIN  
Night, dad.

TONY (O.S.)  
Night, lovely.

LATER

Rain proudly studies her new self in the mirror. Her hair is  
a nice shade of light brown.

INT. SCHOOL CORRIDOR - DAY

Rain strides over to Holly in the crowded corridor. Her new  
hair colour attracts quite a bit of attention. Several other  
girls look at her with admiration.

Holly tries to downplay her disapproval.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HOLLY  
It's, like, brown.

Rain smiles confidently, strides past her and into the classroom.

EXT. ENGLISH ROSE PUB - DAY

Rain and Holly saunter past the pub where a GROUP OF BOYS IN UNIFORM lean against the pub wall with open shirts and loose ties. They stare open-mouthed at Rain.

Holly notices. A flicker of jealousy crosses her face.

Rain waits for the boys to be out of earshot. She stops and points back to the pub.

RAIN  
Let's go to the pub.

HOLLY  
Can't. My boyfriend's coming down from London.

RAIN  
(puzzled)  
Boyfriend?

HOLLY  
(focused)  
Yeah. We've been, like, dating for months, like we're in the middle of a relationship. He's amazing but the distance, you know, it's, like...

RAIN  
Difficult.

HOLLY  
(sadly)  
Mmm...

RAIN  
What's his name?

Across the road, Holly notices a cleaning lady beating a doormat.

HOLLY  
Matt. Matthew.

Rain looks at Holly with sympathy.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HOLLY (CONT'D)  
 (bleakly)  
 I guess that's just how life  
 goes...

Rain nods in sympathy. Holly fakes a sad smile.

HOLLY (CONT'D)  
 Mustn't let it get to me.

Holly pats Rain's arm and saunters away, leaving Rain standing in the middle of the street.

Rain looks indecisively back at the pub.

INT. THE ENGLISH ROSE PUB - DAY

Rain takes a few careful steps inside, nervous with anticipation. Some drunks at the bar look her up and down.

Rain notices Harry and his friends, among them Shelley, sitting with beers at a table in the back of the pub.

Rain approaches the bar. The friendly BARTENDER looks at her encouragingly.

BARTENDER  
 Yes?

RAIN  
 A Coke.

The bartender smiles and serves her a Coke.

BARTENDER  
 That's eighty pee.

Rain pays, takes her Coke, sits down at a table and stares at Harry.

Harry notices Rain, gets up, squeezes past his mates and confidently approaches Rain.

HARRY  
 (cheerfully)  
 Hi Rain.

RAIN  
 (faintly)  
 Hello.

HARRY  
 Haven't seen you here before.

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED:

RAIN

I only come here when my dad's band's playing.

HARRY

Hey, that's great, what kind of music is your dad into?

RAIN

Ehm, jazz...

Somebody must have just told a good joke, because Harry's crowd suddenly break out in cheers and laughter.

Temporarily distracted, Harry looks over to his mates and then back at Rain.

HARRY

Your dad must be really cool. Maybe he'd like to come along to our gig. You're coming aren't you? You're welcome to, you know, hang out with us later. You know where it is?

Rain shakes her head.

HARRY (CONT'D)

Redhill Close. It's a private house.

RAIN

I don't know how to get there.

Harry smiles seductively.

HARRY

I can pick you up. Is seven good with you?

Rain looks well pleased.

RAIN

Yeah!

SHELLEY (O.S.)

(hysterically)

HARRY!

Harry smiles apologetically at Rain.

HARRY

Like your hair.

Rain beams. Harry strolls back to the others where Shelley excitedly whispers something into his ears. He laughs.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Rain's face falls again and she quickly finishes her Coke with one big gulp.

EXT. RAIN'S ROOM - DAY

Rain sits melancholically hunched over her desk and studies a copy of Samuel Beckett's *Endgame*. *Last Aid* spills from the speakers at full volume.

We hear a FEW KNOCKS on her door.

RAIN  
COME IN!

The door opens and Tony walks in.

TONY  
IT'S TOO LOUD!

Rain reaches over to her ghettoblaster and turns the music off.

TONY (CONT'D)  
(softly)  
You don't have to turn it off.  
Just turn it down.

RAIN  
I know.

Tony can't take his eyes off Rain's hair.

RAIN (CONT'D)  
(dryly)  
You don't like it, do you.

TONY  
You'll always look lovely, whatever  
you do to yourself.

Rain looks at her dad reproachfully.

TONY (CONT'D)  
You're happy with it, aren't you?

RAIN  
Yeah.

TONY  
Everything else okay?

RAIN  
(dryly)  
Yeah.

Tony turns to go.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RAIN (CONT'D)  
 (quickly)  
 You don't mind if I go out Saturday  
 night, do you?

TONY  
 You're old enough, aren't you?

Rain smiles warmly at her dad.

RAIN  
 (reassuringly)  
 Sure.

Tony smiles and gracefully leaves the room.

INT. CORNER SHOP - MORNING

Rain hands Rajid two *Secret* chocolate bars and a pound.  
 Rajid hands her the change back while again staring at her  
 sandals.

RAJID  
 Hey, you know you got beautiful  
 feet?

Rain looks down at her school sandals. Her feet look very  
 ordinary.

RAJID (CONT'D)  
 I wish you'd let me take a photo of  
 your feet.

Rain's face fills with confusion and worry.

RAJID (CONT'D)  
 (reassuringly)  
 I've got loads of photos of women's  
 feet. They all let me do it. I'll  
 show you.

Rajid takes a big photo album from a shelf behind the  
 counter.

RAJID (CONT'D)  
 I've got photos of every size.  
 Big, small...girl feet, grandma  
 feet...all really nice shapes.

Rajid leafs through the album to show her. Indeed, the album  
 is full of gigantic feet photo prints, beautifully  
 photographed, a pair on each double page with one foot on the  
 left and the other on the right.

RAJID (CONT'D)  
 Nice, um?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Rain nods with wonder and continues to stare open-mouthed at the feet photos.

Rajid arrives at the last photo page. There are several empty pages left.

RAJID (CONT'D)  
 We could do yours after school,  
 when grannie's back to mind the  
 shop.

Rain smiles uncomfortably with just one side of her mouth and hurries away.

EXT. TONY'S HOUSE - DAY

Rain and Holly idle past Jodie putting in some plants in front of the porch.

RAIN  
 (demurely)  
 Hi.

HOLLY  
 (smiling)  
 These are nice.

JODIE  
 (austerely)  
 They're called Petunias.

Holly catches up with Rain who is already by the front door. Jodie's eyes follow the girls with an ambiguous expression.

INT. TONY'S KITCHEN - DAY

Rain and Holly sit at the table with fizzy drinks and watch Tony snap both ends of runner beans.

Holly watches Tony flirtatiously which disconcerts Rain.

HOLLY  
 What do you do with the beans? Do  
 you just boil them like that?

Tony is unaware of Holly's subtle play.

TONY  
 (pleasantly)  
 Of course.

HOLLY  
 I use a bean chopping machine.

TONY  
 Never heard of one.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HOLLY  
It gives you this amazing angular  
cut.

With an unashamed smile, Holly draws an explicitly phallic  
shape in the air.

Rain knits her brows.

RAIN  
Let's go to my room.

HOLLY  
(pleadingly)  
Oh, let's stay.

TONY  
Stay for dinner, if you like.

HOLLY  
I'd love to!

Rain looks angrily at Tony. It takes a few moments for him  
to remember.

TONY  
(embarrassed)  
Oh, bugger me, I completely forgot.

Rain sighs.

Holly looks questioningly at Rain.

RAIN  
(innocently)  
Harry asked me to come to his gig.

HOLLY  
Harry asked you? You could've told  
me.

RAIN  
Are you going?

It is clear that Rain is hoping otherwise.

HOLLY  
I never thought you'd be like that.

RAIN  
Like what?

Holly gets up with a heavy air.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

HOLLY  
 (glibly)  
 Anyway, I have, like, a million  
 things to do.

TONY  
 Do stay.

HOLLY  
 Thanks, Tony, but no.

Rain looks guiltily at Holly.

HOLLY (CONT'D)  
 (sarcastically)  
 Oh and Shelley's sick. The stage  
 is yours. Enjoy.

Holly marches out of the room.

TONY  
 (to Rain)  
 Who's Shelley?

RAIN  
 (trying not to smile)  
 Just someone.

Tony continue with his cooking, unable to understand anything.

INT. RAIN'S ROOM - NIGHT

Rain applies the last finishing mascara touches to her upper lashes and puts the mascara stick away. She scrutinises her face from all angles and checks it against the Madonna photo, which is taped to her mirror.

INT. TONY'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

Rain hurries into the kitchen with a mass of teased hair and lots of make up. She looks good but gives Tony and Jodie, who are in the middle of their dinner, a start.

TONY  
 (amused)  
 You make all these pop stars look  
 like amateurs.

Rain laughs and gives Tony a careful hug so as not to damage her style.

Jodie looks apprehensively at Tony. Tony notices and fakes seriousness.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TONY (CONT'D)  
 (to Rain)  
 I want you back before midnight.

RAIN  
 (ironically)  
 Sure.

A MOTORBIKE STOPS outside the house.

JODIE  
 Don't accept any drinks from people  
 you don't know.

TONY  
 (jokingly)  
 Yes, and call me if there's a  
 problem - say if the music's  
 rubbish!

Jodie knots her forehead at Tony's light-hearted manner.

RAIN  
 (laughing)  
 Okay!

TONY  
 Have fun!

Rain hurries out of the door.

Tony looks at Jodie with a pleading, bad-boy expression, but Jodie continues to look gloomy. He averts his gaze, defeated by her impenetrable eyes.

EXT. TONY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Rain opens the door. Harry's motorbike is parked outside.

Through the helmet's visor we see not Harry but Raul.

RAUL  
 (grinning)  
 Rain?

Rain nods, perplexed and a bit disappointed.

RAUL (CONT'D)  
 I'm Raul.

Raul gestures Rain to jump up behind him. Rain jumps up and they speed away.

EXT. PARTY HOUSE CORRIDOR - NIGHT

Rain and Raul squeeze themselves into a small, seedy semi-detached house, which is chock a block with people wearing black clothes and eyeliner.

EXT. PARTY HOUSE GARDEN - NIGHT

A large white tent is set up in the garden. Flashing lights play on the white canvas walls. Raul leads Rain towards the large square opening.

Harry hurries towards them from the tent looking stressed. He is almost unrecognizable with his white-colored face, thick black eyeliner and gel-covered hair. Rain is intimidated by his appearance.

HARRY  
(charmingly)  
Did Raul behave himself?

RAUL  
(ironically)  
Of course not.

Harry smirks at Raul and then gives all his attention to Rain.

HARRY  
When's your dad expecting you back?

RAIN  
Any time. My dad's really easy-going.

HARRY  
Cool. You look nice.

RAIN  
Thanks...you too.

Harry smiles but is distracted by ADAM, 18, a tall guy with long wild hair and smudged lipstick who stumbles towards him with a pale face and red eyes.

ADAM  
(in passing)  
Need ya, bro!

HARRY  
Just a minute.

Harry, Raul and Rain watch Adam trying to open the back door of the house. He misses the handle a few times before he succeeds and stumbles inside.

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED:

Harry turns apologetically to Rain.

HARRY (CONT'D)  
We'll hang out after the gig, okay?

RAIN  
(feeling abandoned)  
Sure.

Harry hurries after Adam. Raul feels sorry for Rain and smiles encouragingly at her.

RAUL  
Let's find the kitchen. Always a  
good place to start.

INT. PARTY HOUSE KITCHEN - NIGHT

Raul takes two beers out of the overloaded fridge. Rain does her best to act cool.

RAUL  
(charmingly)  
You don't look English.

Rain is pained by his question but acts cool, laboriously removing a strand of hair from her face.

RAIN  
(lying)  
I'm half...Italian.

RAUL  
Thought so. I'm half French.

RAIN  
Is Raul a French name?

RAUL  
It's kinda Spanish...Chilean.  
That's my other half.

Raul hands her the beer and Rain takes a long swig.

RAUL (CONT'D)  
(jokingly)  
My naughty half is French and my  
other naughty half is Chilean.

RAIN  
Is your mum Chilean?

RAUL  
Yep. A Chilean refugee. And my  
dad...he just got fed up with  
France.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Raul takes a biscuit tin from the top of the fridge and opens it. It contains several dull looking biscuits.

RAIN  
What is it?

RAUL  
(cheekily)  
Special biscuits...

He hands one to Rain. She takes it with a doubtful expression.

RAUL (CONT'D)  
You know what I'm talking about,  
right?

Rain fakes a knowing nod and takes a bite.

LATER

Raul and Rain are laughing uncontrollably. Rain looks remarkably fit for her first cannabis biscuit.

RAUL  
(rambling)  
Miss Evans is a total babe, let's  
face it. She looks good AND she  
could help me grow as a person...

Jamie saunters into the room. Rain and Raul watch him as he slowly opens the fridge door and searches inside for what seems like an eternity.

RAUL (CONT'D)  
(to Jamie)  
Don't you think?

Jamie ignores Raul, gets a beer out and very slowly opens the bottle with his teeth.

JAMIE  
(apathetically)  
What?

RAUL  
Miss Evans and me...

Jamie remembers something else. He points with his beer outside.

JAMIE  
Hey, you're missing the band!

INT. PARTY TENT - NIGHT

Rain and Raul stumble into the tent. *Last Aid* is performing on stage, an extremely good-looking and introspective three-piece.

Adam, who looks adequately recovered, does vocals and lead guitar.

ICKY the drummer flashes his fake vampire fangs at the audience.

Harry does backing vocals and bass guitar.

Rain watches Harry intently. He looks incredibly mysterious and cool.

Suddenly, Rain rolls her eyes and falls down on the murky grass.

EXT. TONY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Rain is barely holding on to him as Harry halts his bike in Tony's driveway. Harry helps her off and escorts her to the door.

Rain falls to the ground and Harry wipes some of his make up off with a tissue.

Rain is sick on Jodie's flowers.

HARRY

Good girl.

Harry helps her up again. Tony opens the door. He notices Rain's state and looks shocked and worried.

HARRY (CONT'D)

I'm terribly sorry, sir.

Tony mutely helps Harry carry Rain inside.

INT. RAIN'S ROOM - NIGHT

Harry and Tony put Rain gently on the bed and take her boots off.

TONY

(finally)

What happened?

HARRY

(embarrassed)

Too much beer, maybe? And...or weed? I'm so sorry!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Tony throws him a very critical look, which makes Harry extremely concerned. Tony notices Harry's concern and relaxes his features. He looks back at Rain.

TONY  
(grudgingly)  
Well, I guess we've all done it...

The men watch Rain with loving expressions.

Tony looks encouragingly back at Harry.

TONY (CONT'D)  
Coffee?

Harry nods gratefully and follows Tony out.

The door shuts and Rain opens her eyes. She slowly gets up and opens the door again listening downstairs.

The men's LAUGHTER is just about audible from downstairs.

Rain feels weak, closes the door and stumbles back into her bed. Despite her pain, she feels total security and bliss.

EXT. SEASIDE/FISH AND CHIPS SHOP - DAY

Harry and Rain sit on a wall by the sea, eating fish and chips in the wind.

Harry waves his arms to scare the pigeons away.

HARRY  
Smelly old rockers.

Harry studies Rain's pale expression.

HARRY (CONT'D)  
How's the hangover?

RAIN  
I don't complain.

HARRY  
Tell me, I wanna know.

RAIN  
(chuckling)  
I feel like death warmed up.

HARRY  
(laughing)  
I like that expression.

They eat a moment in silence. Rain tries to get her hair out of her mouth but the wind keeps blowing it back in.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HARRY (CONT'D)  
How was your dad about it?

RAIN  
Fine.

HARRY  
And your mum?

RAIN  
(naughtily)  
We decided not to tell mum.

HARRY  
(amused)  
Is she strict?

RAIN  
About some things she is.

HARRY  
You don't see her that often?

RAIN  
I could if I wanted to.

HARRY  
But you don't?

Rain shrugs her shoulders. She is unsure whether she ought to continue.

RAIN  
(laconically)  
You know, after she left us I had this dream. I was at assembly and my mum walked in like a ghost. I was so shocked because parents are not allowed to do that. Then I wanted to hug her but she disappeared. It was like I was allowed to look at her but not touch her. "No, you can't hug me"...

Rain fights back her tears.

HARRY  
It's like you lost her for good.

RAIN  
(laconically)  
Yeah, even though she's so in your face.

Harry gazes reflectively into the sea.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

HARRY  
I like your dad.

Harry turns to look at Rain's lips with growing anticipation.

Rain inches towards Harry and their mouths move closer and closer until they are kissing deeply.

The seagulls scream ominously in the sky above.

INT. TONY'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Rain saunters into the dark living room without switching the light on. With a happy sigh, she lets herself fall on the sofa.

BOLD FOOTSTEPS march downstairs.

RAIN  
(happily)  
Dad?

Jodie enters the living room and switches on the light.

The room is filled with boxes.

Rain looks around in wonderment.

RAIN (CONT'D)  
What's going on?

JODIE  
He didn't tell you?

Rain's puzzled look indicates a "no".

JODIE (CONT'D)  
(cross)  
He should've told you!

Jodie opens a box and rummages inside. It is quite clear that she is moving in with Rain and Tony.

Rain watches Jodie unpack a couple of framed photographs.

RAIN  
(reluctantly)  
Can I help?

JODIE  
Those boxes over there (pointing),  
would you take those up to the  
master bedroom? Thanks.

Rain saunters over to the boxes and obediently takes one.

INT. TONY'S UPSTAIRS CORRIDOR - NIGHT

On her way upstairs, Rain notices that the family photos are gone from the walls.

EXT. TONY'S HOUSE - MORNING

Rain skips out of the door and notices Tony rinsing her vomit off Jodie's flowers with a garden hose.

RAIN  
(embarrassed)  
Oh.

TONY  
I told her it was the dog.

RAIN  
What dog?

Tony smiles uncomfortably.

RAIN (CONT'D)  
Was she furious?

Tony looks down at the flowers. For a moment Rain gazes sadly and disapprovingly at her dad.

TONY  
I know you're concerned about Jodie moving in and all.

RAIN  
Don't you think it's all happening a bit fast?

TONY  
I'm not getting any younger.

Tony turns off the water flow.

RAIN  
Still.

TONY  
(defensively)  
I know she comes across a little cold. But she's had a bad divorce. Give her time.

Tony still looks away from Rain, too ashamed to face her.

RAIN  
Is she pregnant?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TONY  
(jokingly)  
Golly, I hope not.

Rain looks very worried.

TONY (CONT'D)  
(lovingly)  
You're all I want.

RAIN  
(seriously)  
Use condoms.

Tony laughs out loud hoping that Rain will join in. But she doesn't and makes him look embarrassed.

EXT. SCHOOL GATES - DAY

Rain skips towards Harry, who is on his motorbike outside the gates. As she approaches him, she notices Holly against the stone wall, looking lonely.

RAIN  
Hi.

HOLLY  
(glibly)  
I wouldn't let him wait.

RAIN  
But...

HOLLY  
It's cool. It's really cool.  
Everything is swanky. I'm thrilled  
about you and Harry. Really, I am.

Rain strides towards Harry, still upset about Holly's behavior, but aware of the envious glances of all the other girls.

Harry kisses Rain hello and she climbs on his bike.

All the girls watch Harry and Rain ride fast down the busy street.

INT. RAIN'S ROOM - DAY

Rain wears only a bra and her panties as she sits in front of the mirror painting her toe nails.

Harry watches her from the bed, topless, leaning over a rock music magazine.

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED:

HARRY  
Would you have sex with me?

RAIN  
Now?

HARRY  
(jokingly)  
Either that or I'll burn the house  
down!

Rain suddenly looks extremely alarmed.

HARRY (CONT'D)  
(apologetically)  
We can wait till you're sixteen, no  
stress.

RAIN  
No, it's not that.

Rain points her finger downwards.

RAIN (CONT'D)  
(whispers)  
The ice maiden is listening.

Harry looks relieved.

HARRY  
Oh, the ice maiden.

Rain lies down next to Harry on the bed and places her head on his chest. She looks very petite next to his wide upper body.

HARRY (CONT'D)  
Next week I'm going camping with my  
mates. You should come.

Rain's face lights up and she turns over, facing away from him. Harry adjusts to hold her from behind.

HARRY (CONT'D)  
We could have our own little love  
tent...

Rain closes her eyes, smiling.

INT. TONY'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

The kitchen looks very clean. Everything is in its place. Rain, Tony and Jodie are at the table eating dinner.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RAIN  
Dad, would you let me go camping  
with Harry?

Jodie's jaw drops.

RAIN (CONT'D)  
(adding quickly)  
There's lots of people going, not  
just us.

TONY  
Sounds great.

JODIE  
She's fifteen.

TONY  
(unsure what she means)  
Yeah.

JODIE  
Tony, that's young.

TONY  
Harry will look after her. He's a  
good lad.

An uneasy silence.

JODIE  
He lets her get drunk! And, and he  
wears eyeliner!

Jodie's jaw starts to wobble. Tony's face shows growing  
concern. Jodie regains her countenance but looks very gloomy.

JODIE (CONT'D)  
You're not her friend you're her  
dad.

Tony looks down into his food.

Jodie gets up and hurries out of the room.

RAIN  
She's nothing to do with us.

TONY  
She's got a point.

RAIN  
(upset)  
SHE'S NOTHING TO DO WITH US!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Loud HOOVERING penetrates down from the first floor. Tony and Rain instinctively look up.

RAIN (CONT'D)  
She's not!

Rain runs out.

INT. RAIN'S ROOM - DAY

Rain storms into her room and finds Jodie hoovering away the spiders and webs.

RAIN  
(with tears in her eyes)  
You're not allowed here!

Ignoring Rain, Jodie finishes and marches determinedly out of the room.

RAIN (CONT'D)  
(shouting after Jodie)  
Don't do this again! Ever!

Rain slams her door shut.

EXT. MARKET - DAY

The sun shines strongly through a scatter of thick grey rain clouds, bringing out strong colours and dark shadows. Rain and Harry walk from market stall to market stall, combing through old clothes and records.

RAIN  
(unhappily)  
I hate her.

HARRY  
What?

RAIN  
The ice maiden. I wanna move out.

HARRY  
Where to?

Rain looks expectantly at Harry.

RAIN  
London.

Harry looks away from her. He notices Shelley stroll down the market aisle with Chenille. The sun has caught Shelley's hair with an almost blinding effect.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Shelley becomes aware of Harry's gaze and smiles at him, unashamedly flirtatious. Chenille has meanwhile spotted a trendy hat on a stall and drags Shelley away by the elbow.

Eyes wide with disbelief, Rain stares first at Harry and then at Shelley. Harry turns apologetically to her.

HARRY

Sorry, what did you say?

Rain gives him a hard look. Harry guiltily averts his eyes and searches the stall. He finds a velvet purple scarf and holds it up for Rain to see.

HARRY (CONT'D)

Like this?

Rain nods and Harry carefully puts it round her neck. Then he turns to the MARKET SELLER.

MARKET SELLER

One fifty.

Rain's face slowly fills with affection as she watches Harry scrape his last few coins together to pay for it.

INT. RAUL'S CAR - DAY

Rain wears her new purple scarf resting her head on Harry's shoulder in the back of Raul's car.

Raul focusses on the road ahead and Jamie smokes a spliff in the passenger seat.

The car is old, rusty and piled full with rubbish but the speakers are first class, spilling out moody Goth rock.

The car passes a "MUD ON ROAD" sign. There is mud everywhere.

Jamie passes his spliff back to Harry.

Harry pulls, coughs and hands the spliff to Rain. She inhales superficially and hands it back to Jamie.

JAMIE

So, your dad let you go?

RAIN

(distracted)

Kind of.

JAMIE

(amused)

Kind of?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HARRY  
What's it to you, ha?

Jamie grimaces playfully at Harry and turns to face the road ahead.

Rain turns her gaze to the window and melancholically watches green fields and endless hedges move past.

INT. HARRY'S TENT - NIGHT

Rain freezes inside her sleeping bag. Light rain falls noisily on the tent mixed with shouts and laughter from outside.

Harry crawls into the tent, lies down next to Rain and kisses her.

HARRY  
Hello.

RAIN  
Hello.

Harry gazes at Rain with love and admiration.

HARRY  
You've not done this sort of thing  
before, have you?

Rain hesitates, then shakes her head and tries to get her arm into a less painful position.

HARRY (CONT'D)  
Okay, don't worry.

RAIN  
(amused)  
I don't.

Harry undresses himself with difficulty, his manoeuvring restricted by the tiny space.

HARRY  
You comfy?

RAIN  
Yes.

HARRY  
(affectionately)  
Liar.

With all his clothes off, Harry places a condom in reachable distance and climbs into the sleeping bag with Rain.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HARRY (CONT'D)  
 Good thing you're so small.

Harry strokes her body and notices Rain's expression of intense discomfort.

HARRY (CONT'D)  
 I washed my hands.

Rain laughs.

RAIN  
 They're cold!

HARRY  
 Sorry.

Harry rubs his hands together and tries again.

HARRY (CONT'D)  
 Better?

Rain nods. They kiss and Harry climbs on top of Rain, careful not to squash her.

INT. TONY'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

Rain and Harry sit on the couch, cuddled up, watching an 80's American teen sex comedy.

The TV shows the big, naked breasts of a woman wobbling while she is pounded from behind. Just then Jodie strides busily into the room.

Jodie notices the breasts and angrily picks up the reading glasses from the top of the TV before hurrying outside.

HARRY  
 Bad timing.

RAIN  
 With her, it's always bad timing.

EXT. TONY'S GARDEN - DAY

Harry has sex with Rain pressed against the windowsill while Jodie hoes a garden bed.

Jodie looks up and notices the love-making. Displeased, she continues digging.

INT. RAIN'S ROOM - DAY

Rain is at her desk reading the sex advice page of a girlie magazine. We hear RAISED VOICES from downstairs.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Rain opens her door so she can listen better. Jodie's shrill voice is clearly audible.

TONY (O.S.)  
(pleadingly)  
...Jodie, darling--

JODIE (O.S.)  
(helplessly)  
I feel so excluded! I feel there's  
no point in me being here.

TONY (O.S.)  
(charmingly)  
But I want you to be here.

JODIE (O.S.)  
Do you?

TONY (O.S.)  
Of course I do!

JODIE (O.S.)  
Why?

TONY (O.S.)  
(hesitantly)  
Well, you make me happy.

Silence.

JODIE (O.S.)  
(pleadingly)  
I can't go on. I need a solution -  
we need a solution! Tony! You do  
see that, don't you? Tony?...Tony?

We hear FOOTSTEPS move from the kitchen to the hall. The FRONT DOOR is OPENED and SHUT.

Worried, Rain slowly closes her door.

INT. TONY'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

Rain strolls into the room and notices that all photos of her on the side cupboard are lying face downwards.

Distressed, Rain puts them up again.

INT. STRAWBERRY COTTAGE KITCHEN - NIGHT

Harry pours white pancake mixture onto a hot black pan which he rotates to even out the liquid.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Mary steps into the room with a hot water bottle pressed to her side and a blanket with African motifs around her shoulder. She tries to appear jolly despite her thin and pale appearance.

MARY  
Hello Rain.

Harry examines Mary critically.

HARRY  
Mum, go to bed.

MARY  
Are you all comfy darling? Is Harry looking after you properly?

Rain nods with a smile.

MARY (CONT'D)  
(proud)  
Harry's such a cook. When he was five he got this little toy oven for his birthday...

HARRY  
(with concerned annoyance)  
Go to bed!

Harry pushes his mother out of the kitchen.

HARRY (CONT'D)  
You've got to rest, you fool!

MARY  
I'm fine.

Mary sighs and shuffles outside. Harry attends to the pancakes again, his annoyance masking his concern.

HARRY  
She never manages to lie down for more than ten minutes. It's really annoying.

RAIN  
Is she very sick?

Rain is immediately aware of asking the wrong question. Harry places the pancake in front of Rain.

HARRY  
(laconically)  
Lemon or chocolate spread?

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED: (2)

RAIN  
Chocolate spread.

Harry places chocolate spread before Rain and sits down with his pancake.

They eat in silence.

EXT. CHURCH - DAY

The church tower pierces the heavens which have opened with torrential rain.

Rain is on her way to school playing with a colorful umbrella.

Her face suddenly contorts with pain.

INT. SCHOOL TOILET - DAY

Rain sits on the toilet, showing some slight relief.

INT. SCHOOL CORRIDOR - DAY

Rain paces jerkily down the school corridor. Miss Evans notices Rain and moves alongside her with clearly something on her mind.

RAIN  
Morning, miss.

MISS EVANS  
Everything okay, Rain?

RAIN  
(with emphasis)  
I have a bladder infection.

MISS EVANS  
(distractedly)  
Sorry to hear that.

Miss Evans takes a deep sigh, knitting her brows.

MISS EVANS (CONT'D)  
We had some bad news. Mary's got metastases in her lymphatic system.

RAIN  
What's that?

MISS EVANS  
It means that her cancer has spread to other parts of her body.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RAIN  
It got out?

Miss Evans nods in her teacherly way.

MISS EVANS  
You could say that. She's only got  
weeks the doctors say...imagine  
that, honey, weeks!

RAIN  
That's not long.

The BELL rings.

Miss Evans and Rain look at each other with grave  
expressions.

EXT. PARK - DAY

The rain has stopped but deep puddles of water still cover  
the grass and pavement testifying to the heavy downpour.

Rain strolls across the park towards Harry, Raul, Jamie and a  
lot of ATTRACTIVE GIRLS who look unbelievably worried. Some  
even cry. Shelley is also there giving Harry a big long hug.

When Harry notices Rain he disentangles himself from Shelley.

Rain strides angrily away from the group.

Harry runs after her and Rain turns around with a stropopy  
expression.

HARRY  
What?

Rain feels like choking and is unable to answer.

HARRY (CONT'D)  
Don't get in a strop over  
nothing...

RAIN  
(stroppily)  
Strop?

Rain stares coldly at Harry.

HARRY  
(gruffly)  
It's over, isn't it.

Rain is still unable to speak.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Harry gives Rain a grim look. Then he strolls back to the group. He tries to look casual but is obviously hurt.

INT. RAIN'S ROOM - DAY

Tony is seated at the end of the bed looking unhappily at Rain, while she, lying down, looks away from him.

TONY  
Just until things cool down.

RAIN  
(coldly)  
Things can't get much cooler.

An uncomfortable silence.

RAIN (CONT'D)  
This is my house as well.

TONY  
(despondently)  
I know it is.

Another uncomfortable silence.

RAIN  
You're driving me out of my own house.

TONY  
It'll always be your house.

Rain digs her fingernails into the blanket.

RAIN  
When?

TONY  
There's no hurry. Your mum needs the builders to do what she describes as their shit first.

Rain chuckles sarcastically.

TONY (CONT'D)  
She's really looking forward to being with you more.

Rain turns to look at Tony.

RAIN  
You just think of yourself. You don't even know me.

A pause.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RAIN (CONT'D)  
You don't even remember anything  
about me, like when I was young.

TONY  
Of course, I do...

Tony bites his lip. He can't remember.

Rain turns away from him.

RAIN  
(quietly)  
Loser.

EXT. TONY'S HOUSE - DAY

Rain stands outside the house with a big suitcase, several bags and a grim expression.

Tony stands guiltily a few feet behind her.

TONY  
Come, visit your old dad.

RAIN  
(coldly)  
Don't expect me to visit a place  
where I'm not wanted.

A small red Ford pulls speedily into the driveway.

Savarna brings her little, battered red car to a screeching halt. She gets out with a big, victorious smile.

TONY  
(ironically)  
Hi Sav, can I call you a racy  
driver?

SAVARNA  
(happily)  
If you say it like that, yes.

Rain laboriously pulls her heavy suitcase towards the boot of Savarna's car.

Savarna opens the boot and Rain puts her suitcase inside.

SAVARNA (CONT'D)  
You got everything, my sweet?

Rain nods and climbs into Savarna's car.

Tony appears at Rain's window, distressed.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TONY  
(guiltily)  
I need the key.

SAVARNA  
Is that really necessary?

Rain hands Tony the key without looking at him.

TONY  
(quietly and sombrely)  
I love you.

Rain ignores him. She remembers something, gets out and hurries back into the house.

SAVARNA  
This is getting boring.

TONY  
(cross)  
Sav!

SAVARNA  
Well, someone has to stop you from wringing all the emotional shit out of this moment, you "dicksplat".

TONY  
What did you call me?

SAVARNA  
I called you Tony.

Rain emerges from the house with her Vishnu sculpture. She climbs into the passenger seat, not once looking at Tony.

Tony sighs.

SAVARNA (CONT'D)  
Well, you made your bed and now you have to lie in it.

Savarna starts the engine and Tony sadly takes a few steps back.

The car reverses speedily out of the driveway.

Tony wipes tears from his eyes as he watches the red car drive away.

INT. RAIN'S NEW ROOM - DAY

Savarna helps Rain carry her case into her new, smaller ground-floor room. There is a big tree outside her window obstructing the view.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Rain falls on the bed and looks apathetically at the menacing chandelier above her.

SAVARNA  
My poor little pea, I'll make you a  
nice cuppa which is going to make  
you feel better right away.

Savarna takes Rain's face into her hands and kisses her on the forehead. Then she glides out of Rain's room, singing.

SAVARNA (CONT'D)  
(singing)  
One two, one two...

INT. SAVARNA'S KITCHEN - EVENING

Rain sits at the kitchen table looking through a bunch of salad leaves.

She listens discontentedly as the toilet next door is being FLUSHED. Savarna dances into the kitchen, still singing.

SAVARNA (O.S.)  
(singing)  
One two, one two and through and  
through...

Savarna glides into the kitchen.

SAVARNA (CONT'D)  
Have you found any slugs?

RAIN  
(laconically)  
No, just evidence of some.

SAVARNA  
(playfully)  
You mean slug shit. Or cud.

RAIN  
Have they got two ends?

SAVARNA  
No, it all comes out one end.

RAIN  
(downcast)  
How revolting.

A pause while Rain continues to pick at the salad.

Savarna watches her concerned but unable to say anything.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RAIN (CONT'D)  
I found a squished worm.

Rain uses a spoon to pick the worm out of the salad with almost robotic movements.

She turns the spoon around and examines her warped reflection in the shiny metal.

INT. SAVARNA'S BATHROOM - NIGHT

Rain stands in front of the mirror in her underwear shaving her legs and arms.

The door opens abruptly. Startled, Rain cuts herself.

Craig stands in the doorway. He is also surprised and looks her up and down.

RAIN  
Get the fuck out!

Craig shuts the door with a grunt.

A drop of blood falls on the white towel covering the floor.

EXT. SHOPPING STREET - DAY

Rain wanders down the middle of a shopping street, sad and all alone, glancing at her reflections in the shiny office buildings, taking in all the ads showing girls who are white, slim, blonde and beautiful.

A car packed with uncouth youths pulls up alongside her. The driver, who looks far too young to be a driver, sticks his head out.

YOUNG DRIVER  
(curtly)  
Are you a car? Are you made of metal?

Piqued, Rain retreats to the pavement.

Rain passes a red phone box in which a high-spirited WORKING CLASS MUM in a tracksuit is on the phone. Her 8-YEAR OLD SON is standing next to her working his way noisily through a bag of crisps.

WORKING CLASS MUM  
(gushing forth)  
Did she? Did she fuck him?

8-YEAR OLD SON  
(eagerly)  
Course she fucked him!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Rain flinches and speeds up her pace.

EXT. CHURCHYARD - DAY

Rain sits on a bench in the churchyard coldly watching the pigeons on the roof.

She absentmindedly watches a dog chase a cat up a skinny tree. The tree sways precariously. The cat MEOWS desperately.

OLD HOMELESS WOMAN (O.S.)

Go home!

Rain looks up and into the eyes of the old homeless woman who has stopped before the bench holding onto her shopping cart.

Rain stares blankly at the homeless woman.

The homeless woman grunts and continues pushing her shopping cart down the path.

EXT. CORNER SHOP - DAY

Rain notices the teenage junkie sitting in front of the shop. She approaches him.

RAIN

Hi.

TEENAGE JUNKIE

(smiling distractedly)

Hi.

RAIN

I need a favour.

TEENAGE JUNKIE

Yeah? What's that?

Rain shows him a five-pound note.

RAIN

Buy me beer?

The teenage junkie smirks.

RAIN (CONT'D)

You can have some as well.

He smirks again, takes Rain's money and strolls inside.

Rain watches him through the window buying beer.

The addict emerges from the shop with a grin and hands Rain a plastic bag.

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED:

Rajid's big, curious eyes appear on the other side of the shop window.

Rain takes a couple of cans out of the bag and the addict takes them. He stretches his hand out towards Rain. Rain shakes it. Then he points his fist at her. Rain takes a moment to realise what he is on about. They tap fists with each other like buddies.

EXT. SEASIDE - EVENING

Rain saunters along the beach, her thin cardigan wrapped tightly across her torso. A brisk wind keeps messing up her hair.

The only other figures on the beach are much further away and have their attention on dogs or children.

Rain finds a secluded spot in the grass and sits down.

She opens a beer and drinks it with short fast swigs, staring at the grey mass of water...

A wicked little TERRIER approaches her, BARKING viciously.

RAIN  
(trying to calm him down)  
It's all right.

Rain notices an unkempt Indian girl standing a few feet away, furious.

INDIAN GIRL  
(to her dog)  
Oi, get away from that honky!!

The terrier does not obey the girl's order and she hurries over to pull him away.

Rain watches her stroll down the beach. Her face lights up. Slowly her smile turns into laughter and...

RAIN  
(laughing hysterically)  
Honky...

LATER

Dusk has set in. Rain, sleeps peacefully, surrounded by empty beer cans.

Rain wakes to find RAJID standing above her, staring at her feet longingly.

EXT. SAVARNA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Rain stumbles past Savarna into the house.

Savarna looks startled and angry. She turns her attention to Rajid.

SAVARNA  
(in fast and furious Urdu)  
What the hell have you done with my  
daughter, you wicked man!

RAJID  
(in equally fast Urdu)  
It's not my fault! I found her  
drunk on the beach. You should  
look after her better!

SAVARNA  
(in even faster Urdu)  
This is not your business! Go back  
to your shoddy little shop!

Both Savarna and Rajid are so hotheaded, they are practically unable to upset each other.

RAJID  
(also getting faster)  
I won't let you in my "shoddy  
little shop" ever again. Then you  
can walk all the way to the  
supermarket for all I care.

Rajid defiantly turns around and leaves the driveway with angry strides.

Savarna waits for him to disappear from sight before closing the door with a grunt.

INT. SAVARNA'S STAIRS - NIGHT

Savarna shuts the door and notices Rain lying next to a pool of sick on the stairs.

SAVARNA (O.S.)  
Rain?

Savarna bends down and smells Rain's breath.

SAVARNA (CONT'D)  
Can I smell beer?

Rain nods.

SAVARNA (CONT'D)  
How many?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RAIN  
(ironically)  
About three or four thousand.

SAVARNA  
For god's sake!!!

Savarna slaps Rain's cheek, then helps her downstairs.

INT. RAIN'S NEW ROOM - DAY

Rain wakes up to an impossibly loud SAWING sound. She looks up and across the room at her window.

The tree, which was in front of it, falls down and Craig appears in the window frame, smiling annoyingly.

Rain hurries to the window and shuts the curtain in Craig's face.

RAIN  
Fuck off!

Rain listens to Craig's FOOTSTEPS crunching away. Then she opens the curtain again.

The room has more of a view now, but it merely extends to the sidewall of the neighbor's house.

We hear a few loud KNOCKS.

SAVARNA (O.S.)  
Breakfast! Now!

INT. SAVARNA'S KITCHEN - DAY

Savarna, Craig and Rain silently eat breakfast. The air is heavy with contrition. Savarna is still wearing her nightgown.

The PHONE RINGS and Savarna leaves the room.

Rain is not happy to be left with Craig.

CRAIG  
Do you dye your hair?

RAIN  
What?

CRAIG  
Do you dye your hair?

RAIN  
Um, yes.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CRAIG

Why?

RAIN

I just do.

CRAIG

(pensively)

I prefer dark hair. Like your  
mum's. Dark and smooth. Like oil.  
Engine oil. Or new tyres. That's  
what I like.

Craig tries to gesture something.

CRAIG (CONT'D)

But have it your way. If that's  
what you like...

A hint of a smile crosses Rain's face. Craig smiles too.

INT. SCHOOL REFECTORY - DAY

Rain looks for a place to sit. She notices Holly hunched  
lonely and miserable over her lunch. Rain hesitates for a  
moment but then sits down beside her and takes a sandwich  
from her bag.

RAIN

You mind?

Holly looks up and shakes her head in a sullen but not  
unfriendly way.

RAIN (CONT'D)

How are things?

HOLLY

(ironically)

Just trying to make it through the  
day.

RAIN

And your mum?

Holly looks down at her chips.

HOLLY

Still dying.

Holly pokes listlessly at her chips.

HOLLY (CONT'D)

(dryly)

Don't feel sorry for me.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HOLLY (CONT'D)

Every fucking person in the world  
is feeling sorry for me and I can't  
stand it.

The girls eat in silence.

RAIN

I'm sorry I took off with Harry  
like that.

HOLLY

(earnestly)  
No, I'm sorry.

RAIN

What for?

HOLLY

For being so rude about you both.

RAIN

You were only, like, being  
concerned.

HOLLY

It's sweet of you to say I was  
concerned but let's be honest, I  
was a bitch child to be frank.

RAIN

It's not important now.

Holly pushes her food away. She looks endearingly at Rain,  
pleased to have her friend back.

HOLLY

Do you wanna come over after  
school? There's just me and Miss  
Evans. My dad's away and Harry  
usually comes in late.

RAIN

What about Matt?

HOLLY

Who?

RAIN

Your boyfriend.

Holly sniggers guiltily.

HOLLY

Oh god, him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

RAIN  
(worried)  
You broke up too?

HOLLY  
No, no...I invented him.

Rain was about to take another bite from her sandwich but stops in mid-air.

RAIN  
(in disbelief)  
What?

HOLLY  
(embarrassed)  
It's cause you were getting all the attention and I wanted some too.

Rain puts her sandwich down.

HOLLY (CONT'D)  
I know it sounds loopy.

RAIN  
And I wanted to be blonde like you.

Holly laughs. Rain joins in.

EXT. SCHOOL GATES - DAY

As Rain and Holly stroll through the gates they notice Tony humbly pacing towards them. Rain immediately assumes an air of recalcitrance.

RAIN  
What are you doing here?

TONY  
(quietly)  
I miss my little girl.

RAIN  
(ironically)  
You sound like a perv.

Tony looks upset.

TONY  
Come for a drinkie at the pub?

Rain looks away.

TONY (CONT'D)  
Or another place, I don't mind.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RAIN  
Why don't you see me at home with  
mum?

TONY  
(embarrassed)  
Well, you know...

RAIN  
(disappointed)  
I know, the ice maiden.

Holly taps Rain's arm.

RAIN (CONT'D)  
I was going to Holly's.

HOLLY  
(gushing forth)  
You can both come to mine!

Rain throws Holly a quick disapproving look.

RAIN  
(to Tony)  
Let's do the Rose.

INT. THE ENGLISH ROSE PUB - DAY

Tony and Rain sit in a corner. Harsh sunlight streams through the window. Tony drinks lager, Rain a Coke.

Tony grabs inside his coat pocket and produces a key. He holds it up for Rain.

TONY  
I want you to have this.

Rain stares coldly at the shiny metal.

RAIN  
(unenthusiastically)  
Is that my key back?

TONY  
(seriously)  
It's your key.

RAIN  
What do I need it for?

TONY  
Hold on to it.

RAIN  
Is that a joke?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Tony puts the key down on the table in front of her. Rain take it and puts it in her bag.

RAIN (CONT'D)  
The ice maiden doesn't know about  
this, does she?

Tony takes a long swig.

RAIN (CONT'D)  
(softening)  
What is it about her? You were  
never like that with mum...

Tony looks guiltily into his drink.

TONY  
I was lonely.

Rain stares at Tony in disbelief.

RAIN  
Lonely?

Tony nods slowly.

RAIN (CONT'D)  
You sure you were lonely?

TONY  
I was.

Rain looks critically at Tony.

RAIN  
You had me!

TONY  
That's different. You know that.

Rain's expression turns sour.

TONY (CONT'D)  
Come on, I'm not a bad dad. I  
looked after you, cooked for  
you...and I do remember a funny  
detail from when you were young. I  
remember you wouldn't eat anything  
red.

RAIN  
(surprised)  
I didn't?

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED: (2)

TONY  
Tomatoes. Strawberries. Even  
sweets. You wouldn't eat any red  
sweet.

RAIN  
(slightly amused)  
Not even sweets?

Tony looks cautious, fearing the return of Rain's sour  
expression.

TONY  
Nope.

Rain chuckles.

RAIN  
That's loopy.

Tony smiles, relieved.

TONY  
No, that's absolutely normal.

Rain smiles too. She loves her dad.

EXT. THE ENGLISH ROSE PUB - DAY

As Rain and Tony close the pub door, they notice Harry and  
Shelly approaching.

Harry and Rain stare at each other coldly, both too stubborn  
in their pain to say anything. Shelley ambles inside with  
victorious irreverence. Harry follows Shelley.

TONY  
Isn't he your boyfriend?

RAIN  
(despondently)  
Not anymore.

TONY  
But he worshipped you.

RAIN  
He likes real blondes.

TONY  
(decidedly)  
What a silly tosser.

Rain pulls an ironic face at Tony. He smiles encouragingly,  
puts his arm around Rain and presses her against his side.

EXT. SAVARNA'S KITCHEN/PURI - DAY

Savarna looks through her visa statement with a very concerned expression.

SAVARNA  
(hysterically)  
Four hundred quid. What did I spend  
four hundred quid on!

RAIN  
I saw dad.

SAVARNA  
Somebody has robbed us and I don't  
know what to do. I'm scared.

RAIN  
(repeating)  
I saw dad.

Savarna grunts with displeasure.

RAIN (CONT'D)  
He picked me up from school and  
gave me my key back.

SAVARNA  
(worried)  
What?

RAIN  
As a token.

SAVARNA  
(resolutely)  
You're not going back.

RAIN  
(dryly)  
I don't want to.

SAVARNA  
It wouldn't be good for you.

RAIN  
(louder)  
I said I don't want to!

Savarna looks down again at her bill.

SAVARNA  
(calmer now)  
Four hundred quid. Did we buy a  
car?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RAIN

No, mum. You can't buy a car with that money.

SAVARNA

(confidently)

I can.

Rain looks at the dishcloth. It has a drawing of the Hindu god Juggernaut with his sister and brother on it.

RAIN

What's that? It looks like a cartoon.

Savarna looks at the cloth.

SAVARNA

That's the Juggernaut.

RAIN

That's a big destructive thing, isn't it?

Savarna ponders a moment, still worried about the missing money.

RAIN (CONT'D)

Isn't it, mum?

SAVARNA

No, he's good. He's a good god.

RAIN

Why do we think it's a big destructive thing?

Savarna looks at Rain for the first time with genuine interest.

SAVARNA

The Juggernaut is a reincarnation of Vishnu. The others are his brother and sister. In Puri they have this ritual. Once a year Juggernaut gets sick and needs to get well again. Then he goes on vacation to visit his aunt at her temple a mile down the road. A huge carriage drives them. Thousands of visitors come to Puri on a hot day to pull it and gain religious blessing.

INSERT shots of Puri and the Juggernaut event.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

SAVARNA (CONT'D)

And with so many people, a few are bound to get hurt. And that's why the English thought that it was a big destructive thing.

Savarna spends a moment staring reflectively into space, then turns back to her paperwork.

RAIN

I'd like to go there.

Rain eagerly awaits Savarna's reply but Savarna turns her full attention to a receipt as if she was ignoring Rain on purpose.

RAIN (CONT'D)

Have you really got no relatives I could stay with? I mean, they can't all be dead.

Savarna's face lights up.

SAVARNA

Ah!

Savarna breaks out in laughter.

RAIN

What?

SAVARNA

(overjoyed)

The washing machine! I bought the washing machine! Ah! I can't believe it. We're not fit to live!

Rain gives up and looks frustrated at being ignored.

INT. HOLLY'S ROOM - NIGHT

Rain and Holly lie next to each other in bed sharing a pillow, their hair intermingling. Rain is about to fall asleep while Holly is wide awake.

HOLLY

I guess it's this little tribal thing. Like with meerkats. They only allow the alpha couple to mate. If any of the others are found shagging, they get slaughtered.

RAIN

Eow. Horrible.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HOLLY  
Survival of the fittest, darling,  
that's what it is.

The girls stare silently into space.

RAIN  
But I want to believe in love.

Holly sighs.

HOLLY  
Me too.

INT. BUS STOP - MORNING

Rain, Holly and Derek wait for the bus among the usual crowd. They glance down the road with bored expressions.

A large piercing outbreak of GIRLY LAUGHTER causes them to shift their attention to Shelley who talks agitatedly to Chenille.

Rain notices Derek looking admiringly at Shelley.

RAIN  
(teasingly)  
You fancy her, don't you.

DEREK  
No way.

RAIN  
Then why do you look at her?

DEREK  
Dunno. I look at cripples and  
alcoholics too. Doesn't mean  
nothing.

Rain tries to suppress a grin. Holly yawns.

DEREK (CONT'D)  
Anyway, they're dying out.

HOLLY  
What? Who?

DEREK  
You know, blondes.

HOLLY  
What d'you mean they're dying out?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DEREK

That's what they say, innit. It's a genetic thing.

HOLLY

(teasingly)

Suppose that makes us special.

DEREK

(ironically)

They should put you in a fucking museum, innit?

Holly playfully slaps Derek's arm. Rain looks up into the grey sky. A flock of birds move flawlessly over the rooftops.

INT. ART DEPARTMENT - DAY

Rain paints a picture of the Juggernaut.

She looks up and notices that Shelley and her friends have surrounded Holly with sympathetic expressions.

Shelley bends forward and hugs Holly while Chenille puts her hand on Holly's shoulder. Holly can barely hide her amusement.

MISS EVANS (O.S.)

(delighted)

This is such a nice, colorful cartoon, Rain.

Rain turns her head to see Miss Evans looking down at her.

RAIN

It's not a cartoon. It's the Juggernaut. A Hindu god.

Miss Evans looks genuinely interested in the picture.

MISS EVANS

Indeed, a very interesting style but build on it. Don't copy. You should try to develop your own.

Rain nods pensively. Miss Evans smiles encouragingly.

MISS EVANS (CONT'D)

India is such an art treasure. One day you should go there with a sketchbook. I always take one on my travels.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RAIN  
(impressed)  
You do a lot of travelling?

MISS EVANS  
Travelling unleashes your  
creativity.

Miss Evans smiles once more and moves on to the next pupil.

Rain continues to paint with a wistful expression.

INT. THE STRAWBERRY COTTAGE KITCHEN - NIGHT

Rain creeps into the kitchen which is lit by moonlight. She opens the fridge and pours herself a glass of milk.

We hear the FRONT DOOR BEING OPENED and the FLICK OF A LIGHT SWITCH.

Harry slouches moodily into the kitchen. Rain's presence startles him.

HARRY  
Oh.

Harry puts his rucksack on the kitchen table.

HARRY (CONT'D)  
All right?

Rain nods.

RAIN  
You been to the hospital?

Harry nods.

RAIN (CONT'D)  
How is she?

HARRY  
(stoically)  
Her kidney's have packed up.

RAIN  
That's not good, is it?

Rather than giving another sarcastic answer, he softens his grimace.

HARRY  
No, it's not.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Harry takes a beer from the fridge and gulps down a long swig.

Rain slowly walks up to him and pushes her hand on his shoulder.

Harry takes her hand and kisses it. He puts his beer away.

They embrace deeply for a long moment.

INT. HARRY'S ROOM - NIGHT

The room is lit by moonlight. Harry is on top of Rain, making passionate love to her.

LATER

Harry and Rain lie naked in Harry's bed. Harry is fast asleep and holds her tightly, needfully, to him.

Rain has her eyes wide open.

INT. HOLLY'S ROOM - MORNING

Rain quickly creeps back into Holly's bed while Holly is fast asleep.

INT. SAVARNA'S KITCHEN - DAY

Rain and Savarna sit at the table eating packet soup and toast with butter.

Savarna slurps a spoonful of soup and her expression turns sour. She puts the spoon down again.

SAVARNA

(gushing forth)

I think that the people who put  
Stilton in this soup should be  
shot!

Rain rolls her eyes to the ceiling.

RAIN

(gruffly)

The things you come up with...

SAVARNA

(sternly)

Oi, you should respect your elders.

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED:

RAIN  
(despairing)  
But how can I respect you, when you  
always exaggerate, like...like  
Colonel Mustard, like, (mockingly  
theatrical) this foul, foul soup!

SAVARNA  
One is allowed to become a little  
truculent with age.

RAIN  
(consternated)  
Truculent!

Rain puts her spoon down and pulls her knees up to her chin.

RAIN (CONT'D)  
Is that why you left us? Because  
you got all truculent?

SAVARNA  
Well, no.

RAIN  
Then why did you leave us?

Rain looks fixedly and expectantly at Savarna.

SAVARNA  
(flippantly)  
Well...I hardly know myself,  
honeypot! These things are very  
complicated.

RAIN  
That's not good enough.

Savarna reflects for a moment.

SAVARNA  
(earnestly)  
Maybe it just takes a little more  
to feel alive at my age.

RAIN  
It takes Craig does it?

SAVARNA  
Craig's here now.

RAIN  
And who's next?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

SAVARNA

(annoyed)

I honestly don't know who's next,  
honey. Colonel Mustard?

Frustrated, Rain looks down at her feet.

Savarna strolls away from the table and opens the fridge door.

SAVARNA (CONT'D)

Shall we get more of these little  
red tomatoes. I love these little  
red ones.

Rain remains defiantly silent.

Savarna shuts the fridge and gazes endearingly at Rain.

SAVARNA (CONT'D)

So, what's really bugging you? Come  
on, my droplet, you should tell  
your old mum.

Savarna strolls back to Rain and lets her fingers glide through Rain's mane, stiff due to extensive colouring and hairspray.

SAVARNA (CONT'D)

(pensively)

Look at your hair...

RAIN

What's wrong with my hair?

SAVARNA

It looks lovely, my droplet. But  
you make such an effort to look  
different, when you're so lovely as  
you are.

RAIN

Then why do you use all that make-  
up?

SAVARNA

I'm old, honey.

RAIN

Whatever, at least...

A pause.

RAIN (CONT'D)

(stoically)

...I'm not a slag like you!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

SAVARNA  
(cross)  
THAT'S ENOUGH!!!

EXT. THE STRAWBERRY COTTAGE - DAY

Rain presses the doorbell. Miss Evans opens.

MISS EVANS  
Hello, Rain.

RAIN  
Is Harry in?

MISS EVANS  
(gravely)  
They're all at the hospital.

Rain looks alarmed.

MISS EVANS (CONT'D)  
I'm afraid so.

RAIN  
Can I go there?

MISS EVANS  
I don't see why not.

INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR - DAY

When Rain arrives at the end of the white linoleum corridor, she sees Harry and Shelley sitting on the only two available chairs. Shelley holds Harry's hand and rests her head on his shoulder.

Rain tenses up.

HARRY  
Oh! Hi.

Harry takes his hand out of Shelley's grip.

RAIN  
Miss Evans told me.

Shelley slowly removes her head from Harry's shoulder.

Rain looks at the pair with a dumbfounded expression.

SHELLEY  
(arrogantly)  
Nice of you to come.

Harry gets up and gives Rain a brief kiss on the cheek. Then he points to his chair.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HARRY  
Wanna sit down?

Rain petulantly shakes her head.

The door opens and a nurse pops her head out. She nods at Harry and Harry follows her inside.

Shelley looks Rain up and down.

RAIN  
(annoyed)  
What?

SHELLEY  
I know you're bitter. But try to understand. Harry is very confused right now.

Rain just ignores her and paces down the corridor.

INT. SAVARNA'S BEDROOM - DAY

Rain opens the door and notices Savarna lying fully dressed on the bed facing away from her, looking at a photo.

RAIN  
Mum?

Savarna stays in the same position without answering.

RAIN (CONT'D)  
(moved)  
Mum, you're not a slag.

Savarna doesn't turn around but keeps looking at the photo.

SAVARNA  
(softly)  
I know, darling.

Rain sits down next to Savarna and hugs her as she looks down at the photo.

INSERT: Photo of Savarna and Tony's wedding. Savarna wears a salwar kameez and Tony a beige, linen suit.

Both have a bright and happy smile on their face and their arms around one another.

RAIN  
That's your wedding photo?

SAVARNA  
I still have my salwar kameez.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Savarna moves out of Rain's hug and searches in the overfilled wardrobe. She finds the hanger with the elaborate garment and proudly shows it to Rain.

RAIN  
(excited)  
Can I try it?

Savarna takes the garment off the hanger and hands it to Rain.

Rain takes her skirt and jumper off and slips into the salwar kameez, which turns out a little too big for her. She examines herself in the wardrobe mirror.

Savarna looks at her daughter, touched.

SAVARNA  
There's a shawl with it but it's gone missing.

Rain turns around to face her.

RAIN  
I wanna wear this for my wedding.

A tinge of irony moves across Savarna's face.

SAVARNA  
You're welcome, I won't be needing it anymore. I'd rather run naked through hell than get married again.

Rain takes the garment off, silently frustrated about her mother's loss of positive spirit.

RAIN  
(dryly)  
Christian hell or Hindu hell?

Savarna contemplates this question for a moment.

SAVARNA  
(ironically)  
Hindu hell. It's more like modern marriage. Horrible but temporary. Not like Christian hell. You're not stuck there forever.

RAIN  
Where do you go after Hindu hell?

Savarna contemplates for a moment.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

SAVARNA

Back to earth. As a man.

Rain despondently hands Savarna the garment, who puts it back in her wardrobe, HUMMING some indiscernible melody.

INT. CORNER SHOP - DAY

Rain saunters into the empty shop. Rajid sits casually behind the counter reading a newspaper.

Rain takes a *Secret* chocolate bar and puts it on the counter.

Rajid notices her presence.

RAJID

(grinning)

Ah...!

RAIN

(embarrassed)

Thanks for the other day.

RAJID

Don't mention it. It was fun.

Rajid grins apprehensively.

RAJID (CONT'D)

(self-assured)

Now you'll let me take a photo of your feet, right?

Rain smiles and nods. Rajid turns his attention to the door behind the counter.

RAJID (CONT'D)

(shouting in Urdu)

Grandma! Can you cover me for five minutes?

An OLD INDIAN WOMAN staggers out of the door, one hand on her back. She shows him impatiently all five fingers of her right hand.

Rajid gestures Rain to follow him inside.

INT. BACK ROOM OF CORNER SHOP - DAY

Rain sits on a chair waiting for Rajid to adjust the lens of his SLR. A professional light illuminates her right foot which rests on a small burgundy velvet pillow.

Rajid is shy with admiration.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RAJID  
(quietly)  
Beautiful.

Rajid takes several photos.

RAJID (CONT'D)  
The left, please.

Rain puts her left foot on the pillow. Rajid again takes several photos.

RAJID (CONT'D)  
(in a professional manner)  
Thanks. Now both and leave a small gap.

Rain puts both feet on the pillow. For the first time she observes her feet properly. Every curve, every hollow. The size of her toes...

Rajid has finished taking photos and looks at Rain with earnest admiration and enthusiasm.

RAJID (CONT'D)  
That's it. You were great.

As Rain puts her sandals back on she is fascinated by a statue of the Hindu goddess Kali sitting on a shelf with many spidery arms and her tongue sticking out. Rajid notices her fascination.

RAJID (CONT'D)  
Kali. She's a devi, a goddess.

RAIN  
(impressed)  
She's a girl?

RAJID  
Kali gives you moksha. Liberation of the ego. She destroys unreality. I had this awesome dream once when she put her feet around my dick and massaged it with slow--

Rain stares at him, unnerved.

RAJID (CONT'D)  
Sorry...

RAIN  
Where did you get it from?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

RAJID

India. I go to India every August,  
the holy month. August is wicked  
cause there's so many festivals.

RAIN

And it rains a lot, doesn't it?  
That's why I'm called Rain. My  
birthday's in August.

Rain looks wistfully at the Kali figure.

RAIN (CONT'D)

I wish I could come...

Rajid opens the door to the shop.

RAJID

Come! My whole family is going.  
The more the merrier. That's what  
we think in India anyway.

RAIN

You sure?

RAJID

Damn right I'm sure.

A wave of excitement overcomes Rain. She can actually  
picture herself going to India with Rajid's family.

EXT. BUS - DAY

Rain and Derek stand in the bus among the usual crowd,  
holding onto the same pole. Derek is again cleaning his ears  
with a cotton stick.

DEREK

You still Harry's bird?

RAIN

(resolutely)

No!

DEREK

Why?

Rain indicates that she does not want to answer.

DEREK (CONT'D)

You think he fancies someone else?

Rain rolls her eyes away from him.

DEREK (CONT'D)

Shelley?

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED:

Rain still looks away from him.

DEREK (CONT'D)  
He doesn't fancy her.

Rain turns to look at Derek.

RAIN  
(surprised)  
How do you know?

Derek smirks.

DEREK  
She told my sis. She's even upset  
about it.

Rain's eyes are wide with disbelief.

DEREK (CONT'D)  
It's true.

EXT. SCHOOL GATES - DAY

Rain watches as a big Mercedes stops in front of the big iron gates where Shelley and the usual crowd of girls in uniform are lined up, waiting with dramatic, sorrowful expressions.

Shelley and her friends home in on Holly as she gloomily gets out of the Mercedes, but Holly ignores them and pushes her way through the crowd towards Rain.

Holly gives Rain a long, desperate hug.

EXT. MARKET - DAY

Rain and Holly stroll through the market and stop at a selection of necklaces with Gothic crosses.

HOLLY  
(excited)  
These would be great for the  
funeral!

Holly points to the necklaces. A JUNKIE GIRL dressed up as a spider fairy lolls behind the table.

HOLLY (CONT'D)  
Excuse me how much are these?

JUNKIE GIRL  
Just the cross, or one with a  
little person on it?

HOLLY  
Jesus?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JUNKIE GIRL  
(confused)  
Jesus, what?

HOLLY  
Just the cross.

Holly turns her attention to Rain.

HOLLY (CONT'D)  
Want one?

Rain nods.

Holly points at two necklaces with large, simple crosses.

HOLLY (CONT'D)  
Two of those.

EXT. GRAVEYARD - DAY

CEMETERY WORKERS scoop earth on Mary's grave.

A CROWD OF MOURNERS dressed in black traipse around the graveyard with sombre expressions and study other graves.

Holly and Rain sit pensively on a bench wearing black dresses and the Gothic crosses dangling down their fronts.

Holly lays her head on Rain's shoulder and looks at the sky, which is completely white.

HOLLY  
(pensively)  
How can she do this to me? How can she, like, put me into this miserable, grey world called England and then, like, bugger off, leaving me all alone, to my own sodding devices...

RAIN  
That feeling's normal.

HOLLY  
I don't want to be depressed. I wanna have fun, I wanna get laid.

Rain nods with sympathy.

HOLLY (CONT'D)  
You coming to the buffet? I totally understand if you don't. I'd get out of it if I could.  
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HOLLY (CONT'D)

It's just going to be full of grief hyenas, like, those people who've got all this morbid curiosity, like, who just SO want to be part of the action because they have such boring lives, people like...

Holly and Rain watch Shelley, looking very elegant in her black suit and shiny stilettos, strolling around the graveyard with Harry, talking at him rather than with him.

INT. THE STRAWBERRY COTTAGE GARDEN - DAY

The same crowd of mourners pick food from a buffet in the garden.

Harry, Adam, Icky, Raul and Jamie wear dark suits. Adam wears dark sunglasses. They stand in a circle mutely drinking beers.

EDWARD, Holly's slick lawyer dad is conversation with Savarna and Miss Evans. They are watched by Jodie and Tony, who silently stand side by side in a corner of the garden. They in turn are watched by Rain and Derek, while Holly seems to be concentrating on Raul who looks very striking in his suit.

RAIN

(her eyes on Jodie)  
She's so cold.

DEREK

I'm not surprised.

Rain and Holly look at him blankly.

DEREK (CONT'D)

(cheekily)  
You don't know?

The girls shake their heads. Derek smirks, drawing out the tension.

HOLLY

Come on, Derek.

DEREK

Basically, her hubbie couldn't keep his dick in his pants. He boned one of his pupils with hair like Marilyn Monroe, all blonde and fake and done up.

RAIN

Really?

HOLLY

You're such a gossip.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DEREK

He went totally bananas. Jumped out of a school window and ended up in a nursing home.

RAIN

I mean, Marilyn Monroe wasn't blonde?

DEREK

No, she was a brunette. Elvis was blonde.

HOLLY

I don't believe all this. I mean, that she jumped. Sounds loopy.

Derek smirks mysteriously.

Shelley approaches the group balancing a tray of full red wine glasses.

SHELLEY

You have no drinks! You silly people.

Holly and Derek mutely take a glass.

SHELLEY (CONT'D)

(to Holly)

How are you kid?

HOLLY

Can't say, weird?

SHELLEY

You must be confused.

HOLLY

(lightly)

I'm always confused.

Rain enviously watches Derek stroll away.

SHELLEY

I had a little cry this morning. She was a really great person, your mum, suffering so quietly.

Holly wearily points at the buffet.

HOLLY

Well done with the buffet.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

SHELLEY

(very pleased)

Oh, thanks! Your dad was going to order one ready-made, but then I thought, cause it's for Mary, it should really be prepared by people who loved her.

HOLLY

(laconically)

I'd say she doesn't give a shit now she's dead.

Shelley glances critically at Holly, then carries her tray towards Tony and Jodie.

HOLLY (CONT'D)

I didn't mean it like that...

RAIN

I know.

Edward impatiently indicates Holly to come over. Holly sighs.

Rain watches Holly obediently trot towards him. She watches Edward complain to Holly about something. There is little warmth between the two.

Then Holly saunters over to the garden shed and a moment later emerges with two bottles of red wine. She carries them to the table and clearly pretends that she has difficulty pulling the cork, while throwing conspicuous glances at Raul.

Raul notices Holly and walks over to offer his help.

Rain knits her brows, then looks around for company but all the other mourners are busy talking to each another.

Rain eventually saunters towards the house.

INT. THE STRAWBERRY COTTAGE KITCHEN - DAY

Rain watches a fly caught in a spider's web in the kitchen window. It buzzes desperately.

HARRY (O.S.)

Hi.

Rain turns and looks stropily into Harry's soft brown eyes. His white shirt is unbuttoned at the top and his hair is a complete mess making him look even more handsome in a wild, romantic way.

Harry notices Rain's displeasure.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HARRY (CONT'D)  
I'm sorry I didn't call, but you understand why, don't you, with my mum dying and all.

RAIN  
Sure.

Rain's attention wanders back to the fly.

HARRY  
Thanks for looking after Holly, she needed you.

Harry's expression becomes all serious and introverted as though he was talking about himself.

HARRY (CONT'D)  
She really did.

Harry watches Rain watch the fly intently for a long, uncomfortable moment.

RAIN  
Anything else?

HARRY  
We're doing a gig at the Rose next Friday. Would be cool if you, you know...

RAIN  
I'll think about it.

Harry still expects some attention from Rain, but she is not willed to grant him any.

Rain turns to watch Harry stride casually out of the room with his hands in his pockets.

EXT. THE STRAWBERRY COTTAGE GARDEN - EVENING

Rain strolls around the garden. It is almost completely dark save for a few candles. A scatter of mourners are left talking to each other, drunk and tired.

Rain notices Holly and Tony involved in a lively discussion. She studies the oddly-matched twosome for a moment but there seems to be nothing unusual or forbidden about the way they converse with each other.

Rain approaches Holly and Tony, who are both happy to see her.

RAIN  
Where's Jodie?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TONY  
She wasn't feeling well.

HOLLY  
(to Rain)  
I hope you're staying.

RAIN  
Sure.

Holly smiles at Tony without her usual flirtatiousness.

HOLLY  
You could stay as well. We got  
plenty of free rooms.

TONY  
I really should be off.

Holly gives Tony a friendly hug.

HOLLY  
(politely)  
Lovely to see you.

TONY  
Take care of yourself.

Tony looks expectantly at Rain.

TONY (CONT'D)  
Wanna see me out?

Holly watches Tony and Rain walk around the house towards the front gate with a slightly envious but peaceful expression.

TONY (CONT'D)  
Had any thoughts about your  
present?

Rain tries to think of the best way to put her request to Tony.

RAIN  
I wanna go to India.

TONY  
(alarmed)  
India?

RAIN  
(facetiously)  
Yeah, well I thought about staying  
with mum's family but that's gonna  
be difficult, isn't it, since  
they're all dead...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Rain throws Tony an expectant side glance.

RAIN (CONT'D)  
They're not all dead, aren't they?

Tony starts to look very troubled.

Rain grows impatient.

RAIN (CONT'D)  
Come on! I'm big enough to know.  
And I have a right to, anyway.

TONY  
I promised I wouldn't tell you.

RAIN  
(ironically)  
That's great, dad.

Tony still hesitates.

RAIN (CONT'D)  
Go on, you have to tell me. Now  
that I know that you know.

TONY  
Not here.

Rain looks around to check whether anyone else is listening.  
They are clearly all by themselves.

RAIN  
Why not?

Rain fixes Tony with unflinching eyes.

TONY  
What it is you want to know?

RAIN  
What happened to mum's family? She  
just ignores me when I ask about  
them.

Tony sighs.

TONY  
You know your mum was going to  
marry someone else when she came to  
England?

RAIN  
No.

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED: (3)

TONY  
She was sixteen. Like you.

Rain gulps.

TONY (CONT'D)  
Actually, her parents forged her  
documents and made her twenty-two.

It slowly dawns on Rain.

RAIN  
(in shock)  
They sold her? They put her on the  
market and sold her??

TONY  
(guiltily)  
I shouldn't really be...

RAIN  
Dad!

Tony clears his throat.

TONY  
She didn't like him and met me and  
wanted to marry me instead.

RAIN  
You knew she was sixteen?

TONY  
Course not.

Rain stares at Tony in utter disbelief.

RAIN  
(with outrage)  
You paid for mum?

Rain finds it hard to take it all in.

Tony looks incredibly guilty.

TONY  
(defensively)  
I sent her parents some money to  
start with but I would've done it  
anyway. Sav stopped me from doing  
it. She was furious with them.

RAIN  
Furious?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

TONY  
(smiling)  
You know her.

RAIN  
(under hear breath)  
So, what happened to them?

TONY  
I don't know.

Rain stares at Tony, lost in thought.

TONY (CONT'D)  
Are you okay?

Rain nods hesitantly.

INT. HOLLY'S ROOM - NIGHT

Street light fills the room. Holly and Rain lie awake, again sharing a pillow with their hair intermingling and look at the Vishnu statue whose shadow fills the room. Rain is absent-minded, still trying to grasp the importance of Tony's revelation.

HOLLY  
I think he likes it here.

RAIN  
Yeah, he does.

HOLLY  
He really helps.

RAIN  
Have him as long as you want.

Holly moves into a more comfortable position.

HOLLY  
Can I wake you up if I can't sleep?

RAIN  
Sure.

HOLLY  
It feels so unreal. Everything  
feels so unreal. Like I'm inside a  
huge, invisible puffball.

RAIN  
It might go away.

HOLLY  
Maybe if I had sex.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RAIN

Mmm...

Holly looks over to Rain who has her eyes closed.

HOLLY

Good night then.

RAIN

(dozing off)

Good night.

Holly still feels wide awake.

HOLLY

Rain, sorry. If you wanna sleep tell me.

RAIN

Go on then.

HOLLY

You miss Harry, don't you?

Rain sighs, confirming Holly's suspicion.

HOLLY (CONT'D)

Stupid tosser!

A pause while Holly's eyes fill with tears.

HOLLY (CONT'D)

I miss my mum.

Rain opens her eyes and carefully takes Holly's hand.

Holly bursts out in a huge wave of tears.

INT. THE STRAWBERRY COTTAGE CORRIDOR/KITCHEN - NIGHT

Rain tiptoes out of Holly's room, wearing Holly's gigantic furry slippers. A GLASS SMASHES downstairs.

Curious, Rain tiptoes to the stairs and takes a couple of steps downwards until she can see into the kitchen.

Rain sits down on the step peering through the banister.

Miss Evans stands by the cooker, flustered.

Harry takes a couple of steps towards Miss Evans. It is clear that she is displeased with the situation.

Harry kisses her on the mouth. Miss Evans doesn't resist but remains passive.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He heaves her onto the oven. But when he puts his hand inside her shirt she pushes him away.

Miss Evans gets off the oven, reaches for her coat and car keys and leaves in a flurry.

Embarrassed, Harry looks away until we hear the front door OPEN and SHUT.

Rain continues to sit on the stairs, mesmerized, when Harry walks out of the kitchen towards her.

Harry notices Rain and freezes.

Rain meets Harry's angry look with a cold and aloof air.

RAIN  
I won't tell.

HARRY  
(very drunk)  
It meant nothing.

RAIN  
You know, that's not a very nice  
thing to say about Miss Evans.

Harry just stares at Rain for a moment, then paces past her up the stairs.

EXT. SHOPPING STREET - NIGHT

Rain, fully dressed, strides past the old homeless woman in the sparsely-lit street.

OLD HOMELESS WOMAN  
Go home!

RAIN  
(furious)  
I am! I am going home!

Rain unhappily speeds up.

INT. SAVARNA'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

Rain walks into the kitchen. The room is dark except for the TV showing the midnight news.

INSERT: TV footage of Russian politicians.

NEWS PRESENTER  
Today the parliament of the Russian  
Federation has formally declared  
its sovereignty...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Rain takes the remote. She presses the button and nothing happens.

Rain presses harder and walks right up to the TV. Still nothing happens.

Rain checks the remote for batteries. There are none inside.

RAIN  
 AHHHHHHHHHHHHH!!!!!!!

Rain presses the switch on the TV. The room goes completely dark.

INT. RAIN'S NEW ROOM - NIGHT

Rain pokes at the mirror with her hairbrush, cracking it. She contemplates her reflection in the cracked mirror. Then she takes a piece of the broken mirror and stares at it...

...for a long moment...

She drops the piece into her bin, takes a pair of scissors and...

...bit by bit...

...cuts all the blonde hair off leaving a...

...cropped, black mane.

INT. SAVARNA'S BATHROOM - NIGHT

Rain sits in the bath, sponging her body. She pops her knee out of the milky-white water.

Rain looks down on her knee for a long moment...

...then she kisses it...

...again and again...

EXT. BUS STOP - DAY

Rain calmly approaches Holly and Derek who have both locked onto Rain into an open-mouthed gaze.

Rain has styled her short hair nicely and is wearing Harry's velvet scarf around her head. She looks changed, relaxed, almost happy.

HOLLY  
 Oh, my god!

Holly studies Rain's cropped look intently.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HOLLY (CONT'D)  
It's amazing! It really brings out  
your face. Can I feel it?

Rain nods and Holly uses her fingers to stroke through Rain's wild, gelled strands.

HOLLY (CONT'D)  
How cool is that!

RAIN  
Sorry about last night.

Holly gives Rain a long and sympathetic hug.

HOLLY  
Harry explained. He said you two  
had a fight.

INT. SCHOOL CORRIDOR - DAY

Holly and Rain stroll down the corridor but suddenly stop still when they see Shelley coming towards them with her hair dyed black!

Rain and Shelley gaze at each other for a moment. They are both shocked to see the other with a different hairstyle.

MISS EVAN S (O.S.)  
Rain?

Rain turns apprehensively towards Miss Evans who is peeking out of the art department. She looks sullen and withdrawn.

MISS EVANS  
Could you come in here for a  
moment? I'd like a word.

RAIN  
(nervously)  
Sure.

INT. ART DEPARTMENT - DAY

Rain walks into the room finding Miss Evans on her teacher's chair. They are both nervous.

MISS EVANS  
How are you, my darling?

RAIN  
All right.

MISS EVANS  
Your parents?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RAIN  
(ironically)  
Doing great.

A pause while Miss Evans clears her throat.

MISS EVANS  
I've got something on my mind.

Rain gasps.

MISS EVANS (CONT'D)  
This is quite confidential but  
important. Is that okay with you?

Rain is unsure but nods.

MISS EVANS (CONT'D)  
I wanted to ask you whether you  
noticed anything unusual about  
Shelley?

Rain looks very surprised and takes a moment to answer.

RAIN  
(confused)  
Shelly?

MISS EVANS  
Yes.

RAIN  
You mean the hair?

MISS EVANS  
Not just the hair. Lately, there's  
something quite off with Shelley.  
She's got this restlessness in her  
eyes. She frightens me.

Rain is lost for words.

MISS EVANS (CONT'D)  
Please help keep an eye on her? We  
should all be watchful, just in  
case...

Rain looks expectantly at her.

MISS EVANS (CONT'D)  
(repeating quietly)  
...just in case.

EXT. THE STRAWBERRY COTTAGE GARDEN - DAY

Holly and Rain play Badminton on the lawn in their school uniforms. Rain hits the ball.

RAIN

Dick.

Holly hits the ball.

HOLLY

Cock.

Rain hits the ball.

RAIN

Knob.

Holly hits the ball.

HOLLY

Ehm....

Rain catches the ball.

RAIN

I've won.

HOLLY

I was going to say bishop.

RAIN

That's not a penis is it?

HOLLY

(jokingly)

It is. A small one.

The girls laugh.

RAIN

(ironically)

You lost anyway.

Holly notices Raul leave the house.

HOLLY

Oi, Raul!

Raul turns around and strolls over to the girls.

RAUL

Hey.

The girls smile fetchingly at him. Raul's attention is on Holly.

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED:

RAUL (CONT'D)  
You babes are definitely coming to  
the gig, right?

HOLLY  
(gruffly)  
I'm not my brother's groupie.

RAUL  
Oh, come on...

Holly fakes pensiveness. She enjoys Raul's attention.

RAUL (CONT'D)  
(cheekily)  
...you could be mine.

Holly's face lights up but she looks at Rain for her approval.

HOLLY  
I'm only going if you're going.

Holly looks pleadingly at Rain.

RAIN  
(dryly)  
Oh, okay.

EXT. INDIAN TRAVEL AGENT - DAY

A well-fed, middle-aged Indian TRAVEL AGENT hands Rain her plane ticket.

TRAVEL AGENT  
Have a nice flight.

Rain takes the ticket with a big grin on her face.

Rain turns around. Rajid is studying the flight offers in the window.

INT. SAVARNA'S LIVING ROOM - EVENING

Savarna and Rain sit on the sofa with an Indian take-away and the TV news on. A photo of a twenty-something BLONDE GIRL in office dress is shown on TV.

NEWS PRESENTER  
Lamee Sunning was wearing a white  
jacket and low high heel shoes on  
the day she went missing. She was  
last seen in the company of a tall,  
white...

Rain takes the remote and flicks the mute button.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SAVARNA  
(cross)  
That's naughty!

The TV shows an identikit picture of the suspect.

RAIN  
I'm going to India.

SAVARNA  
(her attention on the  
identikit)  
I hope his balls are hacked with a  
blunt knife and stuffed down his  
throat!

RAIN  
(louder)  
I'm going to India, mum.

SAVARNA  
Don't be silly, darling.

RAIN  
My roots are in India.

SAVARNA  
Your roots are here, honeypot.

RAIN  
Mum, I'm serious! I'm going! I  
wanna see India! I wanna develop  
my art!

SAVARNA  
Sweetie, India is big, loud, dirty  
and dangerous! And I don't want  
you to develop your art. I want  
you to be a doctor.

RAIN  
I got money.

SAVARNA  
(puzzled)  
Money?

Savarna reflects for a moment.

SAVARNA (CONT'D)  
(softly)  
But, sweetie, he wouldn't give you  
money for that!

Rain shows Savarna her flight ticket.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

RAIN

Well, you're wrong. Dad wants me  
to go.

Savarna studies the ticket with growing consternation.

SAVARNA

Nonsense! Anyway, you can't  
possibly go all by yourself.

RAIN

(resolutely)

You're right. I'm going with  
Rajid, and don't call me droplet or  
honeypot. Show me some respect.

Savarna's face fills with fury and disbelief.

SAVARNA

Rajid!!!

INT. RAIN'S NEW ROOM - DAY

Rain applies thick, black mascara to Holly's eyelashes.

HOLLY

There's nothing wrong with Shelley.  
Well, not like in serious wrong.  
There's plenty of other stuff wrong  
with her.

RAIN

What about her and Harry?

A short pause while Rain applies lipstick to Holly's lips.

Then she, one by one, undoes the curlers in Holly's hair.

HOLLY

She's around a lot, but she's more  
like his accessory. I don't think  
there's anything going on. Well,  
not like in a serious way. It's  
like that, nobody is having any  
sex.

RAIN

Meerkats.

HOLLY

Meerkats.

Rain uses a comb to mess up Holly's curls.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HOLLY (CONT'D)  
 You know what that means?  
 Shelley's not alpha. But then, who  
 is?

The girls exchange pensive glances.

INT. THE ENGLISH ROSE PUB TOILET - NIGHT

Rain washes her hands while inspecting her face in the mirror. She takes one of her strands and pulls it low into her face. Then she carefully redraws her eyeliner line.

The toilet is flushed and Chenille leaves one of the cubicles.

CHENILLE  
 Oh, hi.

RAIN  
 Hi.

While Chenille washes her hands, she glances at Rain.

CHENILLE  
 You're hair is really nice.

RAIN  
 Thanks.

Chenille picks at her hair with wet hands.

CHENILLE  
 (sincerely)  
 Maybe, another day, you can do  
 mine?

RAIN  
 Sure.

Chenille smiles and strides confidently out of the room, rubbing her wet hands on her jeans.

INT. THE ENGLISH ROSE PUB - NIGHT

Rain pushes her way past a crammed full pub watching *Last Aid* perform on stage.

Rain notices Shelley drunk near the stage, hardly able to stand, looking adoringly up at Harry, who ignores her and, intently and disapprovingly, looks in someone else's direction.

Jamie cuts in and disturbs her.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JAMIE  
(drunk)  
Hey.

Rain tries to follow Harry's gaze. Jamie looks where she looks but only notices Shelley, who dances with a glass of beer in her hand. She looks drunk and unstable.

JAMIE (CONT'D)  
(pointing at Shelley)  
Look...

Rain ignores Jamie and moves further along the crowd to get a better view.

In a seating area at the back of the pub, Raul and Holly, who looks unrecognisably sexy, are engaged in a very long, deep French kiss.

Harry puts his guitar aside. Puzzled, the other musicians follow suit and together with all the guests watch Harry push his way past Shelley. Shelley falls over. Harry ignores her and makes his way through the crowd, towards the unaware couple.

Shortly before Harry reaches the couple, Raul notices him and separates himself from Holly who is unhappy about the interruption.

HOLLY  
NO!

Harry makes a fist, lunges out and strikes Raul in the face.

Shelley is down on the floor, her forehead bleeding from where she cut it on the broken beer glass.

Slowly she gets up, unaware of her gash, and stares at Harry with stark terror in her eyes.

INT. SAVARNA'S KITCHEN - DAY

Savarna turns on the radio and zaps through a few stations until she tunes into Classic FM which is playing melancholic classical music, which also accompanies the next scenes.

EXT. SOUTHAMPTON - DAY

We see shots of dismal early morning life:

Tatty amusement rides, which are still shut.

The industrial estate, which is still quiet.

Big housing estates where people in tracksuits walk their dogs.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Shelley wanders through the park with an empty expression. She has a horrible scar across her forehead, messy hair and wears an old, filthy tracksuit.

INT. SAVARNA'S STAIRS - DAY

As Rain paces sleepily down the stairs she notices Savarna with a sour expression in the downstairs corridor, holding a birthday cake with one tall, phallic burning candle in the center.

Suddenly, the DOOR BELL is pressed so LOUD that Savarna lets go of the cake which topples to the floor.

The BELL RINGS AGAIN AND AGAIN in quick succession.

EXT. SAVARNA'S HOUSE - DAY

Derek, sweaty and out of breath, keeps pressing the doorbell like a madman.

EXT. CHURCHYARD - DAY

Savarna and Rain hurry towards a crowd of concerned onlookers who have their eyes fixed on the church roof.

Shelley balances dangerously from one end of the roof to the other. She looks ready to jump.

Savarna hurries over to Miss Evans and embroils her in a serious chat.

Rain looks around. She notices Derek in conversation with OFFICER BAILEY, 50, a megaphone-carrying policeman.

On the other side of the crowd, Rain notices Holly holding hands with Raul who has a black eye. The girls exchange glances. Holly looks content with Raul but smiles sadly at the church roof spectacle.

Harry arrives on his motorbike and pulls up alongside Rain. He dismounts and takes his helmet off.

HARRY

(unnerved)

How the hell did she get up there?

RAIN

You think she's going to jump?

HARRY

Ah, she's a drama queen.

Shelley notices Harry's arrival and gazes fixedly down at him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Derek and Officer Bailey approach Harry and Rain.

OFFICER BAILEY  
You're familiar with the girl?

HARRY  
Yes.

OFFICER BAILEY  
You've got any idea why she's up there?

HARRY  
No.

DEREK  
She fancied you.

HARRY  
I never--

DEREK  
She still fancied you.

HARRY  
I'm not responsible. I haven't a clue why she's up there!

The officer's walkie talkie makes weird NOISES and he strides away.

DEREK  
You're responsible for people you hang out with, mate.

HARRY  
Dickhead.

DEREK  
Wanker.

Derek notices Chenille's tear-stained face, strolls over to her and gives her a brotherly hug.

RAIN  
You let everyone come so close.

HARRY  
Want me to push everyone away?

RAIN  
Maybe that would be better.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

HARRY  
 (coldly)  
 Everybody is responsible for their  
 own shit.

RAIN  
 They're not. They're also  
 responsible for other  
 people's...shit.

An uncomfortable silence. Shelley has her eyes on Harry.

HARRY  
 Anyway, nobody came close.

Rain watches Harry get back on his bike and drive away.

She turns around and meets Savarna's gaze. They stare at each other for a moment with mixed expressions.

The crowd gasps as Shelley jumps.

...she falls...

...and falls...

CUT TO:

A bird flies through the sky...

...and flies...

...and flies...

CUT TO:

INT. SUBURBAN STREET - DAY

An ambulance chases down the street.

INT. RAIN'S NEW ROOM - DAY

Rain lies on her bed sobbing. Holly strokes her head.

HOLLY  
 Well, at least you're crying.  
 That's good. Let it out.

RAIN  
 He said nobody came close.

HOLLY  
 Don't be stupid. That's bullshit.  
 You had, like, a proper  
 relationship.

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED:

Savarna opens the door and sticks her head into the room. She briefly exchanges a helpless glance with Holly, then closes the door again.

Rain takes a few deep breaths.

HOLLY (CONT'D)  
There, that's better.

Rain bursts out in tears again.

RAIN  
I can't stop!

LATER

Rain opens her eyes. Holly has left. With tear-swollen eyes and a tired expression she slouches out of the room.

INT. SAVARNA'S KITCHEN/INDIAN STREET SCENE - DAY

Rain stumbles into the kitchen and is startled to see Savarna against the new washing machine and Tony against the fridge, both with mugs of tea and concerned expressions.

TONY  
Hello, lovely.

SAVARNA  
Come, sit down.

Rain sits down with growing terror.

RAIN  
(whispers)  
Shelley...?

SAVARNA  
No, she's fine.

TONY  
She isn't.

SAVARNA  
(flippantly)  
She will be once she's out of her coma. No, actually, we were talking about you. About your plans. You know, about India.

Rain becomes all alert.

TONY  
Your mum--

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SAVARNA  
 (ignoring Tony)  
 I don't want to you to be unhappy  
 that you can't go.

Rain suddenly realises what this is all about.

RAIN  
 You mean you don't want me to throw  
 myself off a building.

SAVARNA  
 No, that's--

TONY  
 You're right.

Savarna throws him a critical look.

SAVARNA  
 Oh, darling, I think it's probably  
 better to let you go.

Rain's face lights up.

RAIN  
 To India?

SAVARNA  
 Yes, India.

Savarna is pleased with Rain's reaction.

SAVARNA (CONT'D)  
 It doesn't seem all that  
 unreasonable. You're not on your  
 own. You've got a whole family  
 looking after you.

Tony and Rain exchange meaningful glances. Rain smiles gratefully.

TONY  
 And she's sixteen.

SAVARNA  
 (melancholically)  
 My Rainikins is a big girl now.

Rain she throws her head back and stares joyously into the ceiling lamp, which turns into..

...the Indian sun and for a brief moment we are in India. We look at the colourful street scene bustling with a multitude of people, cows, dogs and rickshaws...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

SAVARNA (O.S.) (CONT'D)

But...

Rain awakens from her daydream and looks nervously back down at Savarna.

SAVARNA (CONT'D)

...you must promise me that when you come back we'll sit down and have a proper discussion about your career plan.

RAIN

(relieved)

I promise.

SAVARNA

Good.

RAIN

I think I might like to do medicine. Or law. I definitely don't want to be a banker.

Savarna smiles happily, but almost immediately grows all sad again.

SAVARNA

(softly)

Oh, dear.

RAIN

It'll be fine!

Rain gets up and gives Savarna a hug.

RAIN (CONT'D)

It'll be fine, mum.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Holly and Rain cautiously move into the neat and grey hospital room. Shelley is lying in bed, in a coma, with a multitude of tubes sticking out of her pale body. Rain is disappointed to see Harry at her beside.

HOLLY

(pleased)

Oh, hi, bro!

Harry turns to look at Holly and Rain, his expression a mixture of guilt and concern.

HOLLY (CONT'D)

How is she?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HARRY

The same.

HOLLY

Did you talk to her?

HARRY

There's no point.

HOLLY

Just because she's in a coma,  
doesn't mean--

HARRY

I know. But she never did. She  
never did understand me.

Rain feels out of place. She moves quietly to the door and  
closes it behind her.

INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR - DAY

Rain idly leans against the wall opposite Shelley's hospital  
room. Her eyes are on the door.

The door opens and Harry stands before her, slightly  
distracted.

HARRY

Hey.

RAIN

(purposefully)  
I'm going to India.

HARRY

(alarmed)  
Really? For good?

RAIN

(teasingly)  
Yes. No. Just for a holiday.

HARRY

I'm moving to London. The other  
band members are too. We're  
getting a flat together to, you  
know, pull us together more as a  
band.

Rain looks sad.

HARRY (CONT'D)

(cautiously)  
You could come as well, if you  
like.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RAIN  
(very surprised)  
What?

HARRY  
To London.

Rain needs a moment for the information to sink in.

RAIN  
Why?

HARRY  
(defensively)  
You said you wanted to.

Rain looks at Harry for a long moment, wondering whether to take him seriously.

HARRY (CONT'D)  
So?

Rain feels a wave of determination overcome her.

RAIN  
I know I wanted to...but that was a  
daft idea. I got to finish school.

Harry tries to play down his disappointment.

HARRY  
(faking indifference)  
I won't ask you again.

Rain watches Harry pace down the corridor, hands in pockets. Miss Evans appears at the other end. She slows down when she notices Harry, but he just briefly nods at her, keeping up his pace.

INT. RAIN'S NEW ROOM - DAY

Dressed in jeans, jeans jacket and trainers, Rain packs some plain T-shirts into her large rucksack.

She quickly scans her desk, shelving units and bedside table and is about to go when she notices Harry's velvet scarf on the floor. She picks it up and sits down on her bed, unable to decide whether she should take it.

SAVARNA (O.S.)  
Rain! Your dad's here!

Rain sadly puts the scarf in her pocket and hurries out of the room.

EXT. SAVARNA'S HOUSE - DAY

Savarna gives Rain one of her long, deeply felt hugs while Tony waits in the car.

RAIN

Bye mum.

Rain smiles sweetly as she climbs into Tony's car.

Savarna puts her head through Rain's window and kisses her on both cheeks. Then she looks at her daughter with a mixture of pride and concern. Tears well up in her eyes and she wipes them away.

TONY (O.S.)

Come on, we're late.

INT. TONY'S CAR - DAY

Rain looks melancholically through her window at the passing houses, while letting the velvet scarf run through her fingers.

RAIN

Does mum know that you told me about that marriage business?

TONY

(guiltily)

No.

Rain watches the passing landscape again.

RAIN

You know, I think it's good that you told me, cause I understand now about mum.

TONY

(doubtfully)

Mmm...

Tony points at a plastic bag near her feet.

TONY (CONT'D)

For you.

Rain looks inside the bag. It is full of bits of information, leaflets, booklets etc. There is also a wad of money.

Rain smiles at her dad. He smiles back.

RAIN

Thanks, dad! You're great!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TONY  
Not a loser then?

RAIN  
(laughing)  
No!

Rain takes a small book out entitled "Teach yourself Hindi".

TONY  
The guy at the book shop  
recommended that one. It's a  
concise guide to Hindi, and it's  
got this little glossary at the  
back.

Rain absentmindedly flicks open the glossary.

RAIN  
Dad, in India everybody speaks  
English.

Rain puts the book away.

Tony notices a motorcycle pulling up very close behind him.

TONY  
Bugger me.

The motorcycle indicates with his blinkers.

Rain looks at the motorbike in the rear-view mirror.

RAIN  
(surprised)  
Harry?

Tony steps on the accelerator.

RAIN (CONT'D)  
(laughing)  
No, stop the car, dad.

EXT. COUNTRY BUS STOP - DAY

Tony stops the car in the same bus stop where Rain and Harry first met.

Harry takes his helmet off but stays on his bike. Rain gets out of the car and shuts the door.

RAIN  
(nervously)  
We're really late.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HARRY  
 (sincerely)  
 I can't let you go to India, like  
 that, without you knowing...

Rain stares at him blankly. Harry looks away and fiddles with his controls.

HARRY (CONT'D)  
 ...you did come close.

Harry looks up and straight at Rain.

HARRY (CONT'D)  
 Very close.

RAIN  
 Why? What do you like about me?

HARRY  
 I don't know...no, that's wrong, I  
 do know...you're a strong person...  
 strong by yourself. I like that--  
 I love that about you.

Rain is so touched that tears well up in her eyes. She wipes them away.

RAIN  
 I'm not strong! I was...I was  
 jealous cause I thought you  
 fancied, you know...!

HARRY  
 (dryly)  
 Shelley? No. You're much better.

RAIN  
 (critically)  
 You mustn't say that.

Tony HOOTS. Harry looks alarmed but tries to act cool.

HARRY  
 Why don't you stay?

RAIN  
 (resolutely)  
 I have to go.

Harry looks down at his controls again.

HARRY  
 Will I see you when you get back?

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED: (2)

RAIN  
What about London?

HARRY  
London's not far.

RAIN  
I'll have to think about it.

HARRY  
(smiling hopefully)  
Okay.

Harry suddenly looks sad and emotional.

HARRY (CONT'D)  
I'll be around...you know, I'll be here.

Rain smiles as she opens Tony's car door. She still loves Harry, but she also feels totally free.

RAIN  
(smiling)  
Bye then.

Suddenly, Harry jumps off his bike, paces towards Rain and gives her a passionate hug. Then he slowly kisses her mouth. Rain responds but not as passionately as he expected her to. Reluctantly, he lets her go.

INT. TONY'S CAR - DAY

Driving away, Rain glances into the side mirror to see Harry still by the bus stop, staring after her, frozen and sad.

Despite her gentle and loving smile, Rain cannot hide a certain feeling of victory.

INT. HEATHROW AIRPORT GATE - DAY

Rain has her hand with the bird tattoo on the glass wall covering the plane.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)  
Passenger on the Air India Flight to New Delhi, we are pleased to announce that your flight is now ready for boarding. Please have your boarding cards ready for inspection...

Rain turns her attention to Rajid and his large FAMILY. They get up from their seats and sort out their various bits of hand luggage.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

A FEMALE ASIAN PILOT walks down the aisle. Rain gazes after her with longing and admiration.

EXT. SKY - DAY

The plane takes off into the brilliant white sky.

THE END