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***“Should I Surrender?”* Performing And Interrogating
Female Virginity In Hollywood Films 1957- 64**

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**A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Film Studies**

**University of Warwick,
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“Should I Surrender?” Performing And Interrogating Female Virginity In Hollywood Films 1957- 64

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Declaration

I declare that material contained in this thesis has not been used or published before. It represents my own work and has not been submitted for a degree at another university.

“Should I Surrender?” Performing And Interrogating Female Virginity In Hollywood Films, 1957-64

Abstract

The twin topics of interest to this thesis are the figure of the desirous virgin, as she appeared in Hollywood films around the cusp of the 1960s, and Doris Day, during the later evolution of her star persona around the time of *Pillow Talk* (Michael Gordon, 1959).

An introductory section looks at important works from star studies and film history. Several texts from stereotype studies are also examined, both sections working to build up a methodology for the explorations of the virgin and Day which follow.

Films which seem to constitute part of a distinct mini-cycle, the ‘virginity dilemma’ film, are then explored in detail, with their shared themes, narratives, characters, and, often, actors, examined. This cycle of films seems cross-generic, with both comic and melodramatic entries produced. Furthermore, a generically-inspired rubric, dictating the physical performance of the virgin, emerges from comparison of the films. Here the comic virgin displays a buoyant comic body, her unruly kinesis indicative of energies not yet directed into sex. By contrast, the melodramatic virgin is always marked by a stillness and composure which may wax and wane through the film but will reach both its apogée and rupture at the moment when she capitulates to consummation.

The final section looks at Doris Day’s star persona as it emerged after *Pillow Talk* attempted to redefine her as a maturely sexual star. Subsequent films pathologized the qualities of maturity and sexuality, resulting in the creation of a coy aged virgin persona. Although actually performed only once, in *Lover Come Back* (Delbert Mann, 1961), this persona subsumed previous incarnations of the star, eventually leading to the decline of her active career and calcifying to become the dominant lasting memory of Day even now.

“Should I Surrender?”: Performing And Interrogating Female Virginity In Hollywood Films 1957- 64

Introduction: Down With *Down With Love*

This thesis takes as its twin topics of interest the sometimes overlapping, sometimes separate figure of the desirous virgin, as she appeared in Hollywood films around the cusp of the sixties, and Doris Day, during the later evolution of her star persona around the time of *Pillow Talk* (Michael Gordon, 1959). This work will involve me looking in detail at about ten films from 1957-1964, featuring a new kind of narrative which privileges the temptation and occasional yielding of the virgin, and comparing tropes and themes from these films with those in several of the vehicles Day was making at the same time. My interest in the later sections is to ask why a mature, thrice-married mother should come to be so indelibly associated with the figure of the virgin that this persona not only dominated her later career, but still survives as her lasting meaning to the present time. I take my title, *Should I surrender?*, from a moment of self-interrogation made by Day's character in *Lover Come Back* (Delbert Mann, 1961) since it not only acts to confirm – uniquely, I will argue – her virginity in that film but also chimes with the manifold enquiries which, as will be seen, were being directed at the desirous woman by the contemporary popular media: does she or doesn't she, should she or shouldn't she, will she or won't she?

Before I begin to lay out the focus of my study, and introduce the critical theories that have been influential to my methodology, I want to start by briefly looking at a much more modern text, *Down With Love* (Peyton Reed, 2003).

This film, which was an overt attempt to recapture some of the glamour and magic of the early sixties Day-Hudson sex comedies examined later, was unanimously recognized by reviewers as being 'evocative' or 'in the spirit of Day's films, or more basically, as a modern remake (Haskell, 2003; Lovejoy, 2003; Lyman, 2003). *Down With Love* is interesting for this open re-creation of a particular type of film, and even more interesting for the assumptions it reveals about that type of film through its own themes and icons during this re-creation. An examination of *Down With Love*, then, begins this thesis, as it usefully exemplifies some of the ideas I want to be thinking about: ideas about female sexual agency, female virginity, and the public image of women proliferated across a range of media texts.

Unlike the recent slew of films which consciously locates their story in the fifties in order to comment on the parallels between then and now, and then-topical assumptions which can be found lingering today (such as, for example, *Pleasantville*, (Gary Ross, 1998) and *Far From Heaven* (Todd Haynes, 2003)), *Down With Love* is less interested in interrogating its period setting than in recreating its glossy surfaces. It acts as my starting point for this thesis because it so clearly reveals common assumptions about this particular moment in the American past, what might be called 'what everyone knows about the fifties'; and what everyone knows about the fifties seems to be that at that time women, and especially Doris Day, were all virgins.

Although it begins by announcing its own precise historical specificity, ("The place? New York City. The Time? Now: 1962"), *Down With Love* is actually much more nebulous about time and history, informed more by a vague nostalgic impulse perhaps to pay homage to, perhaps to leech off, audiences'

lingering fondness for, the 'Doris Day movies' of the *Pillow Talk* kind, than to consider its own interest in this specific period or the films that date from it. While thus overtly locating itself in the same year as Day's *That Touch Of Mink* (Delbert Mann, 1962) which co-starred Cary Grant, the plot of *Down With Love* reworks motifs from the earlier Day-Hudson vehicles, 1959's *Pillow Talk* and *Lover Come Back* from 1961. Furthermore, apart from the grandiose announcement at the film's start, there is nothing to link it precisely to the year it mentions: no world events occur which place the film precisely, and the costumes, sets, cars, accessories, the sheer *look* of things (over which the film lavishes much attention) are as much fifties as sixties. Vera Dika has noted (Dika, 2003, 62) a dominant trend in films which make the American past their location: they return endlessly to an assumed golden time of innocence which, when interrogated, proves to be any point after the inauguration and before the assassination of John F. Kennedy – what a *Vanity Fair* article on *Pillow Talk* referred to as the period in which the whole of America, encapsulated in the Day and Hudson pairing, seemed to be 'shucking the Eisenhower blahs' (Wolcott, 2000, 152).

Down With Love thus collapses an important and busy period of recent history into a single moment, a vanishing point purged of specificity or the weight of real events. Its intention seems to be to recover a lost era which it associates both with pre-feminism and with sexual innocence (and thus with Day), despite its own narrative about a female sex expert - borrowed, not from a Doris Day film, but from a Natalie Wood vehicle, the 1964 film version of *Sex And The Single Girl* (Richard Quine, 1964).

The film is thus not only vague about its own historicity, but about exactly what it is spoofing. It makes assumptions about what a 'Doris Day film' was like, assuming a homogeneity to such a product that examination does not bear out, as chapters in the final section of this work will illustrate. While it copies both visual elements (the use of split screens, the New York City pastimes montage) and plot points (the heroine's ostensible naivety versus the hero's cynical sophistication, his masquerade complete with phony Southern accent), the film most clearly shows in its characterisation of 'Barbara Novak', the equivalent of the Jan Morrow/Carole Templeton role that Doris Day played in the original films, that it does not understand the thing it is trying to pastiche: Barbara does not need to ask herself *Should I surrender?*

Unlike the Day heroines she is putatively meant to evoke, she is not prey to the sensual temptations besetting her, since *Down With Love* makes the assumption that the Doris Day heroine has an antipathy to sex. The film then presents itself as wittier than the originals it copies by at first appearing to subvert this antipathy, making Barbara a sex expert who has written the best-selling book, 'Down With Love', a guide which informs women how to end their addiction to romance and thus be able to have guilt-free sex without relationship hang-ups, "just like men". But Barbara significantly does not practice what she preaches: the film shows her interested in the attentions of 'Zip'/Catcher, but calculatedly holding back from the ultimate act. *Down With Love* thus presents a self-satisfied and essentially hostile view of the past, assuring its audience through its rehearsal of old forms that 'this is how people were then' but then showing by its contempt for these old forms, 'see how much cleverer we are now'. This sentiment is perhaps most precisely indicated by the sequence where it makes extended use of split screens, for would-be witty effect.

Whereas the split screens in *Pillow Talk* saucily juxtaposed Jan and Brad so that they seemed to be sharing an oversize bath or to be in bed together (Figure 1), *Down With Love*'s use of the same device ostensibly brings its couple even closer, using the line of the split screen, and the extension of the actors' bodies across this line into unseen space, to suggest their connection in a variety of sexual acts (Figure 2). However, while *Pillow Talk*'s split screen served to unite the future lovers across space, distance and the plot exigencies which made them enemies, assuring the audience of their rightness for each other and the bliss of their eventual union, *Down With Love* does not postpone the sex scene until after the film's end, but provides it now. While the original brings the couple closer, the remake emphasizes the importance of singleness, each performing and receiving a comparable act, but experiencing the assumed climax alone. Integrating this scene into a scenario which otherwise insists on Barbara's fake expert status as sex advisor confuses the film's message, and indicates that it is more intent to show off moments of cleverness than provide a coherent text.

Down With Love is happy to spend its time on such devices because it assumes audience members are familiar enough with the terrain (the fifties sex comedy) and what is being contested therein (the relinquishing of female virginity) to leave these elements unexplored. What is so annoying about the text is this assumption that it is tapping into what everyone knows about the period in question - especially since, as this thesis will hope to demonstrate, this 'what everyone knows' is mostly erroneous. Close examination of the Day films from which *Down With Love* quotes reveals that the virginity of the characters she

plays is not ingrained, not inevitable; and the actual young woman making her own choices about sex found in the contemporary films is never so sanguine about shrugging off temptation. While *Down With Love* gives us, in Barbara Novak, a heroine who, as a best-selling author, is subject to objectification and proliferation across a number of media texts, as evinced in the life-size cardboard cut-outs that are seen to decorate book store windows across the globe, much as the contemporary figure of the desirous virgin was multiplied in a variety of different media, her simple traditional approach to the relationship with Catcher Block (no sex before marriage, favours dangled tantalisingly in order to catch Catcher) simplistically reproduces an older assumption about the possibility of separating 'good' and 'bad girls' which is consistently and more complexly problematized in the films I examine in the second section of this thesis.

It has been traditional to look at the American fifties as a time of consensus and conformity (see for example, O'Neill, 1990; Nadel, 1995; Sterritt and Gore, 1998), the stereotype of the period being one of vapid stultification before the excitement and upheavals of the Sixties. A contrary strand of social and film history, however, has suggested instead that the decade's appearance of contented uniformity was both a contemporary fantasy and a post-hoc projection (French, 1978; Douglas, 1994; Foreman, 1997; Koontz, 2000; Breines, 2001). The contemporary scene was never so monolithic as now assumed, as examination of topical artefacts, including films, reveals: then the seeming certainties dissipate, exposing a society awash with doubts and anxieties. Examination of the popular media of this time indicates that many of these tensions were prompted by the figure of the woman, especially after the

publication, in 1953, of Alfred Kinsey's *Sexual Behaviour In The Human Female*. Kinsey's main revelation had been that half of his sample of unmarried thirty-year-old women were not virgins. Therefore, if his sample were in anyway representative, half the similarly-aged single women in America might similarly be expected to be 'experienced'. This was in defiance of prevailing sexual mores which assumed that women would be virgins on their wedding nights, with the expectation for men being the opposite. This presumption of pre-marital chastity in women and sexual experience in their men was the contemporary 'double standard' in sexual behaviour: and what Kinsey's Report was suggesting was that it was being ignored by many more women than had previously been assumed.

The mid-century popular media became fixated with this new persona, the single woman who was not willing to postpone her sexual feelings, but was tempted and might fall; devoting popular attention to this figure, however, did little to assuage the many anxieties she set circulating across a variety of media, provoking both fear and prurient excitement with her unlicensed but potentially active sexuality. She is the topic of the research in the second section of this thesis; in order to investigate her, and the star persona of Doris Day as it was constructed during the same period, my work first examines critical texts from various areas of study which have proved useful in forming my methods of approach.

From star studies and historical contextualizations by authors such as Dyer and Hansen I take both the possibility and the necessity of producing non-homogenized readings of a star persona or character, intending to capture as

much as possible a range of contemporary discourses both about Day and about the desirous virgin, to set up against the sense of the period being an undifferentiated slab of history, and the assumption that ideas about sexuality were monolithic, as evinced in *Down With Love*.

In keeping with Dyer and Hansen, I will be attempting to read the complex figures of the virgin and of Day against the similarly complex backgrounds of other texts, and to return these figures as much as possible to their immediate historical contexts in order to counter the assignment of characteristics to these figures based on vague and unsubstantiable assumptions about the past.

Thus reading both films and other media texts through close analysis, I hope to recover some of what Hansen calls the 'horizon of reception' (Hansen, 1991, 253) for the twin foci of my work, Day and the virgin. Critical pieces which privilege stars in their historical contexts, and others which ignore specifics of both actor and period, have both informed my researches into Day, and are explored in the first half of the opening section of my work. In the second half I examine ideas gleaned from stereotype studies in order to arrive at a working methodology for looking at the more abstract figure of the virgin.

Having set out the influences on my approaches, I then begin to contextualize the figure of the desirous virgin in the second major section of this work, taking Kinsey's *Sexual Behaviour In The Human Female* as my starting point and tracing his findings, and their impact on the popular media of the day, for about a decade. The new desirous virgin, as constituted through a wide variety of media texts during this period, was, as mentioned above, a figure which prompted both excitement and anxiety with her overt sexuality. Hollywood films

of the period were quick to make use of this topical figure, in order to tap into the frisson she exerted, but the virgin on screen caused as much new anxiety as she was perhaps intended to assuage because of the very medium in which she was being depicted: film, as a visual medium, needed to show something, and virginity as an internal, invisible quality was not easily depicted.

Because outward signs of her inward status needed to be invented and were not thus essential, these signs relied for their recognition on consensus, but could both be ignored by the genuine possessor of the quality and faked by those who no longer had it. External signs of virginity were thus, though necessary, fraught with difficulty for the contemporary film. As indicated by my research in the second section of this work into the short-lived cycle of films which puts the virgin and her self-interrogation, *should I surrender?* centre-stage, a performance dichotomy was encouraged which could help render virginity externally. This insistence on polarization links to the topical urge for a clear split between bad and good girl and the simultaneous awareness that such antitheses were rarely so starkly observed. The desirous virgin, in fact, problematizes this contemporary desire for a clear oppositional binary by positing that good girls *want* to be bad. The figure of the sexually tempted maiden thus assumed great topical significance at this time, both because of her sheer multiplication across texts, and because this proliferation allowed consumers to pick and choose their virgin, willing or unwilling, yielding or resistant.

I will be calling these texts from the cycle looking directly at the problem presented by and for the virgin female, the 'virginity dilemma' films; they oppose

the contemporary view of the 'technical virgin', (a scheming manipulator who can, like Barbara Novak, control her own desires, paying out the line of attractions and minor yieldings until her catch is hooked), with the new desirous virgin who does experience urgent sensual longing and desires full consummation. Besides thus offering a shared, more spontaneous view of the desirous female, these 'virginity dilemma' films also tend to include three key scenes or moments which continue to underline the young woman's temptation, while also rehearsing societal dictates against her submitting to these. These shared tropes found across the dilemma movies are the 'why maintain your virginity?' conversation, the crisis of virginity moment, when the girl is put to the utmost test and may succumb, and the scene which details the physical effect the man has on the woman, dwelling on her arousal and, frequently and surprisingly, on the detumescent effect her willingness then has on him.

This last theme introduces a new important point of my research, the notion that the willing and experienced woman is ultimately a threat to the status quo because she challenges the man to be good at sex; as Helen Gurley Brown points out, when advising young women not to feign virginity if they no longer possess it:

The only man who might 'suffer' from your experiences is the man who is no great shakes in bed himself. If you have no one to compare him with, he might get an A! (Gurley Brown, 1962, 213)

This figure of the desirous woman is tamed when her experiences are denied, removed, and she is returned to a state of uninitiation. This seems to have been the fate of Doris Day, who despite having her star persona consciously revamped in 1959 with *Pillow Talk*, in order to make her a *sexually mature* figure, has subsequently been taken to be paradoxically *maturely pre-sexual*.

This assumption was at first to her box office success but lead gradually to the decline of her career and the detriment of her lasting status. In the final section of this thesis I am interested in looking at both when and why this mature virgin label became affixed to the star. I find that although inaugurated, ironically, by *Pillow Talk's* repackaging, it was reaffirmed in different and interesting ways by two subsequent films, *Midnight Lace* (David Miller, 1960) and *Lover Come Back* (1961). This latter openly – and, despite what Day's detractors say about her 'always playing a virgin', uniquely – posits the Day figure as both maturely and risibly maidenly. In effect, the final section of the thesis, and indeed the preceding two by providing a context for it, is intended if not to rescue Day from the unjust slur that she is always busy 'defending her maidenhood into a ripe old age' (Haskell, 1974, 265), at least to save her from the slight done her memory by works like *Down With Love* which mock, without understanding, the texts they pretend to love.

Section 1:

Theories in use: methodologies and inquiries from star studies, film history and stereotype theory

The twin topics of my interest in this thesis are both the idea of the virgin in Hollywood films around the cusp of the sixties, and the star persona of Doris Day. This work investigates how these two discrete concepts overlap at certain times and in certain ways, and at others diverge, in the period under study; such an investigation therefore draws on methodologies and lines of inquiry from very different theoretical positions. Influences on my thinking and research methods for this work have been diverse, as befits a thesis which attempts to join

separate fields of investigation: foremost amongst these have been critical texts drawn from the areas of star, and from stereotype, studies. The following two sections thus deal with ideas gleaned from these two areas which have informed my studies. Throughout the sections below, in examining authors and texts, I attempt to relate the points being extracted forward to their usage in the middle and end sections of this thesis, those dealing with the virgin figure and with the star persona of Day.

Approaches from star studies and film history

It is not my intention in this section to attempt an historical charting of developments in the field of star studies since Richard Dyer's book *Stars* (1979) laid the groundwork for serious study; not only has this already been ably done, (McDonald, 1998, 2000) but also the impetus behind this thesis is to situate my own researches, with their twin, at-times overlapping, foci of the late fifties virgin and Doris Day, in relation to historicized readings of films, stars and stereotypes. This thesis does not, then, attempt a star study *per se*, a straightforward account of Day's star image or iconicity, but works to examine connections and contrasts between her star persona as it gradually evolved and then froze around 1960, and the contemporaneously-evolving figure of the desirous virgin.

In the next part of the section I will be examining those ideas from stereotype theory which have helped to inform my investigations into post-Kinsey representations of the virgin; the task of this portion, however, is to revisit key theories from star studies which have provided the foundations of my examination of Day's star persona. Since my intent is to interrogate the

identification and reiteration of Day as the mature virgin, as it began in the mass media in the early sixties in America, rather than only looking at the star herself, my examination of the field for useful theories and methodologies to borrow and adapt has been conducted both amongst works which privilege stars and those which do not. Linking those pieces which have stimulated approaches to my own research is the endeavour to situate their subjects, as far as possible, within their specific historical period, thus relating roles and films outwards to their cultural moment, to connect with the extra-filmic desires and anxieties which appear to be circulating in the contemporary media. I examine these pieces in detail below; I also include within this section two studies of enormous influence which both lack an historicizing impulse: the work of Molly Haskell and Laura Mulvey looking at female stars has been important to me both for their political motivations and for the subsequent revision which both sets of writings have undergone.

Another main theorist to whom my methods of proceeding is indebted is Miriam Hansen; her work has prompted me to ask further questions about historical embedding, and the importance of context to the studied film. An individual article by Maureen Turim also lent my research a specific tool; as discussed below, whilst Turim touches on areas of relevance to my studies (including stardom, costume and performance) she also acknowledges the importance of embedding these various topics within their social, historical and industrial contexts. Both authors prompted interesting ways to frame questions or attempt answers in relation to the twin topics of this thesis.

I must however begin this section by confessing a debt to the works of Richard Dyer, since in approaching what is partially an in-depth star study I am of course reliant upon Dyer's works on stars and the phenomenon of stardom. *Stars* (1979), which first formalized what it is to study stars critically at all, provides an account of stardom emerging from the detachment of sociology rather than the absorption of fandom, thus inaugurating the legitimization of this area of film studies. Stressing the constructed nature of the star image, and recognising that this construction was carried out across many media, not just through films, it thus allowed that extra-filmic texts, such as publicity material, also made up part of the star persona. Through in-depth analysis of the construction and multiple significances of the star, both within films and society as a whole, *Stars* consistently stressed the wider importance of the star persona to the societal context.

However, while inevitably taking *Stars* as inspiration, in setting both Day and the fifties American virgin against their contemporary backgrounds I am more specifically indebted to the work accomplished in *Heavenly Bodies*, which applied the methodologies for star study laid down in the earlier book, but, crucially, embedded the stars used as case studies not just within a societal but also a specific *historical* milieu. Through indicating that the particular temporal context of a star image was a significant part of its meaning, and that these meanings evolved and changed across time, *Heavenly Bodies* added 'when' stars signify to the 'how, what and why' investigated by *Stars*.

Heavenly Bodies attempts readings of the various, varying, contemporized meanings of the star personae of Marilyn Monroe, Paul Robeson and Judy

Garland; all three case studies provide points of interest for my researches but the study of Monroe's image, which Dyer reads as having been constructed within the various media of the fifties to equal 'sex', has the most obvious and direct relevance for my investigation of the coterminous star persona of Day. In order to work to the blueprints laid down by *Heavenly Bodies* in my later chapter on Day's star image, this next portion of the work briefly outlines the points I find the most suggestive in the Monroe chapter, before drawing comparisons with ideas from other writers that spin off from my readings of Dyer.

Heavenly Bodies

What I take from *Heavenly Bodies* for my own study are two principle concepts, one an over-arching mode of thinking about the films in their contexts, and one a specific area to look at *within* the films I am researching. These concepts are about the importance of history, of reading a star within her/his specific period through a range of different contemporary media which make up 'discourse'; and star performances as potentially *contestatory* of this discourse. *Heavenly Bodies* thus provides the researcher not only with three exemplar stars contextualized within their cultural milieux, but, more fundamentally, with a methodology for reading stars in this way: historically, through a variety of the various circulating media texts of the time.

History

Following the ideas laid down in *Stars* that what is to be studied, when looking at a star, is not a 'real person' but a text, the Monroe chapter acknowledges the

complexity of this: 'Star images are always extensive, multimedia, intertextual' (ix). Not only are the arenas in which the star's image circulates proliferated; the potential readings of the image are too. Dyer asserts the importance of trying to establish the parameters of the possible 'range of readings' (ix) available at the time for these stars, indicating that contemporary audience views on a star such as Monroe or Garland would never be homogenous. The impulse to provide a similar range of contemporary feelings has formed an important part of my researches into the fifties virgin, about whom, as will be discussed later, the publicly-circulating views at the time were never as uniform and monolithic as they have subsequently been taken to be.

Dyer elaborates the point about the potential for a range of different possible readings to be held by different audience members:

Audiences cannot make media images mean anything they want to, but they can select from the complexity of the image, the meanings and feelings, the variations, inflections and contradictions, that work for them. (Dyer, 1986: 5)

In my project I want to recover some of the 'meanings and feelings, the variations, inflections and contradictions' that swirled around the figure of the 1950s virgin; in order to build up a kind of panorama of the available positions towards female virginity and sexual agency I need, following Dyer's lead in *Heavenly Bodies*, to appreciate other media amidst which they circulated: the rich field of popular artefacts - novels, jokes, gossip, newspapers, popular songs, advertising slogans, lifestyle magazines - with which the films had a symbiotic relationship. Dyer provides a very good definition of what he terms 'discourse' and which I perceive as the impulses inhabiting this type of cultural *smorgasbord*:

...not...philosophically coherent thought systems but rather...clusters of ideas, notions, feelings, images, attitudes and assumptions that, taken together, make up distinctive ways of thinking and feeling about things, of making a particular sense of the world. (Dyer, 1986: 19)

Having examined the prevailing fifties discourse, Dyer finds that the overwhelming meaning of Marilyn Monroe emerges in terms of sex. The 'clusters of ideas, notions, feelings' which were circulating at that time worked to indicate that sex was something very important, and Dyer feels that Monroe's star image managed to tap into this, thus securing her own (albeit rigid and perhaps ultimately unsatisfactory) position within the discourse:

Monroe is charismatic because she embodies what the discourses designate as the important-at-the-time central features of human existence. (Dyer, 1986: 20)

Continuing the idea of the plurality of 'attitudes and assumptions', it might be possible to consider that Monroe was only a partial embodiment of these features, and that the 'good girl' stereotype was a contemporaneous fulfilment of other portions of them: examination of how the popular media attempted both to enforce the split between these two stereotypes and also, contemporaneously, allowed clear overlap between them will be examined in the chapters on the new virgin of the late fifties onwards.

Star Performance

Interestingly, Dyer anticipates several revisionist reworkings (LaPlace, 1987; White, 1998; and Lemire, 2000) of Laura Mulvey's precepts about the objectification of women within Classic Hollywood Cinema when he shows in *Heavenly Bodies* how the star can go some way to work against the institutionalized restrictions of framing and placing of the female body Mulvey posits existing within narrative film. Thus, while 'the woman' may always

notionally be objectified or punished by the camera and the narrative it records, the woman *star* may contest these negative connotations by virtue of her 'iconicity', that is, her recognizability as a star of various other films and wider media. To this Dyer adds the notion of the *performance* of the female star further complicating matters.

Dyer firstly cites a gag Monroe told troops in Korea and finds its self-referentiality indicative of a cheerful awareness of her own sexual allure:

I don't know why you boys are always getting excited about sweater girls. Take away their sweaters and what have they got? (Dyer, 1986: 36)

Dyer acknowledges that the gag may tread an uneasy border between being a 'dumb blonde' joke and an instance of self-referential celebration, and indeed as written on the page it may seem both. However, what needs to be returned to the gag is the scene of its delivery: as breathily spoken by Monroe, presumably provocatively dressed and with perhaps one hand pressed in coyness or bewilderment to her breast, the line seems more like self-deprecation. While Dyer perhaps downplays the importance of performance here, he returns to it in discussing *Bus Stop* (Joshua Logan, 1956), where he finds Monroe's performance as Cheri serving to complicate the part, even as the film's visual structures attempt to render it and her within familiar objectified terms. Within the film, Monroe is seen to be commenting on the artifice of performance when, as Dyer discusses, she performs 'That Old Black Magic' whilst kicking switches to alter her own stage lighting or acting out obvious gestures to illustrate the song's lyrics. These self-aware moments confront others in the film that try to position Monroe as an object, and one of ridicule, as in the three sight gags that work to undercut her by guying her physicality, dwelling on her bottom. In his

nuanced reading of the film, Dyer does not privilege one of these strands of meaning over the other, celebrating the more self-referential elements and ignoring the more traditional reifying ones, but accepts them both as indicative of the confusion and anxiety circulating in the wider discourse about woman's agency, her right to self-definition.

In my later examination of the female actors who played the desirous virgins, and especially in the extended case study of Day, I will be very interested to see whether the star's performance can complicate or exceed the narratives that strive to contain her. I am looking at the traditional media association of Day with the figure of the mature virgin, which I do not believe to be frequently found in her film performances; thus, I will be searching to see if there are performance signs which may account for viewers and critics ignoring the habitual characteristics of independence and mature sexuality granted Day in *Pillow Talk*, going to produce instead the concept of Day as virgin *grande dame*.

The central notion I take from *Heavenly Bodies* is this: that what is visible in the film is important for study, but is inevitably influenced by what is off-screen, the discourses circulating in the wider culture. However, two key texts by writers who seemed to ignore this contextualizing notion have also informed my work: Molly Haskell's book-length examination of the presentation of women in Hollywood cinema, *From Reverence to Rape: The Treatment Of Women In The Movies* (1974) and Laura Mulvey's influential article, 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema' (1975). Both were written from a polemical standpoint with a sense of urgency that did not incline either author to contextual framing. Each woman believed herself to be writing a feminist manifesto for film; they

ultimately endorse opposing views of mainstream cinema, but, despite this, because their shared topic is what the filmic representation of women means to the society that produces those representations, they do have an historical application, and it is this, and the intensity of their focus on women, that has affected my work.

Haskell and Mulvey

In the mid-1970s, the emerging awareness of feminism inspired writers to analyse the images of women on the screen. Two female writers in particular achieved important if opposing results: Molly Haskell attempted to demonstrate that positive images of women had once existed in film, during the 30s and 40s, while Laura Mulvey, in contradistinction, argued that positive images were impossible given the narrative and visual mechanics of classical films. Though both pieces are avowedly spurred on by a feminist agenda, they end by advocating very different approaches to cinema: Mulvey desires politically to destroy the pleasure of classic narrative cinema (16) since she sees it as inevitably predicated on women's oppression; while Haskell ends her book with a longing for changed circumstances in which women may make films showing their own reality, until that moment comes she can only advocate, for pleasurable viewing, a return to the old films.

Yet her book-length examination of the changing roles of women in film, *From Reverence to Rape*, begins with a condemnation of just such an attitude, suggesting that wallowing in the individual delights occasioned by the women's

film and other female-associated genres, may be to blame for the slow adoption of feminism:

If it weren't for selective memory, the consolation of the loser, our consciousness might have risen a long time ago. Like reflections of old love affairs, the images of stars that stay with us are the triumphs rather than the disappointments. We remember them not for the humiliations and compromises they endured in conforming to stereotypes, but for the incandescent moments in which their uniqueness made mockery of the stereotypes. And it was through these moments, glimpses and intuitions that were different for each of us and that we may blush to remember today, that we transcended our own sexual limitations. (Haskell, 1974, vii)

One notes here the accent on personal politics, rather than those of class or society: Haskell stresses (and here seems to lament) that individual film icons are adopted as role models by individual women. Haskell regrets that selective memory can operate to wrench positive images from classic Hollywood films, implying that, by providing some comforts to women audience members, such films and such treatment of women in films have been allowed to continue unchecked. Her argument seems to be that the energy which female viewers need to exert in order to find some pleasures from mainstream films which punish women would be more profitably directed to demanding better films for women. Yet for the rest of her study, however, Haskell herself asserts the power of the individual female star against the male film-makers and devotes her own energies to indicating moments which might be treasured rather than providing a manifesto for a feminist cinema.

Lamenting the portrayals of women in films contemporary with her time of writing, such as *Diary Of A Mad Housewife* (Frank Perry, 1970), *Klute* (Alan J. Pakula, 1971), *Play It As It Lays* (Frank Perry, 1972), and others of the early 70s, Haskell finds that such films, whilst ostensibly taking account of the

Women's Movement and feminism's critiques of the traditional emphasis on the importance of love and marriage for women, actually reinforce these emphases; in the 'vacant, freeze-frame faces of the heroines' (370) of *Diary* and *Play It As It Lays* Haskell finds not a raised-conscious feminism but a 'death' (370) of the concerns of the traditional Woman's Film, which she feels represented women's actual anxieties, problems and desires more accurately. In thus returning to performances and roles from films of the 30s and 40s, finding their heroines possessed of an energy and verve lacking in the pallid renditions of 70s cinematic females, Haskell is led to support the point that her book began by striving to condemn: by the close she is recommending an active reading strategy for the female viewer in which the screen heroines' *moments* of triumph are treasured, rather than the half-hours of climb-down and capitulation. Furthermore, her advocacy of finding personal consolation in strong female stars frustrates rather than furthering the aim of creating a mass movement of opposition.

Besides returning to the individual viewer as the source of filmic pleasure, negating the political potential of her account, Haskell's analysis has been further criticized for assumptions about that viewer, situating her unthinkingly in a white and heterosexual subject position (White, 1998, 118), Haskell's study has also been condemned for its 'reflectionist' attitude, making simplistic parallels between the female characters in films and the lives of real women, reading off oppressions or freedoms in such films as *His Girl Friday* (Howard Hawks, 1940) and *Pat and Mike* (George Cukor, 1952) as indicators of contemporary societal norms. While Haskell acknowledges that, rather than just mirroring contemporary reality, films help to produce it, acting as tools

which the dominant ideology can use to normalize the lower status of women, she seems ultimately to defend their provision of fantasy equalities which have been diminished to the level of the individual and romantic:

...in the distinguished women's films, the combination of director and star serve the same function as the complex perspective of the novelist: They take the woman out of the plural into the singular, out of defeat and passivity and collective identity into the radical adventure of the solitary soul, out of the contrivances of puritanical thinking into enlightened self-interest. (Haskell, 1974, 162)

It was this depoliticizing aspect of classic Hollywood cinema that Laura Mulvey attacked in her famous 1975 piece, 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema'. Employing psychoanalytic theory, Mulvey posited that the regime of looking within the film was subject to a binary structure which positioned the male as active and the female as passive: 'woman as image, man as bearer of the look' (19); this was echoed by the agency of characters within the narrative, with only the male active, investigating, 'a figure in a landscape' (20) while the female existed more as an icon, a flat image for contemplation. The female characters were thus reduced to passivity or punished for attempts at agency; their only power lay in the ability of their image to cause the film to forget its narrative thrust - 'to freeze the flow of action in moments of erotic contemplation' (19), yet this in turn was due to their being positioned as fetishes for male viewers, their significance being what they meant to the male viewer and his proxy, the male character within the diegesis.

Subsequent feminist critics have felt the confinement that Mulvey's argument presents for the woman in the audience and *her* proxy in the film: either to go along with the punishment of the transgressive female or to be emptied of meaning as an iconic figure. Some of the writers who attempted to modulate

Mulvey's arguments tried to find their way out of this impasse for the female spectator by elevating the importance of the female star who played the woman thus objectified and rendered passive. For my own work, it is important to note that while those films I am describing as belonging to the 'virginity dilemma' cycle are completely mainstream, Hollywood products, which should (and often do) reproduce the camera and narrative effects Mulvey describes, they yet also diverge from her thesis in important ways because of their central focus on an inherently transgressive central character. This is typically a young woman who usurps the position of the heroes in Mulvey's exemplar text; as 'figures in a landscape', they are characters on the move through cityscapes rather than passive icons who exist only in domestic settings for private contemplation by the hero. Part of their transgressive appeal to female audiences, and a source of mixed prurience and anxiety for the males in the diegesis, is their ability to move through and command control of, public spaces: offices, restaurants, shops, train stations.

A further point of Mulvey's argument which these desirous virgins help contest is the notion that only the woman on screen can be the object of erotic contemplation for the characters (and hence, she assumes, the audience), since 'the male figure cannot bear the burden of sexual objectification. Man is reluctant to gaze at his exhibitionist like' (20). Perhaps because of the filmmakers' assumption that these 'virginity dilemma' films would command largely female audiences, films from the cycle, such as *Ask Any Girl* (Charles Walters, 1959) and *The Best Of Everything* (Jean Negulesco, 1959) are intent to showcase the erotic allure of their handsome male characters; because the narratives demand that the audience credits the men with the power to tempt

the young women sexually, the physical charms of these men need to be on display. Furthermore, it is not merely his desire which is shown, but, as shall be examined in more detail in the following section, her arousal, the intensely physical reaction which the man evokes in the 'girl', is dwelt upon in full close-up.

Mulvey's point that the threat embodied by the female character can be disavowed through sadism, through investigation and punishment in the narrative, is also ameliorated by these 'virginity dilemma' films, the narratives of which, as will be discussed later, are openly predicated on examining the punishments meted out to women who flout the prevailing double standard; through emphasizing society's punishment of the female the films draw attention to both societal inequalities and traditional mainstream narrative treatment of the woman, allowing both to be criticized.

The alternative possibility for coping with the figure of the woman which 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema' posits as obtaining in classic Hollywood cinema is fetishism: the halting and freezing of the narrative in erotic contemplation of the female star. Again, by permitting this figure to direct her gaze outwards, both at the world in general and the desired male in particular, the 'virginity dilemma' films provide a partial way out of Mulvey's bind. The flow of narrative may halt while the camera objectifies and glorifies Jane Fonda, Shirley MacLaine or Natalie Wood; but if at the time she is shown to be looking at the charms of Rod Taylor, David Niven, or Tony Curtis, the narrative is then led to contemplate their erotic potential also, offering a more equitable fetishization of the attractiveness of both sexes, which accords with the machinery of extra-

filmic promotion and publicity, determined to valorize and eroticize both female and male stars.

Significantly, because of her avowed feminist intent in this piece to expose the machinery which makes the passive female image the centre of the narrative, Mulvey does not concentrate on the female stars *qua* stars; her examples include Marlene Dietrich, Tippi Hedren and Grace Kelly, but she treats them all as the objectified and fetishized female form: there is no differentiation between them other than the different uses to which their male directors put them. Mulvey's intent is to show the homogenizing tendency of classic cinema to reduce all female characters to the status of objects. Despite the divergence of their views and the ultimate solutions they advocate for dealing with the negative portrayal of women in classical cinema, the key writings of Mulvey and Haskell can nevertheless be seen to intersect in interesting ways, and not just because of the contemporaneity of their writings. While Mulvey's hard-line activist feminism posited that any woman on the screen was reduced to a state of passivity, subject to the controlling gaze of the male protagonist and through him the viewer, it is in Haskell, who ostensibly represents a softer, less politically-charged feminism, that a possible, partial solution to this passivity, as recognized by later critics of Mulvey, is first found.

Just as Haskell's study has been criticized by subsequent feminist researchers for its heteronormativity and accent on personal, rather than mass movement, politics, later theorists have worked hard to use Mulvey's theory of the gaze and yet find some redeeming mechanism at work within classic narrative cinema which prevents the inevitable reduction of the woman on the screen to mere

passive and punished icon. The idea has been advanced that female stars could contest domination by the narrative through their own star power. That a star might have contestatory potential was first suggested by Molly Haskell; stars such as Rosalind Russell, Joan Crawford, Bette Davis and Katharine Hepburn are claimed again and again throughout Haskell's book to exert such charisma that they transcend the narratives which try to constrict them:

We see the June Bride played by Bette Davis surrender her independence at the altar....yet we remember her not as the blushing bride but as the aggressive reporter and sometime-bitch... (Haskell, 1974, 3).

And again:

Whatever the endings that were forced on Bette Davis, Joan Crawford, Carole Lombard, Katharine Hepburn, Margaret Sullavan or Rosalind Russell, the images we retain of them are not those of subjugation or humiliation; rather, we remember their intermediate victories, we retain images of intelligence and personal style and forcefulness. (Haskell, 1974, 31)

Here Haskell can be seen to provide the springboard for the idea, explored by other important authors such as Dyer and Hansen, that the charismatic female star can command such attention in the course of the film that her punishment by the narrative at the close is overshadowed by her dominance in the rest of the film. Haskell's account is happy to plunder the previous fifty years of Hollywood cinema for moments which isolate strong women characters, regardless of their context; this ahistorical dealing with stars is similar, though put to different uses, to Mulvey's own positing of the female star as victim. By privileging the frozen iconicity of the female figure, ignoring the specific context of their star examples, both overlook the possibility of the audiences' reading of the isolated moment within the film and wider career history of the stars.

Another writer whose work has encouraged me to attempt to return the films I am studying to their cultural, societal and production milieu is Miriam Hansen, whose *Babel and Babylon* (1991) examines the regimes of looking within early American silent cinema: regimes both diegetic, with the looks of characters on film, and extra-diegetic, with the look of the audience at the screen. Unlike the Haskell and Mulvey pieces, Hansen prioritizes and foregrounds the necessity of historical context, stressing the imperative to return female figures to their contemporary environment, in order to see whether the topicality of their presence could affect the habitual denigration of women in mainstream film. Like Dyer, and as shall be seen, like Turim, Hansen is convinced of the necessity of reading a narrative and its populating stars against as detailed as possible an historical background.

Hansen

Hansen's book deals with spectatorship in early American cinema, and it is within this specific historical context that she sees the Mulveyite model of mainstream film both emerging and being contested. Hansen devotes much space to setting out the societal and contextual changes of the period she is investigating (roughly 1907-1917), showing that this historical moment marked a vast influx of women into both job markets and public entertainment arenas as consumers. She endorses Mulvey's idea of the gendered active/passive split fostered by the cinematic apparatus, seeing it as first emerging at this time in direct response to the new female visibility; however, she finds that the same

conditions that permitted its rise also left space for alternative spectator positions which challenge the passive positions allotted to the female spectator and character. It is the woman playing this central female character, the star, that Hansen feels embodies the possibility of more active looking; like Dyer, whose *Heavenly Bodies* posits that the intertextuality of the female star affords her some protection against the confinement of dominant narratives, Hansen feels that the star who eludes or transcends the norms of binary gender expectations can contest the structures of looking and being that Mulvey sees as ineluctable.

Hansen's work is therefore linked not only to Mulvey's, which she takes and complicates, but also to Dyer's, in its emphasis on the star's contestatory potential; however, Hansen also evokes in her work Molly Haskell's point about the contestatory female star, which further serves to illustrate her own positioning within a feminist tradition of film criticism which began in the mid 1970s.

Hansen introduces the idea that both star *and viewer* have the potential to contest the passivity which the Mulveyite model would assign them; returning the film or star text to its immediate historical background then becomes an important project, since it is by historicizing that the multiple extra-filmic resonances of the star become clearer. While admitting current research cannot now easily or definitively recover any oppositional reading of stars from earlier times, Hansen asserts it can attempt to reconstruct 'the conditions of its possibility', (Hansen, 1991, 125).

While Hansen's examination of stardom at this time leads her eventually to look at Valentino and the particular impact the star's gender can potentially have on the audience, as will be discussed below, her preliminary thoughts are about the role of stardom per se, without any complications of gender. Hansen asserts that the diegetic and extra-filmic manifestations of a star work together to reinforce the star persona, invoking Dyer (as she acknowledges in her notes):

The casting of a star binds the viewer all the more firmly into the fictional world of the film by drawing on more sustained structures of identification, mobilizing long-term psychic investments...At the same time the reincarnation of the star with each new film reconfirms, inflects and keeps alive his or her publicity existence. (Hansen, 1991, 246).

However, Hansen goes on to contend that the star's continued existence outside the diegesis cannot be forgotten and s/he thus unsettles the filmic/extrafilmic balance, always serving to remind the viewer of a 'real world' outside the film, rather than permitting that total suture which stitches the audience members into the narrative action as though it were unfolding before their eyes, for them, in real time.

By lending a focus to the film's narrative and scopic regime, the presence of a star actually undercuts that regime's apparent primacy, unity and closure. By activating a discourse external to the diegesis, the star's presence enhances a centrifugal tendency in the viewer's relation to the filmic text and thus runs counter to the general objective of concentrating meaning in the film as product and commodity. The star performance weakens the diegetic spell in favor of a string of spectacular moments that display the 'essence' of the star (and which are often circulated separately in the form of publicity stills and trailers). (Hansen, 1991, 246-7).

It is possible to compare this idea of Hansen's, the breakdown of the 'diegetic spell', to Mulvey's fetishized moments when the narrative becomes frozen as the camera is lost in contemplation of the female star. Unlike Mulvey, however, Hansen directly relates such moments to the extra-diegetic world of publicity and promotion, again stressing her commitment to putting each text into its

wider historical context, and remaining aware that films are products which need advertising to sell them to consumers. Moments which display the 'essence' of the star are reproduced on posters and in magazines as promotional material, demonstrating the star doing what the audience (assumedly) loves seeing her do; in this way, the narrative is altered, no longer transcribing a single coherent narrative trajectory, seeming instead a more random collection of set pieces in which the star goes through her familiar routine; with Day this might mean singing, dancing or even performing those smaller gestures that frequently recur in her films, such as the stamping of the foot with a furious 'Ooh!' to indicate annoyance.

Hansen is thus in accord with Dyer's views about the potential the female star has to contest her containment by the text through the maintenance of a persona which has coherence outside and sometimes despite the narrative in which she finds herself. Adding to this persona - which could be considered as being comparable to a well-defined product or brand, through its constitution through consumables such as fan magazines, photographs, endorsed merchandise - the performance within the narrative by the female star, as Dyer posits, may also be able to counter narratives trying to contain the character she is personifying. Hansen's exploration of the star persona of Valentino advances the notion that female fans were able to resist the passivity generally assigned the audience through his stardom, which was marked both on and off-screen by the reversal of traditional gendered relations, associating masculinity with power and agency and femininity with the lack of both. For my studies, it is not easy to see Doris Day providing as transgressive and unsettling a figure to assumptions about gender norms as Valentino; nevertheless, in the section

where I discuss her changing star persona, I do consider the way in which the revamped Day seems, by performing a maturely sexual woman, to have unsettled comfortable assumptions about her own stardom.

Hansen directly confronts Mulvey's psychoanalytically-informed model of the cinematic apparatus, and explains why she finds it lacking, in her introduction to the chapter on Valentino. Here Hansen discusses what she feels to be the inappropriateness of seeing all objectification as inevitably and only feminizing; as a star whose films invariably positioned him in poses and situations both as the vulnerable object of an aggressive and inimical male look, and as a commodity seen and desired by a passionate female gaze, Valentino complicates the binaristic notions underlying Mulvey's original thesis. In stating this, Hansen pleads for stars to be examined individually, not merely allotted into power positions based on gender; this case-specific outlook accords with her overarching belief in the importance of returning the studied text - whether star or film - to its originating milieu. Here Hansen establishes the basic points that make up the manifesto for her study; the specific passage from *Babel and Babylon*, while quite long, has had sufficient impact on my work to quote at length:

If the either/or of sexual difference seems inadequate to an understanding of the textual significance of such composite figures [as Valentino], this inadequacy also indicates the need to complement the methods of psychoanalytically grounded textual analysis with more historically and culturally specific approaches.

...

Therefore, reconstructing a possible horizon of reception for Valentino involves juggling different levels of material and bringing them to bear upon each other in a kind of methodological both/and of textual analysis and historiographic speculation. This means tracing the contradictions of female spectatorship both inside and outside the films: on the one hand, through textual configurations that betray a tension between dominant and subdominant positions of reading, often marked by a dissociation of

narrative into spectacle and scenario, and, on the other, through the public discourse surrounding Valentino – reviews, interviews, studio publicity, articles in fan magazines and the general press, popular biographies – sources that at once document, manipulate and constitute his reception.

This does not mean treating the films as texts and the publicity discourse as a seemingly given, stable and accessible context. On the contrary, when we consider the diversity of materials, interests and ideological mechanisms operating in that discourse, both levels emerge only through an effort of reading. This effort takes its cue from symptomatic moments in the filmic texts and from points of friction between the Valentino figure, the cinematic institution and dominant cultural norms and codes. (Hansen, 1991, 253-254)

Hansen's point, that Valentino's star persona was sufficiently complex and outside of accepted gender norms to complicate Mulvey's binary active/passive model, seems to me to apply equally well to the young female heroes of the films under examination in the next part of this thesis. Paradoxically, since they often belong to the narratives because of their 'either/or' sexual status, straddling the dichotomy of virgin/post-virgin for much of the films' length, the 'either/or of sexual difference' seems inadequate to define and confine them, also, since they occupy central narrative positions in their stories, act as prime movers of the action, and direct the camera's gaze at their objects of desire, the glamorous, importuning, young men, whilst still remaining within more traditional structures of looking, themselves glamorized and objectified for the camera and audience. Following Hansen's impetus towards 'more historically and culturally specific approaches' thus involves returning these troubling female figures to their historical contexts and illustrating the wider cultural moment of the desirous virgin. Emulating Hansen's lead in restoring the 'horizon of reception' to these virgins underlines their topical importance and thus renders diegetic moments when the girl seems to have unusual power or agency not anomalous but part of a contemporary obsession with the disturbing power of the liminal female.

It is not my intention to attempt direct audience research, (such as has been achieved, for example, by Jackie Stacey in her study of British women's preferred stars of the 1940s and 50s (Stacey, 1994), and Rachel Moseley in an examination of the iconic status of Audrey Hepburn for female audiences (Moseley, 2002)), in order to recover dominant and oppositional readings by female viewers of the 'virginity dilemma' films; rather, I have been impressed by Miriam Hansen's methodology of establishing this 'horizon of reception' based upon 'textural configurations' within the film themselves and corresponding or conflicting elements in other contemporary media.

The figure of Valentino, as Hansen contends, was complexly treated by extra-filmic media; in perceiving that it is these other media which 'at once document, manipulate and constitute his reception' Hansen not only underlines the basic fact of stardom being a state in which offscreen and onscreen lives and personae intersect, but also that the film roles played by a star may be one of the lesser determining elements of her/his persona. Similarly, the desirous virgin was very much a character that lived in and through the mass media, the public ballyhoo about her serving to 'document, manipulate and constitute' her existence very much like Valentino's.

Like Hansen I will not be treating the films as volatile texts, and the contemporary discourses which act as their background as non-contentious, but will remain aware of the fluidity of background material too; the task of tracing the desirous virgin will thus not be one of 'solving' a problematic figure by placing her against her static and explanatory backdrop, but adding to the

psychical baggage the late 50s virgin carries by returning her to contemporary debates, settings, and associations. The section on the figure of the desirous virgin will therefore attempt to view her various media instances as manifestations of the combination of anxiety, prurience and desire she seems to have generated. Hansen's notion of there being moments of 'friction' between Valentino's star persona and the contemporary social context further informs my examination of not only the desiring virgin, but also of the star persona of Doris Day. In this study I wish to reconstruct similar 'horizons of reception' for the twin foci of my thesis, using Hansen's 'both/and' method; textual analysis, extending from the 'virginity dilemma' films to the body of competing contemporary discourses in other media, will inform my 'historiographic speculation' on the drives and desires dictating the emergence and dominance of the trope of the desirous virgin and its partial overlapping with Day's star persona.

Turim

Besides *Heavenly Bodies* and *Babel and Babylon*, which have primarily informed my researches, another article has also been important: 'Designing Women: The Emergence Of The New Sweetheart Line' (1984), by Maureen Turim. This deals with a further way of relating a film to its production context, and with the potential of costume to disturb the dominant intentions of a film's narrative. This has been very helpful, especially in the third section of this

thesis, where I consider the remarketing and revamping of the Day persona at the time of *Pillow Talk*.

While brief, the article manages to go beyond the usual costume analyses which look at a single iconic outfit or costume moment in a film (Gaines 1990, 210) or chart a progression in clothes across an entire narrative (Bruzzi, 1997, 9-13) to look at a shape and its impact both in the narratives of particular film texts and in the wardrobes of American females of the fifties also. Although this contextualizing impulse is what links Turim to the other theorists who have influenced me, her article is important to my work for other reasons: in the chapters of my study where I examine Day's films and persona development, costume frequently plays a vital part in the characterisation of the woman at the centre of the text. This was (and indeed is) very common in Hollywood cinema, where, as Jane Gaines puts it,

Although all characters, regardless of gender, are conceived as 'costumed' in motion pictures, a woman's dress and demeanour, much more than a man's, indexes psychology; if costume represents interiority, it is she who is turned inside out on the screen. (Gaines, 1990, 181).

In exploring the significance of the sweetheart line, Turim first sets the context by considering the costumes of the central women in films such as *Mildred Pierce* (Michael Curtiz, 1945) and *Spellbound* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1946); while their suits are meant to seem masculinized, this is not only due to dictates of realism which would be evoking a 'real world' of wartime thrift, clothing shortages, and Utility Suits, but to diegetic impulses to indicate the heroine thus clothed must somehow be aberrant. Turim notes that Ingrid Bergman, as the psychiatrist Constance Peters in *Spellbound*, declares her intention to feminize her wardrobe once she has found love. Turim feels that the character's

declaration is meant to send a cue to the women in the audience about their own imminent need to re-feminize; as the war drew to a close, women-targeted mass media publications began to urge their consumers to adapt their wartime economy outfits in order to make themselves more glamorous and thus ready for returning war heroes.

Turim details this background context, an audience awareness of the media injunction to become more obviously 'feminine', in order to suggest the reason that Christian Dior's 'New Look', launched to acclaim in Paris in 1947, attained such dominance in America too. Showing that the outline seemingly invented by Dior had been anticipated by American designers in the mid-1940s, Turim explains that the significance of the New Look was that it brought about a return to a feminized silhouette at a time when the market had been psychologically prepared for such a concept - it was not therefore the newness of the New Look, but its appositeness to the cultural moment that made it so successful. Turim's article discusses the influence of this high fashion reaching American consumers and eventually filtering its way both into Hollywood costuming and into popular mass culture garments. Significantly, she notes a discrepancy between Parisian fashion dictates and the obedience of the mass market:

High fashion began to vary the 'New Look' just two years after its introduction. By 1949 Dior's collection was dominated by very tight straight skirts... By the Fifties, high fashion showed a straight and full skirt simultaneously (something rare in the history of fashion)... Resisting the lead of high fashion, popular culture and the mass of consumers retained the silhouette of the belted waist and the full skirt through the mid-Fifties. The shape that I am calling the 'sweetheart line' produced for the Hollywood screen and reproduced by the garment industry, was created from a mixture of period nostalgia and the high fashion lead of the New Look. (Turim, 1984, 6-7)

Importantly, Turim indicates the high fashion context which stimulated the creation of the sweetheart line, and shows the to-and-fro of influence between couture, film costume design, and mass clothing. It seems to me significant that Parisian designers were, by the cusp of the Fifties, showing both straight and full skirts, and that both these shapes were then incorporated not only into film costume but also into popular American fashions. In the 'virginity dilemma' films which I examine in detail in the following section, sexual status is very clearly indicated by using these silhouettes in an emblematic way, with virgins in the full shape and post-virgins in the more tightly-clinging one. Interestingly, given the assumptions about the Day characters' mature virginity in her later films, as will be considered in the final section of this thesis, the star's designers consistently put her in the sheath outline.

A further important point that I apply from Turim's analysis of the role of costume in films is that not only can specific garments and outfits suggest information that supports what is tacit in a narrative, but they can also offer counter-indications which challenge the dominant message in the narrative. Turim's article suggests this idea when noting that Bette Davis persuaded Edith Head, designer for *All About Eve* (William Wyler, 1950), to let the character she was playing, Margo Channing, be softened through her outfits:

...Davis convinced Head that her suit should have skirts full enough to indicate Margo's femininity in scenes where she might otherwise seem completely tyrannical. (Turim, 1984, 8).

Here the costume narrative is consciously brought in to counter the script and performance, creating a context for the character's behaviour in which how she looks in saying a line impacts on the audience to disrupt their appreciation of what she says and the way she says it. This underlines a trend dominant in

cinema since the beginning of sound to privilege what is seen over what is heard; as has been frequently attested, when there is conflict between the two, the visual information is taken to be accurate, the aural ironic or misleading (Kozloff, 1988). While *The Best Of Everything*, one of the 'virginity dilemma' cycle of films, shows the heroine, Caroline in the sheath outline despite character assumptions about her continuing 'good girl' status, the costume thus subtly (and correctly) contradicting the dominant narrative, in the Day vehicles examined in the last part of this work, the costume codes overtly reinforce what the script and narrative are saying, and yet were still read in a way which confirmed Day's mature virgin myth.

The enduring power of the sweetheart line is seen, Turim argues, in its role as the ultimate shape for bridal dresses from the early Fifties onwards. With its emphasis on the bust and hips, but modest covering and veiling, in yards and yards of material, of the genital zone, the sweetheart line seemed to provide an 'exaggerated feminine' which could 'annex the connotations of princess, debutante, bride' (Turim, 1984, 10). Furthermore, Turim shows how these connotations could be used to subvert, not only diegetic information about a character or her behaviour, but even the political impetus behind a narrative. Analyzing the sweetheart line's role in the costuming of Angela Vickers (Elizabeth Taylor) in *A Place In The Sun* (George Stevens, 1951), Turim shows how the savage social commentary of the original Dreiser novel, *An American Tragedy*, was overturned through the power of clothes:

Instead of being concerned with the tragic loss of human values that capitalism demands on the part of those who enter its high society, the film focuses on how an unfortunate past destroys a man's entrance into a fairy tale romance with the proper sweetheart. She is Elizabeth Taylor, and her gowns, designed by Edith Head, are a major factor in creating

that ideological shift...[the] seductive charm of the garments destroys sympathy for the non-sweetheart, the 'dowdy working girl' as she is called by *Life*. (Turim, 1984, 8).

The idea that film characters' outfits have the potential to participate in an 'ideological shift' is a very exciting one. Turim's article is useful in relating items on screen to real-world events off screen, such as the War and the impulse towards refeminization that followed its end, and this form of contextualization is what I attempt in relating the mid-Fifties media obsession with female virginity and sexual agency to the film characters in texts being made and distributed at this time. Turim takes film costume, however, to be capable of more than supplying visual excitement, character information and ameliorating detail: by examining the popularity of a particular dress style, she is able to indicate how use of that style in a film would promote certain responses over others. With the popular media saturated with images of women in the sweetheart line dresses, film audiences were already cued to make certain assumptions about the characters who might wear them. The final section of this thesis will therefore deal with similar audience assumptions the Day films courted via costume about the sexual status of their female heroes.

Stars and History - Conclusion

In this opening section of my thesis I have been attempting to lay down foundations for the brief examination of the star personae of those women playing the desirous late 50s virgin, and of Doris Day, which will be conducted in the following chapters of this thesis. In sketching the ideas and investigatory methodologies that I have gleaned from star and history studies, my aim has been to indicate my allegiance to notions of historicization of the star. Three of the key sources that have inspired my studies share, as previously mentioned,

this overriding belief in the importance of establishing historical contexts for the films under examination.

Before I can move on to this task, however, I need to lay out the methods for looking at the virgin type, establishing an historical milieu for the figure in the same way that my source texts in this section have encouraged for the star persona. The next section of this theoretical chapter therefore deals with the useful concepts drawn from writers investigating the rules governing the creation of the stereotype, and its social significances.

Stereotype Theory

The task of this first section has been to discuss the theories used in the subsequent ones to examine the twin topics of focus. In this second chapter I will sketch some precepts for examining stereotypes, describing the tools to be used in examining a stereotype culturally and historically *in situ*. While many of these are derived from racial theory, using writings by such authors as Mireille Rosello, Donald Bogle, and Donald Kirihiwa, they have application to a sexual stereotype such as the virgin, not least, as will be considered very briefly below, because the virgin is almost always figured as both *female* and *white*. Further works by Richard Dyer, T. E. Perkins and Janice Welsch have also been drawn on for their insights into the operation of sexuality and gender stereotypes. Again, works by Dyer in particular have been especially useful; just as his various works on stars, as outlined in the preceding section, proved invaluable in my attempts to establish a methodology for studying star personae, here his various pieces on the stereotype, in managing to combine complexity and

flexibility of theory, helped me to formulate lines of inquiry which can be applied to types of virgins within Hollywood film.

The approaches and tools gleaned from the various authors who have written on stereotypes thus prompt useful inquiries about reading the specific trope of the virgin female and persona of Day in the light of more generalized typings.

Stereotypes

In tracing the development which a concept such as virginity undergoes during a specific period, it becomes clear that this particular trope is so nebulous that it needs to be grounded or rather embodied in a physical way in order to be represented. This leads to the use of the virgin stereotype, a character who is supposed to be instantly recognisable, reassuringly fixed and unchanging.

Interestingly, in researching these sources and compiling tools from them with which to interrogate the virgin figure, I have found that examinations of stereotypes seem frequently to present conclusions about their subject in terms of binaries: that is to say, each point about the stereotype seems also to suggest its opposite. The inherent binarism of the stereotype is one of the attributes suggested by several critics; Sandor Gilman, for example, suggests that every stereotype is 'inherently bipolar, generating a pair of antithetical signifiers ('the noble savage' versus 'the ignoble savage')' (Rosello, 1998, 175). Yet it seems that not only is bipolarity claimed to be a characteristic of specific stereotypes but also to be a way of thinking about stereotypes in general: it is not only stereotypes themselves but also stereotype theory that is binaristic.

In order to unpack these binaries, I have separated them out into clear-cut categories, although frequently when in use the strands of meaning will all be plaited together. Chapters below thus consider various discrete qualities of the stereotype, recruited from critical thinking on the topic, clustering around dyads comprising:

- Its fixity versus its fluidity
- Its use as a fixed boundary versus its potential to inhabit both sides of a cusp
- Its timelessness versus its specificity
- Its visuality versus the impossibility of representation

Some critics have commented on the limitations of a dyadic approach to stereotypes and therefore a further subsection will explore its more polyvalent potential, as laid out in wider taxonomies. To conclude the section there is a brief consideration of the potential given the actor playing the stereotype for contesting or refining the usual meanings of the character, which can be considered in light of the ideas about the star's contestatory potential suggested by Haskell, Dyer and Hansen.

Fixity/fluidity

Mireille Rosello, in beginning her study of racist stereotypes in French culture, looks back at the derivation of the word itself. In printing terminology, a stereotype was a large block of text set as a whole together, rather than requiring each line of lead to be individually filled. The advantage of this technology for the printers was that the stereotype could be used time and again, swiftly, with the minimum of effort, for large sections of writing that needed frequent usage without textual changes. Rosello takes the concepts

inherent in the original printing stereotype – its fixity, its efficient reiteration of idea – and applies this to the metaphorical stereotype she is considering:

The stereotype facilitates the transmission of ideas, images and concepts, but it does so by freezing a certain stage of the production of the text....Like a block of cast iron, [stereotypes] form a whole that cannot be dissolved and whose main purpose is to be endlessly repeated. (Rosello, 1998, 23)

It is important to note, however, that despite the fixity of the image the stereotype does not either necessarily represent fixity, i.e. the fixed image can be of flux, mutability; nor does it have a fixed and unchanging meaning. That is to say, the stereotype represents an image which is fixed, frozen at a certain point, but it need not be an image of fixity (the image could be of the character's liminality); nor need its meaning be fixed (the meaning read off from the image changes over time – in that virginity may at different times be respected or reviled); these potential modulations of the stereotype's meaning will be examined in more detail in the following section.

Boundary versus cusp

Many critics have noted the stereotype's role as a boundary enforcer; fewer have recognized that stereotypes can also represent not so much a fixed line but a fluid cusp. The polarity that seems so often observable in stereotypes can be seen operating here: the stereotype can be seen at times to be a rigid demarcation device to denote inclusion and exclusion, and at others to offer a more ambivalent location.

In an early piece of writing on stereotypes, here examining that of the alcoholic, Richard Dyer notes the delimiting function of such typage:

This is the most important function of the stereotype: to maintain sharp boundary definitions, to define clearly where the pale ends and thus who is clearly within and who clearly beyond it. (Dyer, 2002c, 16)

The role of stereotypes as here defined is to establish the parameters of a society; the image of a cordon being drawn around a group of people is evoked, with some inside and others beyond, outside the line. The usefulness of the concept conveyed in this mental image is that it helps tell us where our place is, presuming that 'we' are inside the cordon and others are without. It needs to be remembered, however, as much writing on stereotypes does not, that who 'we' are is subject to historical, social and cultural change. When T. E. Perkins wrote her article on stereotypes in the politically clamorous climate of the 1970s she could confidently claim for herself, as a woman, as politically left-wing, a position beyond the pale, the safe interior occupation of which would be reserved for white middle-class men. Stereotypes are not, however, only there to describe threatening outgroups: perhaps the situation has changed since 1979 but it can not now be claimed that there are no stereotypes about groups 'higher' in the social echelons than 'us'. The British stereotypes from the 1980s, the yuppie, the Sloane Ranger, the Hooray Henry are neither 'positive stereotypes' (Perkins, 1979, 144) nor ones representing disempowered groups which, as she suggests, suddenly have or are presenting a problem to the dominant ideology (145-6).

The usefulness of the stereotype to offer demarcations for 'them' and 'us' becomes more problematic when the differences between groups are not ones of gender or race. It is relatively easy to distinguish male faces from female and black from white, and possible to do when the distinctions are class-based (using, perhaps, accent and income as evinced in clothes, car, accessories);

but when the distinctions are of internal qualities it becomes both more difficult and precisely therefore more urgent to tell where the boundary lines can be drawn.

A virgin stereotype, along with others based on sexuality, would seem to fall into a similar category, since it too prompts the question of how an internal quality, an actual lack, can be externally represented. Dyer's point that such boundaries can be both invisible and fluid is also a significant one to consider relative to the virgin since, as will be seen in the chapter on Kinsey's influence on the cultural horizon of the fifties, Kinsey's report on the *Sexual Behavior of the Human Female* (1953) posited that virginity was not an absolute state but one subject to qualifying degrees.

A later examination of another popularly found stereotype, the 'sad young man', provokes Dyer into contrasting the boundary position of some stereotypes with the more fluid cusp moment he finds embodied by this type. This boundary/cusp dichotomy is a very interesting one since it highlights both the point of stereotypes – to enforce differences – and the anxiety that can often attend them: maybe there are no differences after all.

...the sad young man is especially strongly marked in terms of transition, not only by virtue of age but also by virtue of the notion of moving between normal and queer worlds, always caught at the moment of exploration and discovery. (Dyer, 2002a, 131)

Dyer notes that the sad young man stereotype is often given a moment of revelation:

Coming out – accepting that one is gay – thus takes the form of going in to another world ('Cross[ing] over the border into the half-world of homosexuality' – *All The Sad Young Men*)....The sad young man image

is frozen on the moment before 'becoming' or knowing that one 'is' a queer... (Dyer, 2002a, 128-129)

The significance of this cusp moment for the sad young man stereotype identified by Dyer is that it undermines the security that the boundary was meant to furnish, reassuring the consumer of the text that there is a line that can be clearly drawn. While the moment of self-discovery or self-alteration that inheres in the border-crossing has to be built up to be a monumental transformation in order to convince that what is being marked is markable, the 'frozen' state of the cusp-inhabiting sad young man indicates that one can go on forever fence-sitting, like Janus looking both forward and back at both sides of the border. If there is a boundary line, then there is a boundary, a real difference, a line that reassuringly can be drawn between virgin and post-virgin, queer and straight, men and women. But a cusp hints at the possibility of never crossing, of maintaining a state of ambivalence.....

Timelessness versus specificity

Another truism often put forward about stereotypes is that they are classic, universally applicable, for-all-time and thus outside of time, beyond the specific. Like the other points about stereotyping considered here, the direct opposite can also be advanced.

Regarding the former point, T. E. Perkins, for example, can be seen subscribing to the view that the stereotype is a rigid and inflexible trope historically, even whilst she is arguing against the inevitable rigidity and fixity of the stereotype within ideology:

In order to assess whether stereotypes are particularly rigid, we need to study the conditions under which concepts change, how much information is necessary, how important the continued existence of the confirmatory information is, and how important the stereotype's conceptual status is (how much else would have to change). This must surely be essential to our understanding of ideology. We must look at the social relationships to which they refer, and at their conceptual status, and ask under what conditions are stereotypes more or less resistant to modification. (Perkins, 1979, 141)

Perkins notes here that the stereotype may be modified, but there is no sense within her argument of its ability to *modulate*; the concept of the stereotype she advances is one which can accommodate a reversal of meaning (the stereotype meant one thing, but with new information, this meaning was overturned) but not a gradual and more subtle change over time as different connotations accrete.

While some critics have appeared to accept the ahistorical nature of the stereotype thus, others have appreciated that seeming ahistorical is part of the stereotype's job, and that not only do particular stereotypes have specific resonances within each time and culture that they appear, but that returning them to this context, as much as possible, provides a way to see through them to the anxieties that provoked their particular conjuring on a particular occasion. To this demystifying end, Rosello notes that:

“ ...if stereotypes are a branch of the art of representation, they have to be treated not as the opposite of truth but as one of the narratives that a given power wants to impose on the truth *at a given moment*” (Rosello, 1998, 17; my italics)

While prompting the possibly unanswerable question – which given power? – this is a helpful quotation in underlining that the stereotype has a contemporary specificity, and that understanding of a stereotype is enriched if one appreciates the background against which it emerges. With this in mind, the 50s desirous

virgin needs to be set into the context of the fifties, rather than just examined from a 21st century standpoint.

It should also be remembered that since most stereotypes have very long histories, what is perceived as a new high media profile at a particular moment is likely to be a re-emergence to prominence; just as a resurgence of vitality in a film genre tells us something about the society producing it, linking the new interest in an old set of conventions to previous iterations while also speaking to new impulses, nostalgias, anxieties that make the genre an apt vehicle, the sudden prevalence of instances of a particular typing can often be most accurately read as the *reappearance* of a stereotype, pointing to a new wave of interest/anxiety caused by the figure. The sudden and widespread visibility of the virgin female in the period under study should therefore initially be juxtaposed to previous incarnations of the character; what was at first new in the 50s was not the figure of the virgin per se, but the amount of anxiety she was causing. This in turn, as will be seen in the following chapter, provoked a new form of virgin within the late 50s 'virginity dilemma' films, young, attractive and actively desiring.

Interestingly, in drawing attention to the novelty of this incarnation, the late 50s desirous virgin can be seen diverging from the usual practice of stereotypes in masquerading as ahistorical, permanent: one of the most significant things about the desirous virgin at this point in history is that it was presenting itself as something new and radically different. Why this would be a tactic to employ will be considered in more detail in the following section.

In a paragraph in which she continues to advocate contextualization as a necessary defusing tool, Rosello asserts that:

It is crucial to write books that anchor different stereotypes in their own changing historical contexts. Because stereotypes parade as eternal bits of human wisdom, studies that analyse their evolution implicitly or explicitly juxtapose their pseudo-immortality with their social irrelevance. (Rosello, 1998, 33)

While it may be overstating the case to insist on the 'social irrelevance' of stereotypes – surely they must have some relevance even if the images they embody and the ideas they promote are distasteful? – the task of refusing the immortality of stereotypes by returning them to their own times and places is a very useful one. Because of this tendency to make their own construction and topicality invisible, it is important in examining stereotypes to remember that their meanings change over time. Belief in the timelessness of the stereotype, as some critics display, conforms to notions of classicism that the stereotype promotes about itself, since actually the connotations prompted by the use of the stereotype are both multiple and evolving. In this way, within the discussion of virgins which the 50s media seemed to be having with itself, there will be neither a single (one view) attitude to virgins, nor was this be a fixed view (one time): ideas about them were various both within a period and across different periods. The diversity of potential attitudes towards female virginity and sexual agency available to be contemporaneously held needs stressing: a context is bigger than just one view, which the assumption of a monolithic fiat mandating female premarital virginity in the American 50s, as seen to be evinced by *Down With Love*, for example, tends to overlook.

Paradoxically, by dwelling on the longer-term historical nature of the stereotype it can most fully be returned to its more contemporary context. Being mindful of

earlier incarnations of the type helps to provide a lineage for the newer usage, although nuances and shifts need to be noted as well as adherences to tradition. Discussing the ancestry of the sad young man stereotype, Dyer establishes a list of earlier traditions drawn on by the persona:

Like all stereotypes, the sad young man is a combination and a condensation of many traditions of representation. This intensifies the image (so much history of significance caught by such spare formal means), gives it rich possibilities of connotation and use and enables it to be read in a multiplicity of ways. The lineage of the sad young man includes: Christianity... The Romantic poets... The Bildungsroman.... The third sex.... Freudianism... The invention of adolescence.... Urbanism as alienation... (Dyer, 2002a, 118)

It is possible to suggest an equivalent 'history of significance' for the desirous virgin of the 50s by similarly suggesting her earlier lineage. The 'traditions of representation' that would seem to feed into her 50s incarnation might include: the Virgin Mary, saints, martyrs; the pathological, sexological: hysterics, the frigid; the rite of passage, the 'invention of adolescence'; rural innocence versus urban decadence; 19th Century theatrical melodrama, victimhood; career girls; these different elements feeding into the late 50s virgins' lineage will be very briefly suggested at the beginning of the following section on filmic virginity.

A quote from Donald Kirihiwa's exploration of the Asian stereotype both defined and defied by the actor Sessue Hayakawa summarizes what I want to achieve in the following section, in attempting to return the late 50s filmic virgin to her social and cultural context:

.... the stereotype cannot be 'fixed' in an ahistorical zone, for not only will each period define its own stereotypes, but it will also offer tactics for their unveiling. (Kirihiwa, 1998, 82)

Kirihiwa, like Dyer and Rosello, appreciates the specificity of stereotype usage at particular times; by attempting, as much as possible, to restore the fifties

Hollywood context for her, I am hoping to find tactics for an 'unveiling' of the virgin.

Visual qualities of the stereotype

What does a virgin look like? It's anybody's guess.
(Wolfe, 1958, 53)

Continuing to support the interesting paradox that stereotypes generally suggest a concept and simultaneously its opposite, is the notion that the stereotype will have very clearly defined visual characteristics, and yet at times be called upon to represent the unrepresentable. Mireille Rosello has noted the metaphorical stereotype's conceptual link with its printing-press namesake, the large block of text set as a whole together, recognizing that stock pictures were often used in the same way, for general applicability. In her introduction to *Declining stereotypes* she considers the evolving image used to advertize a French breakfast powder, which moves, across years, from a representation of a black soldier to a stylized smiling face; Rosello feels the changing image carries the weight of its former incarnations with it through progressive iterations: 'Images have changed radically, but the memory of previous representations lingers in the collective unconscious' (Rosello, 1998, 5).

Stereotypes, however, have a nebulous connection to the visual icons brought in to represent them and the 'chicken and egg' scenario that often results can be seen as part of their project to appear inevitable, regardless of the fact that what may be being represented may be an internal quality – like sexuality – and one subject to change – like virginity. The stereotype masquerades as a

classic, ahistorical truth, but the utilization of a specific visual image to evoke it risks returning it to history and specificity, since visual codes shift over time.

In the same way that investigating a specific stereotype, as I am doing with the virgin, seems to lead inevitably to investigating what other writers on stereotypes have meant and done, Rosello's consideration of the visuality of the stereotype leads her to conclude that this visuality has been overly relied upon in other stereotype theorists' work:

At one level we can say that the stereotyping process turns the text into an image because it transforms the symbolic freedom of endless assembling and disassembling into a symbolic lack of flexibility. Not surprisingly, then, many studies of stereotypes rely heavily on images as if the visualization of certain ideas was the ultimate actualization of the metamorphosis of separable signs into one fixed entity. (Rosello, 1998, 23)

Of the theorists who have examined the workings of stereotyping, Richard Dyer has been most alert to this ambivalence with regard to the stereotype and its assumed ability to represent a group visually. Over the course of several writings he charts the potential of the stereotype to call up a visual image in the viewer:

In a film, one of the methods of stereotyping is through iconography. That is, films use a certain set of visual and aural signs which immediately bespeak homosexuality and connote the qualities associated, stereotypically, with it. (Dyer, 1977, 31)

Other theorists have noted this quality, yet Dyer, while pursuing the general applicability of this as a rule for stereotypes ('a few verbal and visual traits are used to signal the character', 1979, 14) has also more significantly realized that this visual shorthand is often problematic; not only is the visuality of some stereotypes ambivalently cued, but it is also predicated on the necessity for

making visible something that as an internal quality is invisible. Dyer considers these points in connection to a range of homosexual stereotypes: gay and lesbian (1977), the sad young man (2002a) and the queers of noir (2002b); there is an obvious parallel with the representability of virginity, another internal quality, a lack of an occurrence, an experiential minus.

Dyer notes that, unlike the stereotype of the black or the woman, the actors personifying these sexuality stereotypes are charged with the task of physically embodying the invisible, provoking the need for some kind of visual cue to give reassurances:

Iconography is a kind of short-hand – it places a character quickly and economically. This is particularly useful for gay characters, for, short of showing physical gayness or having elaborate dialogue to establish it in the first few minutes, some means of communicating immediately that a character is gay has to be used. This is of course not a problem facing other stereotyped groups such as women or blacks (but it may include the working class) since the basis of their difference (gender, color) shows, whereas ours does not.
(Dyer, 1977, 32)

In a later piece on stereotypes Dyer pushes this point further:

Stereotypes...also insist on boundaries exactly at those points where in reality there are none. Nowhere is this more clear than with stereotypes dealing with social categories that are invisible and/or fluid. Such categories are *invisible*, because you cannot just tell by looking at a person that she or he belongs to the category in question. Unless the person chooses to dress or act in a clearly and culturally defined manner...it is impossible to place the person before one... (Dyer, 2002c, 16)

The point about 'culturally defined' behaviour, in the above quotation, is also a very significant one for this thesis, since the second chapter will attempt to delineate how, given the invisibility and fluidity of the virgin state, impulses from within popular culture attempted to render the virgin visible through 'culturally defined' behaviour. Dyer's examples of culturally defined codes include one of dress and one of behaviour – 'the working-class man's cloth cap, the male

homosexual's limp wrist' (Dyer, 2002, 16) – and it will be seen in greater detail in the following section that Hollywood and other popular culture media attempted to delineate the virgin through identical means. Costume codes were established in films of this period intending to help viewers see at a glance on which side of the great divide a woman found herself. Emily Post and other etiquette prescribers also attempted to codify appropriate behaviour (modest and passive) for the virgin female.

The very invisibility of the quality possessed by the group being stereotyped causes its necessity for delineation; although Dyer's point here is about the anxiety provoked because of the potential *presence* (homosexuality) rather than the willed *absence* (virginity relinquished), the urgent nature of the need for a boundary line is similar:

The role of stereotypes is to make visible the invisible, so that there is no danger of it creeping up on us unawares; and to make fast, firm and separate what is in reality fluid and much closer to the norm than the dominant value system cares to admit. (Dyer, 2002c, 16)

Making 'visible the invisible' is what the virginity stereotype is there to do; the stereotyped female virgin figure (subject to varying codes in film depending on genre, and perhaps on star) was evoked to provide a boundary, to offer reassurance about the possibility of being able to tell who has had sex and who has not. However, since it is only socially/culturally defined codes rather than essentialist truths that are being evoked, the visibility of the stereotype provokes anxiety because these codes need not be adopted. The success of the stereotype is thus predicated on the users ignoring that the visual codes referring to the stereotype are assumptions, and overlooking the fact that they operate by setting up and insisting on the validity of a false syllogism: the

stereotype group referred to is evoked by the cliché that always refers to it. For example, this 'chicken or egg' scenario operates with regard to the gay stereotype by insisting both that 'gays look like this' and 'if you look like this you are gay'. But as Dyer points out in a piece on the queer stereotype in films noirs, the very visual codes that are called upon to evoke a stereotype can create as much anxiety as they are meant to dispel:

...queer stereotyping has a particularly odd logic. Stereotypes of say, blacks or the disabled tell us that people who look like that are like this in character; stereotypes of queers seem to work in the same way (men and women who dress like that are like this) but they are founded on the opposite need, to say people who are like that (queer), even though you can't see that, look like this. Queer stereotypes are posited on the assumption that there is a grounding, an essential being which is queer, but since this is not immediately available to perception, they have to work all the harder to demonstrate that queers can be perceived. In other words, the problems with queers is that you can't tell who is and who isn't – except that, maybe if you know the tell-tale signs, you can. (Dyer, 2002b, 97)

Similarly, with the desirous virgin, the external means of delineating her, costume and demeanour, were signs which could be employed without the necessary presence of their signifier: thus the desirous virgin, as will be explored in detail later, also evoked as much anxiety as it solved.

Dyer posits that, contentious or not, successful or not, the stereotype is intended to work in film through two main areas, iconography and structure; the first of these works both on its own to connote associated qualities, but also in conjunction with the structural role the stereotype is called upon to perform.

The following section will examine the types of visual signs which might bespeak female virgins and virginity within Hollywood films of the period under consideration. It should be noted that Dyer considers that these visual techniques do more than merely point to the presence of the stereotype – they

also cue the viewer to expect what the character will be like. In this way homosexuality, Dyer argues, is associated with various negative qualities, for example, 'fastidiousness and concern with appearance' (1977, 32). Virginity, by contrast, is variously associated with both negative and positive qualities, varying between films portraying the virgin and sometimes even varying within the same film, as will be seen.

The other mode by which Dyer asserts stereotypes can be rendered within a filmic text is through their positioning within the narrative structure. His analysis of the position of the stereotypical lesbian character in seven French films of the 1970s shows a strong degree of similarity of function and fate for these figures. In the virgin films under examination in the next section, however, there appears to be a binary split for the eventual destinies of the female characters and their physical performance of virginity, depending on the genre to which the film belongs. The structural employment of the desirous virgin is similar, however, even when generic impulses differ, since they are always placed centre stage in the films which treat them both having and being a problem.

Polarities/taxonomies

Another interesting facet of stereotypes, as noted by some theorists, is the ostensible fact of their going together in pairs. Rosello's citation of Gilman's noble/ignoble savage pairing has been mentioned previously, and it can easily be seen that the desirous virgin has as its linked antithesis the vamp or whore. However, further thought prompts the realisation that there is more than just one virgin stereotype, and that, as will be seen later, the contrast of the desirous and yielding virgin with the desirous but self-restrained maiden ruptures the

strict dichotomy that would oppose any sexual uninitiate with an experienced woman; recognising the plurality rather than polarity of stereotypes, some critics have sought to complicate the binary model.

Lucy Fischer, for example, conceives of the bipolar couple as representing not binary opposites, but rather two aspects of the same persona:

The figure of opposing twins seems not to represent dual lobes of the female psyche, but rather two aspects of the broader cultural conception of women.

... the split between good and bad twins has far deeper implications than can be explained by the stereotypes of saintly and evil females, of virgins and whores. Rather, the fissure that they represent seems not so much demarcated along the lines of morality (of vice versus virtue) as it does along the lines of gender identification – of “masculine” versus “feminine” poles. (Fischer, 1989, pp184-185)

Fischer arrives at this conclusion following an examination of three films from the 1940s featuring identical twin sisters. While it may be tempting to take the idea of the clearly established duality and apply it to the virgin cycle of mid-50s films, seeing the virgin females as representatives of a proper passive femininity and the post-virgins of a threateningly active one, the proliferation of extra aspects of the virgin persona surplus to this binary model casts doubt on its ubiquitous applicability: since a brief list of filmic virgins could point out such varying aspects amongst the type as young, old, content and hysterical, this abundance within a subset gives the lie to the simple polarization around a cusp of sexual experience. Furthermore, since all the virgins dealt with in the following chapter are desirous though not all yielding, they further complicate this binary model.

A more adventurous approach to categorization, which is prepared to leave behind this dyadic mode seeming so often to cling to concepts of the

stereotype, is found in critics such as Bogle and Welsch as they attempt to taxonomize stereotypes and their qualities using a larger paradigm. Donald Bogle's taxonomy of black stereotypes within the dominant white media of American popular culture is very interesting, not only because the categories he describes are of very long duration, dating from early cinema and from theatrical and literary traditions even before then, and also still ostensible in the creation and marketing of black stars within Hollywood today; his framework is also flexible enough for the categories not to be stark opposites of each other, but to share qualities. For example, his type of 'the Mammy', the always big, very dark black woman, is linked by personality traits to the 'Uncle Tom', though divided from him by sex. Similarly, Bogle's taxonomy permits the subdivision of some types: 'Coons' proliferate in the pure adult form, and also subdivide into the 'Pickaninny', played by a child actor and the 'Uncle Remus', who again varies from the Tom in certain ways (Bogle, 1974, 1-22).

As well as noting racial divisions in this framework – since the norm from which the black stereotypes are seen to deviate is always a white one - Bogle further classifies the black stereotype by gender, examining the types of 'Mammy', 'Aunt Jemima' and the 'Tragic Mulatto'. This last, the person of mixed race who is so pale that passing for white is possible, but always with tragic results, is seen by Bogle as an inescapably female type. It would be interesting to wonder whether, with the passing of time and the mutability of stereotypes, the character of a tragic young mixed race *male* might be found, a story of his attempt to pass for white and to earn love and acceptance within the white community be told. As noted throughout this section, stereotypes are not to be regarded as classical, ahistorical truths or part-truths, but to be returned to their

historical contexts as much as possible; if there is no equivalent 'male mulatto' stereotype available it prompts questions about the particular collision of connotations found in the female stereotype which speak to *current* contexts also.

Bogle's categorizations thus provoke thought because they couple sexual and racial stereotypes in ways which seem 'natural', as is the job of stereotypes, but actually provide clues to the complex clusters of assumptions about races and genders that we hold currently. The pairing of whiteness with virginity, which Bogle notes in discussing Griffiths' *The Birth of a Nation* (1915), despite being a very ancient association is still visible in films from the late 50s and beyond. Although the topic of race is outside the ambit of this project, it would be fascinating to trace the assumptions about purity and sexuality which adhere to it as they reveal themselves in the films under consideration. The second version of *Imitation of Life* (Douglas Sirk, 1959), for example, seems both to reaffirm and problematize the unthinking assignment of innocence and chastity to the white, and inherent sexual knowingness to the black, girl.

A further classification study that attempts to move away from a binary model is Janice Welsch's *Film Archetypes* (1978). Welsch categorizes seven female film actors, including Doris Day, into four main types: the Sister, Mistress, Mother and Daughter. It should be noted that while Welsch calls these recurring personae 'archetypes' rather than stereotypes, there appears to be little difference in the meaning of these terms as used, since Welsch studies the connotations clustering around the typed figures, just as stereotype studies do. However, the use of the word 'archetypes' implies an assumption of the types'

ageless, universal applicability. As already seen, this is often found with stereotypes too, as they masquerade as ahistorical truths. Calling her typology 'archetypes' yet ironically coupling this with the historical specificity of 'of the 50s', Welsch seems to suggest her types fit into traditional classifications of female characters, rather than appreciating the particularity of the context that produced them. Furthermore, there seems to be no sense of the national context that produced these stars, yet a typology that attempted to examine European as well as American female actors from this time would probably have emerged with very different classifications.

Interestingly, Welsch's typology is centred round *familial* definitions; even the mistress exists within a familial unit, as the second partner of a married man. Because of the insistence that these characters are archetypes, somehow classical and outside of time, Welsch denies herself the opportunity to posit this familial perspective as a contemporary restriction, relating it to the 50s and the specific US context that fostered such readings of female film roles. For example, whilst claiming the prevalence of all four of these female typings in films, Welsch can only find one example of the 'Mother', yet does not draw historical or social conclusions from this fact (as, for example, the edging of mother characters out towards the margins of the narrative, which Nina Leibman finds to be a characteristic of films from this period (Leibman, 1995)).

Inspired by Welsch's multiple classifications, and Bogle's more permeable-boundaried categories, I will be seeking to avoid polarized categories such as bad girl/good girl when tracking the late 50s virgin through the vexed terrains of sexuality and agency. Interestingly, Kinsey's *Sexual Behavior of the Human*

Female had famously posited a taxonomy of sexual experiences for its research subjects; suggesting that a multiplicity of techniques and acts were possible for women to try, Kinsey thus promoted the idea that the concept of a dyadic split around inexperience/experience, based solely on the initial act of penetration, was unhelpful and privileged heteronormativity unnecessarily.

Contesting stereotypes

Returning the stereotype to its historical context is, as theorists have argued, a way of contesting its powers, denying its inevitability and timelessness. Another related way of contesting the stereotype, which also relies on returning specificity to it, rests with the actor inhabiting the stereotype. In his examination of the Asian actor Sessue Hayakawa, Donald Kiriawa suggests that the actor has the potential variously to inhabit, show up, or modulate the stereotype (Kiriawa, 1998). Crucially Kiriawa examines the stereotype in action, as it is embodied in specific films by a particular actor, rather than writing in a general way about generalizations, as so many stereotype theorists do. Of the other critics studied, only Richard Dyer and Donald Bogle seem to intuit that a theoretical stereotype on the page may be experienced very differently from one given human form through its embodiment by an actor, moving and talking on the screen. Bogle writes mainly about the negative consequences of this, finding that the fleshing out of rickety clichés by talented performers unfortunately seems to give the stereotypes new life and justification: there

must be Tragic Mulattos, because there's Fredi Washington or Jennifer Beales *acting* one.

Dyer and Kirihiwa, on the other hand, look at the negotiations that go on between actor and audience via the stereotype: in his study of the queers of noir, Dyer shows how unsettling performances from actors can create uncertainty over which stereotype they are inhabiting; while this uncertainty fits with the pervasive mood of unease that typifies noir, it also, argues Dyer, fits with the uncertainty engendered by queerness, since these films can elect to eschew the obvious stereotype of the swishy 'queen' and instead show manly men in he-man, strong-arm roles who yet seem to have an intimate bond with other men (Dyer, 2002b, 102). While Dyer feels these characters often have to be located at the margins of the narrative, as in the case of henchmen Fante and Mingo from *The Big Combo* (Joseph H Lewis, 1955), their presence in the film at all, readable as both 'normal' henchmen and queer lovers, complicates the stereotypical page that would find these categories mutually exclusive.

Kirihiwa's piece on Hayakawa similarly treats the possibility of complicating the readings of typical figures, seeking to ask provocative questions of the stereotype:

How are they part of the activity between film and viewer? What role do they play in the strategies of narration and viewing? (Kirihiwa, 1998, 82)

Significantly, viewing the stereotype as part of an 'activity' going on between audience and film requires belief in an active and engaged audience, one working at making meanings, rather than passively absorbing them. As it unfolds, Kirihiwa's article indicates *at times* that he believes in the potential of

alert audience members to alter the inevitability of the stereotype's meaning, although at others he ascribes this power to the actor and at still others to other film-making professionals. While this apportioning of power may seem to complicate the argument, Kirihiwa's aim is to prompt the researcher to investigate the relation between the actor, audience and stereotype, both within specific narratives and beyond:

[Hayakawa's] films, characterizations, and reputation are cogent instances of how stereotypes operate...in the overlapping area between the spheres of the formal conventions of texts and the social conventions of that text's audience. (Kirihiwa, 1998, 82)

Here Kirihiwa posits that the stereotype inheres not only in the onscreen roles and the diegetic contexts that surround them, but also in the offscreen personalities that the stars are called upon to perform in 'real life'; this overlap of on and offscreen, and the presence of the stereotype determining meaning in both realms, again illustrates the necessity of returning the film to the context of its contemporary audiences.

The article may begin to suggest too complex a model, as first Kirihiwa seems to be saying that the actor both on and offscreen has the stereotype working on him; then he says through the interaction of the viewer and film the stereotype can be modulated; then that Hayakawa's films are sophisticated because they take on more complexity in the stereotype than we generally see:

It is in the interaction of viewer and film in narration that the stereotype is granted its scope as well as its limits, and Hayakawa's films exhibit a tendency to problematize the prefabricated patterns that we associate with stereotypes. (Kirihiwa, 1998, 83)

This point would, however, seem to suggest that the writing personnel, as well as the actor, have some control over complicating readings, making them

richer, rather than the audience working to problematize the stereotype. Finally Kirihiwa brings the power for change full circle again, stating that '[Hayakawa's] characterizations often urged nuance and subtlety on existing stereotypes' (Kirihiwa, 1998, 91) and thus suggesting once more that it lies with the actor to make a character more multi-dimensional and less typed. This again chimes with the suggestions by Haskell, Dyer and Hansen that the charismatic star can subvert or escape the confining text by the fact of her/his lasting iconicity, the presence in a variety of media which overshadows the constrictions of any one film narrative. In looking at the star persona of Doris Day in the final section of this work, I will be interested to see whether Day's revamped persona managed to achieve this escape, even for a while, or whether, as Kirihiwa finally suggests, the interaction between stereotype and actor can work both ways:

....Like other actors, had Hayakawa been no more than a victim of a stereotype, had he not been able to differentiate himself from the simplicity of an accepted idea, he likely would not have enjoyed the success he did. (Kirihiwa, 1998, 92)

It is easy to see Doris Day in the role of 'victim of a stereotype' since the eventual association of her star persona with the figure of the virgin, and Day's inability to differentiate herself from the 'simplicity of an accepted idea', (despite never actively associating herself with it) garnered much media criticism and eventually meant the end of her active career. Interestingly, unlike Hayakawa's racial markers which inevitably associated him with the Asian stereotype, the attributes or qualities of Day that linked her with the virgin would seem to be less 'natural' if equally, in the end, inescapable. The final section of this thesis will attempt to discover these qualities and to interrogate the ways in which the reading of Day as mature virgin came to be the dominant one.

Stereotype Theory - Conclusion

Having here examined the sources on stereotypes that have seemed to provoke the most useful and coherent approaches to them, work can now move forwards to employing these tools on the twin foci of this thesis, the desirous virgin, and the star persona of Doris Day, as both were being constructed and modulated during the period under examination.

As has been examined, stereotype concepts often seem to rely on binaristic interpretations which often prove unreliable, and which need to be unpacked when used to examine the virgin. Noting that these dyads are frequently less fixed and more permeable than they appear, nevertheless, the following pairings of ideas about the stereotype still prove useful starting points for tracking the virgin, and therefore ideas about fixity/fluidity; boundary/cusp; timelessness/ specificity; visibility/invisibility will underpin the work of the following section.

While this concept of binarization may be fruitful for some examinations of characters, however, wider taxonomies have been deemed more useful by other writers. Whilst taxonomies like those used by Bogle, and by Welsch, may seem to construct categories which are as rigid and constricting as the dyads mentioned above, the thinking behind them is at least not restricted to the 'either/or' conception that often bedevils stereotypes, and Bogle's categories are more amenable to overlapping. It should also be noted that the urge to taxonomize gained in popularity during the period under consideration for this thesis: after Kinsey had subjected female sexuality to categorization and produced matrices in which the fluidity of desire was reduced to various well-

defined acts and degrees, popular culture too succumbed to the temptation to plot ontologies and etymologies onto neat grids and graphs. In *Where The Boys Are* (Henry Levin, 1960), for example, Merritt tells Ryder, as he is attempting to seduce her, that she has extensively categorized male predatory behaviour, although she has yet to decide whether *he* is a 'sweeper', a 'stroker' or a 'subtle'. Similarly, *Boys Night Out* (Michael Gordon, 1962) contains an allusion to the current topicality of the taxonomizing scientist when Kathy (Kim Novak), studying for her doctorate in sociology and subjecting four 'subjects' to experiments about their libidos, interviews their wives in a door-to-door survey, and has her introductory remark - 'I'm doing a sociological survey of the sexual patterns of the suburban male' calmly answered with 'You mean something like Kinsey?'. Taxonomies are in this way a method of organizing information that was frequently attempted during my period of investigation, and thus my subjecting the various virgins to similar classification both fits with contemporary practice and also, therefore, evokes resonances with contemporary instances.

One final point derived from this stereotype section which will be taken forward in the following sections, especially those dealing specifically with the star persona of Doris Day, is the potential for the stereotype to be contested, either by the actor playing her, the writer or any of the film-making personnel who contribute in bringing her to life on the screen, or, indeed, the audience who receive her. Just as several of the influential writers on star studies took pains to show that audiences working with their favourite stars could choose to reject or ameliorate the narratives that threatened to punish or contain the characters, Dyer and Kirihiwa in particular have indicated that confinement within the stereotype can sometimes be evaded, if only partially and for a time. It then

remains the task of historical embedding to find the material to indicate, as Haskell and Hansen suggest for stars, whether audiences in my period of study were choosing to ignore certain elements of narrative or stereotype that confined the star in ways that became unpleasurable, or, by contrast, to reject some of the newer aspects of the revamped Day persona and to problematize others.

Section Conclusion

The preceding work having established the cornerstone texts of my researches, I can now move forwards, armed with both questions to ask and methodologies for answering them gleaned from the arenas of star studies, film history and stereotype theory.

Significantly, the texts from star and history studies, and from stereotype writings, which have proved most influential on my own work are all ones which stress the importance of historical embedding for the topic under consideration, despite the variety of these topics, from the stereotype of the sad young man, to the star persona of Valentino. In the subsequent chapters, then, I will be attempting to construct 'horizons of reception', as recommended by Hansen, Dyer and the other writers whose works have impacted on my researches, for the desirous virgin which I maintain was a new incarnation, and for Day's star persona which evolved and then crystallized around the same time, the cusp of the sixties.

My intent during this research is to return the star persona of Doris Day to the specific contemporary popular culture milieu in which her dominant connotations evolved (suddenly, and as I will argue in the final section of this work, paradoxically) to signify mature and risible virginity. I will be attempting to establish a 'horizon of reception' for this persona, relating it to what I perceive as the newly-emergent stereotype of the desirous virgin; in looking at Day's films alongside the mini cycle I call the 'virginity dilemma' films which feature these new virgins, I will be using notions from Dyer about the various media texts that make up 'discourse', and from Hansen concerning the efficacy of searching within the films themselves for 'intertextural configurations' (Hansen, 1991, 254) which indicate a convergence of on- and off-screen desires and anxieties. Furthermore, from the stereotype theorists I will be borrowing ideas about paired concepts which have clear echoes in the assumptions about good/bad girls, the permeability of the boundaries between them, and the dichotomous performance styles which, as will be seen, are found in the films themselves.

In thus attempting to reconstruct a 'horizon of reception' for the films, their female stars, and the persona of the desirous virgin, it is my aim to offer some sense of the contestatory potential afforded the new virgin by her sheer multiplication across texts. That is to say, while women were being told again and again by the popular media, including some of the films under study here, that premarital chastity was the only sensible and moral option, they could choose to ignore these messages either partially or wholly, consuming instead other films and other texts which gave them vicarious access to stories of women who had chosen agency, desire and sex. The over-abundance of

dissenting voices in the popular media gave access to 'a public horizon for women's experience' (Hansen, 1991, 124) similar to that fostered by the Valentino figure; by indicating the contemporary proliferation of differing views, of different choices about sexuality, my work in the next section will seek to show that the media from this period, the late fifties - early sixties, presented, ultimately, no monolithic endorsement of chastity for young women, whatever contemporary societal intentions may have intended or subsequent generations assumed.

Section 2:

Virgins in Hollywood: texts and contexts

Introduction

Having explored the methodologies for examining representations of virginity in Hollywood films of the period under study, this section will now begin to put those tools to use. As prompted by the key writings discussed in the former chapters, one of the aims throughout the work here will be to embed the material being introduced within its historical and social contexts; thus the first chapter of this section looks at Kinsey's *Sexual Behaviour in the Human Female*, the contemporary assumptions about female and male sexual norms it tapped into, and responses to it in the popular media.

The section begins with a necessarily brief account comparing the virgin before and after the 'K bomb' about female sexual agency. While full examination of the various qualities of virgin stereotypes before Kinsey has yet to be made,

and would be a fascinating project, limited space here dictates that the account contextualize rather than explore: my focus on the post-Kinsey virgin necessitates relating a *before* to her *after*, but this before needs to be lightly sketched rather than delineated in the detail it merits. This brief sketch, then, will attempt to provide an indication of the main differences between the two stereotypes on either side of the cusp of the second Kinsey report, contending that the significant change is the emphasis placed on sex within the narrative. This is achieved through comparison of various versions of the film *State Fair*, from 1933 (Henry King), 1945 (Walter Lang) and 1962 (Jose Ferrer), in order to illustrate the increased attention to the sexual initiation in the last version.

After this short introduction, the section divides into two. The first part provides a general background to the films to be studied, looking at the media storm provoked by the second Kinsey report, and the ways in which popular culture perpetuated its focus on female sexual experience, repeatedly returning to the Report's main revelation, that 50% of its sample of unmarried 30 year old females had willingly flouted the double standard. The uproar that greeted this news seems to suggest that one piquing point about this revelation was that it was a revelation, prompting the realisation that the basic problem with virginity is that no one can tell sexual status by looking.

The second half of this section will specifically examine how Hollywood films sought to deal with this problem, by attempting to make virginity visible, like an outfit that can be worn or a disguise that can be assumed. Special attention will be paid to the techniques of virginity's display through physical performance. Before this, the first chapter lays out the rules and tropes governing the mini

cycle of films which were being produced and distributed at the time which tap into cultural anxieties about the new desirous virgin. I call such films 'virginity dilemma' texts, and mean the name in a dual sense: both because diegetically they centre the conflicts felt by the unmarried yet desirous girl, and because, within the wider societal context, they illustrate the anxieties being experienced by the culture because of this figure. Interestingly, these films appear cross-generic, in that comic as well as melodramatic treatments of the woman's negotiation of the border of virginity/experience are found; as I will show, while the narratives of these film seem to accord with a genre-based rubric, aligning comedy with the maintenance of chastity and melodrama with its loss, the specific ways in which virginity is performed also correlate with the film's genre, indicating the transgressive potential and threat variously posed by women who do, or do not, act on their desires.

Throughout all the chapters in this section my intent will be to set the desirous virgin in her various contemporary contexts, in order to indicate her topical importance in the wider media to which the films were both alluding and adding levels of significance. This figure's location across a range of media contributed to her impact as an icon of contemporary anxiety and desire. Beginning as an abstract summation of data from a scientific report, she was invested with attributes and characteristics as speculation about her grew in the popular media, until finally she took on flesh in her embodiment by the star performers in the 'virginity dilemma' films. Arriving at prominence both across and through these various media accounts, the menacing and exciting persona of the desirous virgin provoked a variety of responses which attempted to deal with,

nullify, or occasionally celebrate her transgressive powers. This variety of reactions and strategies will be explored below.

Pre-Kinsey virgins

Unfortunately, there is no room here to consider sufficient film texts and supporting contextual material to provide an in-depth examination of the *presumably* more staid pre-Kinsey virgin, as I hope to do for her later desirous counterpart. My assumptions about assumptions about virginity before Kinsey therefore have to draw on a generalized awareness of various societal attitudes towards women and sexuality before 1953, rather than on a substantial body of work on specific filmic examples and their parallels in other contemporary media. Interestingly, such a substantial body of work by other scholars is not available for reference and consultation, since it has yet to be undertaken: the analysis of *representations* of female virginity has been rarely attempted within film studies. It is not specifically analysed or examined even in treatments of filmic women – when Higashi (1978), Staiger (1995), Doane (1991), Basinger (1999), Haskell, and even Hansen discuss early female roles, they may *mention* the virgin, but they *anatomize* the butterfly, vamp, flapper. These authors seem to share the perception that the ‘virgin’ is so self-explanatory, so straightforward and obvious a category, that she does not merit or need close attention.

Higashi's *Virgins, vamps and flappers* provides chapters on the latter two categories but although the former is mentioned in the title, there is no chapter dedicated to her, merely to two female actors who may be perceived to have played virgins: Mary Pickford and Lillian Gish. But the various women (or child-women, or girl-women) these two perform have differences between them – an

obvious and immediate contrast is Pickford's energy and ruddy health opposed to Gish's ethereal frailty. Not only do the virgin characteristics thus begin to proliferate, frustrating the stereotype's inclination towards establishing rigid binaries, but there has yet to be a full study of what other connotations can cluster round the early cinema virgin because of the personae of the stars who played her, and how different performances contribute further levels of meaning to the virgin character and her characteristics.

Noticeably, examination of the concept of virginity and its changing place and importance has been attempted within wider social and cultural histories as rarely as specific filmic examples of virgins have been explored. Despite the fact that that virginity (especially female virginity) has been such an important and contested area of cultural thought in America, it has tended to be dealt with as a side issue, on the rare occasions when it is dealt with at all. Even John D'Emilio and Estelle Freedman's important book, *Intimate Matters: A History Of Sexuality In America* (1988), which charts changing attitudes to and patterns of behaviour in sexual relations in the US across the first eighty or so years of the 20th century, has little to say on the subject.

While, then, as noted earlier, the stereotype should be differentiated from earlier and later incarnations as part of the work establishing it within its own specific historical context, this has not been possible for the late fifties virgin under examination here. In making assumptions about the pre-Kinsey virgin I have therefore drawn on works which impact in a tangential manner on the specific figure of the late fifties desirous virgin, including several histories which mention virginity in the context of the person and iconography of Mary the Virgin, and

within religions more widely (Warner, 2000; Laven, 2003; Abbott, 2003).

Haskell's points about early cinema (1974, 42-89, especially 49-50) and the virgin persona of Lillian Gish in particular, proved to intersect with Dorothy Yost Deegan's study of *The Stereotype Of The Single Woman In American Novels* (Deegan, 1951) as well as to relate to points about the character of the virgin heroine in Victorian melodrama, as briefly explored in David Grimsted's *Melodrama Unveiled: American Theater And Culture 1800-1850* (1968, 172-176). Popular fiction, from Sinclair Lewis's *Main Street* (first published 1920) to *The Bell Jar* by Sylvia Plath (1963), via Bett Hooper's *Virgins In Cellophane* (1932), Dawn Powell's *The Bride's House* (1929) and Barbara Probst Solomon's *The Beat Of Life* (1960) also provided valuable insights, in their characters of one-time virgins, about the changing attitudes to female virginity at least espoused by these writers, if not by their contemporary societies. One study alone attempted to depict a broad swathe of history of the virgin: Kathleen Coyne Kelly's *Performing Virginity and Testing Chastity in the Middle Ages* (2000), drew out strands of significance from the Virgin Mary's image and related these not only to female saints and martyrs of the Middle Ages, but also, in a brief final chapter, to contemporary virgins in film and television. While Kelly's readings of the importance of virginity in *Beverly Hills 90210* and *Hair* (Milos Forman, 1972) might be scanty, her attempt to relate these texts back to source ideas about virginity and chastity is all the more laudable for its rarity.

This thesis, unfortunately, cannot begin to do justice to the virgin's longer-term significance, or to redressing her habitual neglect by exploring her representation at different moments in twentieth-century American culture. My focus is the desirous virgin female that arose in Hollywood cinema and other

popular media texts after the publication of the second Kinsey Report. While there would doubtless be many elements of continuity and similarity between the pre- and post-Kinsey virgins if the former were given detailed analysis, the significant point, for this research, is that this continuity, this consistency, was elided, smoothed away or ignored by contemporary media accounts, which persisted in seeing as new and radically different the desirous virgin of the late 50s. Maureen Turim points out with reference to the so-called 'New Look' designed and introduced by Christian Dior, that it was not the (debatable) newness of the New Look that made it important, but the fact that consumers bought into the idea that it was new (Turim, 1986, 6); similarly, with the new desirous virgin being promulgated at this point in the late 50s in American popular culture, it is not her newness or potential difference from the pre-Kinsey virgin that matters so much as the public perception of that newness and radical difference.

Thus the importance of the desirous virgin at this time is not its reworkings of old traditional assumptions about virgins but rather its insistence of being a radical break from these traditional views. The films and other media which featured the virgin dilemma scenario at this time consciously underlined the newness of the problems besetting the heroine, even though the 50s could hardly have been said to have invented desire. While Rosello may therefore maintain that it is generally part of the job of the stereotype to seem timeless, fixed and immutable - 'stereotypes parade as eternal bits of human wisdom' (Rosello, 1998, 33) - with the late 50s incarnation of the virgin the significance is that she looks new and topical, she represents change and challenge to the status quo. This still partially supports Rosello's argument of the stereotype's

association with fixity, since this new version of the virgin implies that no unmarried women had been having sex before her, another monolithic view of the past based on unsubstantiable assumptions. The desirous virgin does thus imply stasis even though she displaces this onto the immediate past to contrast with her own embodiment of change. This is necessary since the new image could hardly claim to be so different if the contexts around her were varied and contingent: she needs a fixed background against which to project her difference. While then, close examination of the earlier filmic virgin might reveal that there has always been a strand of meaning about her nascent or incipient sexuality, the later 50s films and other media texts which are the focus of this thesis promote the belief that, in her own awareness of her desires, and her potential for acting on them, the new virgin represented a definite break with traditional female attitudes.

The Kinsey Report on female sexuality can thus be seen as a significant border which alters the public perception of the virgin, resulting in a change in perceptions about the stereotype. The revolutionary scale of the change can be best appreciated with actual examples; this introductory chapter therefore concludes with a comparison of the virgin characters – significantly both female and male – as portrayed in the various versions of the film *State Fair*, positioned on either side of this border.

***State Fair* 1933, 1945 and 1962**

Contrasting the latest version of *State Fair* with the middle, 1945, incarnation supports my contention that by 1962 virginity had emerged as a hot topic; comparing it to the earliest screen treatment in 1933, however, fascinatingly posits the possibility of a longer tradition of desirous virginal females. While all three films reproduce the pig-and-pickle plot which keeps the Frake parents busy at the fair, they differ in their treatments of the romances of the two pairs of younger lovers, Margie Frake and Pat the reporter (called Jerry in the 1962 film), Wayne Frake and Emily the showgirl.

All three versions of the film maintain the accent on the younger Frakes' amatory experiences but significantly differ in varying degrees, both from their source novel and from each other, in the portrayal of the desirous females. The novel grants Margie space to describe the desires which are besetting her. Having been seduced by Pat, her new beau, Margie admits the strength of the sensations she is experiencing:

She tore into her heart and tried to find shame and penitence; she found only ecstasy and an anticipation which shimmered like a thin flame from her thighs to her armpits. He had been so gentle, and so sure of her, perfectly aware that her desire was at least equal to his own, and yet he knew that she was not a loose woman – he knew that he was the first.
(Stong, 1932, 100)

Interestingly, both good and bad girl in the 1945 version have their sexuality considerably downplayed, compared to both the earlier and later versions: while it is clear here that Margie (Jeanne Crain) does not yield to Pat (Dana Andrews) – who, indeed, does not press her to do so – it is also made much more

ambiguous whether the relationship between Wayne (Dick Haymes) and Emily (Vivian Blaine) has been consummated. Unlike the 1932 source novel, which daringly showed both brother and sister yielding to strangers at the fair, the 1945 film prefers to make the relationships more romantic than sexual.

Significantly, however, the earliest film version does follow the book in suggesting the consummation of both relationships, and keeps the novel's point that it is the girl in each couple who realizes that the relationship cannot outlast the fair. While in the book this pragmatism was seen to be realistic, the story ending with all four lovers separated, in all three film versions the downbeat nature of this narrative closure is partially ameliorated: while the Wayne/Emily story ends with the lovers' break-up, Margie is reunited with Pat when he comes to her small home town.

While in the 1962 version there is a return, after the 1945's more milder treatment, to the emphasis on sexual experience present in the novel and the 1933 film, this latest *State Fair* intriguingly glosses the topic in a specifically contemporary way to produce a 'crisis of virginity' moment, as so often found in the texts I am designating 'virginity dilemma' films. Not only do both son and daughter of the family get a virginity scenario, as in the novel, but the father (Tom Ewell) is also given a scene in which he can reflect on his initiatory sexual experience. The 1962 film uses this moment, which does not derive from the novel, to support the idea that Wayne and Emily do not belong together since she has yielded sexually to him and thus forms part of the great continuum of girls that men may make love to but are not suitable for marrying. The film not only condemns the girl who permits and participates in full coitus, however, but

attempts to celebrate, *in song*, the ‘technical virgin’ who has learnt how to pay out lesser intimacies in order to reel in her catch. As shall be seen, the attitudes the film adopts towards active female sexuality chime with assumptions and anxieties circulating in the contemporary media; those other current tropes that can also be discovered in many of the topical texts – the double standard, the fundamental opposition of men and women, and their goals, the urge to divide women into clear binaries – can all be found in the 1962 version of *State Fair*.

A principal difference between the two earlier and the last (to date) versions of *State Fair* is in the treatment of Margie’s character. Janet Gaynor plays her as young girl awakening to the possibilities of sexual passion, tender enough to weep at being parted from her lover, pragmatic enough to refuse to marry him. While Pat’s agency is, in the 1933 film as in the source novel, the decisive factor in the initiation scene (...‘he caught her above her knees and brought her down, her eyes towards the rift in the trees and the stars....‘Ah, God!’ she cried, in anguish and delight’. Stong, 1932, 83.) Margie’s active participation in the relationship is confirmed by her keenness to see her lover again, to spend every possible moment with him before the inevitable parting.

By contrast, Jeanne Crain portrays Margie as a dreamy girl, prey to conflicting emotions about the suitability of Harry, her comic steady boyfriend, but, once she has met Pat at the fair, untroubled by this new romance, self-possessed and sure of what she wants – him. While he warns her on one occasion that he’d ‘be no good for you, no good at all’, the audience is shown no sign of their unsuitability as a match and at the end Pat duly arrives at her home to marry her. Overall Crain’s portrayal shows Margie as a ‘normal’ teenage girl, romantic

but level-headed, kissable but still chaste since she is not pressed – or seemingly tempted – to succumb.

Pamela Tiffin's Margie, contrastingly, does experience the internal conflict over submission to which the desirous virgin was topically prey; while tempted to yield, the film shows her learning to manage Jerry's approaches, manipulating them to her own advantage. There is nothing in Tiffin's portrayal of the frank acceptance of reciprocal passion evinced in Gaynor's performance. Because of its location within the period of fretting about female sexuality, the film instead takes many pains to show how good girl Margie learns from her mother to modulate overt refusal to ensure she gets what she wants: marriage. This scene is a very telling one since it puts Melissa, the mother, into the position of advocating technical virginity and that detached and calculating approach to permitting intimacies.

Margie tells her mother about her 'boy trouble'. Melissa gives her advice in a song which does not appear in the 1945 version, untroubled as it is by sex:

Margie: He kept trying to kiss me, but I wouldn't let him, exactly....I said no, just plain flat no.... I'm right.....Don't you think?

Melissa: I'm not sure....(sings:)

When I was just your age my mother taught me lots
She taught me how to clean a floor and how to scour pots
She taught me one thing more....
A word that men abhor.....

Never say no to a man
Simply avoid saying yes to him
That leaves the ultimate guess to him
Darling, don't ever say no.

Men find the negative rough
Give an affirmative grin to him

You needn't *really* give in to him
Don't use the positive no.

No is a mean monosyllable fit for a horse
A dog, or a cow, or a calf
A nod and a smile would cut the divorce
Statistics by just about half!

'Maybe', 'perhaps', 'if I can'
These are some words that will do as well
Darling, he's sure to love you as well
Never say no to a man.

Throughout this song Margie listens with an expression of mild bewilderment at this counter-traditional advice, until she 'gets it' and begins to smile when her mother stresses the 'really' of the line, 'you needn't really give in to him'. I find it interesting that this advice is couched as being passed down from mother to daughter through generations in a domestic and familial context, the techniques for handling men equated with other household chores significantly involving both cleanliness and repetition. In this way Margie is being taught how to keep repeatedly postponing the moment when 'the ultimate guess' has to receive an answer, keeping on saying no, and therefore being, and keeping her partner, 'clean'.

These edicts correspond to contemporary notions about female sexuality which the figure of the desirous virgin importantly contested; these ideas posited, as shall be explored more closely shortly, that the natural state of female sexuality was a detached and calculating one divorced from the woman's own sensuality: she, thus free, was able to manipulate her man's feelings in order to achieve her goal of marriage. Connected to this was the concept of the 'technical virgin', who had gained some experience but not permitted the ultimate intimacy; the technical virgin manipulated both her partner's desires and the assumed border between sexual ignorance and knowledge, and was feared as

the controlling mastermind behind the plan to snare men with the gradual ceding of physical possession, cynically retaining the hymen as the final bargaining chip.

After this, Margie's next scene with Jerry shows that she may have profited from this advice. He is pressing her as usual to let him kiss her, but she wants to find out his intentions; when she asks him: 'Does that mean you love me? Answer, because it's important to me'. He responds:

Jerry: Of course I love you.

Margie: Then I don't care what happens! I know you wouldn't lie, so I don't care. I don't!

During the conversation he has also been nuzzling her ear, as she turned away from him in what could be read as exasperation at his levity or despair at her own desires: for in this scene it seems that Margie does desire Jerry too. As he nuzzles her, her mouth opens, her eyes glaze, then close, and she pants.

Interestingly, however, when she begins to kiss him back, in the middle of the last line of her speech above, Jerry backs off. The film seems ambivalent about whether he has been shamed by her naïve trust in him ('I know you wouldn't lie') or startled, even made afraid, by her active response; perhaps he simply wants her to 'let' him, without joining in herself.

Meanwhile, the relationship of Wayne and Emily is allowed to become fully sexual in the 1962 version. Here Emily (Ann-Margret) wears tight-fitting clothes cut to show off her bottom and legs, and Wayne (Pat Boone) displays his naked chest and muscular, tanned, arms; both dance in their musical numbers with an accent on pelvic gyrations which simultaneously suggests and anticipates their

eventual sexual union. Before the fade-out which signifies their coupling, they sing about the mutuality of their desire. If an eager woman is being presented as somehow threatening to the experienced man, as in the Jerry/Margie scene, the sole recourse of such an eager woman becomes the male virgin who is too inexperienced himself to know he should be fearful. This then is the double standard at its most naked: each man needing to find but destined to betray the woman who can initiate him into his rightful state of experience, the woman thus possessing a knowledge which is necessary for the male goal of maturation but fatal to the female one of marriage.

The endorsement of this message seems to be the motive for permitting Abel a reminiscence of *his* first girl, a relationship which is spoken of in language which again evokes the domestic and ideas about dirt and cleanliness:

Once, a long time ago, I ran into a girl... I kept saying to myself, I hope this never ends, I'll die if it does, but it did end one night, with lipstick all over my collar, and I didn't die.....Of course, I wouldn't mention this to your mother. Just to get even she might not iron my shirts.

The fact of the affair as before and therefore outside marriage is metaphorically evoked by the sexualized lipstick which dirties Abel's shirt; Melissa, his wife, is now responsible for keeping these cleaned and ironed. The bad girl leaves a stain which it is the later duty of the good girl to ensure does not appear. The bad girl - significantly, Abel cannot remember her name and predicts that Wayne will ultimately forget Emily's - is not suitable for cleaning the shirts nor Melissa for dirtying them; this underlines the contemporary binarization of women into groups based on their sexual or domestic functions.

While the just pre-Code 1933 version presents the story as directly as it can, indicating through costume, *mise-en-scène* and fade-outs that both young

couples succumb to temptation, there is no accompanying anxiety about the events at the fair or suggestions carried by script that the eminently likeable Margie has fallen or become dirty or bad in giving in to her impulses. Similarly, by removing the sexual aspect almost entirely, the 1945 film gives us none of the fretting about female sexuality, active or controlling, found in the 1962 version.

The 1962 version's greater narrative and visual accent on virginity and desire indicates the changes that had come about in the contemporary media context after the Kinsey Report on female sexuality. Margie is nearer in her 1962 incarnation to the 1945 persona in not yielding than to the novel or 1933 character, who both do, but while maintaining her chastity has lost that cheerful self-possession which marked Jeanne Crain's characterisation: what marks the latest Margie is knowledge of her physical body and its urgent promptings. On the post-Kinsey side of the divide, a film scenario involving a man and a girl thus inevitably suggested that not only love, but sex would become a narrative strand. In this way it can perhaps be posited that the second Kinsey Report took America's metaphoric virginity; it took away assumptions and ignorance and supplied knowledge and experience. As is often supposed to result from the initial act also, afterwards there was a certain amount of regret and an impossible wish to return to the former happier days of blissful unknowing. Before moving to discuss in detail those films which openly centred this sexual strand of narrative, dedicating screen time to the desirous virgin, her temptations to yield and the potential consequences of having done so, attention must be turned to the Report itself, its major findings and public rebuttals, in order to see how the prevalent stereotype of the virginal female was altered by it from the insouciant Jeanne Crain kind to the type embodied by

the panting Pamela Tiffin. While space does not permit full exploration of the pre-Kinsey virgin, it is hoped that having indicated Janet Gaynor's cheerful yet passionate nature, much more in keeping with the 1932 novel than either of the later two film versions, it can be seen that the late 50s figure of the desirous virgin was new in her immediate context only; it would be fascinating to chart the progress of this specific stereotype from the earliest days of cinema until her disappearance, presumably around the time of the anxiety-laden war years.

Does she or doesn't she? Contextualizing the virgin 1953-64

While I have been arguing that it is the second Kinsey Report which provides the boundary point at which virgin stereotypes diverge, there has not so far been the opportunity for an analysis of the Report's key findings or the seismic shocks these sent out through the popular media. This chapter therefore seeks to provide an examination of the Report and responses to it. This should help establish some contextual background for the changes observable in the virgin, as noted in the comparison of the various *State Fair* innocents, as well as pointing forward to the exploration of the 'virginity dilemma' films in the following chapter.

The period under consideration is bookended by the bestsellers of two charismatic media personalities, Alfred Kinsey and Helen Gurley Brown. While the scientist and the advertising copywriter-cum-eventual editor of *Cosmopolitan* were both skilled players of the media, willing to court notoriety to boost sales, they can also both be seen contributing to contemporary challenges to the double standard; although *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female* (1953) and *Sex And The Single Girl* (1962) inhabit very different literary

spheres, both were top sellers in the period under examination and both can be read as 'how-to' books instructing on, and celebrating, active female sexuality.

What Kinsey revealed and Gurley Brown later insisted was that 'nice girls do' (Gurley Brown, 1962, 208); the Report itself commented on the fact that what was popularly assumed to be the norm of pre-marital chastity for women had proven, in the study's sample at least, to be erroneous:

Because of [the] public condemnation of pre-marital coitus, one might believe that such contacts would be rare among American females and males. But this is only the overt culture, the things that people openly profess to believe and to do. Our previous report (1948) on the male has indicated how far publicly expressed attitudes may depart from the realities of behaviour – the covert culture, what males really do. We may now examine the pre-marital coital behavior of the female sample which has been available for this study.
(Kinsey, 1953, 285).

Despite this awareness of societal hypocrisy, there did seem to be a feeling that, before the 'K' bomb was dropped, there had been a broad assumption in America that an unmarried girl was likely to be a virgin. It is possible that this was actually a post hoc invention, a nostalgic position more mourned in its perceived demise than ever adhered to. What does seem clear is that, from the moment Kinsey published *Sexual Behavior In The Human Female*, the significant points were his 50% revelation, the revelation that this was a revelation, and an all-pervading interest in and anxiety over attempting to work out *how* who 'had' and who hadn't could be perceived.

A metaphorical question mark thus became affixed over the head of every young woman. Advertisers were quick to tap into this change in the zeitgeist: Clairol began to use the tag 'Does she or doesn't she?' to sell their hair colourings in 1955, making the phrase a popular culture cliché. If the account of

the slogan's genesis is accurate, (Polykoff, 1975) its female author had first invented the tag in the 1930s but did not feel the social climate was ready for a catchphrase that hinged on such a salacious question. After Kinsey's report, however, she felt the time was right, and the Clairol tagline was used, tapping into and echoing the widespread interrogation of female sexual status.

While one advertisement could not be expected to have as great an effect on the mass consciousness as the Kinsey Report, the salient findings of which reached many people who never actually picked up the books themselves, the Clairol tag still attained a place in the zeitgeist, part of everyday parlance and subject to the same kinds of jokes and allusions as the Report. The slogan both links to the contemporary questioning of female sexual agency and advertizes itself as advancing that agency: the hair dye, a product which the woman actively elects to use, makes her more sexually attractive. Polykoff's advert evokes a range of contradictory ideas: the artificial hair dye is sold on the naturalness of the colour it creates; the invisibility of the product is celebrated within the advert drawing attention to it; the woman using the product can hope no one will know about her usage 'for sure'; the child often present in the pictures underlines the naturalness of the coloured hair and attests that comparison will not reveal the product's usage, since Clairol does not make hair look dyed; the child also shows that the woman has had/is having sex but implies that she is having it within the socially sanctioned space of marriage (Figure 3).

Polykoff's advert plays with this range of ambiguous connotations, paralleling the use of hair dye and sexual experience. Teasing out the advert's connotations further brings age into the equation, since the most common use

for colorants is to hide the grey that come with age. With this reading, the advert acknowledges that the user is old enough to use it, needs it to cover up the grey, and is therefore a woman, simultaneously suggesting that the product denies age, making her appear a girl again. What the product thus sells is an appearance of youth, a state of ambiguity, where the consumer can be either a girl or a woman, either a virgin or experienced; what it ultimately promises is the enigma its advert enshrines: no one will be able to tell *anything* for sure, piquing curiosity and attracting attention.

The Clairol tag was just one of a proliferation of questions at this time addressing the figure of the woman: does she or doesn't she?; should she or shouldn't she? (Johnson, 1959, 60); is she or isn't she? (Gurley Brown, 1962, 64); will she or won't she? (*Playboy*, 1956, 13). This enigma centring around the woman and her troublesome sexuality prompted as much of a wave of articles and investigations as its catalyst, the Kinsey report. By 1959, Nora Johnson, writing an article on 'Sex and the College Girl' for the highbrow magazine *Atlantic Monthly*, could note that:

The modern American woman is one of the most discussed, written-about, sore subjects to come along in ages. She has been said to be domineering, frigid, neurotic, repressed, and unfeminine. (Johnson, 1959, 57)

How had Kinsey's data so unerringly tapped in to contemporary American anxieties about female sexuality that its publication set off this seismic ripple of female interrogation throughout the media? How had a dry scientific account, running to over 800 pages, gained such a hold on the public imagination that one contemporary writer compared it to racy romantic literature:

The important thing about the Kinsey reports is not only what they disclose about sexual behaviour but how hungrily we are devouring them. Men and women are reading Kinsey now as avidly as they read *Forever Amber* and *Gone With The Wind*, and sometimes perhaps for the same reason. (Freeman in Ellis, 1954, 61)

The writer's comparison of the scientific Reports with these two lush fictional classics is arresting because of the vast generic difference in the material. That people could come to Kinsey in order to learn about new scenarios of desire and techniques of satisfaction confirms the Report's potential as a how-to manual and explains its positioning on the best-seller list in the line of previous risqué novels.

'Freud + Gallup = Kinsey'

This joke, quoted in *Time* on the Female volume's release, accurately captures Kinsey's ideology: his belief that sexuality was at the centre of human life chimes with Freud, while his obsession with recording the number of people who had done such a thing to this or that level of satisfaction, is quantitative research much like that carried out for George Gallup's American Institute of Public Opinion. Further on in the *Time* article, however, was a statement that summed up the view of many, in concluding that taxonomy could not replace morality: knowing how many people had performed a specific sexual act did not make such performance acceptable:

In earlier ages of Western civilization, the dominant question about an opinion was never how many people held it, but whether it was right or wrong. (*Time*, 24 August 1953, 40)

This entirely countered Kinsey's motivations in enumerating and charting people's sexual experiences, since he felt that if sufficient numbers of performers could be shown enjoying an act, prevailing public morality on it would have to change. While according to one of his biographers (Jones, 1997,

677) it was his own homosexual inclinations that inspired this belief and the work it obsessively drove, Kinsey met with no easier acceptance for his findings on women's sexuality.

Kinsey's 1953 report on *Sexual Behavior Of The Human Female* achieved three key things, although only one was broadly discussed and circulated in the media storm that greeted the book's publication. This was the most obviously newsworthy revelation, that 50% of the unmarried 30 year olds in his sample had ignored the traditional idea that 'nice girls don't', and had done. This finding elicited not only solemn, in-depth analyses and counter-claims in serious periodicals and further scientific tomes, but also intensely curious examinations and requests for more information from women's and family magazines, cartoons, jokes and smutty stories in many different media (Jones, 1997, 711). This media storm seems both a reaction to, and an attempt to assuage, the anxiety the revelation evoked societally.

The key point was that Kinsey's revelation was a revelation, people realising that not only might assumptions about the likely chastity of unmarried women be incorrect, but also that there was no definite way to know, unless those women were feeling confiding. 'Bad girls' and 'good girls', contrary to traditional belief, were not easily distinguished by eye. It was in this new climate of uncertainty about the possibility of ocular proof that questions about sexual status achieved a currency which went beyond advertising tags to become part of everyday speech. As the 1955 Clairol advert grasped with its 'Does she or doesn't she?' tagline, and as Helen Gurley Brown later echoed in her 1962 bestseller, *Sex and the Single Girl*, asking, 'Is she or isn't she?', the crucial point was that such questions needed to be posed at all, the vital information was not

simply there to access. Far from possessing a clear-cut transparency, virginity resisted scrutiny, provoked interrogation. These questions created their own follow-on inquiries, pushing inquiries such as 'why can't we tell by looking?' and 'who has and who hasn't?' into the popular media, where they were taken up and given vivid exploration in the Hollywood films about the central desirous female, those texts forming the 'virginity dilemma' cycle.

Kinsey's other two achievements were less frequently noted by the contemporary media, but were no less significant. These were the mere fact of studying female sexual behaviour at all, and the charting of the different activities that made up this behaviour. By the very act of taking women's sexual activities as the topic of the book, Kinsey assumed a parity between women and men, who had been the subject of the first report in 1948. This equality between the sexes when it came to the importance of sexual matters, went against the prevailing double standard which held that women had less intense, if any, desires. Moreover, by listing the variety of sexual activities that the women in his sample chose to indulge in besides actual coitus, Kinsey's report informed the reader how to experience various sexual pleasures without giving up virginity through penetrative sex, noting such techniques as 'Simple kissing....deep kissing....breast stimulation....mouth-breast contacts...manual stimulation of the female genitalia....manual stimulation of the male genitalia....oral contacts with female genitalia...oral contacts with male genitalia....genital apposition'. (Kinsey, 1953, 251-259). This taxonomy of various activities also very importantly served to expose a hazy nebulosity over what 'virginity' meant or counted for. If the word was used as mental shorthand to indicate the non-experience of penetrative sex, then this was not

being breached by such 'petting' activities as those cited above. If, however, it was being endowed with some sense of moral value, an intrinsic guarantor of innocence, purity or integrity, then *any* sexual experience nullified it.

An uneasiness about the notion that virginity is subject to gradations of loss, rather than being an either/or, that is, to its supporting a taxonomy rather than demanding a dichotomy, is observable in the concept of the 'technical virgin', a woman who had done (permitted) everything but the act of coitus itself. If virginity was supposed to matter, to be a guarantee of the woman's lack of sexual history, then *technical* virginity undid this guarantee. The technical virgin was seen to be a woman who had arrived at her own taxonomy of what she could do and yield apart from the ultimate intimacy, and still retain her virgin status:

Each girl seems to have her own peculiar and rather precise idea of just how far she can go without losing it'. ('Smith', 1954, 9).

Kinsey's Report thus had, in effect, informed America that its traditionally-held popular cultural concept of the 'technical virgin', as found in such sources as *Playboy*, as in the quotation above, was factually-based and statistically proven; worryingly, therefore, the division between virgin/post-virgin could not be so clear-cut, if it were individual women, rather than societal consensus, who were deciding the definition of 'virginity'. Furthermore, a belief that women were somehow manipulating this borderline, this metaphorical hymen, between the possible meanings of the word, was prevalent at the time. If technical virginity undid the guarantee of absolute innocence, it also undermined the double standard that assumed a man's right to his bride's chastity.

One further strand of contemporary anxiety is observable woven into this fretting over 'technical virgins', the belief in women's detached exploitation of their sexual attractiveness, of their willingness to grant or withhold sexual favours. It was feared that the detached female gave in a little at a time in order to draw the man in, trapping him by implying she would eventually assent to full sex, but holding this back as a final bargaining point until she had gained marriage. This very prevalent notion makes women frighteningly superior to men in their ability to direct and restrain their libidinous desires and can be observed as an underlying assumption in late 50s writings about the new sexual morality.

In summary, then, Kinsey's volume was offering advice to women on how to accept and enjoy their own sexual agency. A reading of Kinsey's Report as an advice manual, a how-to, is possible since he provides such in-depth information: not only does the Report provide data on various techniques of masturbation, noticeably in more detail than the descriptions of positions for marital coitus, it also provides an excuse for it apart from solitary sexual satisfaction, when stating that the figures indicated women who had masturbated to orgasm were more likely to respond to coitus successfully in marriage (Kinsey, 1953, 172): thus masturbation was good for the happiness of the future couple. While it is possible to link this emphasis on married sex in the Report to the closure of the 'virginity dilemma' films, many of which similarly emphasize marriage at, and as, the end of single struggles over sexual relations, Kinsey could also be seen as establishing the importance of satisfaction for both partners within a relationship, while attempting to

counteract the traditional view of masturbation as something harmful, juvenile or male-only.

Not only was Kinsey, therefore, by counting women's activities, making them count, he was also, by providing numerical information, showing how widespread things were, thus removing another potential layer of guilt from the reader of the report. While *Time* and others might denounce certain acts as right or wrong no matter how many people were performing them, Kinsey's Report could still reduce feelings of being uniquely deprived in the reader finding her own self-pleasuring techniques shared by a number of other women. Whether his statistic-laden Report actually helped women in their appreciation of the right to sexual satisfaction, as letters to Kinsey suggest (Jones, 1997, 703-4) it is indisputable that Kinsey, through deeming women's sexual activities worthy of discussion and minute record, propelled the trope of the desirous woman into the public arena, to be debated, denied, or supported, making her an obsessive object of attention and scrutiny across boundaries of high and low culture. Contemporary questionings and accounts of the new desirous virgin female appeared in texts as diverse as *Playboy*, *Esquire* and *Atlantic Monthly*, evolving over the period under examination until Gurley Brown's 1962 text, *Sex and the Single Girl* appeared as the apogee of the new emphasis on female sexual agency. The *Atlantic Monthly* article, 'Sex And The College Girl', published in 1959, brings to the surface many of the contemporary anxieties and assumptions about the desirous virgin who is a central focus of this thesis. The idea that men and women are natural enemies with opposing ambitions, the double standard, and the concept of taxonomizing or dichotomizing, all

feature in her argument, as does the prevailing contemporary idea, that sex is something men want and women grant or withhold.

'Sex and the college girl'

While Johnson's article begins and ends with generalized musings on the state of her generation, the real substance of her piece lies between these points, with an examination of the rules of contemporary coupling. Johnson exhibits both traditional assumptions - sex is something boys want and girls grant or withhold - and more counter-traditional notions, such as ascribing the wish for monogamy to the *male*. What her article also interestingly reveals, however, is an awareness of the nebulousness of virginity as a category, thus chiming with the contemporary awareness of and anxiety over the idea of the technical virgin.

Johnson invents a college Everygirl, Susie, and her boyfriend Joe, as examples of the kinds of subjects involved in the sexual negotiations she is writing about. Significantly, it is Joe and not Susie who is said to want a steady relationship leading to marriage, rather than a bachelor life of polygamy. The boy is said to want a reliable girlfriend, not for romantic reasons, but to spare himself:

...the bother of starting the whole sex cycle over again, with discussions and possibly arguments about how far he can go how soon. He wants it all understood, with the lady reasonably willing if possible. (This depends on his and her notions of what constitutes a nice girl). (Johnson, 1959, 57)

By agreeing to have Susie as his steady, Joe can thus be sure of an (at least partial) outlet for his sexual urges; while Johnson here seems to conform to the idea that boys want and girls grant, her parenthesis carries a deeper meaning,

which she then goes on to develop. Susie is posited throughout as more aware of the mechanics of the relationship than the boy, which fits with the contemporary idea of the scheming female detached from her body, able to manipulate it and the man who desires it in order to attain her goal of marriage, but does not so readily accord with the simultaneous belief that girls crave romance, needing affection and a steady relationship before they can be relaxed enough to yield. Here Susie is seen permitting intimacies gradually, not because of any need for a relationship, from deficiency of desire, prudishness or morals on her part, but in order to convince Joe that she is 'a nice girl'. If she permitted penetrative sex he would not respect her; therefore Susie feigns reluctance in order to reassure Joe that what he wants is worth having. This is very reminiscent of the view laid bare in a 1958 *Playboy* article, where the only woman worth the investment of 'time, energy and cash' ('Will she or won't she?', 13) is the mid-term eventual yielder, who appears to need gradual persuasion.

Susie is no stranger to desire, but her experiences are not to be acknowledged since they would counteract the pose of virginity that she is adopting. A longish passage from the article is worth quoting since it develops these themes and others interestingly:

Susie has, on the whole, kept her chastity. She is no demimondaine, and she wants to be reasonably intact on her wedding night. She had an unfortunate experience at Dartmouth, when she and her date were both in their cups, but she barely remembers anything about it and hasn't seen the boy since. She has also done some heavy petting with boys she didn't care about, because she reasoned that it wouldn't matter what they thought of her. She has been in love twice (three times if you count Joe) once in high school and once in her freshman year with the most divine Yale senior, whom she let do practically anything (except have intercourse) and who disappeared for no reason after two months of torrid dating...

She has kept Joe fairly well at arm's length, giving in a little at a time, because she wanted him to respect her. He didn't really excite her sexually, but probably he would if they had some privacy. Nothing was less romantic than the front porch of the house...or in the back of someone's car with only fifteen minutes before she had to be in. Anyway, it might be just as well.

Susie and Joe have decided that they will sleep together when it is feasible, since by now Joe knows she is a nice girl and it's all right... She will sleep with Joe, if they become engaged, because he wants to, and if she becomes pregnant, they can get married sooner. (Johnson, 1959, 58-59)

These passages testify to the force of the contemporary double standard, and the prevalence of the idea of 'technical virginity'. They also indicate how women could manipulate the boundaries of the good/bad girl dichotomy which these notions both spoke to, the double standard in attempting to impose such binary categories, and technical virginity in subverting them. The account of Susie's sexual history is a fascinating one since it indicates the topical masquerade of chastity girls were adopting whilst still going about the business of sexual experimentation.

Susie can believe herself to be fairly virginal because her experiences have been with men who are either no longer around, or who seem to be, reading between the lines, socially inferior. She maintains the stance of the virgin with Joe who counts because he is marriageable material, and can do so without too much awareness of hypocrisy because of the circumstances of her learning about sex. The intimacies permitted when drunk with the boy at Dartmouth College do not count to her, both because she is now unaware of them and he is not still on the scene, in other words, she remains innocent because she cannot remember her experience, and there is no one around to tell her (or indeed anyone else) about it. Thus her reputation is intact both internally and

externally. The casuistry at work here is probably not unique; indeed, Johnson's account indicates that this is a common state of affairs for the college girl. Interestingly, though, the extent of the intellectual negotiations Susie undertakes to maintain the illusion of inexperience undercuts the concept of purity and chastity. These become not qualities in themselves but goods on the market, cynically not devalued if no one has seen them being handled.

Johnson's assertion that Susie has petted with boys who didn't matter contradicts the traditional assumption that girls need a romantic attachment to their partners before being persuaded to have some kind of sexual relations; Susie has experimented with 'boys she didn't care about' (58). Presumably, this is because they are not marriage material: if they were, she would care about them. A further point against traditional assumptions on female feelings is the 'torrid dating' (58) Susie enjoys with her Yale, indicating that she can know desire. While she cannot imagine why he disappears after two months, the reader can perhaps posit that Susie has become a little too keen on this boy, has become sexually excited and not remembered to say no gradually, but has yielded to all but intercourse too readily. Tradition asserts itself again when Johnson says the Yale boy was allowed to 'do practically anything' (58): here again sexual intimacy is something boys want and act upon and women withhold or, permitting, have acted upon them. Having forgotten to pay out the line gradually to hook the Yale boy in - as she is doing with Joe - because she has become sexually or romantically hooked herself, Susie loses the potential value she might have as a wife, having proven herself to be not respectable; by then refusing to fulfil the only function left for her, as a 'bad girl' who would permit full sex, she gives her Yale boy reason to dump her. Susie is being more

cautious with Joe, not risking being dumped because of mismanaging her sexuality. This is why Johnson feels 'it might be just as well' (58) that Joe does not excite Susie since she wants to retain her detachment and her hold on him, which means sublimating her own desires.

The final paragraph of the quotation indicates that Kinsey's findings from his sample were indeed indicative of the larger society, and that pre-marital female chastity was not as firmly maintained as has been previously assumed. Susie is preparing to sleep with Joe 'because he wants to' (59) - the traditional assigning of desire to the male - and she feels secure enough in the relationship not to fear his imminent departure if she became pregnant. While the traditional assumptions about female sexual dormancy seem to be upheld in Susie's behaviour here, they are undercut by the previous revelations about her willing experimentation with other boys and her skilful playing of Joe - who will sleep with her when her gradual ceding of ground to him has persuaded him that she is a 'nice girl'. This endorses the Kinsey and Gurley Brown idea that 'nice girls do' but significantly also seems to ironize it: Susie can be seen to be manipulating the concept of the 'nice girl' since she is consciously performing reluctance in order to gain a later goal. Here the girl can even be seen needing to be more experienced than her boy in order to feign inexperience convincingly, and avoid things she knows will arouse her too much so she gives in, losing his respect.

Because, then, of society's prevailing double standard, such calculating behaviour from its female members seems to be mandated, as they are required to calculate desire, map it onto a scale, and then permit its indulgence

to certain degrees at different periods. While the article does not overtly lay the blame for such calculation on society, it does acknowledge that girls have little to guide them in their relationships with the opposite sex, and that boys' attitudes do not help at all. Here we find again the contemporary trope of the dichotomy, as the male view of women is resolutely organized around two poles, just as Susie's Yale boy had believed:

[Men] divide girls into two categories, good and bad: the bad one have obvious functions, and the good ones are to be married (Johnson, 1959, 59).

While the male view of women is binarized in this way, Johnson's article provides evidence that the contrasting contemporary habit of taxonomizing could obtain when women looked at men; if the boys in her article are reduced to the two categories of boyfriends and the more dangerous 'intellectual-amoral type of man' (60), at least their seduction techniques are allowed to proliferate:

[The intellectual-amoral man] is full of highly complicated arguments on the subject, which have to do with empiricism, epicureanism, live today, for tomorrow will bring the mushroom cloud, learning about life, and the dangers of self-repression, all of which are whipped out with frightening speed while he is undoing the third button on his girl's blouse. (Johnson, 1959, 60)

Johnson's article gives the complex reaction these lines were likely to evoke in the still-virginal. Her point throughout is that contemporary girls have no grounding - moral, educational, religious - to rely on when it comes to sex, and are having to make individual decisions about their levels of engagement: 'What or what not to do about sex is, these days, strictly relative... Today girls are expected to judge each situation for itself' (59). Given this lack of support, Johnson implies, it is no wonder that girls get confused, become prey to the dictates of the double standard which condemns them for yielding and yet makes outright refusal the occasion for being dumped. Johnson seems to find

the college girl has been educated beyond what is helpful: having been taught to think things through, she finds it difficult to stop thinking and start feeling:

Our liberally educated girl is not very likely to be swept away on a tide of passion. With the first feeling of lust, her mind begins working at a furious rate. Should she or shouldn't she? What are the arguments on both sides? Respect or not? Does she really want to enough? and so on, until her would-be lover throws up his hands in despair and curses American womanhood. (Johnson, 1959, 60)

This interrogation, *Should she or shouldn't she?*, recalls the artful question of the Clairol tag and the pragmatic polarization of *Playboy's* 'will she or won't she', but importantly speaks from the girl's own subject position: it is an internal self-interrogation, rather than an external inquiry. This scene of self-interrogation marks the 'crisis of virginity' moment which is often put on screen in the films discussed in the next chapter and indicates, there as here, the societal pressures that were being felt by girls at this period. Johnson indicates that the girl has been too well-schooled in debate and in forming coherent arguments for her college assignments, where each *pro* must be weighed against a *con*, to make a spontaneous decision, especially one which would seemingly have such important consequences. The exasperated would-be lover mentioned above is therefore not taking into account the circumstances that combine to make the girl's position a difficult one; Johnson's article indicates awareness that real female desire is supposed to be suppressed, inexperience feigned, intimacies calibrated for gain rather than enjoyed as pleasure. Without then overtly citing societal pressures and the double standard, Johnson yet indicts them through the body of the text for her *Everygirl's* lack of spontaneity. Ostensibly blaming the situation here on female over-education permits Johnson to critique the contemporary American society which constrains its female subjects in this way.

Concluding, Johnson's article revisits the idea of technical virginity; without directly referencing Kinsey, the article shows awareness of the kind of hazy boundaries around virginity that he posited, exploiting the ambivalence of the meaning of 'virginity' (sexual inexperience/lack of full penetration) for the maintenance of virgin title even if not purity:

I suppose the ideal girl is still technically a virgin but has done every possible kind of petting without actually having had intercourse. This gives her *savoir-faire*, while still maintaining her maiden dignity.
(Johnson, 1959, 60)

As argued, if the idea of 'virginity' was meant to convey merely the withholding of the ultimate act, coitus, then petting did not contravene this, but if it implied some kind of inherent value in innocence, then any sexual experience negated it. Virginity can thus be seen occupying its own vexed terrain, being *perhaps* subject to binary rules - one is either a virgin or a post-virgin, with no gradations - but *perhaps* able to support a taxonomizing of experiences. In either case, that it was the woman who seemed the one to decide the status of virginity provoked unease. Susie and her college companions may be seen to be subject to internal debating about yielding, but it is still the female debating; furthermore, that the debate is internal means that, as long as she keeps her composure afterwards, her eventual decision need not be visible. This brings us back to the ultimate anxiety of the time, the invisibility of the experience being discussed and the fact that if virginity is not discernible then it can be faked. Paradoxically the man can be seen setting himself up for anxiety since he promotes a situation which insists on the woman learning to dissemble and deny her experiences, acting out a need for initiation that may be without foundation.

Johnson's article seems to suggest that large numbers of girls had already decided to have sex and more would be tempted to do so were it not for the fear of being caught out:

Susie, like all her friends, has a deep-rooted fear of pregnancy, which explains their caution about having affairs. They have heard that no kind of birth control is really infallible. (Johnson, 1959, 58)

By the time that Gloria Steinem wrote *her* campus-based article, 'The Moral Disarmament of Betty Co-Ed', in 1962, the female constituency she shared with Johnson is assumed to have a very different attitude to sexual 'affairs'. Despite their similar subject matter, the two articles differ in their position on either side of the cusp of the introduction of the Contraceptive Pill. Whereas the girls in Johnson's pre-Pill article ask each other for advice about how to turn aside insistent male attention, Steinem's sample seek to enjoy it, swapping notes on doctors who can provide the birth control. Steinem's article ultimately takes on and disagrees with Johnson's view of late fifties attitudes to sex; where Johnson noted Susie's 'deep-rooted fear of pregnancy' (58), Steinem not only talks about the current 1962 situation but makes a claim for such topical bravery operating in the past:

Constant fear was hardly the condition prior to the pill in this country, but removing the last remnants of fear of social consequences seems sure to speed American women, especially single women, toward the view that their sex practices are none of society's business. (Steinem, 1962, 155)

While this conflicts with Johnson's experience of premarital sex, it accords with Gurley Brown's, whose book, exactly contemporaneous with the Steinem article, had revealed she had yielded at 20, twenty years before (Gurley Brown, 1962, 1). Significantly, although she does not say so, this meant that Gurley Brown's sexual initiation occurred during the Second World War, a period where

more liberal attitudes to sex obtained (D'Emilio and Freedman, 1988, 260). Gurley Brown's experiences are recast by her, however, as modern, that is contemporary ones, in order to speak to the young women in 1962 facing similar choices with the added security of the pill.

Kinsey's Report, as well as prompting pieces such as by Johnson and Steinem affirming the notion of female desire, also generated considerable material which represented wholehearted condemnation of this. Various religious bodies denounced his findings in their publications, the young evangelist Billy Graham thundering that it was 'impossible to estimate the damage this book will do to the already deteriorating morals of America' (Jones, 1997, 720). Across the full range of media, warning texts illustrating the consequences of succumbing to fleshly desires were launched at female audiences: the filmic examples of this will be examined in the next chapter. One contemporary book-length example was *It's Time You Knew*, a 1955 volume of sexual information and morality for the High School girl, written by Gladys Denny Shultz. Unlike the dry scientific tone adopted by the Kinsey Report, Shultz's text employs a more confidential and intimate voice; the book's very title, *It's Time You Knew* implies that an older, wiser, woman friend is now about to impart sexual arcana. Beyond the confiding intimacy of the title perhaps lurks a more unsettling resonance which hints that the girl approaching puberty is now old enough to be admitted to the sisterhood that understands a dread secret. This tone obviously takes the sex guide away from the scientific naturalism of Kinsey to a more Gothic realm, suggesting not only that sex was and should be shrouded in mystery, but that it is a mystery of which 'nice' and 'decent' women do not want full knowledge.

Shultz is very clear that sex is a problem which affects girls only because of its effects on boys; she is in no doubt about the 'normal' girl's lack of desire:

To feel occasional vague or even rather intense sex longings is nothing a girl need be ashamed of, for it is just a sign that she is developing towards normal womanhood. But in the average, normal girl, these longings come only once in a while, and they are considerably less intense than those with which the average male must contend. Also, they are more easily controlled when they do come. (Shultz, 1955, 90)

The language here underlines the view throughout the book that females are not naturally passionate; their 'sex longings' are 'occasional', 'vague' or at most 'rather intense', fleeting indications that the girl experiencing them is maturing towards adult womanhood and marriage, which Shultz feels is the appropriate time to submit to these feelings. Sex is therefore not something for single girls but for married women: her words postpone the dread deed until it can be safely licenced. Shultz's proscription indicates that such longings are not to be succumbed to but 'controlled', and, underlining the key message of the entire book, reminds the female reader that her passions are much less fierce than a man's.

Shultz can be seen reproducing the topical ideas about the battle of the sexes - men and women having opposing goals - and subscribing to the connected idea, as also exhibited in some of the other texts reviewed here, that women must remain both aware and wary of their own bodies and desires, distributing favours gradually and calculatedly in order to achieve the gender-appropriate goal. Rather than allowing *herself*, as well as her partner, the pleasure of complete coitus, the girl is advised to ration her acceptance of and participation in sexual foreplay. Shultz thus endorses the contemporary view of the hymen as the final bargaining chip which should be used in negotiations for marriage.

While *Playboy* ('Will she or won't she?', 1956, 13) might chafe against this

calculating and guileful brand of femininity, it was the insistence on the double standard, holding premarital sex mandatory for men and banned for women, that ultimately necessitated it.

This idea, that men, experienced themselves, still wanted to marry virgin brides, was boldly called into question by Helen Gurley Brown's 1962 bestseller, *Sex and the Single Girl*. Gurley Brown maintained that far from despising she who had succumbed, men liked such experienced women. By turning around the accepted norm, denying that men demand virgin brides, she asked why girls should bother to save their virginity. Gurley Brown told girls to have a good time while they were waiting for Mr Right, and to make that waiting time count, using it as a training period to learn what to do when 'he' did come along. Gurley Brown admitted this was what she, and most of her friends, had done; furthermore she posits that if she had been a 20 year old virgin when she had met her (extremely eligible and famous film producer) husband, she would not have been able to attract him:

For seventeen years I worked hard to become the kind of woman who might interest him. And when he finally walked into my life I was just worldly enough, relaxed enough, financially secure enough (for I also worked hard at my job) and adorned with enough glitter to attract him. He wouldn't have looked at me when I was twenty, and I wouldn't have known what to do with *him*. (Gurley Brown, 1962, 1)

While not explicitly spelling out here that she was sexually experienced when she met David Brown, it is possible to gloss her words 'worldly' and 'relaxed' to take this meaning, Gurley Brown the 38 year old sophisticate able to attract and sexually please him as her twenty year old virginal self would not have been.

With her own example as manifesto, Gurley Brown turns contemporary accepted wisdom on its head, urging her readers to enjoy the things that come

the Single Girl's way, especially the men, thus training themselves to be the perfect, experienced partner qualified to entrap a highly marriageable man. Unlike Johnson's Everygirl who allowed herself a certain amount of sexual freedom with boys who did not matter, for Gurley Brown the experiences thus garnered by the Single Girl would not be later denied, innocence feigned, when Mr Right turns up, but cashed in on: the most radical part of her message is not just that 'nice girls do' (206) but that they assert it:

Should a man think you are a virgin? I can't imagine why, if you aren't. Is he? Is there anything particularly attractive about a thirty-four year old virgin? (Gurley Brown, 1962, 212)

Gurley Brown's tone, as she advises her Single Girl reader on everything from diet and wardrobe to what to cook him for dinner or breakfast, is determinedly contemporary. Alone of the writers in my sample, she declares her sources, acknowledging her debt to Kinsey – 'and I really did read another book once' (61) – as well as popular taglines from the zeitgeist that she shares with her readers:

I don't think anybody is even asking anymore 'Does she or doesn't she?'. They just want to know where can *they* get that color? (Gurley Brown, 1962, 202-3)

In this skilful sentence she sums up her philosophy on contemporary female sexuality whilst nodding to the slogan that inspired her own '*is she or isn't she?*' (64). Understanding the implicit sexual interrogation in the tag, Gurley Brown suggests that, several years after Clairol and Kinsey, no one is any longer pondering whether or not another woman is having sex, but how they can get some too.

Sexual Behavior In The Human Female can thus be seen as an item in the public domain which could be invoked by different parties, its influence appearing in a number of texts succeeding it which adopted its topics of female sexual agency and desire. Whilst the object of these other texts (to titillate, to educate, to amuse, to warn) might vary, the end result of this media attention was to add to the traditional incarnation of the shy, reluctant maiden her more active sister, the desirous virgin. This can be seen to split the traditional dichotomy which presents women as either virgin or whore; by proliferating the virgin, the desirous stereotype casts all categories into doubt. Despite this confounding of the dichotomy which the figure of the virgin can be seen to enable, contemporary media insisted on clinging to the habit of binarization. If the axis around which polar opposites had to be positioned could not be determined by *having*, or having not, had sex, because of the nebulousness of what constituted sex and virginity, then perhaps it could be restructured around *wanting*, or not wanting, to have sex. This displacement of the emphasis from praxis to intention significantly occurs during the period when, as has been seen, Kinsey's report on female sexuality had borne out contemporaneous suspicions about 'technical virgins'; this displacement could therefore be viewed as acknowledging the difficulty of drawing a line between virgin and post-virgin, and the comparative facility with which desire or its lack could be located. The potential of drawing any line amidst the whirling nebula of competing assumptions, anxieties, assertions, could then help assuage the topical fears conjured by the notion of active female sexuality, by at least indicating in whom desire was operating.

The 'virginity dilemma' cluster of films produced at this time employ this topical dichotomy of the virgin, adopting the idea that it is easier to draw a line between willing and reluctant, than between virgin and post-virgin, with all the gradations to which the state of virginity had been shown subject. As shall now be discussed, this topical impulse to dichotomize the virgin is continued in the performance styles of the actors, where there is a very definite division in the way virginity is embodied and enacted, according to the generic allegiances of the specific films.

The 'virginity dilemma' film – introduction

As outlined in the introduction to this thesis, it has been traditional to look at the American fifties as a time of consensus and conformity, the stereotype of the period being one of stasis in contrast to the political and social upheavals of the following decade's Sexual and political Revolutions. The contemporary scene was never so monolithic, however, as examination of topical artefacts, including films, reveals: then the seeming certainties dissipate, exposing a society awash with doubts and anxieties. Examination of the popular media of this time indicates that many of these tensions were prompted by the figure of the woman, as the media became obsessed by the new persona Kinsey had revealed – the girl who might be sexually experienced but who could not be identified by sight, part of the 50% who had yielded, if, as was so often assumed, Kinsey's data could be extrapolated out from his sample to the rest of American womanhood.

Devoting this attention to this figure of the woman, however, did little to assuage the many anxieties she set circulating. For example, in dealing with the fallout from the 'K' bomb, many of the counter-blasts attempted to ameliorate the nebulous worries it unleashed through the establishment of clear-cut distinctions, such as:

Virgin	post-virgin
Girl	woman
Doing it	not doing it
Showing, suggesting it	not showing it
Virginity - externally representable	virginity - not externally representable
Signs helping	signs being deceptive

However, there is a sense that *not only* are there uncertainties over which side of these dichotomies is 'right', there is also the worry that the lines between areas might not be so easy to draw, since, after all, the frisson inherent in such questions as 'Does she or doesn't she?' resided in the fact that no one could tell by looking. While many cross-media responses to Kinsey's *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female* attempted to assert the contemporary urge to binarize women over their sexual status, it might be expected that films, since they could visually depict women and their stories, would be prominent in such attempts to establish clear boundaries. Indeed, a number of films produced after the second Report can be understood as Hollywood's response to the contemporary apprehensions set circulating by Kinsey's disclosures.

A cross-generic impulse to exploit or invoke the virgin can be seen developing after the publication of the Female Report, the virgin female considered significant enough to be the centre of narratives because of her desirous status. The foregrounded virgin figure appears in seemingly male-oriented genres like the western and science fiction as well as in more obviously female-centred and targeted narratives. In *The Last Sunset* (Robert Aldrich, 1961) for example, the plot hinges not only on the real paternity of the young girl, Missy (Carol Lynley, a frequent contemporary screen virgin) but also on whether she will have sex with the menacing gunslinger, Dana (Kirk Douglas). Both questions are resolved when it becomes clear to all but Missy that he is her father and he allows himself to be killed in a shootout rather than explain exactly why they can't 'be together'. While the potential incest drama at the centre of the film overwhelms the virgin strand of the narrative, the point remains that it is maiden Missy who prompts the problem.

Similarly, in *I Married A Monster From Outer Space* (Gene Fowler, 1958), the virginity of the bride, Marge (Gloria Talbot), is explicitly referenced, highlighting the assumed normative status of the double standard. On her wedding night, with the audience aware that her husband has been replaced by a lookalike alien, Marge presents herself in sexy lingerie to her bewildered spouse:

Marge: ...the least you could do is ply me with liquor. Maybe you've guessed but I've never been on a honeymoon before.

Bill Neither have I.

The alien's otherness is underlined by his lack of knowledge about appropriate masculine and feminine experiences and behaviour, his alterity residing in his ignorance of the right to sexual experience which the double standard gives the

male. The film later further underscores its commitment to assumed normative sexuality by making the key difference between earthling and alien the human male's ability to impregnate his mate.

Many contemporary films thus make some use of the virginal female, illustrating that it is not the setting that makes the virgin, since she can be as iconic amidst the western dust as in middle American suburbia. In one of her earliest overt contemporary incarnations, in the film which made movie history for containing the first use of the word 'virgin' since the establishment of the Production Code, *The Moon is Blue* (Otto Preminger, 1953), she is unambiguous, self-evident, self-advertising; by the end of the period under consideration the potentially-virginal woman is equally noisy but possibly post-lapsarian, in *Sex and The Single Girl* (1964). These two films bracket the period of investigation; comparing their central women seems at first to indicate the progress of desire in the decade, but on closer examination the fears and anxieties prompted by the sexualized female are not seen to be erased with time. In *The Moon is Blue* Patty is a self-proclaimed virgin, happy to acknowledge her lack of experience and how it affects her position in the marriage market ("Men are usually bored with virgins"). Never questioning that women might or should have rights to equality of sexual experience, she rather smugly inhabits the world of the double standard, making it work for her, and is never seen at risk of losing her virginity nor prey to sensual promptings of her own. By 1964, in *Sex and The Single Girl*, the heroine can openly state her defiance of the double standard that rewards men at the same time as it censures women for pre-marital experience of sex. Unlike Patty, Helen is not the technical virgin who manipulates the dictates of the double standard, but the desirous heroine of the

'virginity dilemma' films: she *is* seen physically reacting to the sensual seductions of her would-be lover, wanting to yield but holding back only because she believes he is married.

However, though of a later date and thus potentially more imbued with the spirit of the more permissive sixties, this latter film still reveals the presence of a conservative streak illustrating that the desirous virgin continued to pose a threat. This is evident in the film's paradoxical combining in one ambivalent persona the outspoken condemner of the double standard with the desirous but still inexperienced maiden. Helen's chastity is held by the narrative to be in question while she pretends to be an 'expert'. The ambiguity over whether or not Helen 'is or isn't' chimes with the equal ambivalence the film feels over the desirous female.

Helen may be happy to talk about emotions and actions which Patty would not acknowledge - this marking her as the desirous virgin – but the film is not happy to indulge her in them without a struggle. The film may date from 1964 but the double standard emerges with a new twist: having earned her professional reputation as the author of the book, if she is a virgin she is a fraud, but if she is a post-virgin no one will want to marry her. Societal mores may have advanced enough for women to be challenging the double standard but men can still manipulate it - her colleague Rudy asks for free samples to see if she is worth all the trouble, blithely ignoring the fact that anything she grants will count against her prospects for matrimony. The film suffers under the weight of its own incoherent stance on the double standard and cannot commit itself to declaring Helen a member of either side of the virgin/post-virgin dichotomy.

The issue is resolved, as so many contemporary romantic/sex comedies are, through the woman's marriage, which removes the problem of her unlicensed sexuality. The other, linked, problem of her professional status as psychologist is cured at the end too - by having the sex research Institute where she works demolished.

It is interesting that a film such as *Sex And The Single Girl*, which allows its heroine to be much more outspoken about female desire and the inequities of the double standard than many of the earlier 'virginity dilemma' films, has an ending which seems more conservative and repressive too. Perhaps the very licence allowed Helen early on brings on the severity of the conclusion, the closure putting her firmly back within a traditional domestic sphere. The film's trajectory, however, still reads as incoherent, the mastery of Helen at the end tacked on rather than brought on, through cause and effect, by her early stand for women's rights. The film unravels during the extended multiple car chase during its final fifteen minutes; having set up the plain dichotomy forcing Helen to admit either to experience or fraud, the car chase dissipates the film's energy as it dodges this issue, sending the narrative on a slapstick diversion which seems to belong to another film, (perhaps anticipating the picaresque travelogue *The Great Race* (Blake Edwards, 1965), also starring Natalie Wood and Tony Curtis). The contemporary urge to binarize women's sexual status breaks down in this film, perhaps because of the notoriety of its real-life inspiration. The film takes from Gurley Brown's book its title and theme of the single girl's sexuality but cannot wholeheartedly commit to endorsing the original text's libertarian outlook; contrariwise, pretending that screen Helen has maintained her chastity is ultimately impossible given the extradiegetic

significance of both Gurley Brown herself, avowedly not a virgin on marriage, and Natalie Wood, who plays the film's 'Helen Brown', and had been very frequently the subject of sexualized scandal from the time of *Rebel Without A Cause* (Nicholas Ray, 1957) onwards. (See, for example, 'Natalie Wood: Teen-Age Tiger, *Look*, June 1957, and two 1957 articles cited in Suzanne Finstad's biography of Wood, 'Boy-Crazy Teen-Ager?' and 'Why Are Men Afraid Of Natalie Wood?'. Finstad, 2002, 640 and 644.)

'Virginity dilemma' films – themes and tropes

In order to establish a 'horizon of reception' (Hansen, 1991, 253) for the 'virginity dilemma' film which I am claiming is a short-lived but discrete mini cycle starting in the late fifties, I needed to ensure that this accent on the young desirous virgin was indeed new. My basic methodology for this was to read all the film synopses in *Variety* from 1940 to 1970, thus beginning thirteen years before Kinsey published his *Sexual Behavior In The Human Female*, in order to ascertain whether films paying attention to the sexual choices of young women, either as the main or side issue of the narrative, began after and thus seemingly as a result of Kinsey. My end date was determined by an assumption that by 1970 the popular media's acceptance of the contraceptive pill would have made such soul-searchings over the loss of virginity outmoded.

In reading the synopses I looked for willed sexual encounters by unmarried young women. While it was often difficult from *Variety's* synopses to find out if the main focus of the narrative was the young woman herself, there was clearly a very marked increase in the use of the single unmarried female as central

narrative hero during the central years of my investigation. Before 1953 sex as a topic was generally only alluded to, and that within the genres of the marital comedy or the drama: single girl sex was not a narrative trope. In that year, however, the year of the 'K bomb', there were two instances of the narratively significant virgin: Preminger's film version of the play *The Moon Is Blue*, and *Act Of Love* (Anatole Litvak), which told the story of a doomed – and physical - romance between an American soldier (Kirk Douglas) and a young down-and-out girl (Dany Robin) in Paris. The following year, six films featured one or more virginal heroines, *Three Coins In The Fountain* (Jean Negulesco, 1954) introducing the multiple-female narrative with its three young women learning about love in Italy. This number remained constant until 1958 when the number of virgin-motif films jumped to 12. They then settled back for another two years to pre-1958 totals, until another leap in 1961 with 16 films, indicating the full flowering of media interest in the virgin female figure. The films featuring this character peak at 19 in 1963 and decline rapidly thereafter: films using the virgin dwindled by the end of the decade to just one, in 1970 – and this one Sandra Dee, a virgin sacrifice deflowered by Satan! (*The Dunwich Horror*, Daniel Haller, 1970). While I am not claiming that all the films found would fall within the 'virginity dilemma' cycle, I think the increased number of films across this period interested in the young desirous woman does indicate her growing contemporary status as a figure of interest, prurience and anxiety.

Within this larger set of contemporary films which deal with the virgin, I will be concentrating on the smaller 'virginity dilemma' subset which makes the virgin's testing a key diegetic point, positing, as noted, that such films emerged after the second Kinsey Report and after the Production Code's 1956 revisions, which

"lifted all remaining taboos except nudity, sexual perversion and venereal disease" (Leff and Simmons, 2001, 225); this cycle then enjoyed a brief flurry of popularity before the widespread *media* acceptance of the fact of the contraceptive Pill, from around 1967 (women had been consuming the product since 1962) removed the particular impetus behind the films, the exploration of the sexual temptations of a young woman whom, it was being assumed, should not (but might still) yield. The Pill made such films look old fashioned, as the Sexual Revolution became an accepted part of the media and Hollywood films such as *Doctor, You've Got To Be Kidding!* (Peter Tewksbury, 1967) and *Bob & Carol & Ted & Alice* (Paul Mazursky, 1969) began to tap into this new cycle and the new female stereotype that it brought to prominence, the swinging chick.

As noted, not all films from this period with sex or virgins fall within the ambit of the 'virginity dilemma' film, however; I have restricted this categorisation to films which specifically focus on the younger woman who might before Kinsey have been assumed, from her age and single status, to be a virgin, which centre around the 'should she or shouldn't she?' question, and which present this as a self-interrogation, so that, in other words, the girl is asking herself whether or not to yield. Under this rubric, *Peyton Place* (Mark Robson, 1957), which might seem to be an archetypal virginity film, does not fit, despite the fact that its popular source novel, like *Ask Any Girl* and *The Best Of Everything*, was picked up by Hollywood and filmed while the book was still notorious. While *Peyton Place* devotes much space to showing the various sexual relations in one small town, it does not, however, present a desirous virgin asking herself whether or not to succumb. In the novel, Allison, the central nubile female, does yield but

this is recounted as a memory; in the film version, neither the crisis of virginity moment nor the subsequent yielding scene are enacted before the audience.

Similarly, those films which treat older virgins, such as *Summertime* (David Lean, 1956) starring Katharine Hepburn, are not included as 'virginity dilemma' films, since the problem of and for the older virgin is different. For the past-her-prime virgin, there seems to be a bittersweet quality to her maidenhood; as she is perceived to have been waiting for Mr Right too long it is easier to let her 'fall' with the sympathies of the audience. (Interestingly, Day's persona is not openly identified with this older virgin, despite her actual age in the sex comedies, except perhaps in *Lover Come Back*, as will be considered in the next section).

The nubile young virgin, however, who has not lost all hope of finding a man but who can be seen to be impatient to enjoy the physical side of marriage, appears more of a threat to societal norms; it is this younger girl, a threatening as well as an exciting persona, who is the centre of the films discussed here as part of this post-Kinsey cluster.

At some point in each of the films there is a moment when the heroine's virginity is in crisis, when the question *should she or shouldn't she* is made explicit in the text. Significantly, while a film may opt for trying to demonstrate through the consequent narrative that *she shouldn't*, it still needs to depict the desires to which the virgin is prey, delineating the sensual temptations besetting her.

However much the text may want to condemn the young virgin for her vacillation, therefore, in thus providing a space for these temptations to be concretized for the audience, the counter argument for the urgency of desire is

inevitably put. The conservative films that want to support a pro-chastity message are thus caught by having to display the temptations they want to deny; although the fallen girl may be punished by pain, madness or even death in these films, these punitive narrative strategies are inevitably enacted in the conclusions of the film after screen time and impact has been granted to scenes detailing the sensual longings of the virgin heroine.

Most of the 'virginity dilemma' texts, however, do not operate so unambiguously, but ambivalently show both the urgent promptings of the desirous female body and some kind of consequent trouble befalling the girl who lets these sway her. Interestingly, this display of desire is enacted across the genres in which the 'virginity dilemma' films appear; while in the melodramatic or tragic film the heroine succumbs to temptation, maintaining her chastity in the comedies, the emergency that physical desire presents to conscience is shown as a constant across these generic borders.

In examining contemporary films for their treatment of the virgin female, there appear to be at least twenty-five or so which might fit the notion of a small, relatively short-lived, cluster; these texts seem to me to have enough shared topoi and themes to constitute a 'virginity dilemma' cycle, and of these I examine or make reference to the following in this chapter:

Marjorie Morningstar (Irving Rapper, 1958)
Ask Any Girl (Charles Walters, 1959)
The Best of Everything (Jean Negulesco, 1959)
Gidget (Paul Wendkos, 1959)
A Summer Place (Delmer Daves, 1959)
Where The Boys Are (Henry Levin, 1960)
State Fair (Jose Ferrer, 1962)
Under The Yum Yum Tree (David Swift, 1963)
Sunday in New York (Peter Tewkesbury, 1963)

Sex and The Single Girl (Richard Quine, 1964)

(In looking at the content, themes, imagery and the performances in films within my 'virginity dilemma' cluster, I have been restricted to examining those texts I could collect from video, DVD or television sources. *Blue Denim* (Philip Dunne, 1959) and *Susan Slade* (Delmer Daves, 1961) would both have made very interesting complementary texts, but were not available during the time of my researches).

I will be exploring these films for their negotiations with the anxieties and pleasures attending the figure of the desirous virgin, along with the various strategies, filmic and narrative, by which they attempt to enact virginity and deal with the virgin. I will also be examining the mise-en-scène and musical cues that occur during the testing and succumbing scenes. Strategies for the performance of virginity will be dealt with in a subsequent chapter.

I have been contending that Hollywood films of this time were responses to the anxieties set circulating by Kinsey's revelations about the desirous young woman prepared to disobey assumed norms of good behaviour in flouting the double standard. These films would be intended, as most mainstream films are, to cater to the maximum possible audience demographic, and would thus try to show both the consequences and the sensual excitements of female desire, whilst also trying to reassure that sexual status could be rendered visible and less nebulous through being codified through norms of demeanour. However, such an external show of virginity provoked its own concomitant anxieties: having female actors enact chastity through demeanour outwardly, so that they can be read as virgins, meant that they could continue enacting these signs

when the quality itself was not there: if virginity can be performed, then it can be faked. This would be rendered especially problematic if virginity was being performed by female stars who were known, through extra-diegetic spheres such as gossip and fan material, to be very much post-virgin. These self-reinforcing anxieties about sexual status and external representability, as evinced in the contemporary films, will also be explored.

The 'virginity dilemma' film in close-up

The 'virginity dilemma' films go some way to discounting the myth of detached female sexuality fretted over in contemporary texts, positing as the antidote to this myth the figure of the desirous and desirable young virgin who is not calculating or manipulative, but tempted by the sensuous pleasures being revealed to her. Besides showcasing this desirous virgin who offers a rebuke to the 'technical virgin' tradition, the 'virginity dilemma' films also provide the opportunity to explore the urge to yield by building their narratives around the following themes and incidents:

- a 'why maintain virginity?' conversation
- a crisis of virginity moment
- scenes which demonstrate the physical desires of the virgin, and the unsettling effect this female desire has on the male

Interestingly, the films of this period rework and recycle not only the themes emerging from the contemporary anxieties about the desirous active woman, such as the double standard and the inevitable disparity of female and male goals, but also reuse the actors involved in the scenarii. This has the effect of making the male urge to seduce the female and she to outwit him (or

sometimes, to be seduced more expertly) seem to be being waged constantly by the same characters, continually imploring, yielding, resisting in an endless round.

For example, Rod Taylor plays the suave seducer who is wrong for Meg Wheeler (Shirley MacLaine) in *Ask Any Girl* and, without any fluctuation in performance, the suave seducer who is right for Eileen (Jane Fonda) in *Sunday In New York*. Natalie Wood is innocent *Marjorie Morningstar* until, having been seduced by Noel Airman (Gene Kelly) she evolves into supposedly worldly Helen Brown in *Sex And The Single Girl*. Carol Lynley manages to reverse the usual virgin/post-virgin trajectory by yielding in *Blue Denim* but remaining chaste in the later *Under the Yum Yum Tree*.

The effect of employing this repertory company of virgins and seducers serves to underline the prevalence of virginity as a theme of obsessive interest at the time, making virginity and its loss and the consequences of that loss seem inescapable topics. Furthermore, not only were young women succumbing to or refusing importunate young men in the 'virginity dilemma' films; there is also the implication of initiatory sex in other films which do not quite sit in the virginity dilemma subset. These may lack the specific tropes identified above, or be more concerned also with the contemporaneous, overlapping persona of the Career Girl; nevertheless, there are several examples of such films released at this time, significantly with these same young stars. In *Come Fly With Me* (Henry Levin, 1963), for example, the presence of two of the legion of screen virgins, (Dolores Hart from *Where The Boys Are*, Pamela Tiffin from *State Fair*) goes to further the sense of an ineluctable topical mediascape populated by

men on the make and girls who were desired, desirous, and making their own choices. Yvette Mimieux appears as the unguarded Melanie, the girl who *does* fall, in *Where the Boys Are*, and, then returns as damaged Clara in *Light in the Piazza* (Guy Green, 1962). In between being innocent Marjorie and supposed sophisticate Helen, Natalie Wood starred as the innocent *and* sophisticated stripper Gypsy Rose Lee, in *Gypsy* (Mervyn LeRoy, 1962). Similarly, George Hamilton starred with Mimieux in *Where The Boys Are* and *Light In The Piazza*, and Wood in *All The Fine Young Cannibals* (Michael Anderson, 1960) enacting a variety of importuning but attractive young men.

It seems important that the same young women actors constantly recur as the central female figure, and share the screen in proliferated virgin films like *The Best Of Everything* and *Where The Boys Are*. Not only does the recurring presence of such stars as Sandra Dee, Natalie Wood, and Carole Lynley all embodying the new desirous virgin create a kind of unavoidable public sorority of tempting, tempted young women, but the offscreen publicity that these specific stars were attracting during the years of the dilemma cycle also served simultaneously to confirm their rightness for, and to problematize, their roles. Contemporary media attention, for example, centring around Natalie Wood dwelt at length on the magnetic pull she exerted on men, even as a teenager ('Natalie Wood, Teenager with a past', *Movie Life*, July 1956); similarly Sandra Dee was constantly dogged with headlines commenting on her frequent 'boy troubles' until her marriage to Bobby Darin, whereupon they criticized her tiny size and assumed her unfitness for motherhood (see Scheiner, 2001). By having female stars whose offscreen 'real life' chastity was either cast in doubt or definitely non-existent, the dilemma films created another layer of the very

ambiguity they were intended to assuage: casting post-virgins as virgins undermines the notion of a real virginity that cannot be faked, enacted, especially if their performances are any good.

While, then, desire was not invented at this period of American history, and seduction, resistance and succumbing were not new, their presence on film screens without mediation was as new a phenomenon as the young, attractive female stars embodying their heroine, the desirous virgin. This new accent on the girl's first-time sex seems to have been such a topic of intense media interest during this period of study that it appears in films which do not need it, as noted previously in the 1962 version of *State Fair*, almost as if it were impossible to make a film about young women at that time and not include some reference to their imminent sexual initiation. And yet all this attention devoted to the virginal character does not allay the fears and anxieties she fosters, both as someone who might not fully yield - the calculating technical virgin who withholds till gaining her goals - or, perhaps even worse, *might* fully yield - the new desirous virgin who, as shall be seen, conjured up and embodied another threat, the threat of male failure, through her very willingness. In moving to examine the shared themes and tropes of these 'virginity dilemma' films now, this worrying aspect of the sexualized woman comes increasingly to the foreground as the period of study progresses and the media becomes aware of the inherent challenge the willing woman presents to the man.

The why maintain virginity conversation

The 'virginity dilemma' films always seem to include a staged 'why care about virginity?' conversation where the film permits the discussion of the pros and cons of pre-marital sex for the girl. The person with whom the central girl has this conversation is significant, since the films, despite their own dealing with the topics of sex and virginity, seem to share the notion that this is not a 'nice' discussion for a woman to have with a male partner; thus where this conversation occurs between a woman and the man who wants to sleep with her, it is usually a sign to the audience that their relationship is doomed.

While these films are all predicated on and obsessed with the topic of virginity, presenting virginity-imperilling scenarii in clichéd or creative ways, they also interestingly suggest murmurs of an anti-virginal sentiment circulating in the contemporary context. This is well-defined by the last of my sample of 'virginity dilemma' films, *Sex And The Single Girl*, where Helen is appalled at the professional disrepute implied to her by a lurid magazine; her doctor colleagues discuss the matter with her:

Doctor: (reading aloud)...”she should be ashamed and millions of women should be ashamed for bringing their intimate problems to someone with all the knowledge and experience of a twenty-three year old –“

Helen: Stop! Don't *you* say it! The nerve of them, the gall, to call me, Dr Helen Gurley Brown, a twenty-three year old virgin!

Rudy: Traditionally, Helen, the term is considered a compliment.

Helen: Well not by me!

These films present the virgin as, and in, trouble. Here Helen is undermined as a sex expert if she has no first hand knowledge of the subject she advises on.

This negative attitude should not be thought to be solely caused by the film's

late date, however. While Helen is worried about her *professional* reputation rather than her personal one, and this particular aspect of virgin-slighting might be attributable to the film's mid sixties period, there are similar signs in earlier entries in the group which demonstrate the same avoidance of the virgin.

Perhaps this is because the gift of virginity is one which obliges the recipient to respect the donor – even to marry her. The double standard operates clearly here, in that to be a nice girl, and potential marriage material, rules the girl out from pre-marital sex with a *nice* man, except in the case when both partners are first-timers, as in *A Summer Place*. Her options are limited then, she must either remain chaste till marriage or choose to lose her virginity with an unscrupulous character like *Ask Any Girl's* Ross. He does not care about honouring such obligations but is happy to consider his services a boon, couching his physical enjoyment as a necessary part of her maturation: '...in a kind of way, I'm doing you a favor. I want to develop you emotionally.'

Sunday In New York is virtually a treatise on the why maintain virginity issue; this permits other contemporary aspects of sexual morality, the double standard, technical virginity and the battle of the sexes to feature as tropes. The first of the many conversations occurs between virginal Eileen and her rakish brother Adam:

Eileen: Is a girl that's been going around with a fellow for a reasonable amount of time supposed to go to bed with him or not?

Adam: What kind of a question is that to ask?!

Eileen: Well, it keeps coming up all the time!

Such innuendo ('it keeps coming up') is rife in the film's dialogue and carried through into the suggestive *mise-en-scène*: Adam's apartment is full of

oversized phallic shaped ornaments. Eileen is thus framed (Figure 4) against the thrusting erection of a giant bullet casing when she answers her brother's would-be words of comfort:

Adam: Eileen, men marry decent girls. That's the way it is and that's the way it will always be.

Eileen: The catch is in the word 'decent'. It seems to have a comparative connotation, like 'the girl was a *little bit* pregnant'.

Eileen here acknowledges Kinseyite levels of virginity and 'decency'. That she has not been prepared to be a sufficiently manipulative technical virgin, perhaps skilfully employing Kinsey's many forms of non-penetrative sexual contact in order to stimulate but simultaneously frustrate until her goal is won, is borne out when she tells Adam why her boyfriend finished their relationship:

Eileen: ...We had a heart-to-heart talk. He explained to me the realities of male-female friendships and said he was tired of going to the gymnasium three times a week and playing *handball*, if I knew what he meant....

In place of the skilled technical virgin's literal manipulations, Eileen's beau has had to resort to his own. This rather overt reference to masturbation is picked up in *Under The Yum Yum Tree*; the narrative has the central couple move in together but agree to live chastely, which creates a position where David and virginal Robyn can endlessly discuss the value of virginity. While the film takes pains to show the effect that David's physical proximity has on Robyn (at one point, for example, making up a bed together, their bottoms gently bump and she appears to be instantly and embarrassedly aroused) he maintains that living together without sex is going to be more of an ordeal for him than for her:

Robyn:We didn't make love before, Dave, this'll be just the same except we'll be together more.

- David: No, no...it's not the same, Rob. Before, when I left you I could go home and ease my tortured body under a shower...
- Robyn: So shower here.
- David: Oh yeah, with you rustling around in your sexy underthings! I'll spend every waking moment under a running faucet! Honey, what about my libido?
- Robyn: Well what about me? I'm subject to the same intoxications you are.
- David: Oh no you're not, no, you're not. Women have had centuries to perfect their willpower.

The language here indicates contemporary assumptions about the inequities of female and male desire: while Robyn speaks of her own sexual longings as 'intoxications', David dismisses them by invoking her willpower. She speaks about desire, he of its antidote. David's assumption that Robyn, as female, is both less aroused than he and better able to control her feelings clearly taps into contemporary notions of female dormancy, as evinced in Gladys Denny Shultz's work, but is contradicted by the way the film shows Robyn's arousal. While, then, the narrative seems to work towards a closure in which Robyn's silly experiment of sexless cohabitation is ended by David's greater male wisdom, his stature as the more experienced and intelligent of the two is undercut by the display of her physical desires.

The virgin female should not, then, discuss her chastity with the man she wants to end it, unless she knows that they are *both* virgins. When this occurs, as with the young couple in *A Summer Place*, the loss of innocence is couched as a shared gaining of experience, rather than as *his* exploitation of *her*. Molly and Johnny frequently discuss their mutual attraction and how at odds this is with

what society tells them is 'good', before confirming that they care more about physically expressing their love than obeying societal dictates.

The first conversation about sex in *A Summer Place*, however, is between Molly and her cold, calculating mother Helen, when the latter tries to insist her daughter be a technical virgin:

Helen: Don't you ever underestimate the value of a good reputation!

Molly: Yes, Mama.

Helen: I've got nothing against this boy....You could do worse. But you've got to play your cards right. You can't let him think that your kisses come cheap.

Molly: I won't, Mother, honest.

Helen: I know you're a good girl, I know that. But you've got to use your head. You've got to remember that you have to play a man like a fish. You have to make him want you and never betray that you want him. That's what's cheap, wanting a man...

Here Helen instructs her daughter how to get what she should want (marriage) without fully giving him what he wants (sex). Molly does not absorb the tenets of this lesson, for which the film applauds her. Less manipulative negotiations about sex occur between the teen lovers; Molly demurs, knowing that good girls shouldn't, but once Johnny agrees but seems colder towards her, she oscillates back the other way: 'I know a place we can go nights'. Though he is verbally more forceful in arguing for further experimentation, she later proves his equal in desire by arranging the circumstances of, and then insisting on, consummation of their relationship. Importantly, they are both inexperienced, and the discussions are not carried out in order to manipulate but to negotiate a shared decision. The *why virginity* conversation here is therefore conducted

between equals, and this seems a significant difference condoning the teens' actions. Unlike the conversations that take place between the experienced male seducer and the virgin girl, here the mutuality of their inexperience and desires affirms the sincerity of their feelings, guaranteeing that each acts from spontaneous passion, not planned seduction.

Of all the films in the sample, *Marjorie Morningstar* performs the most drawn-out game of come-ons and put-offs with its audience, endlessly setting up, then derailing, the moment of consummation. This attenuation again permits the frequent iteration of the *why virginity?* conversation. A scene between Marjorie (Natalie Wood) and her first boyfriend shows the viewer that Marjorie has been brought up a nice girl:

Sandy: (moaning in ecstasy as he kisses her) Oh Marjorie!

Marjorie: (embarrassed) Sandy, please!

Sandy : What's the matter with you, anyway? You frigid or something?

Marjorie: It's wrong to go on like this.

Sandy: It's not wrong, it's a biological necessity.

Just as Sandy mouths clichéd contemporary male arguments for sex (there's something wrong with you if you don't want to, it's natural, and good for the health), Marjorie responds with the good girl line about ethics. To her mother, however, Marjorie confesses the stirrings of desire. Interestingly, as she does so she sits at her dressing table, gazing at herself: her rapt expression and dreamy voice supply hints of self-eroticism which, in suggesting the possibility of female masturbation, seems even more permissive than the more overt

references to male self-pleasure in *Sunday in New York* and *Under The Yum*

Yum Tree:

Marjorie: He wanted to make love to me. He didn't...What should I do about it?

Rose: About what, darling?

Marjorie: Oh...about the way I ...feel sometimes.

Rose: Take those feelings, put them in the bank for the man who'll appreciate them and love you for them after you marry him.

Like Gladys Denny Shultz, Rose Morgenstern sees sexual desires as properly and safely located only in a future marital situation. Marjorie's desires put her in danger (of succumbing to young men and, perhaps, to herself) as Rose's advice indicates she is aware, counselling her to store them up, like an erotic dowry, for the man who will legitimate them through marriage. Noel Airman (Gene Kelly) is *not* this man, as both Rose and he appreciate, although Marjorie does not lose hope of marrying him and thus converting him into the man who can draw on her erotic savings.

Noel, 'the enemy of every mother in greater New York', is adept at seducing virgins, not marrying them, employing a range of lines which include condemning the girl for following rules established by society, class and religion, rather than her own desires, and endless reverse psychology along the lines of 'I'd be no good for you, baby'. In one of the frequent *why virginity* conversations Noel attempts this reverse psychology while the film again signals the widespread awareness of the 'technical virgin':

Noel: I haven't time for another Shirley in my life.

Marjorie: *Shirley?*

Noel: Yes, Shirley. That's the trade name for the respectable middle-class girl who likes to play at being worldly. It's written all over you like parents sew camp initials on their children: hands off, decent girl, object matrimony....I haven't got a chance without the little wedding ring.

Marjorie: You won't get me to do anything wrong.

Noel: Naturally not, Shirley only hugs and paws on a rigidly graduated scale.

Noel assumes Marjorie would play the technical virgin with him, dallying with sex (playing 'at being worldly') without committing to it, augmenting rather than alleviating his frustrations in order – 'object matrimony' – to get him to capitulate to her demands. Marjorie's statement, 'You won't get me to do anything wrong' which both asserts her own integrity and assigns a similar honourableness to Noel, is twisted by him into a confirmation of her manipulateness, willing, in the contemporary vernacular, to pet but not put out.

Despite Noel's scorn in the scene quoted above, he does try for a time to be the patient, undemanding suitor that Marjorie wants; later rebelling, his language shows that he still regards her unwillingness to have sex with him as a marriage manoeuvre, whilst displaying contemporary attitudes to the male's entitlement, under the double standard, to sex from some source:

Noel: Don't you understand, I *ache* with pleasure right now just from touching you. I can't stand it, it's killing me... I've played the game by your asinine rules. I've been faithful to you. Can you understand what that means to me? Not to touch you and yet not touch any other girl?

The utter disparity of the sexes seems exposed here, when the man cannot appreciate that a period of pre-marital fidelity does not necessarily qualify him for yielded chastity. The film shows that Marjorie is not playing a game with Noel, just trying to live as her upbringing – stressed as both comfortably middle-

class and devoutly Jewish – has taught her. He is unable to perceive that her unwillingness to have sex with him when she obviously desires him too is not part of a scheming virgin's gameplan, but is firmly based in her personal notions about morality and integrity.

The film itself skilfully plays the technical virgin with the audience over the couple's consummation, endlessly setting up, then postponing, coitus. When Marjorie finally does surrender the film indicates, not unsympathetically, that having finally played her hand, she has overplayed it and thus lost Noel.

Despite this ending, *Marjorie Morningstar* should not be seen as overly-conservative: the film allows so many details and specifics to accrete that Marjorie and Noel cannot be taken for Everygirl and her seducer. In particular, the infantilism and weakness shown to make up Noel's character mitigates against any feeling that Marjorie should never have yielded before marriage; had she had sex with Wally, the other man in the story, who loves her as hopelessly as she loves Noel, all would have been fine, the film implies, subverting the ending of the original novel (in which Marjorie fulfils the fate prophesied for her by Noel by marrying a nice Jewish doctor and moving to New Rochelle), instead patching Marjorie and Wally together at its conclusion.

Sex and The Single Girl is unique in my sample in not containing a *why keep your virginity* conversation, perhaps both because it is the film furthest into the sixties and because it is predicated on maintaining an ambivalence about Helen's sexual status. Instead of prompting the audience to ask will she or won't she, *Sex and The Single Girl* wants to know *has she or hasn't she already?* It contains an exchange between Helen and work colleague Rudy who

is keen to play by the double standard rules which permit him sexual experience, the right to a virgin bride, and the nerve to ask for 'free samples':

- Rudy: Helen, I must know, ever since that magazine raised the question of whether you were or you weren't...
- Helen: Why must you know?
- Rudy: Why?! All of us want to know... Helen if you aren't, this elegant and very expensive evening I've arranged for you is going to be such a waste of time. But if you are...
- Helen: You'd marry me?
- Rudy: Maybe. But only if I were sure... [kisses her]
- Helen: Rudy, stop it! You're such a prude. I'm simply appalled at the double standard you men keep trying to impose on us women.

Helen is permitted to voice contempt for the double standard but her authority is undercut, and thus so too is the strength of her message, by the fact that while her lines are serious, her body as she says them is presented in a very cartoonish way. Helen is dressing to go out with Rudy for his 'elegant and very expensive evening', and has the above conversation whilst brushing her hair and simultaneously dancing cheek-to-cheek with Rudy, being squeezed by him so that her breasts well up out of her dress like bubbles, and doing the hand-jive (Figure 5). Her somatic signals are meant to provoke mirth, therefore, just at the moment when her verbal performance is trying for most seriousness. The film thus undercuts the gravity of her condemnation of contemporary mores that distinguish men's from women's rights to sexual fulfilment.

The 'virginity dilemma' film, then, contains a scene when the validity of the further maintenance of female virginity is challenged, with the exception of *Sex And The Single Girl* which substitutes instead a conversation where the male

demands the right to know whether or not he needs to make such a challenge. While often these conversations take place between females, either the girl and her mother or the girl and her girl friends, some of the most telling arise in moments when the male seducer is attempting to overcome the girl's resistance: using lines about suffering health or her lack of 'maturity' or commitment to the relationship coupled with soft caresses, the seducer hopes that the double-whammy will ensure the desired yielding, as can be seen in *Ask Any Girl, Under The Yum Yum Tree* and, with the desired effect, in *The Best Of Everything*. The moment also permits the film, however, the chance to consider why contemporary morals should urge girls to prize their lack of experience so dearly: the men's seducing motive does not lessen the fact that conducting the conversation does dual work, providing the opportunity for active questioning of topical assumptions about the limits of permissible female pleasure and experience.

The crisis of virginity

Each of the films under study also contains a scene where the virgin's chastity is put to its most extreme test: this is the crisis of virginity moment, and how it turns out depends in large measure on the generic allegiances which the film maintains, as will be discussed in more detail in the chapter on performing virginity. A basic rule seems to operate, however, aligning comic films with the maintenance of virginity, and more serious films with its loss. In both cases, however, the virgin's resolve is put to various tests in the film, the most serious of which (at which she will yield if the film's generic fealty permits it) I call the *crisis of virginity* moment.

This critical moment is found in the print media versions of the virgin's tale too, as in Johnson's account of the conflicted feelings besetting 'Our liberally educated girl', in which,

With the first feeling of lust, her mind begins working at a furious rate. Should she or shouldn't she? What are the arguments on both sides? Respect or not? Does she really want to enough? And so on until her would-be lover throws up his hands in despair and curses American womanhood. (Johnson, 1959, 60)

These contested feelings are given even more impact when rendered in the visual medium of film. There the virgin's performance conveys the internal barrage of questioning; while recalling Clairol's suggestive question, this particular phrasing of the interrogation, *Should she or shouldn't she* importantly differs from it because of its centring the question within the girl's own subjectivity.

The crisis moments appear to varying degrees of seriousness and intensity in all the films of the 'virginity dilemma' cluster; the four which actually present virginity's loss are examined in the chapter on consummation scenes below. Early comic entries in the cycle, such as *Gidget* and *Ask Any Girl* (both 1959) assure the audience through bouncy musical cues as well as slapstick performances that, despite the real urgency of her sexual longings, the crisis of virginity will not turn out 'badly' (that is, decisively) for the comedy virgin. By contrast, later comic films, such as *Under The Yum Yum Tree* and *Sunday in New York* choose to tease the audience into thinking sex has occurred during the crisis moments. Perhaps because of their later date they are more able to make light of the possibility of virginity lost outside of marriage.

In *Under The Yum Yum Tree* David eventually tires of playing by Robyn's rules and decides to seduce her; when, however, his attempts appear successful, and Robyn seems enthusiastically willing, he begins to repent his calculated behaviour and leaves. The audience sees the lecherous landlord come in. Cut to the next morning: David returns to the apartment, strategically missing the hungover lecher who emerges, looking for his socks, *from Robyn's bedroom*. While the audience then jumps to the same conclusion David eventually reaches, the narrative soon stops tantalising all parties by having Robyn arrive back, fully dressed and intact, having also left so as not to succumb to her virginity crisis.

Sunday in New York accomplishes this same *did they or didn't they?* in a more succinct scene. Having discreetly fading out on experienced Mike kissing virginal Eileen, the camera comes back to the couple to find them both in bathrobes, she tearful and he in a rage storming around the apartment. This short scene is played without dialogue between the pair, and is temporarily mystifying. Did they or didn't they? Why is she crying? Why is he so cross? Eventually the cause of the couple's discomfort is explained: there has not been a successful seduction but an unsuccessful one, Eileen therefore crying because of desire derailed, not loss of honour, and Mike angry because of 'how I was almost imposed on!'. Mike's reluctance to seduce 'a beginner' is taken within the film to indicate his inherent decency and ultimate worthiness to be Eileen's husband, but can also be read as a re-emergence of the contemporary anti-virgin sentiment noted earlier, where relieving the woman of her burden places too great an obligation on the man to respect her:

- Eileen: ...What would have happened if I hadn't told you and we'd gone through with it? You'd probably have insisted I marry you!
- Mike: I would have felt obligated....In a situation like this, a girl isn't supposed to be a v... a beginner!
- Eileen: A girl has to start sometime!
- Mike: Not with me!

This crisis of virginity moment will be returned to in the final chapters of this thesis, which deal with Doris Day and her evolving star persona. This, I will argue, occasionally overlaps with the stereotype of the desirous virgin, most notably in *Lover Come Back* (1961) which presents a very clear crisis of virginity scene, where Day performs a character riven with doubts and conflicting desires.

Female physical desires and their unsettling effect on the male

Even when treating the topic comically, the films in the 'virginity dilemma' group all give fair weight to the intense *physicality* of desire, maintaining, often in extreme close up, sensuous emphasis on faces, lips, hair, on clothes and the bodies underneath them. Significantly this is not only given to the male response: the films devote intense emphasis to the physical excitement and sensual reactions of the virgin girls.

There are enough instances of these scenes of desire to draw a composite picture of the desirous virgin: clasped in the arms of her would-be lover, her typical pose is yielding, melting into him; as he kisses her, her head droops backwards as in submission, her eyes half shut, her gestures become languid and self-caressing. These signs of yielding will alternate, as long as she is still towing the good girl line and is not swayed by sensuality enough to abandon it,

with attempts to escape the mesmerizing embraces of the man; she will screw her eyes up in denial, clench her fists; her head turns rapidly from side to side as she tries to get away from his kisses. This display of desire and self-conflict is found in each of the crisis moments when the virgin is seen to pant with both desire and dismay at the situation.

Most important, however, is the reaction such owning of desire has on the male partner: frequently in these films a female sexuality which is prepared to be active is greeted not with excitement but with dismay and anxiety. The seducing males of the dilemma cluster appear to want acquiescent partners, but, as soon as the girls begin to join in, lose their zest for the proceedings. Several of the films present a very similar scene where the balance of activity shifts during the physical exchange: starting out on top, the men then sink unwillingly under the ardour of the girls, and begin to panic. Other films in the group may not present this scene which is generally played as comedy, but still present the once-potent hero suddenly undercut by the girl's openness about her desires.

In *State Fair*, as mentioned in the section introduction, it is difficult to tell why Jerry suddenly stops trying to seduce Margie once she exclaims that if he loves her 'Then I don't care what happens! I know you wouldn't lie, so I don't care...' She kisses him with enthusiasm for the first time, her once passive stance altered as she leans her body into his, her hand caressing his hair and bringing his mouth down harder on hers. Jerry immediately breaks off the kiss and sends her away. The film does not make it clear whether this is because he is

suddenly ashamed of her naïve confidence in him, or because he likes acquiescent rather than active women.

By contrast, Johnny in *A Summer Place* does not try to avoid Molly's active embraces, but *is* seen discomforted by her unguarded acknowledgement of past exploits. When he asks her dreamily how she learned to kiss so well, his face registers disappointment when she tells him pragmatically a boy from school taught her, and horror when she continues that the technique took many lunchtimes to perfect: 'You did it more than once - by daylight?'. Molly's answers keep making things worse: when Johnny asks 'Was this boy your steady?', which would somewhat excuse her behaviour, her 'No, he was the president of the student body' indicates she is unembarrassed about admitting experience, unlike abashed Johnny, who can find no response to make to her confessions. Later, too, just before consummation, Johnny backs away, and Molly has to encourage him. While before, on the beach, in daylight, when their parents were around and there was no real risk of coitus, Johnny was in control, but once Molly has him alone at night he seems less confident, and she assumes the more dominant role. While the teens both obviously desire each other, and Molly's willingness reassures the audience that Johnny is not taking advantage of her, her active participation in their mutual initiation accords neither with the careful calculation advised by her mother ('play a man like a fish') nor with societal assumptions about female passivity.

Ask Any Girl demonstrates the unsettling aspects of female desire on the male in the midst of a staging of the 'why virginity' conversation, when Meg, finally convinced for her own reasons that she needs to become 'mature', decides to

take her long-term would-be seducer, Ross, up on his many offers. Here she repeats the arguments against her prolonged chastity back to him:

Meg: You know, you were right what you said about me, Ross. I am immature. I'm a child. I don't know what I want and when I do know, I don't know how to get it. And I think it's about time I did something about it. I think it'd do me good, don't you?

Ross: (Gulping) Could be...

Meg: You know I've uh...been doing a lot of thinkin'...

Ross: What about?

Meg: About all that nonsense that girls are supposed to believe that they should wait around half their life till the right man comes along. Well I think it's a pretty thought but, Ross, suppose he doesn't show up?

Ross's reaction in this scene is interesting: he has little to do but listen, yet the looks on his face betray a discomfort over hearing the upfront avowal of desire for sex by the woman. While he has made many attempts to seduce and thus should be reacting to Meg's words with excitement, the expressions of edginess and anxiety that he wears indicate different emotions are evoked by her agreement to go to bed, with him. Darting his eyes about, sitting very straight and still as if paralysed with fear, Ross gulps as Meg asserts her new capitulation to his old arguments against chastity. Having his lines repeated back to him by a vocally willing partner upsets the equilibrium of the rake. The passively acquiescent heroine, such as April in *The Best Of Everything*, who, as shall be seen below, maintains a position of craven dependence throughout her seduction scene, does not threaten the man by an application of her own energies. By contrast, the actively desirous female, such as Meg here, discomforts the man because she calls his bluff: he has to perform, he has to succeed. Just as Molly's admission of experience upset Johnny in *A Summer*

Place, Meg's willingness to have sex with Ross puts the onus on the man to meet expectation. Perhaps her arrogation of the cold-bloodedness of the seducer also upsets him: the detached application of logic to the sexual situation is usually the province of the male. Here, when Ross asks why she called him, he phrases it thus: 'What's all the excitement? Meg's calmness - 'No excitement' - as she talks rationally about her decision to give up 'saving' her virtue discomforts him: instead of being able to turn her desires against her to accomplish his aim in spite of her qualms, as Ross tried earlier, her very lack of passion makes her the seducer's unsettling equal.

When, after *Sunday in New York's* sly ellipsis suggesting sex has occurred, Mike fulminates against 'beginners' beginning with him, it may be read as a reluctance on the part of the decent man to take advantage of a decent girl, but it also seems as if the unabashed avowal of her desires by the virgin female unmans her partner. This is similarly found in *Under The Yum Yum Tree* when David attempts Robyn's seduction. The performances of the two actors, Carol Lynley and Dean Jones are very broadly comic here, but this does not negate the display of male fear at female sensuality. We may be expected to laugh at David as he begins to repent the efficacy of his seduction, but the sight of the woman chasing the man around the apartment, climbing on him with her breasts in his face while he struggles hysterically to get away (Figure 6) still reverses the expected trajectory and casts doubt on his assumed masculine prowess. Perhaps aware of the connotations of such unmanly behaviour, the film permits David a line about being too scrupulous to seduce Robyn when she is drunk. While he rejects a now too-easy seduction, 'Like shooting fish in a barrel, Rob!', the scene still ends with the amorous woman beckoning from the couch and the detumescent male slinking out the door.

The figure of the desirous and thus frightening woman is subject to a different attempt at revision in several films from this period; in this strand of contemporary discourse, her activity is forced on her (and thus excused) as part of the man's calculated ruse. For example, in *Sex And The Single Girl*, Bob Weston (Tony Curtis) pretends to Helen Brown that he becomes 'inadequate' when his (invented) wife 'hollers on him'. He uses this pretended inadequacy to get Helen to take the initiative in seducing herself. The film is consciously signalling its own witty self-referentiality in this, as the scene acts as a partial homage/revision of the similar moment in *Some Like It Hot* (Billy Wilder, 1959), where the Curtis character gets Sugar Kane (Marilyn Monroe) to attempt to 'cure' his unresponsiveness; what this also accomplishes is to replay the contemporary nightmare scenario of the good girl's active expertise and the man's lack of ability.

While presented as ruses, such scenes still permit the audience to see the man subjugated to a dominant desirous woman. While the fear that young girls like Sandra Dee, Natalie Wood and Carol Lynley may inspire in the man is limited because of their age and small, slight stature, the fear that an older and obviously physically mature woman could conjure would not be so restrained. In the next section which examines the constant media foisting of the role of mature, rather than desirous, virgin onto Doris Day, this element of fear alongside prurience and excitement will be considered.

Consummation scenes

In this section I want to look in detail at the films which indicate that first sex has occurred, examining the emphasis given the event and how the setting, dialogue and mise-en-scène of the consummation scenes are variously used to colour the audiences' responses to the act.

The four virginity films which narrativize consummation all locate the act firmly within the girl's story: regardless of whether the decision to relinquish virginity is shown to be wholly, or more partially, in error, that decision is hers, and its loss has its primary narrative effect on her, rather than provoking a problem for her male partner. For example, in *The Best Of Everything*, neither April's loss of virginity nor subsequent pregnancy is narratively treated as Dexter's problem - the film is interested instead in comparing how she and other female characters each try to deal with lying men. Though smooth Dexter's lines to innocent April seem as transparent to the audience as they are opaque to her ('I have nothing but the deepest respect for you...*Baby*') the event hinges on her agreement, not on his ploy, permitting her some narrative importance.

Similarly, despite the large amount of screen time given in *Marjorie Morningstar* to Noel's well-rehearsed arguments for sex, the decision to surrender is made by her when he is absent, and has more to do with her realization that her love for Noel is more important than a secure marriage. In going to his sleazy apartment, Marjorie has already chosen to capitulate: the short scene that finally accomplishes their union is played wordlessly as, having made her own decision, Marjorie does not need Noel's rhetoric.

In *Where The Boys Are*, Melanie's multiple sexual encounters occur within a multi-virgin narrative: put simplistically, she is the one who falls so that the others learn the consequences of sex without having to sacrifice anything themselves. Primarily it is her best friend Merritt who realizes the consequences of her own liberalism: it is Merritt who voices the permissive views on sex that Melanie acts upon. After rough sexual treatment, Melanie wanders dazed into traffic and is hit by a car. Though she lives, the film treats this accident as punishment for her unguarded behaviour. While the narrative significance of her fall is thus shared amongst the characters, it impacts only on the females, not the man who actually committed the assault.

While *A Summer Place* treats two relationships, those of teenagers, Molly and Johnny, and their parents, who were in turn young lovers twenty years before, the teens' relationship is given most screen time and sympathy. The fact of their shared inexperience removes the burden of self-restraint from the girl: knowing that she is not 'being had' in being had by Johnny, the film propels Molly toward the point where she gives up her virginity at the moment she takes his. Neither is presented as a passionless seducer; the mutuality of both their sexual innocence and desire ensures that each is a fully willing participant. Molly, in fact, in providing the location and excuse for their tryst, can be seen to be the more active partner. When Johnny tries to leave, struggling with his conscience again to 'be sensible', she elects that they will have sex: reclining in his lap, she pulls him closer, her little wet pink tongue snaking out, licking her lips, just before they kiss. This active female sexuality which does not, for a change, frighten away the male ties in with Wayne's initiation in *State Fair*,

indicating again that the only good boy who is not afraid of an active girl is a virgin himself

Both the *mise-en-scène* and the music and other extra diegetic sounds play a very important role in prompting audience reaction to the sex act presented (or rather, hinted at) in the consummation moments. In *The Best Of Everything*, for example, the seduction of April (Diane Baker) by Dexter (Robert Evans) takes place in his lavish bachelor apartment. The dominant colours are rich purples and greens, the intense hues as stimulating to the senses as the soft furnishings, drapes, carpet, cushions are enticing. To soft orchestral music, the camera starts on a close up the record player and moves left to the couple embracing amidst cushions in the middle of the floor. All the visual, aural and tactile stimulation is too much for April: turning her head away from Dexter she begs him to change the music. As she maintains the good-girl line about not going any further, and he employs the seducer's arsenal of lines to change her mind (you don't love me, prove you love me, of course I'll love you afterwards) he moves back and forth, left to right across the rectangular set in front of the picture window showing the lights of the night-time city, like a spider in his web, while she remains kneeling on the carpet his passive prey, entreating him from a position of literal lowness that underlines her inferiority within the relationship. Grasping his hand like a suppliant, April tentatively asks: 'Would you ever marry a girl who...wasn't pure?' Dexter's answer is not reassuring - 'Of course I would, if I loved her and wanted to spend my life with her, nothing would matter' - but this suffices and April yields ('Oh Dexter!'), he pushing her backwards onto the cushions as the camera tracks away again to the phonograph, the seductive music coming neatly to the end of a phrase. The next sound is that of

enthusiastic clapping and, although it accompanies a dissolve to the next scene, where different characters are taking a bow in a theatre, the overlapping sound of the applause acts to comment on Dexter's performance as a consummate seducer, underlining his insincerity, his playing of a well-rehearsed and often-performed part.

Similarly, within *A Summer Place*, the symbolism of the couple's trysting place attempts to guide the viewers' opinions about the teenage lovers' act. Molly has found the perfect place for the pair to be alone – an abandoned look-out building on the sea front. The hut, on the margin between sea and land, acts as an appropriate symbolic location for the couple poised on the cusp between sexual ignorance and knowledge, as its liminality matches theirs. The sea site also permits several of the details of the scene to have both narrative and iconographic weight - for example, the interior of the hut is filled with hanging nets, perhaps evoking the ensnaring nature of the couple's passions, and the familiar euphemism of crashing waves as a metaphor for sex here seems more diegetically motivated than usual.

This consummation scene is dominated by the confusing mixture of the imagery it employs; the liminal seafront location perhaps serves to excuse the teenagers their actions, as it is reminiscent of the similar trysting place their parents use, the boat house, and thus hints that they are destined to repeat the fall of their elders. Musically, too, the general ambivalence about their actions is brought out through the sudden discontinuities and tonal shifts: the music which accompanies the pair's entry into the hut is the archetypical suspense motif, implying that this is a creepy place and the two of them are in some teen

jeopardy sneaking around there in the dark. This shifts to a sexy, saxy theme which hints more clearly at the forthcoming action, before changing again as the film's famous theme tune by Percy Faith takes over once more. Perhaps what is conveyed despite or even through the clashing of musical, image, and generic, codes is the persistence of desire - the teens' sexual yearning for each other as out of place, ill-timed, potentially as shocking as the jolts in musical style, yet as over-whelming as the love theme that dominates the entire film.

The scene which introduces the consummation in *Marjorie Morningstar* is both short and wordless, and it too features a visual symbol of the character's liminal position. Having been at her friend Marcia's wedding, and having heard from the bride that she is marrying for financial security not love, Marjorie decides at last to act on her unmercenary passion and goes to his Noel's apartment. Noel lies on a couch wearing a black suit, smoking and looking distracted; footsteps sound in the corridor, Marjorie opens the door without knocking and stands in the doorway for a long moment, before walking very deliberately into the room (Figure 7). Her actions here indicate the psychosexual state the character has wrought herself up to: her assumption of the mutuality of the desire is evinced by her not knocking; her hesitation on the threshold demonstrates her awareness of inhabiting the moment before crossing the divide, the stillness of her pose then broken by her action as she moves into Noel's room, accepting his terms of their sexual relationship. For this scene Marjorie is dressed in a very dramatic black outfit which matches Noel's sombre garb and contrasts intensely with the bride's, though ironically the film has demonstrated that white-clad Marcia is no virgin, and Marjorie is. The couple here seem more aptly dressed for a funeral, and in this the film symbolizes the imminent death of

Marjorie's virginity, along with, perhaps, the possibility of true love between the couple which is lost when she gives it up.

Just as the stillness of the moment is broken by Marjorie's decision rendered as motion, the silence of the moment is broken as the film's theme song, 'A Very Precious Love', swells yet again on the soundtrack as the couple embrace. The song, a huge bestseller which sold many copies of sheet music and was a contemporaneous hit for different artists (including, interestingly, Doris Day) tells the audience overtly that the love affair between the couple, predicated on false terms, is destined not to last. The lyrics seem at first to evoke the transcendent nature of the feelings that the beloved provokes ('A very precious love/That's what you are to me/A stairway to a star/A night in Shangri-La, of ecstasy') but end as so many lines from would-seducers do by redefining that love as a single act ('..give your precious love/Your very precious love to me'). The 'precious love' undergoes a translation during the song from the person addressed to the act required, and this diminution of the words signals the transitory nature of the emotions being evoked, here cueing the acute listener to conclude that Marjorie's faith in Noel will not be well-placed. The adjective 'precious' applied to the love act perhaps also hints that it is a first sexual occurrence, so that in singing this song to Marjorie throughout the film Noel has been pleading for her virginity. The over-emphasis given to this first time indicates that once granted the love will lose its allure; indeed, the film devotes itself to showing Noel's constant addressing of the song to new women, ending poignantly when Marjorie, post-virginal, older and wiser, watches him performing the number again for new and virginal admirers. The film's conclusion subtly indicates that the pursuit of virgin conquests is an adolescent

one, and Noel an underdeveloped, immature character in being unable to value Marjorie once she has given him her maidenhead.

In contrast to the other films which build loss of virginity into the onscreen narrative, *Where The Boys Are* stages Melanie's scenes of consummation offscreen. In fact, her entire story is told in the interstices of the other girls' narratives, perhaps indicating the film's prejudice against girls who do 'fall'.

Melanie's first experience of sex seems to occur in daytime: her seducer, Dil, suggests they leave the crowded beach they are at and find a more secluded spot 'just for two'. When she is next seen, Melanie, who now seems a little cowed, asks him 'Dil, you wouldn't ever say anything....tell anyone?' He makes no answer apart from kissing her on the forehead. As she goes back to her room the camera lingers on the man for a minute as he smiles to himself, then slightly shakes his head, as if at the gullibility of women, and leaves the scene. When Mel goes to his room the next day to look for him, another boy, Franklin, is there who tells her that Dil has gone but 'if you need a stand-in for a coupla days, just holler'. Franklin is Dil's stand-in, he inherits Melanie, and his seduction of the girl also occurs offscreen, away from the main action of the film.

In summing up the work in this chapter, looking at the locations and mise-en-scène where consummations take place prompts interesting ideas about the responses to the sex act that the films want to foster. The four films examined here each elect a different symbolic locale in which the virgin succumbs: one sordid (Marjorie's), one sophisticated (April's), one spooky (Molly's) and one invisible (Melanie's). Neat, well-groomed, beautifully-dressed Marjorie is out of

place in the sordid surroundings of Noel's rented rooms, just as she is in his life, and this forecasts that she has no permanent place beside him, despite her sexual yielding which she does in an attempt to keep him. Similarly, innocent country girl April does not belong in the thronging, busy streets of New York, let alone in sophisticated Dexter's playboy penthouse which looks down on the bustling city. Dexter's place is an elaborately arranged stage set, his play seduction, and the editing which takes the viewer direct from April's seduction to a curtain call underlines this theatrical artifice. Of the four succumbing maidens, Molly ultimately has the best fate: though she does suffer for her fall by becoming pregnant, her boyfriend stands by her, and eventually, with the blessing of their liberal parents, marries her. In a final scene, which the film presents as a happy romantic conclusion, the two young newlyweds return to the 'summer place' they met, a wild and beautiful island that appears Edenic. This upbeat stance towards the lovers, which the film's ending affirms, perhaps explains the more ambivalent status of the locale of their 'sin': while the abandoned, ruined state of the old lookout might seem to convey a condemnatory attitude to the lovers' act, as in the sleazy apartment where Marjorie yields to Noel, this is counteracted by the cosiness of the couple as they embrace, with Molly snuggled up in her fluffy grey fur coat, and the extreme tight close up on their rapt faces as they move together to kiss. Finally, Melanie's place of yielding is symbolic in its invisibility: we do not see the beach or car where she succumbs to Dil's charms. This film elects to suggest the illicit and ill-advised nature of her sex scene through its very invisibility, positioning her literally beyond the screen as she metaphorically goes beyond the pale.

While *Where The Boys Are* overdetermines the case against pre-marital sex through Melanie's actions – both in sleeping with two men and being given no more reason to yield than that they are supposedly Yalies - the other three dilemma films which narrativize coitus more sympathetically show the forceful nature of a range of temptations - sensual stimuli, intoxicating words, intense romantic love - which serve to persuade the young women to take this step. The films titillate their audiences by including the taboo topic, then work to recuperate their own naughtiness by showing the inevitably negative outcomes of illicit sex. By showing the girls' subjugation to their own desires, however, the films testify to the force of female sexual desire - not one of the girls gives in just to please her man, but all are subject to the aching physical longing for gratification. In displaying this desire so prominently, the harsh moral lessons that the films might endorse are complicated. This recognition of the intensity of sexual desire possible in the female is a distinguishing mark of the 'virginity dilemma' cycle and, however the narrative closure might work to punish the girls for yielding, the screen prominence given their desires, signalled in images of swooning close-up kisses, underlined by swooping, sighing musical scores, could hardly work to convince their contemporary audiences that sexual initiation was unambiguously inappropriate or undesirable. Thus the 'virginity dilemma' films are clearly centred on the girl, her desires and temptations, her decision to yield or withstand, rendered all the more immediate and intense through this very concentration on female desire and sensuality. This is borne out not only in the frequent conversations about the rights and wrongs of succumbing, but in the close-ups of the girl's physical responses, and those shots, suggestive of her point of view, which objectify the attractive male. Furthermore, the desirous virgin is shown sensually responding not only in

those texts which include consummation but even in the comic ones which do not, thus indicating the contemporary media's widespread confrontation of active female sexuality.

Virginities in performance

As has been noted, one of the many interesting aspects of these 'virginity dilemma' films is that they are cross-generic, both dramatic and comic narratives contemporaneously dramatizing the *will she or won't she* story. The seriousness of the problem of virginity at this time, which reinforced the habitual societal attachment of importance to a girl's chastity with a new anxiety that it might be, unseen, leaking away, did not prevent mainstream cinema from making light of the topic. The audience could be very sure, however, with the comic treatments, that something would occur just in time to prevent the virgin yielding, whatever temptations came her way: Hollywood was not at this point prepared to make comedy out of virginity and then let it be sacrificed. Thus in the majority of the comic entries in the 'virginity dilemma' cycle, while the inevitable final-reel marriage assures the audience that her chastity will soon be relinquished, the female hero reaches the end of the film intact. Only the later films, such as 1963's *Sunday In New York* and the following year's *Sex And The Single Girl*, can slyly suggest that the couple's consummation may occur before marriage.

The contemporary assumption that virginity could not be lost lightly and joyfully, without regret, becomes obvious when considering those films which do allow themselves to narrativize the sexual initiation, all of which present the

consummation scenario, as has been seen, in heightened melodramatic fashion. Virginity's loss is always the occasion for high drama until the end of the period under consideration.

I am interested in two specific ideas here: that at this time, the outcome of the virgin's story correlates with genre-based rules, associating loss with the melodrama (or the serious portion of the film when there is more than one virgin), and the maintenance of virginity with the comic genre; and how this maps onto the performances within the films. I feel that the different burdens of virginity and experience are carried by the bodies of the female actors within these films, put on and worn like outfits: in the comic films virginity is indicated by a buoyant physicality, an unruly, uncontrolled energy, while by contrast, in the more serious episodes the maiden is marked by a stillness and passivity.

This split in the methods of performance interests me not only because the difference between the physical styles of acting in the comic and serious films is both so marked and so uniform across my sample, but also because of its overdetermination. The films post-date the mid-50s relaxing of the Production Code, which meant that storylines built around sexual initiation could now be used, as well as dialogue that boldly included the word 'virginity' alongside such euphemisms as 'purity' and 'immaturity'. Mainstream American film still felt uneasy at showing the sexual act itself, certainly in scenes as realistically simulated as those in *Les Amants* (Louis Malle, France, 1958) the French film featuring a twenty-minute love scene released in America in 1959, the same year that *The Best Of Everything* and *A Summer Place* were discreetly fading out as their couples went into the consummation. But despite this reluctance to

show everything, a certain overtness about sex was now permissible: why then did the 'virginity dilemma' films feel impelled to enact sexual inexperience physically in these buoyant/static ways?

Perhaps the invisibility of virginity caused no more anxiety for contemporary society than it did for film: the late 50s culture alarmed by Kinsey and the figure of the transgressive desirous female which his Report had conjured up needed clear externalization of the virgin, but so did cinema, a medium predicated on *showing*. In this way it can be posited that the very visuality of film demanded that sexual status could be shown without recourse to signposts in the script or plot machinations. The intensity of the anxieties aroused by this new virgin required her physical manifestation: by asserting that sexual status could be rendered externally both film and society attempted to remove worrying ambiguities and ambivalences which threatened their discrete traditional structures. The films of this time can therefore be seen attempting to manage two competing forces: on the one hand, the urge to see some clear sign of sexual status, and on the other, the impossibility of representing an internal nothingness, through the female characters' somatic performance of virginity.

Spectacular virginity

I have suggested that the different types of 'virginity dilemma' film organize themselves around different attitudes to the sexual moment, the comic ones able to laugh at virginity, because nothing, in the end, will really be sacrificed, the more serious films taking a graver view of the status shift between virgin and post-virgin since they actually include the moment of change.

Although I have been intent to show that binary oppositions are generally unhelpful in looking at the stereotypes of the virgin, there is a very real dialectic, because of the different generic allegiances these films obey, operating in the physical performance styles of the female actors. This range of dichotomies can be mapped thus:

Comedy	Melodrama
Kinesis	Stasis
Constant	Fluctuating
Pratfalls	Moment of trial
Maintenance	Loss

In the comic treatments of the virgin dilemma, the maiden's body is seen in unruly motion; her enactment of virginity in this way is constant, and marked by archetypal slapstick moments when, her arms windmilling frantically, she tips off her spindly heels or rends the jacket of an admirer by pulling away too fast.

In the more melodramatic treatments of virginity, the maiden body is generally marked by its stasis, its composure. This may increase and decrease from scene to scene, but will become critically ruptured during the virgin's moment of trial, when her desires war with her conscience, and win.

Obviously, even the swiftest glance across various film periods and performers indicates that energetic physicality has always been the cause of humour; from the Keystone Kops, through Jerry Lewis to Jim Carey, physical comedy involving accidents, pratfalls and body torsion has always been employed to provoke laughter. Such comedy is not gender specific, although there are noticeably fewer female performers who make a career out of this style (perhaps Lucille Ball in her later, TV show, incarnation, might be the foremost).

However, the prevalence of both this performance style in the comic entries in the cycle, and that of its opposite, the enactment of virginity through a still and static demeanour, seem to tap into contemporary discourses about the appropriateness of female agency. I am thinking here of conduct literature, that strand of popular culture that attempts to provide guidelines on correct behaviour and polite manners, whether via the sporadic information offered through advice columns in newspapers and magazines, or whole collected volumes such as, most notably, Emily Post's *Etiquette*. This book was first published in the 1920s and has regularly been revised and reissued ever since; during the period under consideration for this thesis, there were four new editions (1950, 1955, 1958, 1960). The stated intention of the books was to inculcate in the reader a habit of perpetual and generous courtesy to all others. This said, there were distinct differences mandated in the ways for treating a social superior and an inferior, and, significantly for this study, radical variances in behaviour and demeanour depending on gender. Two illustrative mini narratives from Post indicate the necessary etiquette for polite young women. In the first, a young girl becomes separated from her friends at a baseball game. Naturally, because she is well-bred, she cannot raise her voice to call to them, but she cannily removes her large hat and holds it at arm's length above her head so that they can recognize it and make their way through the masses to her. The second, longer, story furthers the notion that women cannot manifest themselves in public:

At the country club, or perhaps at a mountain resort, at the dance on a Saturday night, John Towne is introduced to Mary Lovely. They dance several dances and they sit out several more. She likes him more than anyone she has met – so much so that she walks over to the hotel the next day with the definite hope that he may be there and that he will single her out again....(Post, 1950, 180)

When Mary arrives there is no sign of John and she instantly realizes the dilemma she has created for herself: if he comes into the hotel lobby where she is sitting and does not see her she can neither call nor go over to him. She must sit there, either on her own or with friends, until he comes to her since, as Post succinctly puts it: 'The man must take the initiative' (80). The woman has no voice nor agency in the public spaces of the hotel lobby or stadium but can only position herself intelligently and hope that her needs are recognized and met by her men.

In this societal context, where cultural assumptions enjoin the polite young lady at all times to be still, silent, passive and waiting, it can be seen just how transgressive the noisy, clumsy and energetic figure of the comic virgin is. Being 'polite' is very close in cultural terms to being 'good', as the desirous virgins of the dilemma films are always asserting they are or must remain; the comic virgin's energies exceed the bounds of contemporary politeness, the appropriate female behaviour, just as her desires exceed what had commonly been assumed appropriate female desire.

The comic virgin's classic film moment has her tearing or breaking something, falling over, or both. She is typically clumsy, physically unruly and unguarded, given to slapstick and tearing or misplacing her clothes. Thus in *Ask Any Girl* Meg is constantly though innocently left without, or uncomfortable in, her clothes, whether by having them stolen, confiscated, or drenched. In *Sunday In New York*, comic virgin Eileen breaks the handle of a door in her physical zeal at opening it and misplaces her clothes when surprized by her ex-boyfriend. There is a frequent recourse to drunken scenes too, where the actor becomes

even freer in her bodily register, as with Meg in *Ask Any Girl* and Robyn in *Under The Yum Yum Tree*.

Furthermore, the destructive power of the comic virgin's energies is seen to impact on the world at large but especially on the man who will eventually win her. Meg accidentally squirts ink onto Miles's tie on first meeting him; Eileen gets the fabric rose on her jacket attached to Mike's jacket on the bus, necessitating him carrying her off the vehicle like an oversize doll, and then wrenching his entire pocket off. Such incidents go beyond the traditional romantic comedy convention of the 'meet cute', to indicate the force of the virgin's destructive capabilities. Marrying the girl is then not so much a matter of being the only way he can bed her, for the hero, but, by being then allowed to bed her, the only way he can hope to survive. The life-threatening power of the virgin in these comic films is rounded off in the latest entry, *Sex And The Single Girl*, when Dr Helen Brown, trying to prevent her client's (bogus) suicide attempt by the East River, actually pushes him in.

In these films, the female hero's unruly body is meant to provoke humour through its erratic knockabout flailing. These signs are the constant banner of her virgin state: she is possessed of an excess of motion indicating excessive emotion not yet channelled into sex. Against these comic pratfalls, the melodramatic virgins are marked by their static quality: the melodramatic virgin is more poised, self-contained. In this generic strand, inexperience is rendered visible through a usually upright deportment, an overarching stillness; the habitual stillness and passivity of the serious virgin is, significantly, at its most visible when her chastity becomes subject to trial, before being suddenly

ruptured in a physical outburst which indicates, though it need not coincide with, capitulation to passion. For example, in *Marjorie Morningstar*, as noted above, the heroine seems to arrive at her decision at her friend Marcia's wedding; alone, as the camera tracks nearer and nearer to her still form, its stasis enforced by its framing by and similar position to a pillar, Marjorie appears ill at ease, rapt in thought, only her eyes dart about. The next scene presents the sound of her footsteps running to Noel's apartment where she appears and halts totally still in the symbolically-laden doorway, before rushing into the room, her lover's arms, and a fade out. This sudden kinetic explosion anticipates the imminent sexual act and can perhaps be read as a forecast of its climax.

Similarly, the close-up shot of April's hand reaching out suddenly to grasp Dexter's wrist in *The Best of Everything* marks her surrender; in *Where The Boys Are*, the audience does not see the moment where Melanie decides to submit; in the scenes with both of the men who seduce and share her, Dil and Franklin, she is always seen to be so passive and silent that she appears almost hypnotized. This film of all the examined 'virginity dilemma' cycle most conservatively warns the female audience members against emulation of Melanie's fall because her desire is shown to be based on a trifle – the boys' Ivy League status – not even real physical desire. With this non-libertarian project at its heart, the film makes not showing the moment where she made her wrong decision part of its strategy against pre-marital sex: in this way it seems as if *all* of Melanie's actions are foolish and tending the same way: from going alone to a beach with Dil, to first talking to the two boys, even to looking at them out of her window.

These very brief sketches show the way that the actor physically performed virginity, according to a genre-derived rubric that aligns comedy with physicality and maintained chastity, melodrama with stasis and virginity's loss. Looking at this performance dichotomy in more detail, I now examine two films featuring the same performer from the same year, in order to minimize other variables. The two films clearly seem to illustrate the generically-determined performance style split. Both 1959 films star Sandra Dee: *Gidget*, directed by Paul Wendkos, and *A Summer Place*, directed by Delbert Daves.

Frances, the 'girl midget' heroine of *Gidget* is narratively destined to remain a 'good girl', despite the twin temptations of Moondoggie (James Darren) and the Big Kahuna (Cliff Robertson). *Gidget* for a time entertains the notion of relinquishing her virginity to the Big Kahuna in order to spite Moondoggie, but the film assures the audience she is never really in jeopardy, both through bouncy musical cues on the soundtrack and, significantly, through the buoyancy of her performance.

For her role as *Gidget* Sandra Dee presents a comic kinetic body, swinging her arms, bouncing on her toes, throwing herself about, wrinkling her nose, fixing her hair even while surfing. Significantly, her voice too is subject to many more modulations as she talks, laughs and, *contra* Emily Post, raises her voice on the beach to attract Moondoggie's attention.

In *Gidget* the comic virgin's usual pratfalls are neatly narrativized as tumbles from the girl's surf board. The dilemma films seem to suggest the comic

virgin's many physical mishaps are caused by an excess of energy not yet channelled into sex, at the same time as imposing narratives that ensure these energies cannot be released. Since Gidget is the youngest of the comic virgins, in one scene receiving a surfing motif cake for her 17th birthday, the film realistically realizes that it cannot marry her off at the end, although the theme song does indicate her suitability as bride material with its line, 'although she's not kingsize, her finger is ring-size'. So for Gidget, however much she may desire Moondoggie - and this film, like all the 'virginity dilemma' films, takes pains to show the physical effects the boy has on the girl, the sensuous reality of her sexual desires – the most she can hope for at the film's close, back in her school incarnation as Frances, is a parentally-sanctioned date with the newly cleaned-up and suited Jeffrey, Moondoggie's straight, term-time alias.

Figures 8 and 9 illustrate the traits of this performance style: they show Gidget practicing surfing on her bed, then surfing and smiling. Stills obviously cannot convey the constant motion that is at the heart of Dee's performance here, but the physicality – arms akimbo, balance sought for – does come through.

In contrast, Dee abandons comic kinesics for her portrayal of Molly in *A Summer Place*, taking on instead the static body found in the melodramatic treatments of the virginity dilemma. Unlike Gidget, here Molly does succumb to sensual temptation and relinquishes her virginity. Apart from the kinetic outburst that symbolizes the moment of yielding, Dee's performance is very much that of the still and passive maiden. When an accident befalls her, it is thus used for sexualized purposes, rather than slapstick. Molly catches her stocking on a thorn in the rose garden; this snagging is the kind of accident that often befalls

the comic virgin but if Dee were performing that role here she would pull away and rip her whole skirt off. Instead she waits absolutely still for both the camera and Johnny (Troy Donahue) to fetishize her leg and stocking (Figure 10). As they kiss, her immobility is underlined by the fact that it is Johnny who takes her hands and places them around his neck – she does not actively embrace him herself but remains appropriately passive (Figure 11) until he moves and positions her. The film is not hinting that she does not desire Johnny, but emphasising her habitual passivity, which again Dee's voice bears out, this time far flatter and less given to modulation than her Gidget vocal style.

The thorn incident works to bring the future lovers literally closer together, but also has symbolic connotations – the penetrative thorn, the hymeneal blood, the pains of love. Molly's catching on the thorn may suggest her ripeness for further penetration but does not, here, indicate any clumsiness arising from an excess of unchannelled energy: the virgin from melodrama keeps her energies bottled up till the moment of outburst, not dissipating them in frantic motion. At the moment of her yielding Molly maintains this immobility, because she has already made up her mind: the real crisis of virginity occurs earlier in a scene where the would-be lovers talk on the beach about how difficult it is to be good, to know what good means. Molly's habitual stillness there is broken by the sudden explosion of energy that indicates her capitulation to Johnny's desires: when she suddenly runs to join him this both signifies her yielding and breaks the passivity that marked her maidenhood.

In considering such bodily performances as those enacted by Dee and by the other actors as external indices of both their chaste state and the eventual

narrative conclusion, one further question would seem to be – by comparison with whom does the comic virgin appear uncontrolled and the dramatic virgin poised? With the latter type of character, since the loss of virginity is actively narrativized, there is the opportunity to study the ‘before and after’ of the virgin’s somatic portrayal, comparing her virginal self with the post-lapsarian.

Significantly, however, it appears that the habitual stillness is present *before* the sexual act. It is thus not a question of the maiden displaying unruly energies then dissipated in the unseen consummation: the poised virgin is not made calm by sex but has already always been calm. In this way, with Marjorie, Molly, Melanie and April, there is a temporal before and after their succumbing, but this is not married to a physical difference, a transformation of somatic display aligning itself with the divide of sexual experience. The maidens who will fall are still and passive before they have sex - they are marked from the film's beginning as the ones who are going to leave ‘the continent of girls for another world’ (Jaffe, 1958, 110).

There is, however, no ‘before and after’ in the comic treatments of the dilemma; there is only ‘before’, because ‘after’ is not only after sex but after the end of the *film*, after the inevitable marriage that marks the conclusion of the narrative. Instead the comic virgins have other post-virginal characters around them with whom to contrast their excessive energies: Meg, Eileen, Robyn and even the ambiguously-characterized Helen all have a counterpart overtly marked as sexually experienced, women whose poise and confidence around men tell the viewer as much as their diaphanous outfits and libidinous one-liners. *The Moon Is Blue* perhaps set the standard for this comparison motif within the virginity cycle, in its polarization of Patty and Cynthia, whose very names give off the

appropriate auras for their personae (girl-next-door, down to earth, diminutive versus sophisticated, Europeanate, sensual/sinning).

This association of poise with a post-lapsarian state is an interesting one, and forms a point of continuity between the comic and more melodramatic treatments of the virginity dilemma: in both the post-virginal woman seems physically to be more in control of herself, more contained, the distinction being that the serious films take this poised character as their hero, while the comic ones contrast her with the central girl. When the comic virgin heroine does temporarily seem poised the narrative drive encourages the viewer to read her as wrong-headed: in *Ask Any Girl*, for example, Meg is at her most calm and composed in the scene when she coolly proposes to Ross that they go away together for sex. Significantly, while this composure contrasts with the kinesics of the comic slapstick virgins, it is found in the melodrama heroines *before* they succumb to temptation. In this way it seems as if the possession of poise marks the girl out for pre-marital sex. This perspective is observable in the wider popular media too, if we remember Helen Gurley Brown's insight, 'Being able to sit very still is sexy' (Brown, 1962, 70).

What prompts the associations at the heart of this performance dichotomy, however? Why are the girls destined to remain good bouncy and the soon-to-be-bad still? Perhaps in endeavouring to answer this we can return to the anxieties caused by the idea of the desirous virgin prepared to flout the double standard: this figure's decision to have premarital sex might then be worrisome enough without showing her *active* body too.

With the comic virgin, whose loss of maidenhood is positioned after the final curtain, her innate bounciness and evident expenditure of energy is permissible because she is never going to be allowed to have sex within the diegesis: the destructive energies which cause so many accidents are due to her not yet directing them into the bedroom, and the films which employ her as a character choose to keep this so, inventing plot exigencies that ensure she is married before her unruly energies can achieve their ultimate end. The 'virginity dilemma' films do not allow the same physicality to those virgins narratively destined to succumb to temptation, because energy and agency together would be too threatening. The heroines who are going to yield are kept static and still then, not only to show the momentousness of the step, but also to keep within the bounds of at least one ruling of sexual normativity endorsed by contemporary society, the idea prevalent at the time that sexually active women were still sexually *passive*. Coupling Gidget's bouncy buoyancy with Molly's intent to fall would be too threatening for an American audience at this time: Sandra Dee and the other comic maidens can thus revel in their kinesis because it is channelled into slapstick which is perilous only to their own, and not society's, equilibrium.

Conclusion

The films from this cycle have been seen attempting to negotiate the problem that while virginity itself is invisible, the filmic medium demands that something be shown. The actor is therefore called upon to *wear* virginity in her physical performance, either constantly through its excessive lack of restraint or in occasional heightened moments when the dilemma of resisting or yielding to temptation is at its most intense. In this way, Sandra Dee's two different

somatic performances of virginity in the 1959 films stand as examples of those in all the 'virginity dilemma' films.

However, these physical enactments were always destined to cause as many anxieties as they appeased since this internal state of experiencelessness could not be written on the body in any definite way which forbade or foreclosed the opportunity for imitation, for passing. As noted before, if virginity can be codified through physical display, then it can be faked.

In the next section of this thesis, in the detailed examination of the sexy revamping of Doris Day's star persona which paradoxically froze the star's image as that of a constant and aged virgin, these performance tropes will be employed again. In analyzing those vehicles across which Day's contested virgin dramas are played out, the slapstick comic and composed melodramatic maiden are both observed, which complicate the binaries established here in interesting ways as well as providing evidence that Day did not always play a virgin.

Section 3:

Doris Day's mature virgin persona: 'Defending her maidenhead into a ripe old age'
(Haskell, 1974, 265)

Chapter 1: 'Before she was a virgin....'

Introduction

In this final section of the thesis I want to turn my attention to Doris Day, whose star persona has become linked, probably ineluctably, with the virgin. Two

points which particularly interest me are interrogated throughout the work in this section: the specific time in her career that the association between virginity and Day began, because it was not always there, and the only very partial fit this virgin stereotype has with her actual screen roles. While I acknowledge that, as Dyer has noted (Dyer, 1986, 3) the star persona can as much be made up of extra-filmic events and moments as on-screen ones, Day's lasting chaste reputation seems to have very little to draw on from either sphere: though it is a commonplace that Doris Day 'always plays a virgin', neither off-screen facts nor film roles support this reading of the star. Yet that this is the dominant image of Day remains incontestable: from the moment when her star persona became fused with the virgin, until now, over thirty years after her screen career finished, Day's association with the maiden has been almost total. A by-word for coy pre-Pill prudery and out of touch morality, the star's name is most frequently invoked now to indicate her own films' inane and unrealistic cheeriness ('..the noir heroine is no Doris Day', Naremore, 1998, 20) or our (assumed) more sophisticated distance from "fifties" morals: 'By the time [teenagers] are 13 they already know more about sex than Doris Day had ever figured out.' (Joseph, 1998, 47).

Oscar Levant appeared with Doris Day in her first full-length film, *Romance on the High Seas* (Michael Curtiz, 1948). His famous comment, that he knew Doris Day 'before she became a virgin' (1965, 192) thus comes from a witness: Levant was there when Day was first starting to act, before Warner Brothers had decided what kind of star to try to groom her into becoming. In this first film, as will be considered below, the character Day plays is, simply, no virgin: thus, in Day's playing her before the other maidenly characters more often associated with her, Levant's witticism can be seen to be accurate.

Furthermore, Levant's mordant comment contains an acknowledgement of the manipulation required to render Day into this persona: she *becomes* a virgin. While this remark draws attention to itself by its seeming paradox (virginity is a natural state, virgins are born and not made, in fact, one becomes unmade as a virgin, made into a post-virgin) it also adroitly focuses on the process which froze Day in this image. Further examination is needed to see how and ponder why this was achieved; thus in the chapters in this section I want to examine when the virgin tag was first affixed to Day, and interrogate why this a- or pre-sexual label should become so firmly attached to the star at a time when, paradoxically, she was playing, for the first time in her career, maturely sexual, modern women. Day's smart careerist, chic, successful, and urban, whom she plays in *Pillow Talk* and *Lover Come Back*, is neither a widow with children, an ingenue or a married woman set firmly in a family situation; nor, unlike her portrayal of Ruth Etting in *Love Me Or Leave Me* (Charles Vidor, 1955) is the character set in some safe past which offsets the immediacy of her actions. Day's Career Women characters in these two films even differ from her role as journalism teacher, Erica Stone, in *Teacher's Pet* (George Seaton, 1958): because they are in colour. Day's maturely sexual body, showcased finally in both fabulous gowns *and* glorious Technicolor, can be read for the first time in her film career as being about female sexual pleasure – of the characters, and of the audience, looking at her, feeling with her, wanting to buy copies of the things she wears. A chapter thus considers the importance of the costume decisions made in *Pillow Talk* to the revamping of Day as a sexualized star, and the further evolutions evinced in the wardrobe in *Lover Come Back*.

In both *Pillow Talk* and its unofficial sequel Day tangles with Rock Hudson, negotiating the boundaries of their relationships without ruling out pre-marital sex, but insisting it must be on her terms. However, in only the second film, as shall be seen, does she explicitly acknowledge the initiatory nature of the sex she is desiring. Although it is thus the second Day-Hudson vehicle, *Lover Come Back*, which explicitly posits Day as a virgin, the fact that it does so in a heightened, self-conscious and self-reflexive way indicates that it is riffing off a joke already in existence by its release date of 1961. While *Lover Come Back* may thus perpetuate the virgin persona, writing it onto Day's body with such indelible force that it was never after erased, it did not begin the maidenly myth. Close examination of the pair of films and the two others Day made between them, will also contribute to understanding of the origin of the concept of Day's perpetual virginity.

Other work in this section explores comparable narrative moments from *Pillow Talk* (1959) and *Lover, Come Back* (1961), where the Day character acknowledges her desires; here I argue that, far from always 'playing a virgin', Day's filmic virginity was fluctuating, indicating that its status was something achronologically constructed by the studios and media rather than an organic or inherent part of her screen persona: unlike the trait of independence, as will be seen below, virginity was not an unchanging essential part of her image. By contrasting two scenes from *Pillow Talk* and *Lover Come Back* where Day has a sung soliloquy before the anticipated and desired consummation, I want to interrogate how she 'plays a virgin' in the later film. I thus compare Day's highly skilled performance in this role, the only one in her body of work which seems to exhibit similarities with the contemporary mini-cycle of 'virginity dilemma' films,

with that in the earlier Day-Hudson vehicle; not only was *Lover Come Back* potentially attempting to cash in on the 'virginity dilemma' cycle, it was also definitely trying to recapture the box office success attendant on *Pillow Talk*, to the extent of very largely copying its glossy look, scenario, characters, and even more minor structural elements, such as this sung soliloquy before the desired sexual act. *Lover Come Back* may, however, be the type of copy that irrevocably alters its original: the consciousness of the virginity plot in the later film may have been read back not only onto *Pillow Talk* and Day's star persona, but her earlier film roles too.

In concluding I will mention briefly several films Day made after *Lover Come Back* to see how the virgin characterization becomes variously inflected and eventually immutable; however, this section begins by going back in time, before the virgin monolith took mastery, to attempt a stock-taking of Day's star persona in 1959. By this point, she had been making films for a decade, and can be seen to have evolved into a personality which possessed a definite cluster of meanings for her audiences. In this year Day made two films, *It Happened To Jane* (Richard Quine) and *Pillow Talk* (Michael Gordon), both of which diverged from the usual Day vehicle. Although at first sight not ostensibly so unusual a vehicle for Day as some of the deviations of role in her career (as will be briefly examined below), *It Happened To Jane* actually represents a more radical departure from the perceived Day persona than any of the films, such as *Storm Warning* (Stuart Heisler, 1951), or *Julie* (Andrew L Stone, 1956), which I designate as narratively anomalous.

Doris Day's pre-*Pillow Talk* persona

An examination of the characters from amongst the 23 films Day made before *It Happened To Jane* shows an interesting heterogeneity: it cannot be claimed she has earned her virgin tag by endlessly repeating the ingenue role, since even before what I see as her first maturely sexual role, as Jan Morrow in *Pillow Talk*, she had already played a married woman eight times, a widow twice, and was a mother in four of these ten films. Day's early career is thus interesting since the very varied roles she performs do not seem to contribute to her assumed virgin persona. However, her very great popularity as a star – she appears in the top position in 1952, 1959, 1960, 1962 and 1963, and second in 1951 and 1961 (Basinger, 1993, 509-510) - indicates that the public were able to find a settled cluster of meanings produced by her image. Had the rapidity of alternation in roles between married and single, mother and ingenue, showgirl and girl-next-door not had some core persona at their heart, the incoherence with which Day was being marketed at this stage might possibly have hindered her progress towards stardom. What these earlier films had in common, however, was their consistent use of Day's earlier established stardom as a popular singer, along with a commitment to a core personality with shared recurring characteristics. For example, seventeen of the 23 films made before *It Happened To Jane* are musicals, *The Man Who Knew Too Much* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1956), although a thriller, contains foregrounded scenes of singing, and *It Happened To Jane* itself also includes a moment when Day sings with a troop of boy scouts. *Pillow Talk* followed these attempts to ease audiences into acceptance of a different kind of Day vehicle by incorporating four songs into the film.

While the character played by Day in these pre-*Jane* films may have possessed a variety of marital statuses, there was still a high level of homogeneity in the films' narratives and tone. Because she was generally performing in musicals, films which require happy endings, boy-meets-girl plots, enthusiasm and energy generically, these were the backgrounds against which the Day persona was generally displayed. There were significant deviations from this sunny model, however. Four of the films Day made before *Jane* radically departed from the jolly vehicle in which she usually found herself: *Storm Warning*, *Love Me Or Leave Me*, *The Man Who Knew Too Much* and *Julie*. Feminist critics of the early 80s writing about these films pointed to the popular media's contemporary and continuing discomfort with these roles, suggesting that the sunnier Day was less threatening. Clarke, in particular, details how the television broadcast of post-*Pillow Talk* melodrama, *Midnight Lace*, was book-ended by announcements which sought to affirm the usual 'sunny' Day persona:

BBC television recently screened *Midnight Lace* on its Friday night film slot (5/9/80). The announcer briefly introduced the film as " a tense psychological thriller set in London during the famous fogs of the '50s, starring Rex Harrison and, *in an untypical dramatic role*, Doris Day" (my emphasis). 108 minutes later...a sunny close up of Day complete with the 'famous grin' filled the screen and the same announcer declared that "Doris Day can be seen *in a more familiar role* later this season when the BBC will be showing a series of Doris Day musicals. " (My emphasis)....it seems to me that there must be a lot at stake in fixing the meaning of a star's image. Polysemy (multiple meanings) is strictly avoided in the extra-cinematic discourses and the notion of a unitary, consistent character is put across. There is a lot at stake here because if Doris Day is incapable of contradiction and change then so are you and I and the status quo. (Clarke, 1980, 12-14)

While Clarke is concerned to interrogate what makes the media uncomfortable with the anomalous dramatic Day films, my interest is in examining the continuities between the characters played even in these anomalies with the more usual upbeat roles. Examining the four unusual films made before *It*

Happened To Jane, it is interesting to see that the Day persona remains remarkably intact, even within films which differ so much *narratively* from her normal outlets. That quality of self-reliance and independence, which is a core trait of Day's persona, from the early musicals where she wants to be a star, to the later career woman films such as *Pillow Talk*, is sustained also in her characters from these anomalous vehicles. In *Storm Warning* Day plays a young working-class woman married to a man who, unbeknownst to her, is a member of the Ku Klux Klan. When her sister (Ginger Rogers) uncovers this fact, and that the Klan have murdered a man who was going to expose them, Day's character betrays her husband to save her sister, and is shot by the Klan. It is the only film in which the Day character dies; more remarkably, there is nothing in Day's performance as Lucy Rice, the slightly sullen dishwater blonde who works in a bowling alley, looks after her husband and tends her meagre home, to suggest that she more usually found herself prancing around in musical comedies. The underplaying of the role suggests a confidence in Day matching the character's: though Lucy is torn by divided loyalties, she does not hesitate to act when her sister is in jeopardy.

This self-reliance and confidence in her own abilities is allowed by Day to shade into ruthlessness in the next role that deviates from the sunny norm, *Love Me Or Leave Me*. While this film remains true to the tried-and-tested Day formula for success, by being a musical and showcasing her vocal talents, in casting her in the biopic of Ruth Etting as the star, well-known for her gang connections and then-scandalous affair with her one-time accompanist, the film subjects the Day persona to a significant torsion. James Cagney's Marty 'The Gimp' Snyder may bluster and bully across the screen, but the film clearly displays that is it Ruth

who has mastery. With a disregard for her own popularity, which supposedly did suffer on the film's release, Day plays the character as ambitious, scheming, ungrateful, cold and totally focused on achieving stardom.

While playing Etting offers the actor a chance to distance herself from her usual roles, this is paradoxically offset by the steps the film takes to distance the modern star, Day, from the star of a few decades earlier whom she is playing. Although it works its way through the Etting standards, the film holds itself back from the earlier star in two, specifically musical, ways. Firstly Day sings Etting's songs but makes no attempt to mimic her vocal qualities, which would still have been familiar to audiences. Though for her role in *Calamity Jane* (David Butler, 1953) Day reports her ability and willingness to alter her voice ('I lowered my voice and stuck out my chin a little.' Hotchner, 1976, 148), here there is no attempt to sound like Etting. Secondly, whilst it is a truism that the songs in musical films can comment on the action, here the emotions that are being evoked by Day's voice most often do not fit with Etting's but with Snyder's. Thus when she sings 'You're mean to me', it is at a moment when Etting has again refused to appreciate all that Snyder has done to help her achieve her ambitions. Similarly, in the film's climactic number when Day sings the film's title song, it is *Snyder's* feelings that the song encapsulates. Day as Etting pours out the lyrics of the torch song, but it is Snyder who is carrying the torch, not she: 'There'll be no one unless that someone is you/I intend to be independently blue'.

Why should the film elect to preserve Day's voice in its own familiar timbre, rather than mimic Etting's, and why take the even more radical step of having

her render Snyder's feelings through the songs, rather than her own? Perhaps this was decided because of the potentially risky step in casting Doris Day as Ruth Etting; keeping the star's voice not only maximizes the possibility of album sales but distances a current valuable property from the taint of association with a notorious loose woman, drinker and adulteress. The problem with this decision is that it makes the Day performance seem even colder, if what she sings is to be discounted, and makes Snyder – a gangster and, as suggested here, rapist – into the emotional focus of the film.

According to Day's biography (Hotchner, 1976, 178) she received lots of mail from fans after this film criticizing her for using the stimulants forbidden by her membership of the Christian Science Church; the openness of her beliefs ('As all Hollywood knows, she does not smoke or drink' Whitcomb, 1962, 11) might perhaps have underlined that when she is seen drinking whisky in the film, she is acting, but the fans cited in Day's biography seem to have chosen to interpret her behaviour as a betrayal and as a bad example to young people. Perhaps the real impetus behind the chiding mail was audience members' discomfort with the persuasiveness with which Day portrays Etting: letting us see a woman so driven by ambition to be a star that she will exploit not only her own talents but anyone else who comes near was possibly too close for comfort to the Day who was consistently amongst America's top box office draws across the fifties and sixties. Contemporary press and publicity material had always stressed Day's inherent niceness, endorsing the real existence of the sunny Day seen in countless musicals; typical press articles underline her status as 'Hollywood's nicest star' (*Modern Screen*, cover, November 1957) and note that despite fame she has remained 'Sweet as Apple Cider' (*The Hollywood Reporter*, February 1,

1963, 29). Day can now be seen consciously arraying herself against this role; by indicating a ruthless centre to the woman on screen in *Love Me Or Leave Me* she could be seen unsettling the usual fantasy of her own niceness, backing up a counter (and more realistic) image of a different Day – thrice married, hard working, cleverly marketed – less jolly, more human, more fallible.

It is possible to posit that Day at this time in her career, in the mid nineteen-fifties, was committed to enlarging her screen persona to accommodate a more adult range of qualities, leaving behind the ingenue characteristics that marked her roles in Warner Brothers musicals. Certainly, released from her seven-year contract with Warners in 1955, Day did sign herself to vehicles which proved to show her in new lights, whilst still maintaining a central focus on her vocal skills and core traits of independence and hard work. While *Storm Warning* was an early deviation from the standard Day film, bracketed on either side by more usual musicals, during this mid-fifties period she performed in three atypical films in a row, immediately following her turn as Ruth Etting in *Love Me Or Leave Me* with her role as Jo McKenna, ex-singer, doctor's wife, mother and supposed hysteric in Hitchcock's *The Man Who Knew Too Much* (1956). While ostensibly this role is not as far away as Ruth Etting was from her standard character, since Day can be read as the devoted wife and mother who can sing to her child and support her man, as Jo Day further manages to perform the ennui, discontent, and alienation within domestic life which Betty Friedan would characterize as the housewife's disease, 'the problem that has no name', almost a decade later (Friedan, 1963, 13). The actor's standout scene comes when she does not know her child has been abducted; her doctor husband (played by James Stewart) gives her a sedative before telling her. The resultant

moment, when Jo is succumbing to the drug but fighting to react, is both moving and a little sickening: as the woman struggles to vent her anger at being thus patronisingly rendered unresponsive, the sedative begins to work and keep her fury and misery helplessly unexpressed. The rifts in the McKennas' relationship, already hinted at in the film, become clear here as Jo, weeping and thrashing her limbs, tells her husband she hates him for doing this to her. His decision to sedate her instead of working with her to find the child acts as a damning metaphor for his infantilization of his wife throughout their marriage.

Fascinatingly, while the film chooses to play on Day's fame as a singer, using her recording of 'Que Sera Sera' to help market the project (Sackett, 1995, 137), at the end of the narrative when Jo is called upon to sing in the Embassy where her kidnapped child is being held hostage, it is the *failure* of her technique that is played up, as she abandons the elements of her music training which dictate control of tone and volume, to concentrate on producing not music but a *noise* that will reach the ears of her son and let him know she is in the building. The potential discomfort of the film's audience in viewing a famous singing star performing 'badly' is mirrored by the diegetic audience in the Embassy, whose looks of incomprehension and unease are dwelt upon by the camera. Hitchcock in this way is giving the film's audience permission to be unsettled by Day's performance, to find it lacking in its usual qualities of harmony and tunefulness.

In both *Love Me Or Leave Me* and *The Man Who Knew Too Much*, then, Day can be seen choosing to perform in projects which are anomalous to her usual vehicles, and which require a risky discarding of characteristics – warmth,

likeability, emotions channelled euphoniously through song – which generally accompany her performances. Critics noted that Day's acting in these roles was very strong ('Musical comedy star Doris Day is astonishingly good in her first dramatic role'. Review of *Storm Warning*, *Charm*, March 1951, 144), but the films did not perform particularly well at the box office, suggesting that fans were less keen to adjust their ideas about Day than she herself was. The third in the row of deviations from her normal films, *Julie*, confirms this even further, as it is the only one of the three entirely without song. Set 'now', *Julie* tells the story of the eponymous heroine, newly married after her first husband's apparent suicide, coming to realize that her current husband, unstable concert pianist Lyle Benton (Louis Jourdan) was actually his murderer. Insanely jealous of his wife's contact with any other man, Lyle pursues Julie all over the Point Sur area of California; when she reverts to her pre-marriage career of being an air stewardess, he follows her onto a plane, killing the pilot and co-pilot before being fatally wounded himself. Talked down by the air traffic controllers, Day as Julie is the original stewardess called upon to land the plane, long before this became a cliché mocked from *Airplane 75* (Jack Smight, 1974) onwards. While the plot is overwhelmingly melodramatic, the handling of the narrative is resolutely realistic, even documentary-like: for the climactic scene where Julie is handling the plane controls for the first time, there is no background music to provide emotional cues or mitigate against the narrative tension. The scene of 14 minutes seems to unfold in real time, with a downbeat underplayed performance by Day which gives the scene more realism than it perhaps warrants. Although she spends much of the film enacting terror, running away on high heels from her madman husband, and trying to piece together the mystery, Day still finds time in the film to perform quiet moments that convince

the audience that her character is a real woman in unusual circumstances. For example, a scene where she waits in the stewardesses' accommodation to hear which flight she will be working on is marked by its lack of action. This contrasts with, and sets up suspense for, the big climax on the plane, but also lets us watch Day *being* Julie: wandering around the apartment, leafing through a magazine, smoking a cigarette. The little actions are nuanced and utterly convincing, Day here as in the other anomalous films giving a performance which shows intelligent acting decisions in the quiet moments of inaction helping to support the work in larger, louder scenes.

The melodramatic nature of *Julie's* plot led critics to pan it and audiences to keep away; perhaps also the continued downbeat nature of the films she was performing in, here augmented by being shot in black and white, further discouraged patrons from paying. Day may be seen to have capitulated somewhat in returning, in her next film, *Pajama Game* (George Abbott and Stanley Donen, 1957) to the musical format which had made her so popular before; while her portrayal of union boss Babe Williams is full of character, independence and energy, the musical format of the vehicle comforts rather than unsettles the audience, and the resolution of the film is based more on fantasy and the need for neat closure than in reaching a satisfyingly possible conclusion. *Teacher's Pet* and *The Tunnel of Love* (Gene Kelly, 1958) did nothing further to disrupt audiences' typical enjoyment of Day as their plucky, tuneful heroine.

Throughout both the various usual and anomalous vehicles, then, Day's name beside a character in a cast list signalled to the audience that the woman she

played would be: independent, feisty, energetic, hard-working. These elements were present from her first role, as Georgia Garrett, a perky, wisecracking, gum-chewing chanteuse, in *Romance on the High Seas* (1948). Examination of Day's performance in this film shows a persona not yet settled: outside of referencing Day's established celebrity as a big band singer there is a marked confusion of elements, with the character's easygoing raunchiness sitting uneasily besides her occasional naivety.

Day's first big moment in the film comes when she sings, delivering a song which, in its confusion of tone and styles, neatly symbolizes the incoherence of her nascent star persona. Her costume for this scene also encapsulates a mixture of styles and connotations: the flux Day's yet-unformed image was undergoing can be read in this scene from the song, her outfit and her acting style, all of which blend the naïve with the cynical. Addressing a nightclub audience intimately, Garrett first confidently confesses her inability with words and poetry; her vocal tone changes when she admits herself bested even by the kind of rhymes 'you find on a school house wall'. Alluding to the kind of 'Georgia loves Peter' graffiti written in chalk as a child, for this nostalgic line Day's voice loses its showgirl edge and takes on her habitual purity of tone. This is lost in succeeding lines, however, as she launches into the chorus which involves repeating 'I'm in love, I'm in love'. Now Day's performance takes on a bounciness, a gallumphing energy which is emphasized by the music supporting her voice and the way her body plays up to the tune, underlining the ends of phrases with a 'bomp' of her hip and an emphatic blinking of her eyes.

The messages that this vocal and physical performance yield are about energy and bounce, good-humour and cheerfulness. There is nothing seductive or overtly sexualized; yet the outfit Day wears while performing attempts to add this type of connotation to the mixture. Day's outfit accords with genre verisimilitude: she is a showgirl whose job partly involves, presumably, showing off her physical attributes. The pale blue of the dress seems to suggest innocence, as do its long sleeves and full floaty skirt. These elements are, however, both coupled with and offset by visible cleavage, predatory nail varnish and a big hair do. As accessories, the dress boasts a wafted handkerchief, a fabric flower, a bead necklace and sequins. Items suggestive of innocence (the flower, the child-like beads) clash with more sophisticated ones (sparkling sequins and gracefully flourished material). The incoherence of the outfit chimes with the juxtapositioning, in Day's voice, of the innocent and the brash (Figure 12).

In the short acting scene which follows the delivery of the song, Day portrays blue-collar Garrett meeting and talking with urban sophisticates Elvira Kent (Janis Paige) and her uncle Laszlo Laszlo (S. Z. Sakall), employing a range of performance tones which convey her character's mixture of feelings: wariness of their scheming, confidence that she is their superior in 'smarts' even if their inferior in education – there is much made of her lack of French – cynical determination to exploit their attentions to her in monetary terms for as long as she can. Garrett is both innocent and coarse, aware of the facts of life and the rules of the game: when Elvira introduces the older Laszlo as her uncle, Georgia replies with a knowing wink, 'So if he isn't your uncle, is that my business?'. She is here not quite the 'tart with a heart of gold' stereotype, but

she is not far off it. Later, on a cruise with Peter (Jack Carson), it is Georgia who wants to take the relationship 'further', and he who demurs.

Fascinatingly, though, elements of Day's performance here, in her very first fiction role, can be seen being developed and becoming part of the star's persona, while other aspects are quickly erased and never repeated. Georgia's perkiness and energy were inherited by many Day characters, becoming trademarks, while her cynicism, coarseness and upfront sexiness were quickly phased out. Within just two years, for example, in *Tea for Two* (David Butler, 1950), the dominant image of Day is one that has been purged of Georgia's vulgarity and overt sex appeal: Day's Nanette in the later film maintains the earlier emphasis on the enthusiastic performance of songs, the vocal mastery, but significantly she is no longer a seasoned professional singer, but rather a stage-struck amateur. This chimes with the overall softening of the character: where Georgia was street-smart, Nanette is more innocent, the portrayal of her romantic rather than sexual.

Despite, as mentioned, Day also regularly playing mothers and wives in other films, these ingenue qualities seemed to be a fixture of her persona in the first half of her career. While not specifically coded as pre-sexual, as the girl-next-door roles might suggest, the emphasis in the majority of these films is on Day as the embodiment of a safe because anchored sexuality. Of the many meanings her star connotes, troublesome sexuality is not one of them – until *Pillow Talk*, perhaps. Where the narrative formula differs, as has been noted, the root characteristic of independence is not varied from, even if other elements of the usual persona or vehicle are discarded: Lucy, Ruth, Jo and

Julie all remain self-reliant in the extreme moments to which the various plot exigencies give rise.

It seems very interesting that Day's star persona should be founded on two characteristics which can both be seen to have been inherited from her real life pre-film career as a band singer: her enjoyment of and expertise in singing, coupled with the independence and self-reliance of character which must have quickly developed in a girl who, at 16 years old, was touring the United States with a variety of all-male bands. By regularly playing up the first of these traits, Day's vehicles repeatedly confirmed Day's status as a skilled singer; significantly, the pre-*Jane* vehicles also maintained the second, not varying her core personality characteristic of independence no matter how often they changed her from chorus girl to heiress to settled family woman.

It Happened To Jane by contrast reveals how centrally important this independent-mindedness is to the Day persona: *Jane* seems to prove that Day evolved as a star persona who could make sense, be intact, without the singing part of the equation. While those films I am calling the anomalous ones, *Julie* et al, did not make much money or attract huge audiences, they still work as films, and Day's performances in them are both more than competent as the work of an actor, and comprehensible in terms of her own star persona. *Jane* however demonstrates that while Day could be *more* than singing, she could not be *less* than independent. Close examination of this film will now work to show in what ways the film departed from the conventions that governed her star persona, her settled cluster of meanings.

What happened to Jane?

Tapping into the established body of knowledge about the star, *It Happened To Jane* reminds the viewer of Day's former success in *Calamity Jane* (David Miller, 1953) by giving her character the same name. This can be seen as an attempt to maintain the usual Day persona in a standard Day film, since ostensibly *Jane* does not radically diverge from the usual Day vehicle as it had been established by the late 50s. Day plays Jane Osgood, a plucky widow with two small children who runs her own small business raising lobsters to supply to the restaurants and country clubs of middle-class Maine. She lives in a small rural community where her family have lived for generations. Her long-time beau is the town lawyer and alternative mayoral candidate, George Denham (Jack Lemmon). Pitting herself against the ruthlessness and resources of a mighty business empire run by Harry Foster Malone (Ernie Kovacs), when he ruins a consignment of lobsters, Jane sets out to show him and America that the little people do count, and of course triumphs by the end of the film, managing to convert Malone from curmudgeon into town philanthropist and finally winning a marriage proposal from the shy George too. In between times there is even a musical interlude as Jane sings to George's scout troupe, instructing them tunefully to 'Be prepared and you'll be a real good scout'.

However, the film does depart from the usual successful Day formula very radically in undermining of Jane's own 'good scout' credentials: this cheerful, perky, helpful, can-do and independent American stereotype can be seen to mesh neatly with Day's established image, but is here abandoned. While, as

usual the Day character is established within a safe sexual relationship (by its both being sanctioned by marriage and existing in the past) in order to provide the necessary loveable small children, and is found working and living in idyllic rural surroundings, unusually she is portrayed as petulant, panicky, needy, clingy and, faced with problems, hysterical (much more so than in *The Man Who Knew Too Much*, where this was the charge levelled at her - demonstrably unfairly - by her controlling husband). Her customary energy, which is found in every other Day character, whether it reveals itself and is discharged through her singing and dancing, as in the musicals, or in her pursuit of business success in the careerist films, is here evoked and released only by Jane's habit of running everywhere: from the first scene where she is called to the train station to see the spoiled lobsters, until the end where she leads the chase to thank Malone, Jane runs. But that is all she does. The Day character's usual pragmatism is here replaced by a personality which can encompass only dogmatic decisions or total panic, both connoted by her running, towards a fight, or away from trouble.

Further, *Jane* presents a Day who constantly cries and blubbers; faced with dead lobsters, the other townspeople's anger, Malone's manoeuvres, she weeps, her first recourse is to tears, not, as with Jo McKenna, her last. While that character had, with her son's kidnapping, a real reason for crying and hysteria, yet still maintained a resolutely determined and pragmatic outlook, rarely breaking into tears, Jane here cries at the least provocation. Her weakness is further displayed in her reliance on the Jack Lemmon character, George, whom she bullies and orders about, but whom she also exploits parasitically. It is made obvious to the audience that George loves Jane, and

that she knows this, but he is hampered in taking their relationship further by his memory of the dead Hank, her husband and his best friend, who was a more decisive (and thus more manly) man. When George tells Jane he has decided to sell his house to finance her lobster company, her face lights up at his announcement that they will be partners, but dims again when he elaborates that this will be a business partnership. Jane is positioned as having to drive George to declare himself since he is too shy and modest to assume she could reciprocate his feelings. Whereas Day's Jan in *Pillow Talk* maturely acknowledges her own attraction to Rex, here Jane cannot do the same to galvanize George but instead works to make him jealous, bullies him and finally whines, 'I'm a woman and I need to be married!' This moment seems more truly shocking than that in *Storm Warning* when Day's character is killed, the absolute abandonment of what Day's star persona means – self-reliance even in exigencies – more of a death than Lucy's, who may have been shot by the Ku Klux Klan but dies at the moment of her independent choice to save her sister. Day's persona had always previously guaranteed to the viewer a quality of energized integrity, in that she would pursue what she wanted (often a career) with all her might; having Jane here give up the fight and admit that she wants to be married instead of being independent, and worse, her insinuation that this is an inevitability given her gender, betrays all the women in the audience who had ever looked to her as a role model. In this way Day's performance as Jane can be seen as a betrayal of the usual Doris Day ideal: it is the fact that by saying she's a woman and she *therefore* needs to be married she is reversing track on all those times she would not let gender get in the way of what she wanted to do, as in her many showgirl movies, including *My Dream Is Yours* (Michael Curtiz, 1949), *Lullaby of Broadway* (David Butler, 1949), *April in Paris*

(David Butler, 1953), determined wife vehicles (*The Winning Team* (Lewis Seiler, 1952) *I'll See You In My Dreams* (Michael Curtiz, 1952), and career women movies (*Teacher's Pet*, as well as *Pillow Talk* and its successors).

Audiences – especially perhaps female audiences – loved Day because she was independent and at times ignored her gender to concentrate on more interesting things like careers. Even then she was not averse to love or sex, but marriage and home and Him would not be all her life: her star persona evokes the idea of a well-rounded person with ideas and interests.

In conclusion, then, *It Happened To Jane* differs from and does damage to the usual Day persona by abandoning the core personality trait of that persona, her independence. Not only is Jane unlikeable in her neediness, manipulation and mild bullying, it also feels wrong to make Doris Day be embodying a character with such traits. As noted above, even the anomalous films did not diverge from showing Day as an independent woman who could be relied upon to look after herself, to land the plane, save her child, foil the villains. While *It Happened To Jane* tries to keep some of the standard surface points of the usual Day vehicle – the little kids, the song, the quiet elements of safe romance – the film does not seem to realize these are just trappings, and it is not the trappings which make the Day vehicle successful or not, but rather the maintenance of the star's core personality. Though the film might run the expected narrative course, so that Jane eventually gets her man and bests the railroad boss, in diverging from the usual direction for the star persona the film can be seen making Day be seen untrue to 'herself', and it is this which marks the vehicle a failure.

Jane did very badly at the box office: no one expects or wants to see a snivelling Doris Day. Her success was subsequently felt to be in decline and, according to her biography, it was this fear of decline that led her agent and husband, Martin Melcher, to urge her to consider the script for the racy sex comedy, *Pillow Talk* (Hotchner, 1976, 222) Day's current image was believed to be in need of renewal, of a radical overhaul. The fact that the decline which necessitated this overhaul was felt after *Jane* had departed from the standard Day vehicle, however, seems to have been overlooked. By examining how the whiny and weedy Jane Osgood diverged from the popular personalities Day generally performed, this chapter sought to outline her more usual late 50s persona, thus setting the scene for the work of the next chapter. This will chart *Pillow Talk's* restatement of the key characteristics of the star's image at the same moment as its triumphant transformation of Day into an adult, sexually mature star, which gave the actor a career boost which resulted in her being 'acclaimed by Theatre Owners of America as the world's number one box office attraction' (*Motion Picture Herald*, January 28 1961, 8) just before *Lover Come Back* was released. How this transformation impacted on the meanings of Day's star persona and how, paradoxically, it can be seen as the inauguration of Day as virgin, will now be examined.

The original versus its problematic copy: *Pillow Talk* and *Lover Come Back*

This final section of the thesis is concerned, as has been noted, with asking both at what point in her career Doris Day became firmly identified as an aged

virgin, and, as far as possible, why this identification seems to have emerged.

In this chapter I will be focusing on the two films which seem to act as boundary points for this new twist to Day's star persona: *Pillow Talk* which established the maturely sexual Doris Day in 1959 without, as I believe, indicating any sexual inexperience, and *Lover Come Back* which, two years later, seems to affix the old maid label to the Day character as a matter of routine.

While, as examined in the previous chapter, there were anomalous films such as *Storm Warning*, *Love Me Or Leave Me* and *Julie* which departed from the usual cheery musical formula which marked Day's Warner Brothers' pictures, the usual star persona generated by such films as *On Moonlight Bay* (Roy Del Ruth, 1951), *By The Light Of The Silvery Moon* (David Butler, 1953) and *Calamity Jane* (1953) stressed the independence of the character but also her rural roots, familial relationships and the channeling of energy through song and dance. This persona was significantly revamped in 1959 with *Pillow Talk*, which established a Day who was sophisticated, mature, well-dressed and urban, more like the older, city-dwelling sister of the earlier incarnation than the usual ingenue next door. Significantly, however, for all its conscious novelty in presenting a glamorous, maturely sexual, urban and chic Day, *Pillow Talk*, unlike the previously-considered *It Happened To Jane*, maintained the emphasis on the Day character's independence and energy, here converting these traits into the force behind Jan's considerable career success.

Lover Come Back, by contrast, seems to have a slightly different agenda for Day; although the urban careerist persona is continued, the later film departs from the earlier success by intermittently suggesting that Carole is not very

good at her job in advertising. While this is contradicted by the luxurious and spacious apartment in which she lives – she must be earning a sufficient wage to maintain it – the film undermines the core Day trait of independence by implying she is not good enough to be independent very long in the advertising jungle of Madison Avenue. Although headhunted by an important New York firm because of her success in her hometown company, Carole, the film implies, is not ruthless, acute or manipulative enough to get to the top in the world's advertising capital. Marriage seems then her only option: the film thus attempts at times to reduce the Day figure to one who is playing at work until the right man comes along, a character who has more in common with the young career girl stereotype discernible in films such as *Ask Any Girl* and *The Best Of Everything*, than with the usual Day persona. This may have been a conscious strategy on behalf of the film-makers, linking Carole's work inexperience with her sexual inexperience, since *Lover Come Back* is the only film in the Day oeuvre which, as will be seen, overtly designates the character she plays as a virgin.

'One of the wildest asses in Hollywood': *Pillow Talk*'s repackaging of Day

The slated title for *Pillow Talk* was, at one point in the film's short production-life, *Any Way The Wind Blows* since, as *The Hollywood Reporter's* gossip column noted, the intended title had, for its saucy suggestiveness, 'displeased the Shurlock Office' (*The Hollywood Reporter*, February 5 1959, 2). It is now difficult to guess how – and how successfully - the substitute title would have been linked in to the story of Jan and Brad, but was briefly favoured, at least by Doris's manager-husband, since it was the title of a song he had just produced.

Accounts in *The Hollywood Reporter* (13 February 1959, 2) show shooting of the film commencing in early February 1959 and it first being shown, to enormously positive audience response, in August that year. Frequent issues of the trade daily after this premiere carry advertising for the film which cites its rapturous critical response, for example, quoting its selection as *Redbook's* film of the month for September, (*The Hollywood Reporter*, September 4, 1959, 7) or, in a glamorous double-page layout, show a still from the bath scene with press quotes arranged as a frame around them (*The Hollywood Reporter*, 16 September, 1959, post 3).

If the PCA needed to be persuaded that *Pillow Talk* was an appropriate and not overly-salacious title, it is to be wondered how it reacted to the film's determined repackaging of Day in line with the ambition of the producer, Ross Hunter, to revive her career by revealing her until-now hidden assets:

Doris hadn't a clue to her potential as a sex image and no one realized that under all those dimdls lurked one of the wildest asses in Hollywood. I felt that it was essential for Doris to change her image if she was going to survive as a top star. (Cited in Hotchner, 1976, 230).

This reconstruction of Day as Hunter's 'sex image' begins from the first shot after the opening credits. As Day's voice, singing the lyrics of the title tune, fades away, the image similarly fades from silken pillows to be succeeded by a close-up on Jan's long leg clad in a nude-coloured stocking. This coup de cinema - Doris Day's thigh! - rivets the attention and acts as a proclamation of the birth of the new Doris, underlined by having 'Jan' hum the title tune Day has just performed: Doris Day may have been more well known for her lovely singing voice than her silken limbs, but here, the film seems to say, we're going to get both.

The film was fully aware of its departure in showcasing Day's body in this sexualized manner, and can be seen attempting both to enhance and ameliorate the shock of this new Doris by continuing the association of her characters with music and song. Having Day in this new incarnation continue to sing establishes a continuum with her past roles, but having her sing a song with saucy lyrics ('Pillow Talk') or one which overtly speaks of her sexual desire and begs for fulfilment ('Possess Me!') firmly indicates a break with the past and the establishment of a 'new Doris' who has 'gone sexy' (*Cleveland Plain Dealer* cited in *The Hollywood Reporter*, 16 September 1959, post 3).

The opening few moments of the film, then, work to display a new Doris: beautifully (un)dressed in her lavish, chic and urban apartment. While at this point it is the costume and its scantiness that attract the eye, the film employs other methods which also help to convey that Jan is to be understood as a modern, sophisticated woman about town, which is to say not necessarily a virgin. For one thing, there is her name: "Jan Morrow" is obviously a play on the name of the French star, Jeanne Moreau, rendered clipped and brisk in American English but still retaining the European connotations of mature adult sexuality: at the time that *Pillow Talk* was in production Moreau had appeared in two Louis Malle films released to much media hoopla and scandal in the US: *Ascenseur Pour L'Echafaud/Frantic* (1957) and *Les Amants/The Lovers* (1958), both texts which associate the French star with adultery and a drive towards her own sexual fulfilment. Since the usual films of the two women were not in similar genres, it seems as if the *Pillow Talk* character's name is more a joke specific to the film than to the woman playing her, and intended to emphasize

that the difference between Day's usual persona and role here is as great as that between the usual Day and the usual Moreau, intended, that is, to signal to the audience that here she is a woman experienced in love.

Two further strategies which *Pillow Talk* uses to underline the new maturity of the Day character are the inclusion in the script of direct references to past relationships and encounters with men that Jan has had, and the establishment of a comparison with the character of Brad, the suave seducer. The former proliferate throughout the film: Jan talks to her maid Alma, about the 'very nice men' she goes out with, and to 'Rex' about other experiences she has had: 'I'm sorry Rex, I should have known you're not like the others'. Jan's frequent comments that she can *trust* Rex are simultaneously comically ironic and indicative of past experiences with men who did not employ such elaborate ruses in order to capture her affections. Jan's apology indicates that other men have tried wolfish behaviour on her in the past: significantly, while Jan herself says nothing to deny that such tactics may have been successful, at least one contemporary reviewer decided to believe this:

A fine healthy young woman, *who has so far fought off the passes of many men*, Doris now begins to be kept awake by the primary urge... (*The Hollywood Reporter*, 12 August 1959, 3) (my italics).

Jan's later comment to Rex, that 'I should be able to trust you by now' should thus surely be read not as her acknowledging her awareness that he will not make a pass at her, but that he *will*, differing from other men in that he will not run away or end the relationship after she has yielded. This view of the likely outcome of the climactic scene in the Connecticut cabin, had Jan not

discovered the masquerade plot, is borne out by a comment later made by Day herself to Hudson's biographer, Sara Davies:

I was a businesswoman. I don't think I was a virgin. I went off to the country with him and I probably would have succumbed, except I found out he was a phony and ran away. The audience - *you* thought I was a virgin. *You* thought, oh, she'll think of some way to wiggle out. (Hudson and Davidson, 1986, 79).

Further overt comments on her past amatory experiences come in Jan's sung interior monologue, 'Possess Me!', discussed below, and when she is contemplating how she feels after manipulating Rex into asking her to go away with him for the weekend:

Jan: Gosh, I feel guilty! I practically tricked him into taking me along! You know, you've gone out with a lot of men in your time, but this! This is the jackpot.

While the line 'gone out with a lot of men' does not necessarily imply that she has had sex with any of them, it does underline the context of Jan's familiarity with male company. Furthermore, by tagging this comment onto the end of her guilty glee about going to Connecticut, it can be seen to imply that she has been in similar intimate situations before.

Jan's comments heard in voice over, then, serve to reveal to the audience her attraction to and feelings for Rex in both a seemingly authentic and comic manner, the latter especially given that the viewer knows about the true identity of the man. Jan's happy self-admissions that Rex is handsome, charming and trustworthy are funny in the context of our awareness that he is really handsome, charming and *untrustworthy* Brad, her nemesis of the party line. But the presentation of the interior commentary does more than provoke laughter at Jan's innocence of the plot and mistaken confidence in Rex: it directly

establishes a parallel between the couple since we are permitted to hear the thoughts of both of them. Frequently this does continue the laughter at Jan's expense arising from our possessing greater knowledge than she, as when Brad/Rex cynically calculates 'I'd say five or six dates ought to do it' and the woman, blissfully unaware of all of this, comments contentedly, 'Oh, it's so nice to meet a man you feel you can trust!' However, we are also privy to the thoughts of each when the other is absent, as when Jan, piqued by Brad's innuendoes over the telephone, does wonder for an instant if she has 'bedroom problems?', or again when Brad, hearing that the object of Jonathan's new infatuation is called Jan, forestalls the audience's comment about plot coincidence and contrivance by saying 'It *couldn't* be....Or could it?'

Allowing both Brad and Jan moments of interiority where the audience can hear their thoughts and desires establishes a parity between the characters which is easily overlooked amidst the more overt contrasts the film attempts to build up between them – as in, for example, one of the film's tag lines which explained that the film was 'The captivating story of a careful career girl who believed in 'singleness'...a carefree bachelor who believed in 'togetherness' ...and how they learned that 'Pillow Talk' is no fun, for just one!' While external publicity, then, concentrated on opposing the future lovers, the film itself is careful to establish parallels between Jan and Brad which work to conform their aptness as partners. For example, both are successful in their careers, and derive pleasure from their work; these jobs are more arty than resolutely practical, and allow them to be creative, Jan with colour, texture and design, Brad with music and words. Both also obviously enjoy life in the metropolis, as the scenes from the dating montage illustrate: the couple walk happily towards the camera,

against a back projection of a variety of recognisable New York landmarks and nightspots, wearing various gorgeous complementary outfits (Figure 13).

Brad/Rex and Jan are also both provided with a character who voices criticism about their chosen lifestyles: Brad has Jonathan (Tony Randall), who tells him 'you oughta quit all this chasing around and get married', while Jan has her maid, Alma (Thelma Ritter). It is interesting that while no critic has assumed that Jonathan's homily on marriage to Brad should be meant other than ironically, Alma's parallel remarks about Jan's misguidedness in enjoying her career woman life - 'if there's anything worse than a woman living alone, it's a woman living alone and liking it' - have been taken to be the film itself indicating disapproval of her singleness (Fuchs, in Foreman, 1997, 238-9). It seems to me that, far from setting up Alma as a source of salty worldly wisdom, the film intends her comments to be read in the light of her own context (as a single, lower class alcoholic woman of advanced middle age) rather than to reflect on Jan. The film's paralleling of Alma and Jonathan further underlines the unlikeness of their status as seers: like unmarried Alma, the thrice-divorced Jonathan is meant to act as comic comparison rather than clear-sighted soothsayer.

Two final strategies occur for marking Day's character in *Pillow Talk* as a new, sexually mature persona: firstly there is the witty use of split screens which saucily suggest that the couple is in bed together, or sharing an extra large bath. The innuendo provided by the split screens thus serves as the visual accompaniment to the script's suggestive lines and jokes. The last method of underlining Jan's mature sexuality is particularly interesting in the light of her

subsequent enshrining as a perpetual virgin; this is the little joke about mistaken identity and virginity found at the end of the scenes in Connecticut when Jan has finally realized Brad's imposture. Being driven back to New York by Jonathan, Jan cries all the way until Jonathan stops at a roadside diner for some coffee to comfort her. Here they discuss the situation and he urges her to stop being so upset. Without knowing it, however, the two are overheard by several burly truckers who read the scene between the two friends as one between lovers, and take Jonathan's briskness as a sign of his callousness having now had his wicked way with her:

Jan: I've never done anything like this before.

Jonathan: All right – there has to be a first time! You don't have to go to pieces over it!

Jan: I'm so ashamed... I thought we were going to get married!

Jonathan: Forget it!...

The film invites us to laugh at the truckers' misplaced response to this (they nearly break Jonathan's jaw punching him), their assumption of a Victorian melodrama of seduced innocence and sneering caddishness. But the scene and the truckers' response is only funny if Jan is *not* a virgin. If she were still a virgin and had nearly been duped by Brad, the truckers' physical punishment of Jonathan might seem transferred from right to wrong man, and perhaps out of proportion, but still an apt and just retribution. The scene can only be funny if the old-fashioned response is being held up as the wrong one, thus indicating again *Pillow Talk's* commitment to a modern Day playing a woman who is sexually mature and sufficiently post-virginal to be distanced in time from this scene of disappointed ex-maidenhood.

It seems to me therefore that *Pillow Talk* does not posit Jan as a virgin, does not even address the subject of her virginity except, as in the scene mentioned above, in assuming it instead to have been yielded in the past. Jan is a character aware of her own desires, who evinces none of the usual doubting and fretting that contemporaneous virgins performed. Instead the film seeks to create a post-virginal persona by several strategies: by the sexualized costumes, the character's name, through her knowing and owning of her desires, through script references to past men. In this reading, Jan's wariness of wolves can be seen to exist not because she does not want to yield her virginity, but precisely because she has already done so and has found herself to have been duped before. *Pillow Talk* thus presents a new Doris who has 'gone real glamorous and looks like a dream walking!', as Hedda Hopper's review gushed. (Cited back cover of *The Hollywood Reporter*, 15 October, 1959); this film has Day play a character whose moment of trepidation and self-doubt, her crisis of virginity, predates the film and is never mentioned; in *Lover Come Back*, by contrast, this moment is revived and put centre stage as the crux of the film's narrative.

***Lover Come Back*: 'The assault on Doris's fiercely guarded virginity'**

Because of the enormous success of *Pillow Talk* at the box office ('The film took \$7.5 million on initial release'. Babington and Evans, 1989, 200) the studio, producers and writers were keen to make another film with the same stars, Day, Hudson and Randall, and the same salacious plotline. However, it seems significant that by early February 1961, when *Lover Come Back* went into production, the idea of the Day figure actively maintaining her virginity had been consciously recruited into the text. In Hudson's biography *Lover Come Back's*

director, Delbert Mann, related that he had felt with this film that 'the assault on Doris's fiercely guarded virginity was where the humour came from' (Hudson and Davidson, 1986, 59). Though the film repeated the masquerade plot, the emphasis in the new Day character, 'Carole Templeton', was made to conform to the *Hollywood Reporter* reviewer's view of the earlier vehicle, in preserving the illusion that Day had so far managed to resist would-be seducers.

Lover Come Back has the 'virginity dilemma' as a major narrative strand in a way that *Pillow Talk* does not, since it at times asserts the nigh-total lack of sexual experience in both Carole and 'Linus'. The masquerade plot in the later film, while borrowed as a plot mechanism from its predecessor, can in this way be seen clearly to have increased the emphasis on virginity since it replays and strengthens the trope of Hudson character's avoiding intimacy with Day's, moving from Rex's extreme but excusable gentlemanliness to Linus's anxiety-driven impotence.

Lover Come Back also invokes the basic plot structure of the earlier film, the enmity between the two lead characters which motivates the man's masquerade, but again increases the stakes for which the game is being played by having the Day character's virginity, rather than a relationship, as the prize to be won under false circumstances.

As a basic strategy, the second Day-Hudson pairing can be seen not only to repeat the plot exigencies of the earlier film, but also to make them more extreme. Thus where the original picture presents the necessity for masquerade arising from Brad's need to court Jan in a different persona since she knows

and detests his 'real' self, in *Lover Come Back* Jerry takes on the 'Linus' persona solely to make a fool of Carole, not in order to win and keep her. Frequent gleeful script references to his duping of her bear this out, with the audience made complicit with the 'real' meaning of Linus's seemingly innocent remarks, and Carole made to connive unwittingly at her own downfall, as when she pleads with Linus to stay in her apartment overnight, since 'for what you have in mind, isn't this the perfect place?'

While *Lover Come Back* thus rather transparently repeats many of the points deemed to be successful in the earlier film in order to recreate the box office success of its predecessor, it can be seen to have altered the character played by Day in two significant, and significantly linked, ways. Firstly it undermines Carole's business skills; then, having eroded any professional acumen she might have, the film also explicitly removes the past personal experiences that Jan acknowledges.

Where Jan was a successful interior decorator, shown to be creative, decisive, good at making contacts and important to her boss for all these reasons, Carole the advertising executive is guyed by the narrative for her excessive but unfocused zeal, her unwillingness to use sex to sell products, her lack of creative vision. Unlike *Pillow Talk* too, which gave Jan and Brad different careers and allowed each to be a success, *Lover Come Back* makes the couple business rivals and shows clearly that the Hudson character vastly out-ranks Carole in experience, skill and, importantly, guile.

An early conversation between the two rival advertising executives has them talk on the phone, another of the many conscious nods to *Lover Come Back's* predecessor, complete with split screen; here Jerry variously accuses Carole of not being sexy and of trying to be a man, getting her to admit during this exchange that she is unmarried and inexperienced:

Jerry:If you can't stand the competition get out of the advertising profession.

Carole: You aren't even *in* the advertising profession, and if I weren't a lady I'd tell you what profession you *are* in...

Jerry: Tell me anyway.

Carole: Well, let's just say I don't use sex to land an account.

Jerry: When do you use it?

Carole: I don't.

Jerry: My condolences to your husband.

Carole: I'm *not* married.

Jerry: It figures....a husband would be competition. There's only room for one man in the family.

Carole: (clenching her fist in rage) I wish I *were* a man right now!

Jerry: (calmly) Keep trying. I think you'll make it.

Jerry not only has the upper hand throughout this conversation, constantly able to best Carole's lines and rejoinders, twisting her lines to make her seemingly admit to being a virgin and/or a lesbian (willfully misinterpreting her wish to be a man); he also has the dominant share of the screen. *Pillow Talk's* equitable division of the screen, sometimes vertically, sometimes horizontally, is here abandoned in favour of a split which devotes two thirds of the screen space to the gloating Jerry, and only the remaining portion to the increasingly furious Carole (Figure 14).

As mentioned, however, the greatest difference between Jan and her descendant, Carole, is the emphasis placed on the latter's virginity. The later film importantly chooses to underline these differences by presenting the woman's desires for sex, as did *Pillow Talk*, in a sung soliloquy to which the audience is privileged witness. However, instead of sensuously confirming her desires, as the *Pillow Talk* song does, it indicates her complex array of conflicting emotions. Like the other desirous maidens of contemporary 'virginity dilemma' films, Carole is given a big scene in which her virginity is tested: torn between fear of her own first time, and wanting to prove to Linus that he is adequate, sacrificing her maidenhead on the altar of his ego, Carole's tumultuous feelings find expression in song. The film further underlines the split between her desires and fears by having the song not performed out loud, but in voice over, thus enforcing the tension between Carole's passionate yearnings and the anxieties and proprieties that prevent her from voicing them aloud.

That Carole is overtly posited and meant to be read as a virgin is indicated by this climactic sung soliloquy scene (read in detail in a further chapter below), where Carole asks herself, 'Is this the night Love *finally* defeats me?'; furthermore, other frequent script allusions and performance tropes throughout the film support this conscious avowal of virginity. This is unique within Day's oeuvre, and is meant to provoke laughter at its confession and enactment by a woman of her age. It is to Day's acting credit that she manages to invest a character obviously intended by the writers to be seen as a silly old maid with enough credibility to endow the scene of her intended 'sacrifice' with both sensuality and pathos.

Lover Come Back begins its construction of the virginal Day in its title song, which plays over the animated birds-and-bees credits. To a jolly, bouncy tune, Day's voice can be heard confessing an awareness of a 'lack'; given that, at this point in the story she has no lover, this can be taken as another self-knowing reference to the film's popular predecessor. In this way, Day the star can be imagined to be pleading with Hudson to come back to the cinema for another filmic tussle. As the song draws to its end, Day's voice sings firmly:

I've made my conclusion
I know what I lack
There's no substitution
So please hurry back
Lover, Lover, Lover, Lover, LOVER!
Come back.

The film can perhaps again be seen to be self-consciously commenting on its own reprising of the popular Day-Hudson pairing in the line 'there's no substitution'. Between *Pillow Talk* and *Lover Come Back* Hudson had made *Come September* (Robert Mulligan, 1961) and Day had made *Please Don't Eat The Daisies* (Charles Walters, 1960) and *Midnight Lace* (David Miller, 1960); besides suggesting Day as a more fitting partner for Hudson than *Come September's* Gina Lollobrigida, he more right for her than David Niven and Rex Harrison, the line here also suggests that there is no substitute for what the Day character in the new film lacks: a man and thus by implication, sex. Day's reiteration of the word that she needs can be seen to evoke orgasm as her voice and the music supporting it both build climactically to her final, highest and loudest iteration of 'lover!' This climatic building is echoed in the later song where, as shall be seen, Carole questions whether she should 'surrender?'

Within the first few moments of the film, then, the audience has been assured of another sexy skirmish between the popular stars of *Pillow Talk*. The film continues to build on this anticipation of seduction in the ensuing scenes in a variety of ways, with references both diegetic and extra-diegetic, and visual as well as verbal tropes, all the time reinforcing the newly added fillip that the Day character in this iteration of the narrative is a virgin.

For example, the scenes of Carole teaching Linus how to cycle, sail and play golf and enjoying watching horse racing are intercut with others showing the Tony Randall character Peter going again and again to check on the progress of the real Linus Tyler's invention, a scene which inevitably ends with an explosion emanating from the laboratory. Cutting between the couple's activities and these blasts serves to suggest that there is an explosive chemistry between Linus and Carole too: it is not just wolfish Jerry who feels the attraction but maidenly Carole also, awakening to awareness of desire.

This is further borne out by costume decisions: when Carole plans a day out with Linus, a scene which leads into the extended dating montage, she dresses in a tight orange skirt and a sleeveless white top which draws considerable attention to the outline of her breasts. Her secretary exclaims, on seeing her, 'Hallalujah! Today you are a woman!' This comment draws attention to Carole's overt sexualization through her outfit. Before, her neat, well-matched business suits had been noted for their stylishness and for an emphasis on the colour white (with its connotations of purity); now, through both the eye-catching colour of her skirt, as well as its tight cut, and especially the emphasis on the bust (still

pure in white, and covered up, but now explicitly outlined), Millie's words underline that Carole has evolved into a desirous *woman* from a business *lady*.

There are many other similar diegetic comments on Carole's attractiveness and her new-found awareness of desire; one which links to extra-diegetic awareness of Day's own star persona sets up a plot hook which is later realized in an unforeseen way. Day's well-known avoidance of alcohol is evoked when Carole confides to Linus that she does not drink; the film underlines the potential salacious usage of this fact by having her add,

Oh, it's not that I object to it, it's just that I can't tolerate alcohol. Even one little glass of champagne and I become completely irresponsible, I might do anything!

This creates the expectation that there will be a scene later where Jerry can use alcohol to seduce Carole, but the film gives a surprising twist to the scenario: it is Carole who wants to make use of her low resistance to drink, rather than him. In a skilfully performed moment, Day shows Carole torn between propriety and honesty: swinging one leg underneath the dining table in a movement to channel her nervousness, Carole looks down embarrassedly as she tries to co-opt Linus's agreement to break out the champagne:

Carole: You know...um...I have a small bottle of champagne that someone gave me once and...um...I debated whether to open it tonight. But knowing how susceptible we both are...

'Linus': You were absolutely right.

At this response from Linus, Carole's face falls, a close-up of her expression clearly showing that she had hoped he would agree to drink and risk the ensuing irresponsibility which might lead to sex. Jerry Webster is at his most

manipulative and cruel here; having got Carole to connive at creating the opportunity for her own downfall, he now attempts to goad her into seducing him by baiting the trap with the promise of a lasting commitment:

'Linus: I'm afraid I could never get married...I'm afraid. Afraid I'll be a failure.....Am I the kind of man a woman could love?

Carole: Any woman could love you!

'Linus': *If only I could be sure of that....*

The film has now established Carole's 'crisis of virginity' moment, which will be considered in detail in a later chapter. It is noteworthy, however, that unlike *Pillow Talk*, where the masquerade plot is exploded partly through Jan's own agency and partly through Brad's bad luck, in *Lover Come Back* Carole has to be saved from sacrificing her virginity entirely by outside forces. It is an eleventh-hour phone call from her boss, sacking her for entertaining the wrong Linus Tyler at her apartment, which exposes Jerry's true identity. Carole's business and personal ambitions are thus linked again at this moment of joint failure: she loses her job instead of winning a client and keeps her virginity instead of exchanging it for sexual experience.

The film has not yet finished, however, with the narrative hook of Carole's susceptibility to alcohol; her forecast about what alcohol does to her, and can permit her to do, has four separate moments of resonance in the film. The first comes when Carole tells Linus about her weakness and he realizes he can make something of this; the second is the moment mentioned above when she is trying to tell him about her desire for him but is tongue-tied by modesty and inexperience. When she tells Linus to wait for her in the spare bedroom, and goes off to the kitchen to suffer her virginity emergency, Carole has her third

moment when alcohol becomes important: she drinks a glass of champagne for courage before going to her own room to don a filmy negligée for the 'sacrifice'. Finally, when the real Tyler has managed to invent a product that can be VIP, variously called a mint or pastille that is imbued with 100% alcohol, both Carole and the now-unmasked Jerry become so drunk on the product that they wake up the next morning together in a motel, married. Carole is thus correct in her forecast that alcohol will make them uninhibited enough to have sex, even though she did not anticipate that she would have to be very drunk because by the time of the consummation she hates Jerry for lying to her.

The film allows Carole a moment acknowledging how much she finally welcomed her sacrifice, suggesting that her physical attraction to Jerry is so deep that even hating him personally is not enough to stop her enjoying sex with him, when she acknowledges her own sexual fulfilment. Dreamily, before completely waking up, she sighs: 'Oh Millie, I had the most *wonderful* dream! Doctor Tyler and I...'. This reassures the viewer that Jerry and Carole eventually, when all the plot exigencies have worked themselves out, will have a relationship which, like the Day-Hudson coupling in *Pillow Talk*, can include fun and fulfilling sexualized play even after marriage, through Carole's acknowledgement that sex was 'wonderful'. While she may have been overtly posited as a virgin by the film, Carole is at least allowed to be one who rejoices in physical love when it finally comes to her, rather than bemoaning the loss of her chastity.

Again the film copies its original in positing a scenario after the explosion of the masquerade plot where listeners overhear a conversation and draw the wrong,

salacious, conclusion. In *Lover Come Back*, however, the audience, two cleaning ladies at the motel, are not so wrong in their guess as the eavesdropping truckers were in *Pillow Talk*. While they assume that Carole's horror and anxiety is due to the realities of sex – 'Now darling, it's only natural to be a little frightened... It's like olives, dear, it's something you acquire a taste for' - and her actual misery is caused by who her sexual partner has been, the point of each, the assumption and the actuality, is that sex has occurred.

In production and filming at the same time as those films discussed in the previous chapter, the 'virginity dilemma' movies, *Lover Come Back* shares their interest in the initiatory sexual experience and presents a 'crisis of virginity' moment which Carole suffers as thoroughly and ambivalently as any of the younger maidens from that mini-cycle. Interestingly, however, the film departs to a certain extent from the performance dichotomy sketched in the previous section, allowing Day to mingle the usual separate attributes of the comic slapstick virgin who will retain her chastity and the static dignified maiden who is destined to yield. This interesting hybridity will be examined further in the next chapter, which is devoted to Day's differing performances of experience and virginity in the two films discussed here.

Always 'playing a virgin'? Day's performances of desire and inexperience

A 1962 piece on Day by Al Capp, writer of the cartoon strip, *Lil Abner*, concludes with some humorous hyperbole:

Doris Day's purity is one of the best-known facts about American life. No matter what she does, no matter what anyone tries to do to her, in the

mind of the audience, Doris Day will ALWAYS be a virgin! (Capp, 1962, 137)

Capp's iconoclasm, in deriding Day throughout the article for her mature virgin persona, presents the earliest instance of this assumption that I have been able to find in writing. As noted, this assumption has persisted to the present time, nearly forty years after Day made her last film. Capp's conclusion interestingly assigns the virginity to Day herself, however, rather than to her characters: by insisting Day will always *be* a virgin, rather than *play* one, he not only assumes a monolithic maiden persona for the star which these chapters in my thesis attempt to problematize, but further ascribes this quality to the woman, not the actor. While so many critics have subsequently declared that Day 'always plays a virgin', Capp conflates star and role to insist she is one, implying Day has somehow personally taken on the mantle of virginity, whatever the facts of her real life sexual experience. This is not to imply Capp has forgotten the story of Day's life, the men and the marriages, but that he is suggesting Day's persona as a virgin is well-defined enough to change, obscure, even nullify, the historical details of the woman who plays her.

By examining two separate performances by Day of a scene which could potentially be the crisis of virginity moment found in the 'virginity dilemma' films, the run-up to sex, I want to work towards rupturing Capp's assumptions about Day's maidenly status; by indicating that she does not, indeed, always play a virgin, I hope to problematize the assignment of this label to the star. Looking in this way at the parallel run-up-to-sex scenes in *Pillow Talk* and *Lover Come Back* also continues the exploration of the two films' different presentations of the Day character begun in the previous chapter, and helps to underline the latter film's overt narrativization of Carole as a virgin. Contrary to what Capp

and other critics assert, this comparison of the two comparable moments shows that Day neither *is* nor *plays* a virgin always: looking at the two films in chronological order demonstrates that Day's filmic virginity was fluctuating, first not there, then present, and thus not an unchanging essential part of her performances.

In *Pillow Talk*, Jan's moment of internal pondering of the anticipated sexual act comes in a scene of sung soliloquy: in the car with 'Rex' on the way to a weekend alone together, Jan outwardly enjoys the night-time drive in the convertible. Whilst checking her make-up, and eventually snuggling up to Rex, mark the physical actions she performs, her voice-over sings a song which the audience is meant to interpret as her internal thoughts. Thus establishing a split between Jan's outward behaviour and inner feelings, the film goes on to elaborate this split, by showing the woman's outward actions to be seemingly innocent but her inner words, in her performance of the song 'Possess Me!', to underline both her current desires and her past experiences.

Furthermore, throughout the film we have been allowed access to both Jan and Brad/Rex's internal voices, and have usually seen him acting out innocence or gallantry while his inner voice undercuts these qualities with his cynical awareness of how they impact on the woman ("I'd say 5 or 6 dates oughta do it..."). In this scene, however, the similarity between the two would-be lovers is stressed, rather than their differences, through hearing Jan's passionate thoughts at odds with her quiet outward demeanor. Both characters are shown in this way being prepared to use subterfuge to get the desired goal, and in both cases this goal is sex. The scene gives us Jan's outwardly innocent

performance – the make-up checking which allows her to snuggle up to the man

- while her inner voice thrillingly details what she wants from him:

Hold me tight
And kiss me right
I'm yours tonight
My darling, possess me.
Tenderly
And breathlessly
Make love to me
My darling, possess me.
Near to me
When you are near to me
My heart forgets to beat.
Stars that shine
Make love divine
So say you're mine
And my darling possess me!

In this scene Day's skillful performance can be seen enacting Jan's desires, both through her treatment of the song played as a voice-over and her acting work in the scene itself, and thus continuing the film's construction of Jan as a character with past sexual experience. Three separate factors work together to build up this idea of Jan's desire: the song lyrics, Day's vocal treatment of them, and her physical performance while the song is happening; that this last is different from the words sung needs stressing as there are no correspondences on this occasion between the lines delivered and the business Day enacts.

Lover Come Back's similar scene creates much closer ties between lyrics and physical performance, so that the two seem to complement and answer each other, but in *Pillow Talk* the split between internally avowed passion and externally performed innocence is the precise point.

The song lyrics clearly establish a past history to Jan's sexual desires. For example, her command 'Kiss me right' implies there is a *wrong* way, and that she is experienced enough to know the difference. Further, the line 'I'm yours

tonight' can be read as implying that the woman is aware of the potentially temporary nature of the relationship: there might not be a tomorrow or a forever, but this is not what she demands. Far from the tremulous maids of the 'virginity dilemma' films who want reassurance that the love motivating their acquiescence to sex is a real and lasting one, Jan is not only acknowledging here that there may only be tonight, but also does not insist on the physical acts being excused by love. While obviously attracted to the man she addresses in the song, she does not say she loves him or ask him to love her: when the song mentions the word the second time, its position in the sentence makes it sound again like a command ('Make love divine'), backing up the lyrics' mention of the intensely physical effect he has on her ('my heart forgets to beat').

Day's voice further connotes Jan's status as sexually experienced: her treatment of the lyrics is sensual and caressing. Singing simply, without embellishing or drawing out any particular note, she works her way through each line as though it were a spontaneous outpouring of feeling from Jan. In the middle lines ('near to me...') the tune works itself up to a climax, the notes rising higher and higher, and Day's voice becoming more loud and strong, as if in excited anticipation of the proximity of which she sings. On 'my heart...forgets...to beat', she holds the top note and the final word, emphasising the strength of her feelings. For the final lines, shimmering violins underscore the physicality of what she is demanding with pizzicato caresses.

While Jan couches sex in terms of the man's activity, 'make love to me', the fact that she is commanding him to do these things undercuts her passivity, as does the fact that while she is singing, she is pressing herself close to Rex, enacting

with her body language her desire for him. Day's physical business in the scene strengthens the links between Jan and Rex by showing both capable of performance to get what they desire since, while she is behaving innocently, her voice-over indicates the depth of her passion. Jan is seen looking happily at Rex, checking her make-up, her eyes wide, her smile spontaneous, but this is a performance carried out in order to obfuscate the fact that she is continually moving nearer to him. This *performance* of innocence is foregrounded by the way that the camera records her eyes sliding calculatingly to the left to look at him before she begins her migration. The humor of the scene thereby comes from the contrast between Jan's ostensibly demure behavior and the very passionate commands she is singing in her head, revealing her underlying motives.

What the scene does not provide is any hint that Jan doubts what she wants: there is no hesitation on her part nor any dramatization of a crisis or loaded choice. I do not think, therefore, that Day is performing virginity here. Even without the ironic contrast between the lyrics and behavior which indicate her desires, her actions are still not readable as those of a contemporary tremulous virgin because Jan so clearly has designs on Rex, is getting close to him via the classic 'creeping nearer under the pretext of doing something else' maneuver. Jan is thus undoubtedly performing 'innocence' but it is an entirely obvious performance supposed to be read by us as the character, and not just the actor, performing.

This contrasts very much with the crisis of virginity moment where the uninitiated girl questions herself about her desires and the morality of acting on

them, as presented in the 'virginity dilemma' movies. This crisis scene of self-doubt, anxiety and the conflict between sexual desire and notions of propriety, however, is overtly presented in the other comparable scene presenting Day singing about her desires, in *Lover Come Back*.

As noted, *Lover Come Back* came after *Pillow Talk*, consciously attempting to repeat the box office success of its predecessor. Day's overt assumption of virginity here is therefore a retrograde one: it is not that her persona is seen evolving naturally, getting bolder and older from film to film, but rather revokes the experiences to which Jan laid claim. What was conscious sexual desire and the determination to act upon this in the earlier film becomes in the later one an uncertainty, a self questioning, bound up with questions of morals and a sense of crisis of the self that had no part in the *Pillow Talk* scene.

Carole's crisis of virginity moment is ostensibly presented in a similar way, through repeating the device of the sung soliloquy, an internal monologue which plays over the scene rather than being acted out in it. Having been duped by Jerry Webster into believing he is shy scientist 'Linus Tyler', and into ensconcing him in her apartment, Carole prepares an intimate dinner for two and is abashed when, as noted earlier, Linus misses her hint that alcohol's uninhibiting effects might be welcome. Webster then launches his master plan to seduce Carole: by avowing anguish over his own lack of experience, he hopes to make Carole abandon hers. Thus deciding to 'Surrender!' Carole is about to don a lacy negligée and prove to Linus that he is a 'real man' when her phone rings and the cruel plot is exploded: fake Linus is already a real man, Jerry Webster.

The film then spirals off into more comic exigencies as Carole takes her revenge and the two lovers adopt openly antagonistic positions, before VIP's alcoholic intercession provides the plot manoeuvre necessary for the conclusion. What the scene has done, however, is demonstrate clearly both that Carole is a virgin and that she no longer wants to be one, thus fitting her again with the desirous maidens of the 'virginity dilemma' films. Carole's moment of tremulous self-doubt provides the crisis of virginity moment with its apogée, demonstrating the oxymoronic nature of the bittersweet temptations of pre-marital sex to the female heroes of such films. In another skilful performance Day presents bodily and vocal signifiers that make overt the sense of emotional emergency and physical arousal which the character is experiencing.

The *Lover Come Back* scene repeats *Pillow Talk*'s sung desire soliloquy with significant modifications. In place of Jan's confident commands to Rex, here we have Carole's tremulous questions to herself, and, where before he was next to her in the car, now he is physically absent, in a different room. This means that, alone in her kitchen, Carole can more openly act out the conflicting emotions besetting her. Unlike the careful array of innocent actions calculated to bring her closer to Rex, which the confident Jan performed, here Carole can be seen trying to dissipate her anxieties through action, hence her constant pacing, wringing of hands, crossing and recrossing of the kitchen space. This location marks another difference with the earlier scene: whereas Jan's avowal of desire had been staged in the glamorous, sophisticated and modern setting of Brad's fast-moving convertible, a sexy space of consumerism and affluence, Carole's

occurs in the kitchen of her own apartment, a domestic arena seeming to connote that however real and sensual her physical promptings may be, she sees them in the context of a settled (married) relationship. However, two factors potentially counteract a reading which posits Carole's desires here as neatly confined within a safe, mundane context, suggesting instead that sexual awakening has taken her into a realm of exciting fantasy away from the everyday. Fittingly, given the split between vocal avowal of the virginity crisis and physical performance of business meant to dissipate it, these two factors are similarly split, one being on the soundtrack and the other present in the *mise-en-scène*.

When Carole emerges from the spare bedroom where she has left 'Linus' wondering if he can ever be sure of his masculinity, she shuts the door, then leans back on it, her eyes sliding off to the right to where the open-plan kitchen is located. At the same point on the soundtrack a glassy, bell-like note rings out in a rising scale. This signifies the beginning of the sung monologue, but also introduces a fantasy, almost fairy-tale like quality, since Day's voice and the music that plays under it sound very far away. Whereas Jan's soliloquy sounded very much in the here and now of the scene in the car, she singing quietly almost as if not to alert Rex to her thoughts, the distant quality of Carole's voice seems to suggest that she has entered a realm far from her normal everyday reality. This is further supported by the fantasy aspect of the kitchen space she now enters: it is spotlessly clean and tidy, and implausibly so, given that she has just cooked dinner for two and, as the dialogue makes clear, not yet done the dishes. Not a pan or dish, smear or crumb remains to remind the audience that this is a working kitchen; instead, the literally twinkling-clean

surfaces and harmonious colour scheme suggests Carole has left the everyday at the door to the spare bedroom and stepped out of time into a symbolic arena in which to debate her options.

As the lyrics of the song overtly and repeatedly pinpoint the stark dichotomized choices Carole feels she has at this moment - to yield now or to end the relationship - her body responds to the words to enact the different options she is listing:

Shall I resist my heart?
Shall I deny its splendour?
Shall I insist we part?
Should I surrender?

Should I be fire or ice?
Should I be firm or tender?
Should I be bad or nice?
Should I surrender?

His pleading words so tenderly entreat me!
Is this the night that Love finally defeats me?

Should I avoid his touch?
Should I be a shy pretender?
Should I admit I'd much
Rather surrender?

Surrender! Surrender! Surrender!

The song's rhyme structure, which chimes internally as well as at the end of lines, binds the whole piece together very tightly, and serves to indicate how intensely the dichotomies are warring inside her. Further, while her voiceover sings about the opposing pairs 'fire/ice', 'firm/tender', 'bad/nice' of the second verse, Day's physical performance conveys the alternate poles of sexually desirous woman, and maiden maintaining a chaste outlook, through hardening or softening her facial expression (Figures 15 and 16). As she poses these questions, Day's voice redoubles this emphasis on the two polarized personae,

by hardening and sliding onto the notes for the passionate, sexualized half of the options, and hitting them precisely for the contrasting anxious doubter. Thus Day's physical and voice acting work together to reinforce the existence of two Caroles, each predicated on one of the radically different outcomes of this moment: either giving up her virginity ('the night that Love *finally* defeats me') or parting from the man she loves. Simultaneously, Carole's questioning over which of these roles to adopt conveys that she can choose: the capability of being *either* fire or ice means she realizes her potential for *both*.

While acting out the words of the song Day also manages to add some stage business further to convey the dilemma besetting the character: getting a half bottle of champagne out of the fridge, finding two glasses, shutting the cupboard door, all provide occasions for her physically to embody the sense of imminent crisis, through her pacing, clasping and wringing of the hands, and, as her voiceover sings the last line of the middle section, turning her head from side to side leaning against a cupboard door.

At this point acting and mise-en-scène coalesce: the hitherto self-controlled Carole in pearl and yellow dress matches her fridge. Her kitchen cupboards have dichotomy-coloured doors, red/blue, further indicating her polarised desires, and the different hot/cold outcomes Carole anticipates, while the side to side motion of her head expresses the extreme moment of her virginity's trial. Facing now one way, now the reverse, Day's physical enactment shows us Carole caught between desire and fear. As she sings the final line of the section, however, she smiles and seems to gain in confidence. Returning to the central kitchen unit she opens the champagne and pours it out, giving a tiny

shake of her head as her voiceover puts the question about whether to 'avoid his touch'. As Day's voice on the soundtrack soars and swoops in the aural climax ('Surrender! Surrender! Surrender!') her physical acting underlines the idea of a decision taken in favour of agency, as she drinks the champagne decisively, seeming to radiate resolution coupled with sensuality.

Here the scene calls for Day to make Carole's virginity visible, which she does through a very economical (it lasts under three minutes) and nuanced performance of a character in crisis, made all the more remarkable in that the *film*, though not the character, *is playing it for laughs*. The scene reaffirms Carole's previous inexperience in the way she nuzzles the champagne bottle: there is pathos in the way the liquid is not very fizzy, implying an extended length of time that the bottle has been in the fridge; and, on a cruder level, this can be seen in her unconscious handling (almost orally) of a phallic symbol. The resultant lack of foam can then be seen as an unkind undercutting of her sexual allure.

This performance conveys the dilemma Carole's virginity is undergoing at this moment of testing. Alternating in seconds between a hard-eyed raunchy persona and a more tremulous, doubting one during her pantomimic responses to the questions of the lyrics, Day's acting work serves to underline that both women - bad and nice - are Carole, both possible roles she can adopt. Her assumption of the sexually assertive persona with Linus would therefore be her enacting a role, but no more so than her habitual personification of the self-controlled, wary virgin.

Carole is therefore rehearsing the different demeanours to adopt depending on her choice of sex or separation. Since her performance also conveys the spontaneity of her desires, via the alternations between stillness and sudden outbursts of kinetic energy, she does not seem calculating in her rehearsal, but as if discovering her own potential for different behaviour as she enacts it.

The scene shows how important the actor's performance can be in determining our understanding of the competing pulls on the character. The actor's body bears the burden of performing the problematic virginity; here, through the rapidity of alternation between expressive/repressive attitudes to sex, the split between good girl/bad girl is exposed as a false dichotomy, since Day's Carole is so evidently, earnestly both. This extends the significance of the troubled virgin beyond that in the other 'virginity dilemma' films, in overtly acknowledging that clear binaries are rare, emotions and personae more ambivalent. Day's performance in the role problematizes not only a distinction between bad/nice, but also, by association, other putative polarities such as active/passive, desirous/fearful, even before/after, as the breathless, excited, head-rolling of the still-virginal Carole can be seen to evoke and anticipate the motions of sex.

Throughout the course of this film there is an interesting hybridity in the performance of the virgin role, as Day enacts both the poise of the girl, like Marjorie Morningstar or Molly from *A Summer Place*, who is destined to fall, and the slapstick virgin, the comic film's maid who will maintain her chastity until the convenient end-reel marriage, like *Ask Any Girl's* Meg, or *Sunday In New York's* Eileen. The film is very definitely a comedy, yet includes the self-questioning crisis moment common to the melodramatic films; Day's virginity performance is

displayed through the comic virgin's constant niggling, jiggling physicality (her eye-rollings and foot-stampings of fury, her grimaces of distress) yet her character, Carole, is also possessed of a poise which comes and goes from scene to scene like the melodramatic virgin's and which is both crystallized and then rent apart in the big moment of trial. This refusal to abide by the generic allegiances adhered to by the other films in this mini cycle further underlines *Lover, Come Back's* project to dismantle the notion of polarized binaries given most prominence in the crisis of virginity scene.

The absence of any similar show during the comparable moment in *Pillow Talk* demonstrates Jan's confidence in her own desires, providing good reason to infer the character is post-virginal. In *Pillow Talk Day* as Jan overtly voices her desires but performs a contrived 'innocence'; in *Lover Come Back* as Carole both her desire and hesitancy seem spontaneous and are acknowledged by the character to herself: not feeling one thing and acting another, but feeling *both*.

In this pair of comparable moments of sung introspection, then, Day can be seen performing the desires of her characters for sexual intimacy, but only in the latter scene, from *Lover Come Back*, is this overtly posited as an initiatory event. Electing to copy the sung moment before sex of *Pillow Talk*, the later film can be seen to alter the emphasis on previous sexual experience, letting virginal Carole step out of the narrative into a spotless and twinkling fantasy space where she can debate her options, try out different roles, before returning to earth with a positive decision which is then derailed by the ringing of the telephone. The interesting thing for me is that Day's performance in the latter film complicates the portrayal of the anxious virgin, since it so clearly

undermines stereotypical readings of the desirous or anxious maid by making Carole both. How this complex virginity came to be misread as dominant by Capp and other critics is the main topic of these chapters; the contribution of the costumes to assumptions about Jan and Carole's sexual status will now be examined.

Day Wear: the costume strategies of *Pillow Talk* and *Lover Come Back*

While, as has been noted in the virginity contexts chapters, the wider culture was wrestling with the question of how virgins and post-virgins could be distinguished by eye, the films of this period, both within and beyond the cluster of films identified as being about the 'virginity dilemma', attempted to demonstrate sexual status through utilizing costume codes. Here the films employed a symbolism that was missing in real life. As the Turim article has noted, and examination of both high fashion magazines and everyday clothiers Sears Catalogs attest at this time there were two silhouettes which were both available for wear, the bouffant 'sweetheart' style and the tighter figure-hugging sheath. Sears shows the options for 1959, with both 'Slim Casual Sheath' and 'Striped Full Skirted Dress' available for teens (Shih, 1997, 116; Figure 17). Since both of these outlines were being offered to younger girls as well as to their older sisters, it prompts the question of why in film the wider silhouette is generally visual shorthand for virgins and the tighter shape for women who have crossed the great divide. Significantly, while film costumes using the sheath outline acknowledge the contemporary threat perceived in the single woman as

more sexually accessible, the full-skirted look is used as cinematic shorthand for virgins and also for wives.

Putting both virgins and married women, on different sides of the ultimate divide, coitus, in the full-skirted outline was perhaps explained by the fact that their sexuality is safely contained - the former as yet dormant, the latter licensed by marriage - while both spatially and symbolically the sheer bulk of the circular skirts and stiff petticoats effectively keeps men at a distance. By contrast, the sheath both clung to the body, revealing its curves to the viewer, and simultaneously permitted approach thanks to its more parsimonious occupation of space.

These symbolic associations can be seen employed in a range of contemporary films, not just 'virginity dilemma' texts. In *Some Came Running* (Vincent Minnelli, 1959), for example, Walter Plunkett's costumes operate clear-cut distinctions between virginal Gwen (Martha Hyer) in her 'touch me not' silhouette and the déshabille of party girl Ginny (Shirley MacLaine). Other female characters are similarly sartorially taxonomized. Bama's girlfriend and Edith, who has an affair with her boss, both wear the post-virginal sheath outline; Dave's chaste niece, however, wears the full-skirted dresses, as does her mother who, significantly, is seen rejecting her husband's sexual advances. Wylie's idea of the American Mom reneging on her side of the marriage deal, withholding sex, can be seen in this characterisation, which acts to excuse the husband having the affair. Within the film there is also a concomitant 'hair discourse'; Gwen modestly wears her hair up while a virgin, has her hair

passionately unpinned in the climactic love scene, but later reverts to the earlier hairstyle, restrained and pinned, in denial of her sexual experience.

Hollywood thus attempted to represent the unrepresentable: at a time when Production Code and societal mores forbade on-screen representation of sex, dress codes and allusiveness were made to serve the function of dichotomizing women as virgins/post-virgins. But you frequently *couldn't* tell by looking: these costume codes provide no guarantee, either of authenticity or legibility. The films employ costume in more sophisticated ways when they establish such a dichotomy but then show the characters themselves denying it, as in *Some Came Running*, with Gwen continuing to wear the full shape despite the film indicating that she has crossed the divide, until the final scene when she finally capitulates to the rules established by contemporary film's costume code.

Thus while many Hollywood films of the late fifties operated a code whereby virgins wore the bouffant skirt and post-virgins wore more figure-hugging sheaths, such codes were always subject to the various readings of the people watching them. This chapter will look in more detail at how dress codes were established and manipulated in the two key films of Doris Day under examination, and at the impact that costume change was explicitly designed to have on the revamping of her star from 1959's *Pillow Talk* onward.

Pillow Talk's costume strategies

Pillow Talk was consciously intended by its makers as a repackaging of the star; according to a passage attributed to him in her biography, producer Ross Hunter felt that:

Doris hadn't a clue to her potential as a sex image and no one realized that under all those dimples lurked one of the wildest asses in Hollywood. I felt that it was essential for Doris to change her image if she was going to survive as a top star. (Hotchner, 1976, 230)

Hunter's efforts to rebrand the star were noted as innovative: one ad for the film published in *The Hollywood Reporter* (16 September, 1959) quoted the reviewer for *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*: 'the new Doris goes sexy'. However, as will be considered, the specific costume strategy adopted for 'sexing up' the star may have contributed, paradoxically, to her de-sexing, in its potential for being read as supporting the aged virgin myth.

The costume brief from producer Ross Hunter was that the star should wear modish outfits, as the film's script called for Jan to be a chic business woman with an 'in' wardrobe (Hotchner, 1976, 222). With one exception, Jean Louis did not attempt to create new styles for the clothes in *Pillow Talk*, but to reproduce high-class and expensive renderings of what was then contemporary fashion: some of the outfits similar to the ones sported by Day can be found in the Sears catalogs from the same period. For example, Jan's white belted wool dress which she is wearing when Jonathan kisses her (Figure 18) is very like two items from Sears: a '100% Acrilon Jersey Pullover Dress' from Fall/Winter, 1957 and a 'Rich Wool Flannel Jacketed Dress' from Fall/Winter, 1959. (Shih, 1997, 26 and 45; Figures 19 and 20).

Significantly, following the general filmic rule that sexually experienced women showed off their bodies in the tight silhouette, the fact that the costumes designed by Jean Louis for Jan in *Pillow Talk* are tight and figure-hugging is clearly meant to relay information about her sexual status. By maintaining the

emphasis on slim-line clothes that hug and display the body, a look which Turim has identified with the 'sexual warrior' (Turim, 1984, 9), Jean Louis's clothes for Jan align her with cinematic gold diggers and career girls, rather than sweethearts and wives.

In their design, colours, fabric, numbers and symbolism, the clothes for Jan work hard to showcase the erotic allure of the woman - and that of the star playing her. Confirming Jan's position as career woman, for daytime she wears the sheath outline in dress and coat suits, with the dress tight, cut to emphasize the shape of her bust, hips and bottom, and the coat trapezoid, drawing attention to her long legs. The sheath outline is also maintained in her evening outfits; here there is greater emphasis on surplus amounts of fabric, as the tight skirt of the evening dress is often built up and supplemented with a skirt-length train and worn with a large sumptuous coat; here too bold, jewel-like colours (emerald, ruby) convey a sense of the character's style, energy and seductive sensuality.

The outfit worn by Jan which attains most impact diegetically is the white wool dress she is wearing when she first meets Brad/Rex (Figure 21). This marks Jean Louis' most innovative design within the film, and fittingly it carries diegetic levels of meaning in speaking to aspects of Jan's character. Outside the film, also, it is significant in featuring prominently in the studio publicity for the film, (as is indicated in the Press Book), thus impacting on the public perception of the refashioning of the Day persona.

The white dress is important for what it says about Jan, a dichotomy in its structure signalling a playful eroticism. Made in pristine bridal white, with the

associated colour connotations of purity, the dress seems from the front very prim, as it is ankle length, with no splits which might permit a view of legs, and with a high slash neckline cut close to the throat ruling out the possibility of cleavage. The back view of the dress, however, confounds this primness. The material clings very tightly to Jan's bottom - prompting Brad's pun to himself in seeing 'the other end of your party line' - but above the jiggling derrière the dress is virtually backless. From the front the dress appears to cover her entirely, from top to toe, aided by the fact that Jan wears long white gloves to her elbow; but from behind the material is cut to show lots of her back, and square cut too, like the neckline, not softly rounded or draped, but clean cut (Figure 22). The refusal of drapings or softening in the design pulls the back into coherence with the front of the gown, despite their radical differences in display of flesh, the effect of the severe edges of cloth against the bare skin suggesting a combination of the puritan and the sexy. The dichotomy within the dress design acknowledges a teasing sensuality in Jan, an awareness of the pleasures of display and concealment; while it speaks to a playfulness in manipulating assumptions, the emphasis on sensuous detail which pleasures *her* (the softness of wool and fur, the frisson of air on the nude back) also signals a mature engagement with sexuality very much at odds with the lasting image of Day as over-ripe virgin.

Speaking to different elements within Jan herself, the costume within *Pillow Talk* can be seen backing up the script's notion of her as a chic, experienced woman. But it is also possible to read the tension in the white dress between front and back, concealment and revelation, as an indication of different motivations in the character's nature. The rest of the wardrobe choices, then, can also be

seen chiming with a reading which assigns a basic over-modesty to Jan: her day wear and evening may suggest the outlines of her body, but when in the puffy-bowed nightie she wears to bed after first meeting 'Rex' (Figure 23) Jan seems to revert to a modesty which acknowledges that no one will see her in bed before marriage.

The daytime clothes posit a Jan who is modern, straightforward, go-getting; the bedtime ones, however, hinting at a modesty out of keeping with her age and urban sophistication, can be taken as a sign of a pathologized, rather than healthy, mature sexuality. There is thus a tension set up in the character which, as shall be seen, had serious implications for this repackaging of Day.

However costume is read in *Pillow Talk*, to confirm or problematize Day's mature sexuality, this reading of costume as possessing a modesty explicitly coded as *maidenly* seems to be what the producers of *Lover Come Back* required of Irene, in creating a wardrobe for Day as Carole Templeton. The films' costumes were tipped by the reviewer of the *Motion Picture Herald* as worthy items for exploitation to bring in female audiences on the film's release:

Decidedly part of the selling pattern, and not to be overlooked by any exhibitor in merchandising the picture are the production values, including color by Eastman, and most particularly the clothes worn by Miss Day in the film, as designed by Irene. ...the exhibitor must make a point of the utterly devastating wardrobe, worn with dash and style, with which Miss Day will capture the attention and the conversation of all the women in the audience from approximately eight to 80. (*Motion Picture Herald*, 20 Dec 1961, 388)

Despite this endorsement, however, there seems to be a very clear difference between the maturely sexual glamour provided for Jan in *Pillow Talk* and the chic allure which was somehow suggestive of the character's as-yet-unfulfilled

state in the later film. This seems to go beyond the obvious differences that could be expected by having different costumiers involved in the two projects, to suggest specific costume strategies varying in what they intended to imply about the two characters. As noted, *Lover Come Back* was explicitly conceived as a film in which the comedy was to derive from 'Doris's fiercely guarded virginity'; as in the film's successful predecessor, the costumes were meant to underline information about the character's sexual experience given out in the main narrative through script, situation and symbolism.

Costume in Lover Come Back

While *Lover Come Back* consciously employs many of the major formulae and minor tropes, as well as the cast, of the earlier Day-Hudson vehicle, in order to repeat its box office success, it differs from its original, as mentioned, in presenting the Day character as a virgin overtly, in deskilling her professionally, and also in the visual presentation of the star. Unlike the ultra-chic wardrobe created for Day in *Pillow Talk* by an external expert, Columbia's Jean Louis, who was hired to work on the Universal picture by producer Ross Hunter 'to doll up Doris Day' (*The Hollywood Reporter*, February 17, 1959, 2) *Lover Come Back* used Universal regular Irene, whose other costume credits included the 1900s outfits for *In The Good Old Summertime* (Robert Z. Leonard, 1949) and more 'modern day' clothes, as in Day's own *Midnight Lace* (1960), but was not as well known for sexualized allure as Jean Louis. The outfits by Irene for Day in *Lover Come Back* do not, then, have the same ravishing glamour that marked *Pillow Talk*. Perhaps this fact forms part of the later film's overall strategy to downgrade Carole as an accomplished business woman in relation to the successful Jan: her modish outfits may then be seen as high-end expensive

fashions, while Carole wears clothes which are more suggestive of department store, than couture, chic.

Carole wears 12 different outfits in the film, maintaining the Career Woman outline via use of the sheath silhouette, and with a noticeable emphasis upon the colour white in the first six costumes; given the film's insistence that Carole is a virgin, the use of this colour, traditionally associated with purity, maidens and brides, is unsurprising. At the office and in her advertising research trips around the city, Carole's outfits incline to white as a dominant colour, whether this be the gleaming top worn under a pink or oatmeal business suit of skirt and matching jacket, or the main colour of an outfit, as in the dress coat she wears over a sleeveless steely-grey sheath. The accent on white builds steadily until the half way mark in her wardrobe, when she appears in all-white brocade for her first evening out with Linus. This sheath dress or skirt and jacket suit, with diamond clips for buttons, is chic and flattering, but not such novel or outlandish fashion that female audience members would be surprised by it: the reasonably-priced Sears catalogue shows a similar brocade evening suit for the fall/winter 1959 season (Shih, 1997, 15; Figure 24). With *Lover Come Back* in production in 1960 and filmed in early 1961, Irene can be seen not to have created anything spectacularly new for Carole, unlike Jean Louis' back-accented white dress as sported by Jan in *Pillow Talk*, but to have drawn on silhouettes and fabrics in common usage.

The second half of Carole's wardrobe is marked by a noticeable increase in colour, which gets under way with the rapid succession of outfits worn in the dating montage. Beginning with the orange suit and a tight white sleeveless top

which Millie notices accents her outline ('Hallalujah, today you are a woman!'), Carole begins to wear brighter colours as she teaches Linus to play golf, ride a bicycle, watch horse racing, sail and swim. The emphasis on outdoors activity in these dates excuses the tightness and close-fitting nature of the clothes Carole is wearing, which certainly work to show off her curvaceous and slender body, as Jerry notes with approval.

Whereas Jan wore the possibly most simple outfit of all for her big date with Rex (the first night in Connecticut alone together) in *Pillow Talk*, a white knitted dress like an oversized jumper, Carole by contrast wears the most glamorous outfit for her big night: a tight yellow sheath body with an integral top of shimmering pearls (Figure 25). While this dress does not carry the same weight of symbolism that the *Pillow Talk* back-accented dress seems to bear, several implications can be teased out of its colours and fabrics. The tightness and figure-hugging sexiness of the dress's shape is offset by the cheerful sunniness of its yellow: it is as if the night-time glamour is being downplayed by being cast in a day-wear hue. This suggests Carole's ambivalence at desiring Linus; while she wants him, she would never be so overt – either to him or perhaps to herself – as to acknowledge this by wearing an explicitly vampish, seductive colour like red or black. The pearl top of the yellow dress can be seen to play on the popular superstition that 'pearls are for tears', since the gems are sometimes believed to be unlucky. This is true for Carole as her hoped-for tryst will soon be derailed. Further, the whole ensemble makes the woman wearing it match her refrigerator in the key scene where she debates her options in song: the film continues to sneer at Carole's mature virginity by suggesting a pathological tinge to it, with its visual rhyming of 'fridge' and 'frigid'.

Perhaps compensating for this slight, there is another garment which helps to suggest that even if Carole is a mature virgin, she is one prepared for the moment when she can relinquish this burden. This is the blue, floaty negligée, only half-glimpsed and never worn, which Carole takes from her wardrobe having made the decision to sacrifice her maidenhead on the altar of Linus's masculinity. Walking in a sensuous daze from the kitchen where she has just drunk the disinhibiting champagne, Carole heads for her bedroom, slips off her shoes and removes the diaphanous pale blue garment from the wardrobe. The fact that it is in there waiting, as she has been, for the right moment, testifies to the fact that Carole is a virgin ready for her own undoing. With the champagne in the fridge and the negligée in the closet, the scene is set and she only awaits the right man to initiate the consummation.

Due to the machinations of the comedy plot, however, Carole's *actual* consummation outfit turns out to be another one of her everyday business suits, this time in two shades of blue, as if the purity of her earlier outfits has been besmirched by the fake Linus and white now has no place in her wardrobe. Carole is finally seen getting married wearing traditional white: since, however, she is nine months pregnant, in labour, and on a gurney on the way to the delivery room, this is ironic, as it is a hospital sheet rather than a wedding dress that she wears, as she herself complains: 'I always wanted a church wedding!' In this abandonment of the chic career women outfits she wears in the earlier part of the film, Carole's fate can be seen to be overtly reminiscent of Jan's, whose modish wardrobe is also discarded for the final scenes. Perhaps both films are suggesting that career clothes are no longer necessary as the woman

has embarked on her new career, marriage, which requires no neat suits and matching hats, accessorized bag and shoe combinations, or significant jewellery. The mid-century American cliché 'barefoot and pregnant' neatly describes how Day ends both of these films.

Costume conclusion

Pillow Talk consciously attempted to leave behind the old Day persona of the rural girl next door, repackaging the star as a modern urban woman. *Lover Come Back* followed its predecessor in this, as in so many things, but allowed hints of the country girl's unfitness for the metropolis to creep in, in both the costume strategy which downplayed achieved sexiness in favour of yearning sensuality and the narrative which showed her being bested at her job.

The new accent on the glamour and allure of both characters and the star who played them were thus laid on a foundation of the earlier connotations, the independence and feistiness, the hard-working determination to get ahead now channelled into career progress. Given that the new persona, of necessity, in attempting to recruit fans of the old Day to support the new incarnation, had to revisit elements of the traditional characterisation, it is perhaps understandable that some critics chose to ignore the messages being put out by *Pillow Talk's* costume discourse, and to read Jan's single status as indicative of maidenhood, especially in the light of the later film's conscious play on this.

Significantly, another element which acts as a link to previous portrayals and is possible to discern in Day's characterisation of Jan is a suggestion of prudishness; if desired, this can be gleaned from her old-maid night attire and

from a reading of the film's narrative which privileges effects (Jan departs from the weekend cottage without sleeping with Brad) rather than their causes (Jan has discovered the true identity of 'Rex'). Coupling her flight with Jan's earlier attempts to fend off Tony's passes, it is possible to see the character as trying to avoid sex, even though the narrative indicates her motives are romantic rather than neurotic. This sex-evasion connects to the innocence not out of place in the teenage girls Day had previously played, but which seemed more pathological in a hip, urban sophisticate like Jan and was overtly played as pathetic in a mature woman such as Carole.

Jan's links with the old Day associations thus can confound the attempts of the narrative to promote her as a woman with a mature and active sexuality. Carole then exacerbates this situation by being written and played overtly as a sexual uninitiate. It is paradoxical then that the film which launched Day as a sexualized star, *Pillow Talk*, also inaugurated the mature virgin persona which crystallized as the dominant memory and meaning of the star's persona. Of the two films which followed *Pillow Talk*, the first overlooked but the second tapped into this crystallizing meaning, enabling *Lover Come Back's* further emphasis on the pathological virgin to be laid on an already acknowledged foundation.

Chapter 3:

Post *Pillow Talk* evolutions of the Day persona

Between 1959's *Pillow Talk* which, I am arguing, thus unwittingly inaugurated Day's virgin persona, and *Lover Come Back* in 1961, which overtly confirmed it,

the actor made two films, both released in 1960: *Please Don't Eat The Daisies* (Charles Walters) and *Midnight Lace* (David Miller). Both can be seen in many respects to revert to the type of vehicles with which Day had been associated before, unlike the consciously mould-breaking *Pillow Talk*. While *Midnight Lace* was a return to the darker melodramas like *Storm Warning* and *Julie*, the first film, released in April 1960, was a family romp with songs, based loosely on characters introduced in a series of magazine articles by the writer Jean Kerr, published in book-form in 1959. Day's role as the mother in the chaotic household of four small boys, one large dog, and a pompous theatre critic husband, is rather downplayed; strangely downplayed, in fact, when the equivalent character in the articles acknowledges herself as a force within the family as well as the writer of the narratives which celebrates its various members.

Thus the character she plays immediately after Jan Morrow does not resemble her in the old maid status which reviewers assumed on the part of the *Pillow Talk* character. That Day's contemporaneous fame from *Pillow Talk* did impact slightly on the subsequent film can be seen in one of its small throwaway lines, obviously swiftly incorporated once the popularity of the Day-Hudson vehicle had become manifest: coming home to find the house empty, because Kate is out singing to the after school club, Larry shouts at her when she eventually returns, 'Where have you been all day?' and she responds 'I've been having a rendezvous with Rock Hudson!' This inter-textual reference acknowledges its central character as being played by Day, commenting on and perhaps attempting to exploit the popularity of her previous film.

Please Don't Eat The Daisies is curiously unfocused on Day's character, even though the actor is herself top-billed above David Niven, playing the husband. Furthermore, Day's character, appearing in the role audiences would appreciate was modelled on the author, could perhaps be expected to have some interiority or authority, but is granted neither this nor any suggestion of a writing career, indeed 'Kate' in the film is unlike Jean in the book in that she has no other career at all, outside mothering. *Daisies* removes Kate's career, returning Day to the mother role she did frequently play, but usually alongside some outside interest or profession, and thus takes an important part of the original book and articles away. However, it also adds a factor that was not present in the source texts: the threat of Larry's adultery. Narratively this comes about because Kate moves the family to the country at the same time as Larry becomes a theatre critic in the city, and therefore has to be there alone, at night, without her watchful eye and adultery-inhibiting presence. Furthermore, his enjoyment of his new fame and resultant fêting by socialites and actresses seems shallow and unworthy to Kate, making the couple quarrelsome. A sultry actress (Janis Paige) makes overt offers of sex to Larry at the same time that his children constantly interrupt chances of intimate moments between him and his wife: the film underlines that he is not getting any sex at home and, by having him check into a New York hotel with a *double* bed, indicates that he can get it in the city.

The film ends with both wife and husband realizing what is being jeopardized by their arguing, and rushing to apologize, so that the threat of adultery is averted before it has been realized. However, it is interesting to ponder why this threat was ever incorporated in the narrative at all: neither Kerr's book nor its sequel,

The Snake Has All The Lines (1960) has any hint, worry or even mention of adultery, either on the part of Kate/Jean's husband or anyone else.

Perhaps it speaks to the cynicism of film writers that they could not believe a man left alone in the city would be immune to temptation; perhaps it is not too far-fetched, however, to suggest that some connotation of 'significant sexuality' was already becoming associated with Day's star persona, inherited from *Pillow Talk*. *Please Don't Eat The Daisies* could then be seen trying to tap into this, almost without realizing what 'it' was: the adultery plot foisted onto the film narrative could then be seen to be absorbing the threat of unlicensed sexuality, of necessity displaced from Day's character since she is playing a married woman here, diverting it onto the more traditional possessor of desire, the man. While proving this speculation would be difficult, less fanciful perhaps is the modulation worked on the narrative of Day's next film, *Midnight Lace*, to bring it into line with the mature virgin persona that was emerging into public awareness just at this moment.

As mentioned, this second film of 1960, released in November, was a return to the other type of Day films in which she occasionally appeared alongside her more cheerful vehicles, the darker ones such as *Julie* or *Storm Warning*. As in these earlier two dark films, *Midnight Lace*, based on the English stage play *Matilda Shouted Fire!* by Janet Green (first performed 1958, published 1961), presents a heroine under threat from her husband. Intriguingly, while the core premise of the play's plot was maintained (a woman, terrified by an anonymous 'telephone talker' who threatens her life, eventually finds out it is her husband, attempting to provide signs of madness that will explain his eventual murder of

her as suicide), the film changes significant details of the heroine's characterisation which *can* be seen to make her conform to the new virginal Day persona. Significantly, in thus picking up on the new emphasis given Day's persona in the comedy, *Pillow Talk*, the darker, more melodramatic *Midnight Lace* constructs the character of the heroine through the same two specifically linked areas, sexuality and costume. The *Motion Picture Herald* reviewer, commenting on the thriller, chose to play up the costume allure of the film before its plot, noting:

Irene, the great designer of women's clothes, has come up with a sensational group of, we are told, no less than 17 separate costumes for Miss Day. (*Motion Picture Herald*, 15 October 1960, 884)

Not only was *Midnight Lace* being marketed to audiences on the strength of its costume values, it was also significantly named after an outfit in the film; this outfit, a black catsuit-like pyjama body worn under a lace over-jacket, is diegetically bought by Kit to wear on her long-deferred honeymoon, but turns out to be what she is wearing when her husband unveils the plot to drive her mad just before he makes his attempt to kill her. The outfit thus hints at the film's interesting blending of sex and death as the threat posed to Kit, and thereby leads back to extra-diegetic notions about virginity adhering to the star's persona. *Pillow Talk* had tried to show that Jan was not a virgin partly through its costume strategy; *Midnight Lace* picks up on this to construct Kit as a virgin but desirous not to be so any longer, which latter fact is evinced through the garment she buys to arouse her husband's ardour.

Various tag lines were used to market the film, many of which emphasize this blending of sex and death as feared/desired, and somehow summed up in the promise attached to the alluring black garment. One such refers to the outfit

being 'half-concealing, half-revealing'; this emphasizes the seductive nature of the garb which in part shows glimpses of bare flesh through its lacy apertures, but in part covers the whole female form in flattering layers of black material. As in *Pillow Talk*, there is no hint of emphasis on Day's bust, but instead the erotic charge of the garment derives from the bare skin glimpsed through the lace, as well as her trim body. A further tag seems to suggest the danger besetting the woman is a specifically sexual one: 'Whose was the silken voice in the night?'. The outfit's silk and the silken voice connect the sexual promise of the one and death threat in the other, again making the danger to Kit seem sexual and possibly also suggesting she has brought it on herself in choosing to wear the garment. The film's advertising can be seen to be predicated on a reversal of the actual plot point however, since in Kit's marriage sex is absent not present, not a threat but a desire.

The plot of *Midnight Lace* is mostly inherited, as mentioned above, from the English play *Matilda Shouted Fire!* In this drama, a seventeen year old girl, Lesley, whose father has died the year before, has transferred her affections to his business partner, Max, and married him, despite their age difference (he is in his forties). Although married for nearly a year, Lesley is still a virgin, and this frustrates Max; on the honeymoon in Venice which she wants and he has kept cancelling for business reasons, she has promised to 'grow up' (Green, 1961, 34), that is, give in finally to sex. Meanwhile, a series of telephone calls terrifies Lesley and she pleads with Max to take her on the postponed honeymoon. The various characters in the play, disbelieving Lesley about the phone calls, often refer to her habit of lying to get what she wants, hence the play's title, which refers to the 1907 Hilaire Belloc 'Cautionary Tale' about the

fate of a lying little girl. Presumably, Universal did not feel that American audiences would be sufficiently familiar with the poem to use the quotation as title. It is interesting that in deciding on a substitute name they chose one which plays up the costume significance of the film.

Midnight Lace abandons the gothic component of its narrative when it elects not to acknowledge the threat to Kit is from her husband but instead insists on a more general mystery, asking the question of every man who strays into the plot, is *he* the one? Each of the main male characters apart from the real culprit, Tony, Kit's husband is given a close-up (often exacerbated by a zoom in) at the moment when he appears most threatening, as in, for example, the point when Brian Younger, the engineer working on the flat next door to Kit, is telling her about the memory lapses he has experienced ever since his war trauma 'in that burning tank in El Al....' The film wants the audience to wonder for a while if this handsome young American (played by John Gavin) is actually the one stalking Kit, having the pub landlady where he eats remind him that he has to 'pay for those phone calls you made last night'. This new suspicion planted in the script that Brian is the caller is also accompanied by a zoom-in close up from the camera. The effect of this negative attention paid to all the male characters is to make any relationship between men and women seem likely to end in lovelessness at best, attempted crime at worst: the atmosphere of diffused suspicion and sexualized menace infects the film and renders it fascinatingly uneasy as a text.

Midnight Lace continues throughout the film to explore the association of sex and death which the title and the garment it is named for suggests; the police,

for example, brought in to reassure Kit that the threat from a 'telephone talker' is probably an idle one, only serve to exacerbate her anxiety by underlining the sexual nature of the voice's interest. The Chief Inspector dryly observes that it is Kit's gasp of horror that the caller craves: 'the intake of your voice is like a kiss'. In reality of course the caller is Tony and he actually wishes to avoid Kit's kisses, being more interested in killing than kissing her. When the couple embrace in a later scene, he moves to hug her as she moves to kiss him; when they do kiss, it is briefly, and she demands 'More!' urgently as he moves away. This avoidance of sex is also apparent in the bedroom *mise-en-scène* – the couple have single beds even though the Hays Code advice on this had been moderated in the mid fifties – and above all in the endless postponement of the couple's honeymoon. The audience is surely meant to read that what has been neglected is a symbolic as well as literal honeymoon, that, in other words, the couple have not yet slept together, as in the source text, but in accordance with the opposite partner's wishes here, the husband's, not the wife's.

The film couches the threatened murder in sexual terms, death being the 'honeymoon' her husband wishes to give her instead of the long-deferred consummation. Linking the death threats and the lack of sexual attention paid Kit by her husband, the film shows her hysterical reaction to the former not only seeming to result from the latter but also, in some way, to compensate for it: Day gives two very skilled simulations of hysteria, during which her panting and moaning sounds very like the filmic simulation of sex. Hysteria caused by the threat of death can thus be seen as a sex substitute for Kit, an emotional and physical activity resulting in a fulfilling cathartic conclusion.

The two films that come between *Pillow Talk* and *Lover Come Back* clearly indicate the progressive evolution of Day's star persona around the cusp of the sixties. *Pillow Talk* had attempted to introduce the notion of the star's sophisticated and mature sexuality, but this had become problematized by its own methods. Because it used the sex comedy genre, which pits the man out for sex against the woman out for marriage, the film inevitably had Jan saying no to Brad; linking this refusal with a costume discourse which *could* be read to be connoting a puritan old maid (the lack of cleavage, the floor-length nightie) instead of an experienced urban sophisticate, the film had succeeded in linking the idea of 'significant sexuality' with Day, but adding the suspicion of 'over-ripe virginity' to this concept also.

Please Don't Eat The Daisies demonstrates that this cluster of sexualized meanings is beginning to adhere to Day: in having to displace the erotic charge Day's persona was beginning to bring with it, it invents a clumsy subplot around adultery which has no equivalent in its sources. *Midnight Lace*, by contrast, capitalizes on this new erotic charge, and uses it to add levels of meaning to its routine plot. The film is thereby elevated from being a mundane, obvious thriller, and becomes a delirious gothic miasma of sex and death, its aura of sexualized suspense and menace acting as an indictment of female/male relations. In *Midnight Lace*, Kit is caught on a cusp just as Day herself was: between old meanings and new, between notions of innocence and those of experience; Kit becomes a monstrous because liminal figure, poised on too many opposing thresholds, not only old/new bride, but also virgin/post-virgin, and even life/death.

This second film of 1960 builds on Day's virgin persona as assumed from *Pillow Talk*, absorbing and then modifying the new clustering meanings to produce a reading of Kit as possessing a virginity both pitiful and unnatural in a woman her age. She is not to blame for her maiden status – after all, she has married and that should be enough to end her virginity – but in wanting sex so much she is in error and therefore in jeopardy. It is thus possible to see her 'madness', revealed in the two bouts of hysteria, as caused by sex starvation. The film, pushing Kit into the territory of the hysterically man-obsessed spinster – like the Rosalind Russell character in *Picnic* (Joshua Logan, 1955) - inevitably associates Day with the woman she is playing, making both slightly indecorous because too openly, too maturely, desirous. In playing 'Kit Preston', Doris Day is therefore taking on and adding to the new connotations of her star persona, and the new weight of 'aged virginity' beginning to accrete around this. *Lover Come Back*, which followed *Midnight Lace*, can thus be seen taking up and making new mockery of this evolved persona, a persona already substantially changed from that in its own sex comedy predecessor, *Pillow Talk*.

Conclusion: 'That professionally gelid miss, Doris Day'

(Capp, December 1962, 72)

While *Pillow Talk*, then, has been seen to be attempting to revamp Day's star persona in such a way as to endow it with a mature adult sexuality, enough residual connotations from the star's earlier roles persisted to affect this sexuality, eventually rendering it somehow pathological. Audiences and reviewers alike seem to have been resistant to reading Day as a female star

capable of willed sexuality and Jan as a woman possessing a sexual history, despite the script, narrative and costume codes working within the film. This appears to have been so from the first, rapturous, reviews of *Pillow Talk*, and would only grow in certainty after Day's overt portrayal of the mature maiden in *Lover Come Back*.

The review of *Pillow Talk* on the Los Angeles release day, August 12, 1959, in *The Hollywood Reporter*, clearly situates Jan within these maidenly terms; not only does the reviewer comment on Day's 'combination of sophistication and naivete' (3), the account goes on further to indicate the weight of extra-filmic baggage already being brought to the assessment:

[Hudson] accuses her of having 'bedroom troubles' that are making her neurotic. A fine healthy young woman, who has so far fought off the passes of many men, Doris now begins to be kept awake by the primary urge...[she meets his Texan persona] ..Doris, falling for this like a shooting gallery duck, begins to yearn to surrender to him. (*The Hollywood Reporter*, 12 August 1959, 3)

Constructing a past history of restraint for Jan which is never hinted at in the film itself, the reviewer is at pains to note that her previous refusals have not been from lack of sexuality: she is not frigid ('a fine healthy young woman'), but has been waiting for the right man ('Doris now begins to be kept awake by the primary urge...begins to yearn to surrender to him') to awaken her dormant sensuality. This reading of the character, it will be remembered, strictly runs counter to indications in the narrative and its script that Jan has known other men previously ('... You've been out with a lot of men in your time, but this! This is the jackpot'). Perhaps the potential threat to traditional assumptions of female sexual passivity which have been seen to swirl around the figure of the desirous virgin in the 'virginity dilemma' films can also be seen being

unconsciously invoked here: it is more comfortable for the reviewer to believe that Day's character has, while 'healthy', maintained self-restraint, than to contemplate the possibility of her having gained sexual experience.

As mentioned previously, Al Capp, the 'Lil Abner' author, penned an ironic attack on Day for her perpetual virginity in 'The Day Dream', (*Show*, December 1962). Capp's humorous, bathetic piece is the earliest I could find which explicitly writes about this virgin persona as an indelible part of the myth attached to the star; however, the article does not seem, judging by its language, to be founding a new myth, but to be tapping into an existing one.

While Capp begins his article speaking of Day as 'that professionally gelid miss', he soon abandons this objectivity in favour of the greater bathos available to him if he forgets the important qualifying word, *professionally*. for the rest of the article he writes as if Day herself were icy, 'gelid', rather than being paid to enact characters which have been perceived so, and thus has come to possess a star persona which, by late 1962, explicitly evoked notions of virginity. It is these notions which, his article declares, are the ones that have created her as a top star and inaugurated a specific film cycle.

Attributing Day's success to appealing to both sexes in the audience, and to creating a delicious anticipation of sexual skirmishes eventually safely evaded, Capp explores the 'Day dream' in hyperbolic terms which, despite their overstatement, do hint at the strength of anti-Day feeling which would eventually overshadow her popularity, as her calcified meaning of 'aged virgin' came to seem out of step with contemporary mores.

Capp begins his piece with a précis of the plot of this new cycle; the points he makes in these opening paragraphs are significant enough to quote the section in full:

There is this handsome New York bachelor, a \$250,000-a-year executive whose clothes are constantly being ripped off by love-maddened 19-year-old debutantes. He meets a vinegar-tongued, fortyish, small-town virgin. She loathes him at first sight and tells him so.

He risks his career, his sanity and his life to get her to sleep with him. She won't give in, so he marries her and lives happily ever after in the hope that some day she will.

Millions of moviegoers all over the world have been enchanted with that story as it was told, with no important variations, in the last three Doris Day movies, "Pillow Talk", "Lover Come Back" and "That Touch Of Mink". (Capp, 1962, 72)

Dichotomies are established which attempt to show how ridiculous it is that the Day character would ever win the handsome man in the sex comedies; not only is she 'small-town' to his urbanity, and innocent to his vast sexual experience, she is also compared unfavourably to all the other women this bachelor could and does have, the sexually compliant young women ('love-maddened 19-year-old debutantes') who will never, as does she, refuse him. Capp does tap into one of the central plot mechanisms of these comedies, the ostensible polarities the woman and man represent, but misses the fact that the films then work to show how similar, how compatible, they really are: *Pillow Talk*, as mentioned before, tries hardest by demonstrating that both Jan and Brad are prepared to use subterfuge to get sex. Capp further misses the point when he notes above that the vinegar-tongued virgin loathes the bachelor 'at first sight'. This is not true: *Pillow Talk* ('What a marvellous looking man!'), *Lover Come Back* and *That Touch Of Mink* (Delbert Mann, 1962) all show Day's character reacting favourably to the first sight of her eventual lover, this last film especially showing

the intensity of her instant attraction, close-ups dwelling on her delight in beholding Philip Shane (Cary Grant).

Capp's conclusion to the generic narrative – the bachelor marries the virgin who has been refusing him, hoping that eventually she will stop doing so – neatly anticipates the plot of the final Day-Hudson vehicle, *Send Me No Flowers* (Norman Jewison, 1964), in which the female's insistence on the infrequency of sex in their marriage is made responsible for the Hudson character's extreme hypochondria. The attribution of virginal connotations to Day can be seen to be so fixed by the time of this film that, even married, the star maintains her meaning of 'mature maiden'. The acuity of Capp's comments is questioned, however, by his final point above, when he announces that the plot he has outlined is that of 'the last three Doris Day films'. In taking this tally he has left out *Please Don't Eat The Daisies*, *Midnight Lace* and *Billy Rose's Jumbo* (Charles Walters, 1962); has left out, in fact, the three films that do not fit with his summation of the Day film. Capp can be seen here ignoring the films that do not match the profile he is building, or to be hailing the inauguration of a new discrete film cycle, membership of which is not conferred merely by having Day as the star, but rather through the inclusion of that deferred consummation plot which occurs in the films he cites as true examples.

The 'Doris Day movie' can thus be seen becoming its own genre, with its own recognisable plot trajectories, characters, icons, set pieces and stars. Of course, Day's films are not as homogenous as Capp is pretending here for humorous effect, but it is interesting to posit the audience assumption that there is such a thing as a 'Doris Day film' and that this now means, in 1962, a very

different kind of film from the 'Doris Day film' pre-*Pillow Talk*, where the accent would have been on family comedy with music, rather than a combative kind of female/male courtship with a sense of initiatory sexuality for the woman. Capp posits that this element – the deflowering motif – is the one most accountable for the films' success:

It is difficult for foreigners to understand that Doris Day's screen virginity is one of America's most revered institutions.

"Any threat to it", said one of her producers, "such as the presence of Rock Hudson or Cary Grant in the cast, sends millions rushing into theaters in titillated terror". (Capp, 1962, 72)

This implies that the sexual inexperience of the Day character is important to the audience, because she has more to lose if she is losing her virginity; if it is just another love affair which goes wrong, there is (comic) pathos, but not the grinding sense of failure if she has staked her maidenhead and lost. Capp is here tapping into the notion of the 'sex war' film that Alexander Walker wrote about under the title of 'The Last American Massacre' (1966); Walker was noting, but later into the decade, the prurience of audiences who wanted to see the heroine skirmish, but ultimately defeat the male enemy. Why the inevitability of female victory? Walker asserts this is because: '80 per cent of the audiences for sex comedies are married women' (Walker, 1968, 242).

The assumption that it is women who love Doris Day and her star persona, with its by-now virginal element firmly affixed, is made by various critics, including Walker and Dwight MacDonald (November 1962); the success of the star's films in this new 'Doris Day' genre would then be attributable to a woman with whom other women could identify, neither so fabulously attractive, like Elizabeth Taylor or Marilyn Monroe, as to be beyond emulation, nor so overt, active or

self-assured in her sexuality. Walker thus implies married women love Day because she espouses their values, holds out for what they held out for: marriage before sex. This rehearses once more the traditional assumption about the double standard, with female chastity and male experience before marriage the norm.

Capp comes up with a slightly more sophisticated argument, deeming that Day was popular with both sexes, and quoting one of Day's producers in listing the reasons why:

"....You see, everything about Doris – her freckles, her grin, her protruding teeth – always has aroused respect, and it always will. But now she arouses lust too, and that combination is dynamite." (Capp, 1962, 137)

Capp's producer source seems to be Ross Hunter, the man responsible for recognizing her potential for revamping as a mature sexual star; at least he, like Hunter, claims to be the one who first noticed that 'her fanny [is].. the greatest in show business, and nobody made a thing out of it until I took a long hard look' (Capp, 1962, 137).

This quality of being both sexy and respectable is found attributed to Day in many sources from this period onwards, including her own 1976 co-written biography, where Day calls her screen image of this time 'the woman men wanted to go to bed with, but not until they married her. Sexy but pure.' (Hotchner, 1976, 226). This idea of 'sexy but pure' taps straight back into the virginal notions that were now clustering around Day's persona.

Capp, concluding his piece, quotes another producer who declares that 'no matter what anyone tries to do to her, Doris Day will ALWAYS be a virgin!' (137) This is found quoted in a bitchy 1965 piece on the 'inviolable' star by Nora Ephron (1965, 25), indicating that the idea of Day's on-screen virginity, emerging in 1962, had within three years become an established piece of public discourse.

In addition to *Lover Come Back*, which overtly drew on this persona, Day had made by this time five further films, only one of which, *Billy Rose's Jumbo*, did nothing to endorse the virginity assumed to be possessed by Day's screen persona, but was a throwback to the musical part of her career, with its old-fashioned setting and songs. The other films, beginning with *That Touch Of Mink* can all be seen to fit within the new Day formula, providing sexual skirmishes and complicated plot machinations, even when the Day character was married to her vis-à-vis, as in *The Thrill Of It All* (Norman Jewison, 1963), *Move Over Darling* (Michael Gordon, 1963), and *Send Me No Flowers*.

The first of these was understood by most reviewers to be another standard Day sex romp, this time substituting Cary Grant for Rock Hudson as Doris's love interest. *That Touch Of Mink* varies from the two earlier vehicles, however, in that Grant's suave millionaire Philip Shane never pretends to Cathy Timberlake (Day) that he is interested in her for anything other than a sexual relationship: there is no masquerade plot, no subterfuge on his part. Cathy thus has to decide whether or not she can accept the position he offers her, that of kept woman, or feels morality prevents her. The onus is very much on Day's character to make up her own mind, the film providing her with a more

experienced best friend Connie, (Audrey Meadows), who advises against the irrevocable step but, lessening her message's impact, doing so on mercenary terms, as damaging Cathy's ultimate bargaining power. The film itself seems slightly uncertain about whether Cathy is risking such a big deal or whether, *at her age*, she should cheerfully accept the financially generous offer. Having the charismatic Grant play the seducer, of course, does not incline the viewer to decide Connie is right and Cathy should stay home, instead of being whisked away with a brand new Bergdorf Goodman wardrobe to have sex in Bermuda. The ending of the film, in which Cathy manages to snag the millionaire without, seemingly, have offered herself in return, attracted much sarcastic criticism from reviewers and, though *That Touch Of Mink* broke attendance records at New York's Radio City Music Hall on its release (*Motion Picture Herald*, 8 August 1962, 8) there was a general sense of the Day sex comedy now becoming a lucrative if slightly ludicrous franchise, which the successive vehicles did nothing to dissipate.

In 1968 Day made *Where Were You When The Lights Went Out?* (Hy Averback), which was set at the time of the famous 1965 electricity failure in New York City and revolved around the sexual hi-jinks motivated and excused by the blackout. Renata Adler's review of the film in the *New York Times* (August 9, 1968) diverged from the kindly treatment habitually accorded Day's vehicles by her critic predecessor, Bosley Crowther, who had gone so far as to name *Lover Come Back* as one of the ten finest films of 1961, in company with Resnais' *Last Year At Marienbad* and John Huston's *Freud* (Crowther, April 9 1963, 59:1); Adler, by contrast, exposes the silliness of any plot still revolving around the chastity of Day, now 44 and again playing a married woman, albeit

one who, in a would-be sly inter-textual moment, is a stage actress whose greatest success is in a play called *The Constant Virgin*. The film thus attempts to have it both ways: to acknowledge the idiocy of pretending middle-aged, thrice-married Day is still virginal, whilst still riffing off the erotic charge lingering in the notion of her uninitiated sexuality.

In *Where Were You....* the power cut enables Day's character, Margaret, to discover her husband's infidelities. The film has a plot reminiscent of the masquerade subterfuges of the Day-Hudson vehicles, but without the explosion of those pretences that permitted space for Day's revenge and thus made her previous gullibility bearable: thanks to various machinations, when the lights come back on, Margaret assumes – wrongly of course - that she too has besmirched her marriage vows and is thus motivated by guilt into seeking no redress. The film compounds its own idiocy in the coda, in which Margaret, precisely nine months after the blackout, is taken to hospital in the final stages of labour. While the film has shown that no sexual activity took place, it denies this by making its heroine pregnant in the final reel, not so much contradicting itself as indicating its own disregard for logic or taste.

Adler wearily notes that Day's virginity is hauled about from film to film, always under jeopardy, always rescued in the end; unlike the male critics cited above, she does not blame Day herself for these unworthy vehicles, but rather wishes the star had material commensurate with her abilities:

... a good part of the movie permits Miss Day to play an actress something like herself, and this might be fresh and almost poignant. She is clearly an actress who needs to be let out, and yet she seems to be doomed to exclaim in every movie some version of the "Oh, Peter, I'm tarnished!" line she has in this one... (Adler, 1968, 30:2)

Thus, here in the last stage of her career, Day seemed as trapped by the mature virgin persona paradoxically introduced by the film that tried to establish her as a maturely sexual star, *Pillow Talk*, as she had previously been by the family-oriented girl-next-door films she had largely been making before it. The 'Doris Day sex comedy' had come to mean a certain kind of film, in which the star, even if diegetically married to her male co-star, as in *Send Me No Flowers*, would somehow be perceived as trying to prevent him from having sex: Jan's significant sexuality can be seen to have become so increasingly accreted with pathologies that the woman who played her had come to have 'problematic virginity/frigidity' as one of her dominant connotations.

Day's later star persona thus seemed so inscribed with notions of a pathologically inactive sexuality, of maidenhood jealously guarded long after anyone could want to steal it, that critics could declare her actual body unimaginable:

....the only thing I feel when Doris Day puckers up - *and we shall sooner see America's sweetheart without her clothes* than without her pucker - is nausea. (Simon, 1967, 101; my emphasis)

Day is here envisaged as a star whose nakedness is unthinkable, her body one which will – which must - be permanently concealed. Thus the dominant memory of the star sadly erases moments such as the one in *Pillow Talk* when, in its white dress which speaks to her desirability and desiring subject-hood in one, her body is revealed. What is enshrined instead is the clothed Day, as authentic virginal original.

Should she surrender? Concluding thoughts on the desirous virgin and Day's aged maiden persona

This thesis has sought to interrogate two topics: mid-twentieth century ideas and representations of female virginity, and the star persona of Doris Day.

While I have attempted to establish a detailed background against which the figures of Day and of Kinsey's revelatory desirous virgin could be understood, it has been necessary to make assumptions about earlier assumptions about virginity. In this way Day and the virgin are linked icons beyond their unique (as I have argued) overlap in *Lover Come Back*: both have histories of being passed over, dismissed as too obvious for comment or analysis.

There seems to be something inherent in the idea of virginity which has made it resistant to investigation, something which makes the concept appear over-evident: so personal, private and natural that it renders discussion unnecessary. But on closer examination it becomes apparent that virginity is not personal, but social; not private but public; not natural but constructed, and not obvious at all but invisible. A history of the media representations of the female virgin in America remains to be written and would be a fascinating project, plotting the figure's development against and because of a range of historical and social events: the rise of urbanism and consumerism in the early twenties, the Depression, the Second World War, the wide-spread availability of reliable birth control.

Such a project would unveil the virgin, demonstrating that the popular impression of the decades before the Sexual Revolution as a time of unswerving female pre-marital abstinence is as partial as it is monolithic.

Virgins In Cellophane, for example, a humorous novel about a young girl working as a politician's aide in Washington DC, is full of surprises; written by a woman author, Bett Hooper, in the early 1930s, it presents a view of virginity as a career hindrance:

Men are beasts!....I hope the day will soon return when a girl can be a virgin and still hold up her head. (Hooper, 1932, 28)

Hooper inverts the usual assumed shame of the post-virgin and assigns it to the inexperienced girl, indicating that in at least one specific place and moment during the time before Kinsey, female virginity could be treated lightly, and thus denaturalizing the notion of female purity as perpetually and universally desired.

A full study of the virgin female amidst the changing contexts of the twentieth century was, however, beyond the scope of this thesis, which attempted instead to provide a 'horizon of reception' (Hansen, 1991, 253) for the virgin at one very particular time. Star studies and stereotype studies both seemed appropriate areas of investigation on which to draw to find the methodology to sketch this horizon; while Richard Dyer's work in the former area has been widely acknowledged as being foundational, the importance of his contribution to stereotype scholarship has been less appreciated. Inspired by Dyer, I have attempted to sketch the stereotype of the desirous virgin which appeared around the late fifties against the background of its specific historical, social and cultural moment. As I have hoped to show in the chapters about her, this desirous virgin interestingly problematizes both the usual binaries of 'good girl' and 'bad girl', with regard to sexual desire if not sexual experience, and the more specific binaries that seem to accrete to the stereotype itself in the critical literature on the topic - fixity versus fluidity; fixed boundary versus cusp;

timelessness versus specificity; visuality versus the impossibility of representation. Most significantly, as she appears in the 'virginity dilemma' cycle, she possesses an overdetermined visuality – being marked out by costume, narrative attention and performance – yet at the same time her special quality is itself unrepresentable. The highly visible virgin thus paradoxically marks the site of an invisible attribute.

Before devoting attention to the desirous virgin, however, I first explored the background of this dominant figure, from Kinsey to *Clairol* to *Cosmo*, indicating the impact of her significance across different areas of contemporary popular culture. I posited that the 'virginity dilemma' is a discrete if short lived mini-genre or cycle devoted to the troublesome figure raised by Kinsey's '50%' revelation, the girl who was tempted to have sex, though unmarried; the examined films, which began a few years after the publication of the second Report, peaking in 1963 and then dying away by the end of a decade which had introduced the contraceptive Pill and ushered in the Sexual Revolution, variously attempt to show that premarital sex is a bad idea but inevitably also simultaneously show the intense physicality of the temptation, and this, with the beautiful glamorousness of the suffering heroines (Marjorie, Melanie, Molly), cannot help but mitigate against the obvious moral deterrents.

The 'virginity dilemma' films struggled to establish a way of showing the internal quality which obsessed them, and settled on laying the burden on the actor's physical performance, setting up a dichotomy that aligned the maintenance of chastity with comedy and buoyant kinesis, virginity's loss with melodrama and

stasis, not only after the fall, but also before, so that the maiden marked for future capitulation is always still.

As the previous section sought to show, this desirous female virgin only once precisely overlaps with a role played by Doris Day, when she is Carole in *Lover Come Back*; here Day more complexly blends the dichotomized performance styles of buoyant comic virgin and self-interrogating melodramatic maid, producing a persona who manages, at her time of ultimate testing, to be simultaneously sensual, doubting and funny. Despite this role being, as I have argued, Day's only overtly virgin role, the connotation of a mature and thus risible virginity became attached not only to the subsequent (and in the case of Jan Morrow, anterior) roles Day enacted, but also to the actor's own star persona, resulting in the still-current assumption that Day 'always played a virgin'.

There seems to be such commitment to this assumption, and to the concomitant refusal by audiences (including critics and academics) to accept the idea of a sexually experienced Doris Day persona – despite, as I have argued, the plentiful evidence to the contrary observable in *Pillow Talk* - that there must be something of significance to this denial. This prompts the question: why is it safer for her to be pathetic, risible, man-hungry yet coy old maid than a sexy woman? A return to the figure of the desirous young woman of the 'virginity dilemma' films can perhaps assist in an attempt to answer this. The attractive, tremulous, inexperienced and prepared to yield young women found in this brief cycle presented, as has been seen, a threat to the status quo: hence the films' partial attempts to indicate the inadvisability of pre-marital sex,

the assignment of the performance dichotomy sketched above which linked maintained chastity with a physical unruliness to be eventually cured by marriage-sanctioned sex, the yielding with a stillness which assured that girls might fall but would at least lie passive once fallen.

A mature, sexually active and sexually experienced woman would then present even more of a threat to the status quo; unlike the inexperienced young woman, she could tell if a lover were inadequate – and might do just that. A woman who was then not only attractive and mature and experienced but also, like the classy Jan, one with beautiful clothes and a glamorous apartment, and evident high standards in men – that is, one who clearly was not, to use a contemporary term, a ‘tramp’ – presented a threat not only to the status quo, but to masculinity, to power, to the double standard, to the full machinery of sexual assumptions which Kinsey’s Report had exposed as laid on perilously shaky ground. The anxiety provoked by such a woman is subdued when her experiences are cancelled and revoked, when she is returned to a state of maiden innocence. This seems to have been the fate of Day, the success of whose later vehicles were predicated on the initiatory or unwelcome sexual engagement. Turning Jan’s bold command, *Possess Me!* into Carole’s tremulous self-interrogation, *Should I surrender?* allayed these anxieties as it nullified her troubling experience. While such a move attempted to shore up a belief system of sexuality, hawked as traditional, which revolved around the double standard, the coming of the Pill meant that both the desirous young virgin and Day’s own star persona of risibly mature virgin were soon to seem out of date. After 1965 the *Should I surrender?* line would no longer suffice as a

plot hook. If she even paused long enough to ask herself before succumbing, the swinging chick of the late sixties would be likely to answer *Why not?*

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Filmography

Principal films

Ask Any Girl (Charles Walters, USA, 1959)

Starring Shirley MacLaine, David Niven, Gig Young, Rod Taylor.

The Best of Everything (Jean Negulesco, USA, 1959)

Starring Hope Lange, Diane Baker, Suzy Parker, Joan Crawford, Stephen Boyd, Louis Jourdan, Robert Evans, Brian Aherne.

Down With Love (Peyton Reed, USA, 2003)

Starring Renée Zellweger, Ewan McGregor, David Hyde Pierce, Sara Paulson, Tony Randall.

Gidget (Paul Wendkos, USA, 1959)

Starring Sandra Dee, James Darren, Cliff Robertson.

It Happened To Jane (Richard Quine, USA, 1959)

Starring Doris Day, Jack Lemmon, Ernie Kovacs.

Julie (Andrew L Stone, USA, 1956)

Starring Doris Day and Louis Jourdan.

Love Me Or Leave Me (Charles Vidor, USA, 1955)

Starring Doris Day, James Cagney, Cameron Mitchell.

Lover Come Back (Delbert Mann, USA, 1961)

Starring Doris Day, Rock Hudson, Tony Randall.

The Man Who Knew Too Much (Alfred Hitchcock, USA, 1956)

Starring James Stewart, Doris Day, Brenda de Banzie, Bernard Miles, Christopher Olsen.

Marjorie Morningstar (Irving Rapper, USA, 1958)

Starring Natalie Wood, Gene Kelly, Martin Milner, Martin Balsam, Ed Wynn, Claire Trevor.

Midnight Lace (David Miller, USA, 1960)

Starring Doris Day, Rex Harrison, John Gavin, Myrna Loy, Herbert Marshall, Roddy McDowell.

Pillow Talk (Michael Gordon, USA, 1959)

Starring Doris Day, Rock Hudson, Tony Randall, Thelma Ritter.

Please Don't Eat The Daisies (Charles Walters, USA, 1960)

Starring Doris Day, David Niven, Spring Byington.

Romance on the High Seas (Michael Curtiz, USA, 1948) (UK Title, *It's Magic*)

Starring Jack Carson, Janis Paige, S.Z. Sakall, Doris Day, Oscar Levant.

Sex and The Single Girl (Richard Quine, USA, 1964)

Starring Natalie Wood, Tony Curtis, Henry Fonda, Lauren Bacall.

State Fair (Henry King, USA, 1933)

Starring Janet Gaynor, Will Rogers, Lew Ayres.

State Fair (Walter Lang, USA, 1945)

Starring Jeanne Crain, Dana Andrews, Dick Haymes, Vivian Blayne, Charles Winninger, Fay Bainter.

State Fair (Jose Ferrer, USA, 1962)

Starring Pat Boone, Bobby Darin, Pamela Tiffin, Ann-Margret, Alice Faye, Tom Ewell.

Storm Warning (Stuart Heisler, USA, 1951)

Starring Ginger Rogers, Ronald Reagan, Doris Day, John Gavin.

A Summer Place (Delmer Daves, USA, 1959)

Starring Richard Egan, Dorothy McGuire, Sandra Dee, Arthur Kennedy, Troy Donahue, Constance Ford, Beulah Bondi.

Sunday in New York (Peter Tewkesbury, USA, 1963)

Starring Jane Fonda, Rod Taylor, Cliff Robertson.

Under The Yum Yum Tree (David Swift, USA, 1963)

Starring Jack Lemmon, Carol Lynley, Dean Jones, Edie Adams, Imogene Coca, Paul Lynde.

Where The Boys Are (Henry Levin, USA, 1960)

Starring Dolores Hart, Yvette Mimieux, Paula Prentiss, Connie Francis, George Hamilton, Jim Hutton, Frank Gorshin.

Secondary films

Act of Love (Anatole Litvak, USA, 1953)

A Place In The Sun (George Stevens, USA, 1951)

Airplane 75 (Jack Smight, USA, 1974)

All About Eve (William Wyler, USA, 1950)

All The Fine Young Cannibals (Michael Anderson, USA, 1960)

April in Paris (David Butler, USA, 1953)

Ascenseur Pour L'Echafaud/Frantic (Louis Malle, France 1957)

The Big Combo (Joseph H. Lewis, USA, 1955)

Billy Rose's Jumbo (Charles Walters, USA, 1962)

The Birth of a Nation (D. W. Griffiths, USA, 1915)

Blue Denim (Philip Dunne, USA, 1959)

Bob&Carole&Ted&Alice (Paul Mazursky, USA, 1969)

Boys Night Out (Michael Gordon, USA, 1962)

Bus Stop (Joshua Logan, USA, 1956)

By The Light Of The Silvery Moon (David Butler, USA, 1953)

Calamity Jane (David Butler, USA, 1953)

Come Fly With Me (Henry Levin, USA, 1963),

Come September (Robert Mulligan, USA, 1961)

Diary Of A Mad Housewife (Frank Perry, USA, 1970)

Doctor, You've Got To Be Kidding! (Peter Tewksbury, USA, 1967)

The Dunwich Horror (Daniel Haller, USA, 1970).

Far From Heaven (Todd Haynes, USA, 2003)

Freud (John Huston, USA, 1961)

The Great Race (Blake Edwards, USA, 1965)

Gypsy (Mervyn LeRoy, USA, 1962)

Hair (Milos Forman, USA, 1972)

His Girl Friday (Howard Hawks, USA, 1940)

I Married A Monster From Outer Space (Gene Fowler, USA, 1958)

I'll See You In My Dreams (Michael Curtiz, USA, 1952)

Imitation of Life (Douglas Sirk, USA, 1959)

In The Good Old Summertime (Robert Z. Leonard, USA, 1949)

Klute (Alan J. Pakula, USA, 1971)

Last Year At Marienbad (Alain Resnais, France, 1961)

The Last Sunset (Robert Aldrich, USA, 1961)

Les Amants/The Lovers (Louis Malle, France, 1958)

Light in the Piazza (Guy Green, USA, 1962)

Lullaby of Broadway (David Butler, USA, 1949)

Mildred Pierce (Michael Curtiz, USA, 1945)

The Moon is Blue (Otto Preminger, USA, 1953)

Move Over Darling (Michael Gordon, USA, 1963)

My Dream Is Yours (Michael Curtiz, USA, 1949)

On Moonlight Bay (Roy Del Ruth, USA, 1951)

Pajama Game (George Abbott and Stanley Donen, USA, 1957)

Pat and Mike (George Cukor, USA, 1952)

Peyton Place (Mark Robson, USA, 1957)

Picnic (Joshua Logan, USA, 1955)

Play It As It Lays (Frank Perry, USA, 1972)

Pleasantville, (Gary Ross, USA, 1998)

Rebel Without A Cause (Nicholas Ray, USA, 1957)

Send Me No Flowers (Norman Jewison, USA, 1964)

Some Came Running (Vincent Minnelli, USA, 1959)

Some Like It Hot (Billy Wilder, USA, 1959)

Spellbound (Alfred Hitchcock, USA, 1946)

Summertime (David Lean, UK/USA, 1956)

Susan Slade (Delmer Daves, USA, 1961)

Tea for Two (David Butler, USA, 1950)

Teacher's Pet (George Seaton, USA, 1958)

That Touch Of Mink (Delbert Mann, USA, 1962)

The Thrill Of It All (Norman Jewison, USA, 1963)

The Tunnel of Love (Gene Kelly, USA, 1958)

Three Coins In The Fountain (Jean Negulesco, USA, 1954)

The Winning Team (Lewis Seiler, USA, 1952)

Where Were You When The Lights Went Out? (Hy Averback, USA, 1968)

Appendix: Film Synopses

***Ask Any Girl* (Charles Walters, 1959)**

Meg Wheeler (Shirley MacLaine) arrives in New York City to find a job and a husband. Untrained for any particular career, she first finds work as receptionist in a knitwear company, where she meets Ross Tayford (Rod Taylor), a business man who shows her the town but then propositions her. Seeing Ross's interest in Meg makes her boss amorous, and she resigns. Her next position is with a market research company run by two brothers, Miles (David Niven) and Evan Doughton (Gig Young). Meg sets her sights on Evan, and asks Miles to help her win his brother using market research techniques. Miles agrees, and sets about the task of taking out all of Evan's many lady friends to see what they have that makes them particularly attractive. After Meg has copied this one's hair, that one's perfume, and the style of laughing, dancing, dressing and cooking of several more, she succeeds in winning a marriage proposal from Evan which she accepts sadly – realising she has fallen in love with Miles during the research process. She then declines Evan's proposal and calls up Ross, asking him to take her away for the weekend. On the train to their liaison, Meg gets drunk, and Ross gets beaten up by Miles, who has arrived in the nick of time to save Meg's virtue. They honeymoon in Hawaii.

***The Best Of Everything* (Jean Negulesco, 1959)**

Three young women meet as secretaries in the New York City office of Fabian publishers: Carolyn (Hope Lange), biding her time until her fiance returns from England and marries her, Gregg (Suzy Parker), intent on becoming an actress at whatever cost, and April (Diane Baker), sweet and simple girl from the country a little lost in the big city. The three all clash with Amanda Farrow (Joan

Crawford), a bitter spinster editor. Carolyn is jilted by her fiance Eddy, who has married an oil baron's daughter, and forms a tentative relationship with Mike Rice (Stephen Boyd), which is kept by his gallantry from becoming sexual. April meets Dexter (Robert Evans), a womanizing playboy, and falls for his lines, while Gregg encounters David Wilder Savage (Louis Jourdan), a playwright and director with whom she sleeps, at first to further her career, but then out of a growing obsession with the man. Carolyn is promoted to being an editor when Miss Farrow leaves to marry a widower with a farm and children, and her ambition makes Mike believe she has changed, they quarrel and part. Miss Farrow however soon returns to her old job, happier now that she has tried married and family life and found her career and metropolitan existence so much more fulfilling. Meanwhile April becomes pregnant and Dexter agrees to take her somewhere; it is not the wedding she anticipates, however, but an abortionist, and she throws herself out of his speeding car at the realisation. She lives, but the doctor is unable to save her baby. The doctor and April form a relationship. Gregg has, meanwhile, become increasingly unstable and, sacked both from her role in his play and from his bed, begins to stalk David, rifle through his trash and lurk on his balcony, from which one night she accidentally plunges to her death. Finally, Eddy re-enters Carolyn's life, admitting that his marriage is loveless, and that he made a mistake. He asks her to begin over again, and she agrees until she realises that he does not mean to get a divorce, but to keep her as a mistress. Rejecting him, she returns to work and, at the end of a long day, leaves the Fabian building to find Mike waiting for her.

***Down With Love* (Peyton Reed, 2003)**

Barbara Novak (Renée Zellweger) arrives in New York City to meet Vikki Hiller (Sarah Paulson), the editor of her new book, *Down With Love*. This is a how-to manual instructing women how to cure themselves of the need for romance, so that they can enjoy sex without emotional entanglements, just like men. The book does not sell well until Vikki cleverly gets Judy Garland to promote it on the *Ed Sullivan Show*, whereupon sales take off on a global scale. Women the world over enter Phase One of Novak's plan, foreswearing sexual relations. This piques men, especially Catcher Block (Ewan MacGregor), former bachelor about town and ladies' man. Catcher, who works for the magazine *Know*, determines to write a disparaging article on Barbara, which will ruin further sales. In order to do this, he adopts the persona of shy Southern astronaut 'Zip Martin', and manages to encounter her 'by chance'. Novak appears quite taken with the stranger, and they begin to date. When the time comes for Barbara to prove her mastery of her own technique, however, she first refuses and then reveals her true identity: she is Nancy Brown, Catcher's former secretary, who had become smitten by him but realised she would never win him without attracting his attention as the only woman he couldn't have. Catcher is astonished, but says he is prepared to forgive her. Barbara tells him the charade has had an unlooked for consequence: having spent so long pretending to be indifferent to him, she has actually become so. She leaves and sets up a rival magazine *Now* which threatens to put *Know* out of business. Interviewing for a secretary, she is amazed when Catcher is the first candidate. He insists she hire him and, moreover, that she love him. She agrees and they sing a song in celebration of love.

***Gidget* (Paul Wendkos, 1959)**

It is summer, Frances (Sandra Dee) is about to be 17, and she happily spends her time with her girlfriends at the beach. Instead of posing in a bikini, however, to attract boys like her friends, Frances talks to the boys and finds they are all obsessed with surfing. She eventually is adopted as the surfers' mascot and christened 'Gidget', a contraction of girl midget, which they call her because of her petite size. Gidget determines to learn to surf in order to impress one particular boy, Moondoggie (James Darren), but he is dismissive. The surfers' idol and leader, The Big Kahuna (Cliff Robertson) is kinder to her. After a bad tumble in the water, Gidget becomes ill and has to stay at home for two weeks: with customary energy she uses the time positively by learning to surf with the aid of a book and by practicing on an ironing board on her bed. Returning to the beach, the boys are impressed with her improvement, but Moondoggie is still patronising, refusing to take her to big luau, an evening party at which the surfers and their girls make out. Gidget decides to make him jealous, and begins to vamp Kahuna, who is only just able to resist her charms. Moondoggie bursts in and the pair fight over her, but both then reject Gidget, who returns home alone sadly. Summer has ended and the new school semester is about to begin; to please her father Gidget agrees to go out on a date with 'Jeffrey Matthews', the son of a client. She is expecting to be bored, but is overjoyed when this turns out to be the real name of Moondoggie, who turns up to take her out.

***Lover Come Back* (Delbert Mann, 1961)**

Carole Templeton (Doris Day) an ambitious advertising executive, seems blocked at every turn by an unscrupulous playboy rival, Jerry Webster (Rock Hudson), whom she has never met. Attempting to poach a potential client from Webster, Templeton wines and dines shy chemist Linus Tyler hoping to secure the campaign to promote his new mystery product, 'VIP', for her agency. In showing Linus around New York Carole begins to fall in love with the handsome, if gauche, young man; moreover, he is so shy with women that she finds herself taking the romantic initiative with him, finally inviting him to an intimate dinner in her apartment. Tortured by his feelings of inadequacy, Linus tells Carole to forget him and find a real man. Carole debates the problem with herself. Deciding to 'Surrender!' she is about to don a lacy negligée when her phone rings, the cruel plot is exploded, and she learns 'Linus' is actually Jerry Webster. To have her revenge, Carole goes to the Advertising Standards Council claiming that there is no VIP, but Jerry turns up with a box of mints – alcoholic mints. After over-indulging, the couple wake up in a motel to find they have got married whilst drunk. Carole has the marriage annulled, but cannot annul the pregnancy that resulted from her one night with Jerry. Nine months later he finally learns the news and flies to her side, marrying her again in the elevator on the way to the delivery room.

***Marjorie Morningstar* (Irving Rapper, 1957)**

Marjorie Morgernstern (Natalie Wood) is the daughter of a wealthy middle-class Jewish family in New York City. Keen on a career as an actor, Marjorie takes a job at a summer camp as a drama assistant. At the holiday resort across the

lake she meets the artistic director, Noel Airman (Gene Kelly) an aspiring playwright and confirmed womaniser. Despite their instant attraction, Marjorie and Noel have a protracted courtship because of their different goals: his is sex without strings, hers is a lasting commitment. One evening Marjorie is about to capitulate when her uncle, sent to the resort to keep an eye on her, has a heart attack and dies. Marjorie flees back to her family and, after a time, begins dating a man her parents do approve of, a successful, Jewish, doctor. Noel comes back into her life, however, as he cannot forget her and, after a friend's wedding where the bride confesses to Marjorie that she is marrying for security rather than love or even affection, Marjorie decides to act on her passion for Noel, and they become lovers. Marjorie meanwhile tries to help him finish his musical play, 'Princess Jones' and find backers for it, including Noel's erstwhile assistant at the resort, Wally Wronkin (Marty Milner). The backers agree, more from friendship than belief in the musical, and it is a failure. Noel disappears, running away to Europe. Marjorie travels across Europe herself to try to find him, and, in London, meets Wally, who tells her Noel has returned to his old post at the resort. Marjorie rejects Wally's suggestion that she leave Noel alone, and goes to the resort, but when she sees him surrounded again by adoring girls, playing the one good song from his musical, she realises at last that he can be happier there, where he be a local success, than he could ever be in the more competitive world of New York. Getting back on the bus to return to the city, she meets Wally again, who has waited for her.

Midnight Lace (David Miller 1960)

Kit (Doris Day), a wealthy American woman, has recently married English businessman Tony Preston (Rex Harrison), and lives with him in London.

Because Tony has been so busy with work, there has been no time for the pair to have a honeymoon, which Kit very much regrets. Crossing Grosvenor Square one day in a London fog, she is tormented by a high-pitched, singsong voice which taunts her and tells her it will be coming to kill her within the month. Kit is shaken by this but Tony assures her it is just a prank. Telephone calls from the same androgynous voice begin at home, however, and Kit goes to the police, who seem to take her seriously but, when she is listening to recordings of convicted 'telephone talkers', quietly ask Tony if it is likely Kit is making it all up to get attention. The fact that no one else is around when the calls come through seems to confirm this hypothesis. Near-accidents begin to befall Kit: she is almost hit by a falling beam outside her flat and then trapped inside the building's lift. Both times she is rescued by Brian Younger (John Gavin), a handsome American engineer working on the building next door. Kit begins to believe she is being followed, and is nearly pushed under a bus. Finally, when she is near hysterical, Tony seems to believe her: he is at home when a call comes and decides to set a trap for the talker; he will go out and be seen to drive away, but double back and catch the man, with the police, before he can harm Kit. Terrified but frantic to end the ordeal, Kit agrees, and Tony leaves. A strange man appears at the window, Tony arrives and the pair grapple: a shot is heard. Kit screams when the high sing-song voice is then heard, but it is Tony, holding a tape recorder. Kit thinks the mystery is solved but Tony then reveals it is he who has been torturing her; he has been torturing Kit to make her seem unreliable, so that her murder by him will be read as suicide by the police. Kit manages to flee out the window onto the scaffolding of the building next door, and though Tony tries to shoot her, she is once more rescued by Brian as the police arrive.

***Pillow Talk* (Michael Gordon, 1959)**

Jan Morrow (Doris Day) is an interior designer whose business success is hampered only by her lack of a personal phone line. She has to share a party line with Brad Allen (Rock Hudson), a womanising songwriter. Tensions over Brad's monopolizing of the phone lead the two to argue and detest each other, without meeting. When Brad does encounter Jan, he wants to woo her but realises he stands no chance as himself, so quickly adopts the persona of 'Rex Stetson', a Texan oil millionaire. Reversing his usual wolfish tactics, Brad as Rex treats Jan with respect and distance, earning her trust on successive dates but eventually piquing her curiosity and then her outright anxiety by refusing to make a pass at her. When she asks him outright if they are only friends, he kisses her, and they agree to go away for the weekend together. Once at the weekend hideaway, Brad realises he has fallen in love for the first time just at the moment that Jan discovers his real identity, and flees. With Jan refusing to speak to him, Brad resorts to asking her to redecorate his apartment in order to meet her again. She agrees, and makes it resemble the brothel-like pleasure palace she feels suits him; although Brad is furious, he still asks her to marry him, she agrees, and a coda shows that she has become pregnant.

***Sex And The Single Girl* (Richard Quine, 1964)**

Dr Helen Brown (Natalie Wood) works at a sex research institute and has just published the best-selling book, *Sex And The Single Girl*. Bob Weston (Tony Curtis) is the lead writer on a disreputable scandal rag, who decides his next scoop will be proving that Helen is a fraud - a virgin. To secure proof of this, he adopts the persona and marital history of his neighbour Frank Broderick (Henry

Fonda), tempestuously married to the caustic Sylvia (Lauren Bacall), then takes his case to Helen for help. Claiming to be 'inadequate' sexually because of his domineering wife, 'Frank' is instantly attracted to Helen, and she to him, although she tries to keep the relationship professional. After he calls her at home threatening suicide, and they both end up in New York's East River, Helen invites him back to her apartment to dry off, and the pair end up making out. Helen is stirred as rarely before, but restrains herself not because of her virginity (or lack thereof) but because Frank is married, and insists they part. Bob cannot publish his scoop and is fired; Helen cannot go back to her job because the institute funds have all been embezzled, and the building demolished. She agrees to go away with a colleague, Rudy (Mel Ferrer) to Hawaii, and a lengthy chase ensues with Helen and Rudy, Bob and his sometime girlfriend Gretchen (Fran Jefferies), Frank and Sylvia all tearing off to the airport, swapping cars and partners on the way. Eventually, at the airport, Helen vanquishes Bob by crying, and he confesses everything before they happily board a plane together. Rudy goes off with Gretchen to Hawaii and Frank and Sylvia reconcile – for the moment.

A Summer Place (Delmer Daves, 1959)

Twenty years before, Ken (Richard Egan) and Sylvia (Dorothy McGuire) had been teenage lovers on the summer resort island of Pine Island, though she was a guest and he the pool boy. Now Sylvia is married to Bart Hunter (Arthur Kennedy), a drunken wastrel who owns the island's hotel. They have a son, Johnny. Ken, now made good as an architect, sails his yacht to Pine Island with his wife and daughter Molly (Sandra Dee). The old attraction between the former lovers springs up again and they renew their affair. Meanwhile, their son

and daughter form an attachment too. The teens go sailing but are capsized and have to spend the night together alone on an island. While nothing sexual happens, Molly's mother refuses to believe this and has her daughter subjected to an internal examination. Ken, in town for a few days on business, returns to Pine Island to find his affair with Sylvia exposed and the teenagers hysterical after Molly's ordeal. Divorce ensues and time passes, with Molly living with her mother when not at boarding school. Johnny similarly lives with his father, both teenagers resenting their other parents' relationship. Eventually after Ken and Sylvia have married, the children reluctantly agree to visit them. Molly and Johnny rediscover their attraction, which now does become sexual. Molly realises once back at school that she is pregnant, and phones Johnny's school; he rushes to her side and they run away together. Since they are both underage, their attempt at being married without a parent's presence is defeated; they travel to Pine Island to ask Bart to help them but he is even more drunk and insulting than usual, and the teenagers finally realise they must ask their transgressive parents for help. Returning to California they are greeted lovingly, and married there with permission.

***Sunday In New York* (Peter Tewkesbury, 1963)**

Eileen Tyler (Jane Fonda) comes to New York City to stay with her brother Adam (Cliff Robertson) after the breakup of her relationship with Russ Wilson (Robert Culp). The couple had quarrelled when she had refused to sleep with him before marriage. Adam, a bachelor about town, assures Eileen that she did the right thing to stay nice, and rather intimates that he has followed the same rules. He then rushes out to try to find a place to have sex with his girlfriend Mona (Jo Morrow). Eileen goes out too and meets Mike Mitchell (Rod Taylor).

He propositions her clumsily and she escapes, but the pair meet again and get on better, going boating on Central Park Lake and enjoying the city. Caught in a rainstorm, Eileen asks Mike back to her brother's place to dry off, and whilst he is there opens a cupboard which displays an array of female lingerie.

Realising that her brother had lied to her about his sexual inexperience, Eileen decides to rid herself of her own, and vamps Mike assiduously. He eventually responds but rejects her when he realises she is a virgin. When, with both of them in states of undress, Russ suddenly arrives, Eileen can think of no other way out of the situation than to say that Mike is Adam, hoping that the real latter will not return home before Russ leaves. She is unlucky: her real brother does return and the unlikely quartet end up going out for dinner to celebrate Russ's proposal of marriage to Eileen; but when she decides to tell Russ the truth about the identity of Mike, he breaks off the engagement. Eileen returns to Adam's apartment, Mike turns up and, after various discussions, avowals and denials, they kiss. Adam walks in but then decides to leave them alone, while a coda announces the pair were married, moved to Japan and had many children.

***Under The Yum Yum Tree* (David Swift, 1963)**

Robyn (Carol Lynley) and David (Dean Jones) are college sweethearts who have so far not had sex. To establish their compatibility before this important event, Robyn suggests they co-habit an apartment, living together but sleeping apart. Although he has doubts about the plan, David agrees, and Robyn goes apartment hunting. She finds that her aunt Irene (Edie Adams) is moving out of her apartment at Centaur Buildings, a complex run by the lecherous Hogan (Jack Lemmon) and takes over the place. Hogan keeps the rents of his spacious apartments very low in order to entice single girls in to the rooms and

relationships with him: he agrees to take Robyn and her 'roommate' before finding out that the latter is a man. Piqued by this, and by his apprehension that David will be enjoying the 'yum yum' that he had lined up for himself, Hogan wages war on the young man, attempting by various plots to split up the lovers. Eventually David decides that he cannot bear chaste cohabitation and determines to seduce Robyn. Flinging a log fire, mescal, soft music and erotic poetry at her, he finds his wiles all too effective, panics and leaves. He returns the next morning to find Hogan there and fears the worst, but then Robyn returns also: her aunt has spent the night there, renewing her relationship with Hogan to save her niece. She now leaves triumphantly, as do the lovers, as does Hogan's housekeeper and handyman. Hogan, alone, despairs momentarily and decides to live a purer life, but the arrival of a bus load of young women looking for lodgings makes him change his mind.



Figure 1: The split screen in *Pillow Talk* saucily juxtapose Jan and Brad so that they seem to be sharing an oversize bath



Figure 2: *Down With Love's* less subtle use of the same device.

Figure 3: *Clair* does not make the low angle shot; the shot also implies that the woman has had sex within the socially sanctioned space of marriage.

Does she...
or doesn't she?

Hair color so natural only her hairdresser knows for sure!

...and that's why hairdressers all over the world recommend Miss Clairol... see it every time he sets out, ladylike, looking like a fading note... and in every way. They appreciate, too, the way it allows the hair, gives it lovely, lively curls. Well, you know, who should you wish to look younger... partner... to feel more confident? Try like that, please! Today? It's wonderful, too. Cross Streets in Bagdad.

MISS CLAIROL HAIR COLOR

Figure 3: Clairol does not make the hair look dyed; the child also implies that the woman has had/is having sex within the socially sanctioned space of marriage



Figure 4: Eileen framed against the thrusting erection of a giant bullet casing, in *Sunday In New York*.



Figure 5: *Sex And The Single Girl*: Helen doing the hand-jive.



Figure 6: Robyn's breasts in David's face (*Under The Yum Yum Tree*).



Figure 7: Marjorie Morningstar stands in the doorway for a long moment.

Figure 8: Gayle sitting on her bed.



Figure 8: Gidget surfing on her bed....



Figure 9.....and on the sea.
The young body of the
meandering Vega...with the camera and
Johnny (Trey Donohue) is look at her leg and stocking.



Figure 10: Molly in *A Summer Place* takes on the static body of the melodramatic virgin, waiting absolutely still for both the camera and Johnny (Troy Donohue) to look at her leg and stocking.



Figure 11: Molly is willing to be kissed, but appropriately passive, while Johnny actively embraces her.

Figure 12: Reference to the high seas, the innocence of the public domain, and the juxtaposition, in City's voice, of the innocent and the lawless.

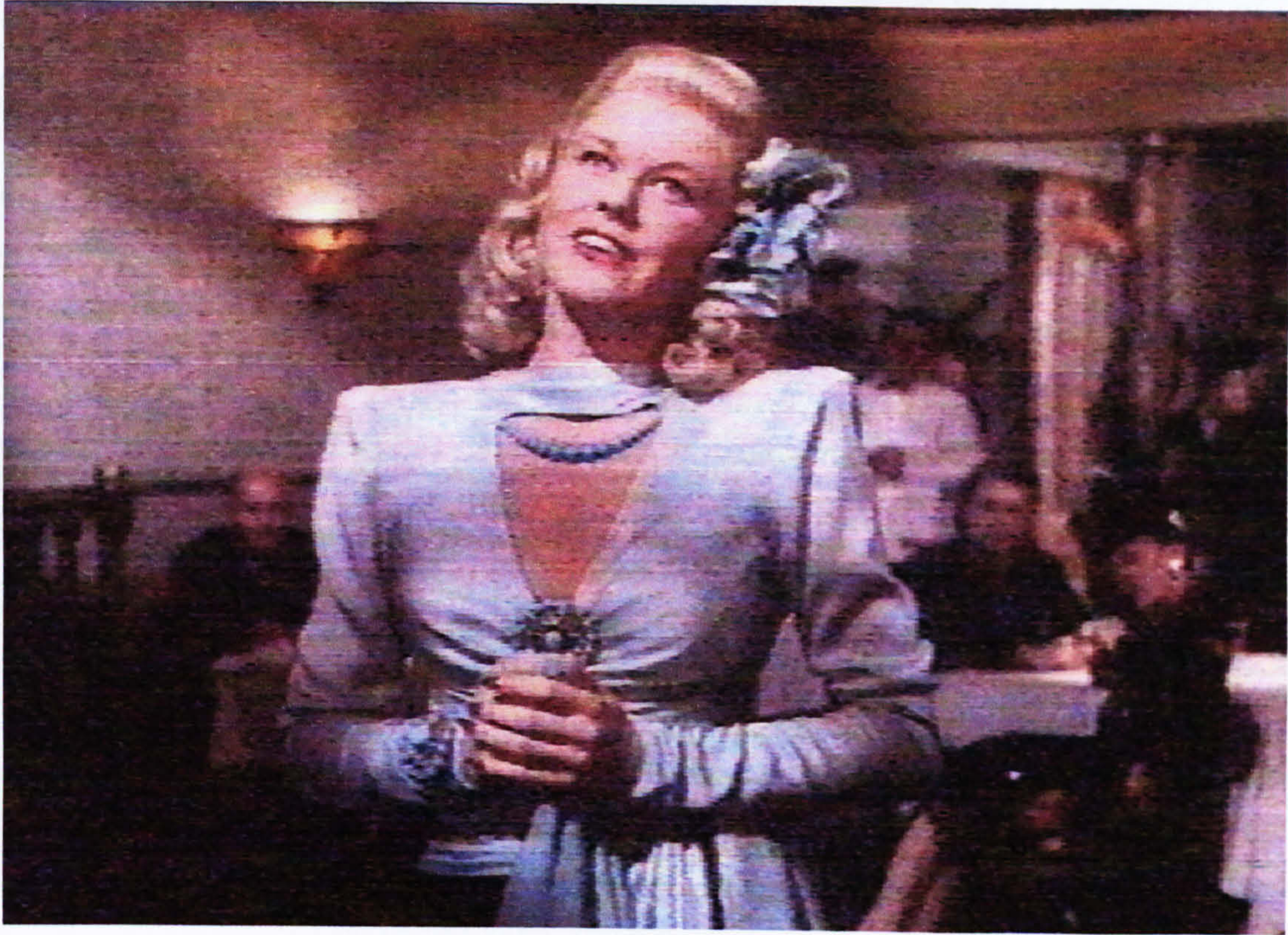


Figure 12: *Romance On The High Seas*: the incoherence of the outfit chimes with the juxtapositioning, in Day's voice, of the innocent and the brash.



Figure 13: Part of *Pillow Talk*'s dating montage, showing the pair in one example of gorgeous, complementary outfits



Figure 14: *Lover Come Back* features a split screen which devotes two thirds of the screen space to the gloating Jerry, and only the remaining portion to the increasingly furious Carole.



Figure 15: Carole enacts the alternatives facing her through hardening...



Figure 16: or softening her facial expression.



Figure 17: 'Both outlines, the 'Slim Casual Sheath' and the 'Full Skirted Dress' available for teens (Shih, 1997, 116).



Figure 18: Jan's white belted wool dress which she is wearing when Jonathan kisses her



Figure 19: '100% Acrilon Jersey Pullover Dress' from Fall/Winter, 1957 (Shih, 1997, 26).



Figure 20: 'Rich Wool Flannel Jacketed Dress' from Fall/Winter, 1959 (Shih, 1997, 45).



Figure 21: *Pillow Talk*: The white wool dress Jan is wearing when she first meets 'Rex'.



Figure 22: From behind, the material is cut to show lots of her back, and square cut too.



Figure 23: The puffy-bowed nightie she wears to bed after first meeting 'Rex'.



Figure 24: A brocade evening suit (to the bride's right, above) for the fall/winter 1959 season (Shih, 1997, 15) very like the one worn by Carole in 1961's *Lover Come Back*.



Figure 25: Carole's big outfit: a tight yellow sheath with an integral top of shimmering pearls.