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The Ethics of Failure:
Mourning and Responsibility in Atom Egoyan's Thrillers.

A thesis submitted to Middlesex University in partial fulfilment
of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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The Ethics of Failure: Mourning and Responsibility in Atom Egoyan's Thrillers

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Abstract:

This thesis considers the work of Atom Egoyan in order to address the relationship between film form and philosophical critique. I look at two of Egoyan's films which appropriate narrative and thematic conventions associated with the mainstream thriller. I argue that in these films Egoyan mobilizes these conventions only to suspend them, specifically through the narrative privileging of ambiguous experiences of mournful and traumatic responsibility. I read these films as strategically failing genre. My analysis of Egoyan's thrillers is informed by Derrida's critique of Freud's theory of the work of mourning, and Levinas's accounts of the ethics of responsibility. While Egoyan's cinema repeatedly examines the experience of mourning and the difficulty of responsibility, I argue that his experiments with mainstream genres in these two films can be understood in relation to ideas of fidelity and failure that feature in the thought of both Derrida and Levinas. The first two chapters introduce the theoretical contexts for the analyses of Egoyan's films that follow. Chapter One, 'The Work of Mourning and the Trauma of Responsibility,' addresses the theories of mourning and responsibility which inform my reading of Egoyan's cinema. This chapter seeks to emphasize analogies between Derrida's discussions of a mourning that paradoxically succeeds by failing and Levinas's description of a responsibility that can never be fulfilled, that inevitably fails. Mourning and responsibility, in these accounts, cannot be understood in relation to conventional notions of success or resolution. In Chapter Two, 'Suspense Thrillers, Generic Identity and Strategic Infidelity,' I look at debates concerning genre and auteur cinema and theories of the suspense thriller in order to provide a context for Egoyan's experimental approach to the genre. Chapter Three looks at *Felicia's Journey* (1999), and Chapter Four looks at *Where the Truth Lies* (2005). These chapters examine the relationship between the films' strategic failing of generic conventions and their narrative privileging of traumatic mourning and responsibility.

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Introduction

In the final scene of Atom Egoyan's *Exotica* (1993), Francis Brown, a tax auditor, husband, and father, drives Christina, his young daughter's teen-aged baby-sitter, back to her home in the suburbs of Toronto, telling her of his plans to buy his daughter a baby grand piano. Disconsolately, Christina suggests that her parents don't regard or talk about her in the way Francis does Lisa, his daughter; Francis gently tries to assure her otherwise, and when Christina responds with doubt, he suggests why she may be wrong:

Francis: *You're a very responsible young woman*

Christina: *Responsible to what?*

Francis: *Well, to whatever it is you believe you have to do*

Christina: *Like what?*

Francis: *Well, Lisa loves it when you come over to baby-sit, for example.
She says you really listen to her.*

Christina: *That's nice. She really listens to me, too.*

Francis: [pause] *She thinks you're not very happy.*

When Christina asks Francis to clarify what he means by "responsible," asking him to name "to what" she is or might be responsible, Francis provides an example: her relation with his daughter, Lisa. Responsibility in this instance is demonstrated by a responsiveness toward another. Furthermore, Lisa has sensed or perceived that Christina is "not very happy" and has told her father of this. Lisa might be said to have taken responsibility for Christina's potential suffering by sharing her intuition, her suspicion, with Francis, her father. Indeed, in the conversation that follows, Francis assures Christina that should she want to, she can tell him "anything," about anything "that might be going on at home"; he responds to Christina's potential suffering and solitude with this simple offer of relation. It would seem that responsibility to and for the other is itself a response to the imagined suffering of the other. When Francis's daughter is murdered, not too long after this conversation takes place, a new relation between Francis and Christina eventually develops, in which their suffering, and their knowledge of each other's suffering, binds them in mutual ritual; dressed in a school uniform much like the one Lisa was wearing when she was

killed, Christina dances for Francis at a strip-club called Exotica. Christina might be said to respond to Francis's suffering by taking on, as a kind of responsibility, an active role in preserving for him a relation with Lisa, providing for him a relation with an image of Lisa now that his actual relation with his daughter has been ended by her murder. At the same time, her decision to do this must be seen, eventually, at the film's end, in relation to, and as a response to, her own suffering; we intuit from her conversation with Francis that she is in an abusive situation at home, although this is not said in so many words. Christina's abuse is intelligible partly due to our familiarity with similar scenes from other films.¹ However, while such scenes function in those movies to inaugurate familiar dramas of traumatic disclosure and triumphant recovery, Egoyan presents this scene as his film's ambiguous resolution. Throughout *Exotica*, in fact, Egoyan exploits our familiarity with genre cinema, and in a markedly more critical and complex way: the exploration of suffering and responsibility in this film not only presents these taking strange form, and binding characters together in ambiguous relations, but takes a strange form itself, due to its ambiguous relation with the erotic thriller genre. In *Exotica*, Egoyan's intellectual and philosophical interests subvert and ultimately displace the conventional pleasures associated with the erotic thriller which dominated the commercial film and video markets in the early 1990s. *Exotica* received many international awards, and won the International Critics Prize at the Cannes Film Festival; it was, however, also nominated for the "Best Alternative Video" in the Adult Video Awards the same year. I suggest that this film's relation with the erotic thriller genre provides a productive model with which to more clearly discern the significance of Egoyan's more recent cinema. Jonathan Romney, referring to how "*Miramax* not only marketed *Exotica* with a trailer that emphasized gunplay—almost entirely absent from the film—but released the video in a sleeve that made it look like generic soft porn," notes how "although *Exotica* sells itself very much in the traditional colours of the art-house 'adult' movie, Egoyan really gives us something very different, and altogether more uncomfortable."² It is the "different, and altogether more uncomfortable" aspect of Egoyan's appropriation of commercial genre which will be the focus of this study. Egoyan has explained that *Exotica*, "a murder mystery set in a strip club," "seems to be a lurid and quite exploitative piece of drama, until such time as you understand what the motivations and reasons for those people being there actually are."³ In *Exotica*, images and relations are ambiguous, and perhaps troublingly so; as the

narrative continues, and reaches its conclusion, our understanding necessarily changes, without, however, ever feeling complete; what we are left with, moreover, is a suggestion of suffering, and of pain, and of the response to these as the original or inaugural basis for the ritualised relationship between Francis and Christina with which the film has primarily been concerned. This thesis focuses on two other films by Atom Egoyan in which ambiguous forms of mourning and responsibility are examined at the same time as the conventions of mainstream genre are appropriated and interrogated. In *Felicia's Journey* (1999) and *Where the Truth Lies* (2005), art cinema and genre cinema are brought together in a relation of vulnerable proximity which threatens the identity of both. These films examine the conventions of popular genre through formal approaches associated with art cinema. Narrative and thematic conventions associated with popular genre are subtly reconfigured by the formal strategies with which Egoyan expresses his intellectual and philosophical interests. Through these films' complex temporal structures and ambiguous resolutions a subtle and strategic reconfiguration takes shape. These films avoid triumphal linearity, and prefer to explore how experiences of pain and loss plait together the past with the present. This thesis attends to these films' strategic failing of generic conventions and their affective exploration of traumatic mourning and responsibility.

The murders of girls and young women in these films on the one hand anchor them to specific popular genres, to the conventions of the thriller, or the horror, or the noir, but, on the other hand, these films also present other young women whose responses to these murders, however belated, and whose knowledge of these deaths, however incomplete, dramatizes an ethics of responsibility that is almost always excluded from popular genre cinema, but which is wholly consistent with Egoyan's consistent concern with catastrophe and commemoration.

Atom Egoyan is one of the most celebrated Canadian film directors working today, and his films have been consistently shown at film festivals and discussed in critical film journals for twenty years. Egoyan's films have been described as "Canadian deconstructions of Hollywood narrative."⁴ They represent "an ongoing attempt to disrupt the conventions of mainstream film narrative, inviting us to understand our own formation by the same structures of thought that inform the filmmaker and his characters."⁵ Atom Egoyan, originally Atom Yeghoyan, was born to Armenian parents in Cairo, Egypt, in 1960, and moved with his family to Victoria, British Columbia, when he was three. As a young child Egoyan stopped speaking

Armenian, and it was not until he was studying International Relations at the University of Toronto that he rediscovered the Armenian language and culture. Lisa Siraganian, discussing Egoyan's films' exploration of "the Armenian diaspora's dilemma of genocide memorialization," has noted that even when "the obviously Armenian characters drop out of Egoyan's films" and they take on "contemporary themes and a more universal scope," they nevertheless remain focused on "traumatic remembering," "survivor guilt" and "the effect of violent catastrophes on individuals and communities," all of which "resonate in Armenian diaspora communities."⁶ Egoyan's experiments with the conventions of mainstream genre cinema illustrate his critical relation to Hollywood cinema at the same time as they enable an allegorical examination of the post-genocidal Armenian diaspora's collective memories and responsibilities.

In this thesis, I am interested in how Egoyan examines the way we come to remember and mourn others who have died, how we take on the responsibility for their memory, and even for the memories others have of them. The films I will be discussing present meditations on these ideas, despite their apparent relation to the forms of popular genre which routinely disavow these themes, despite the genres' dependence on scenarios of violent death. In these films, I argue, responsibility is discerned in relation to an encounter with death; it is, therefore, a mournful responsibility, and a responsive mourning. Both mourning and responsibility, moreover, are presented in relation to murder, murders about which our knowledge remains, on the whole, incomplete: Egoyan preserves for death an essential alterity through his strategic and elliptical approach to narrative and disclosure. Our response to the deaths presented in his films, therefore, is determined by a complex interplay between their allusions to or associations with popular genre, their formal experiments with flashback structures, and their conclusions, which are singly dissatisfying if judged by the standards of the genre. Egoyan's presentation of mourning and responsibility in these films is, I argue, a response to the failures of popular cinema, and one in which an ethical project can be discovered.

Egoyan's cinema has been called a "utopian praxis."⁷ Discussing Egoyan's films, Monique Tschofen describes their interest in an "existential accountability in the way we live and represent our own narratives."⁸ Jonathan Romney describes Egoyan's films as "profoundly compassionate and humanistic."⁹ This cinema, in other words, approaches the ethical both as theme (accountability) and through its essential

regard; characters in Egoyan's films perform tender acts of compassion; the narrative privileging of compassion explains these films' extraordinary power, their empathic claim upon us, and suggests their value. Patrick West has argued that we live in an age of mass mediated and manipulated "conspicuous compassion," of "ostentatious caring," in which "we desperately want to show that we love and care for strangers" and "use the death of strangers quite cynically, to forge social bonds to assert how caring we are."¹⁰ West suggests that this reflects what Stjepan Mestotrovic has called "postemotional society"; that conspicuous compassion is a symptom of post-modernity.¹¹ This thesis addresses how Egoyan's "profoundly compassionate" films function in such a context, and how the traumatic knowledge of, or encounter with, death, specifically murder, is presented in his films: in the films I am discussing, mourning and responsibility are presented in relation to the murder of young women. Gail Holst-Warhaft, noting that mourning is the way in which we display the emotional state of grief, suggests that "the modern, increasingly private person is faced with the death of someone close, she has more to cope with than her own grief; she must invent ways to respond to it." This is what Holst-Warhaft calls the "double burden of grief and confusion."¹² In these films, mourning and responsibility often take unusual and ambiguous shape, and are potentially without end, or resolution. Mourning and responsibility can resist conventional forms, and can challenge the very notion of form by remaining open to endlessness. Egoyan's films, I suggest, also enact this resistance to convention and form. Suspense, the dominant affect associated with the thriller genre, is here produced by elliptical and fragmentary narratives and ambiguous images. This thesis examines the connections between the way Egoyan approaches mourning and responsibility and the ways these films mobilise (only to fail) expectations associated with popular genre.

These films challenge expectations associated with both art cinema and genre cinema; Egoyan invites us to re-think the relation between the two. I argue that Egoyan's films are challenging because they attempt to stage complex ideas about mourning and responsibility within reinterpretations of popular genre. Popular genre might seem an impossible space in which to investigate mourning and responsibility in a critical or philosophical manner. Our familiarity with mainstream and popular genre, however, allows us to see more clearly how these films rework and refuse particular conventions, and it is in their reworking and the refusal of conventions that his ethical praxis is discerned. It is because he works with popular genre, and because

these films seem in different and deliberate ways destined or designed to fail *as* genre films, that they are both challenging and significant: this is how I will approach what I call the ethics of failure. The ethics of failure will be addressed in two interrelated ways. On the one hand, I am interested in how Egoyan's films present mourning and responsibility in ways which admit of their possible, indeed their inevitable failure, and in ways which suggest the ethical aspect of this admission. On the other hand, I am interested in how Egoyan's films mobilize associations with or allusions to popular genre in a complex way, in which their failure *as* genre films is connected to their refusal of the routine failing *of* genre films to properly consider death, despite the fascination with spectacular and violent death such films presume and perpetuate. It is through their particular focus on mourning and responsibility that these films jeopardize their identity and success as straightforward genre pieces. With these films Egoyan seems to expose as much as he explores the failure of popular genre cinema to remember mourning and responsibility. In other words, he is concerned with, and perhaps mourns, responsibility as possibility in contemporary film. In an interview, Egoyan has explained: "I am frustrated with having to structure explanations ... I prefer to leave mystery intact, but also recognize that audiences are not always engaged by that unresolved narrative strategy ... Genre films demand a resolution ... the danger is that the form of the genre, its conventions, may trivialize the ideas I'm trying to express."¹³ In the discussions which follow, I shall address how Egoyan's reinterpretation of genre *uses* both the demand and the danger of which he speaks, how his approach to generic conventions, narrative structure and resolution attempts to "leave mystery intact." I therefore focus on how the ideas he seeks to express, and the forms with which he expresses them, suggestively, strategically and deliberately, "fails" these genres. At the same time, this failure or failing is related to the ways in which his films deprive their viewers of the conventional position of mastery over visual and narrative meaning, by presenting images which remain ambiguous, whose epistemological and ontological status is far from clear, by establishing relations between characters which remain obscure, and by providing endings whose justness seems incomplete or inadequate.

Egoyan's career is coincident with the publication of many landmark critical discussions of postmodern culture and society.¹⁴ Anne Friedberg is among the many critics who have examined the postmodern subject in relation to the development of visual technologies. "Cinema and television—mechanical and electronic extensions of

photography's capacity to transform our access to history and memory—have produced increasingly detemporalized subjectivities. At the same time, the ubiquity of cinematic and televisual representations has fostered an increasingly derealized sense of “presence” and identity. Seen in this context, descriptions of a decentred, derealized, and detemporalized postmodern subject form a striking parallel to the subjective consequences of cinema and televisual spectatorship.”¹⁵ Egoyan's films have often been seen as engaging critically and self-consciously with postmodernism, since not only do they examine the postmodern subjectivities Friedberg describes, but they do so using the various media through which that subject has emerged. In other words, his films detail the “subjective consequences” which attend technology's transformation of our access to history and memory, but do so in self-conscious and critical complicity with “the ubiquity of cinematic ... representations.”

Discussing the conclusions of Egoyan's earlier films (*Family Viewing*, *Speaking Parts*, *The Adjuster*, and *Calendar*), William Beard has noted that Egoyan “wants to assert the primacy of a still-conceivable reality. And he is drawn, ethically and philosophically, to a denunciation of his own (filmmaker's) instrumentality and complicity with image-fascination and to a privileging instead of some eclipsed authenticity that he associates, often, with a certain kind of female principle and personage.”¹⁶ This thesis proposes that Egoyan's films increasingly privilege a principle of responsibility associated with his female protagonists. Egoyan's regular use of female protagonists has not received critical attention. In *Felicia's Journey* and *Where the Truth Lies* the female protagonist is central, developing the way Christina (in *Exotica*) and Nicole (in *The Sweet Hereafter*) gradually move towards a central or determining role in their films. Patricia Gruben's essay on *Exotica*, *The Sweet Hereafter* and *Felicia's Journey* is typical of the accounts which fail to focus sufficiently on the agency of the female characters, on the “female principle and personage” Beard notes. Gruben addresses the desires of the male protagonists of the three films, how they reach out for child substitutes due to their inability to atone, grieve or move on, and how the spectators are implicated in their acts of voyeurism.¹⁷ Significantly, Gruben recognizes that it is precisely Egoyan's approach to form, his “radical manipulation of time, space, and causality,” which ultimately disrupts the continuity between the spectator's and these male protagonists' sadistic voyeurism: “In these three films, narrative continuity, fractured into a mosaic of temporal and spatial perspectives, generates a tension between our fixation on these images and our

awareness of Egoyan's distancing strategies" and subsequently, our "loss of a sense of narrative control—our illusory sadistic voyeurism—fails."¹⁸ However, despite her careful reading of flashbacks and mise-en-scene in the three films, Gruben does not investigate fully how these films foreground young women who take on specific responsibilities, and whose desires are transformed in various ways by these responsibilities, how their desires are transformed through their encounters with death. This thesis focuses specifically on Egoyan's exploration of his female characters' assumptions of responsibility.

Some of the most valuable critical discussions of Egoyan have focused on his films' exploration of identity and technology, of belonging and being, and have concentrated on his films' exploration of identity and ethnicity, of exilic and transcultural experience.¹⁹ Several critics have also noted the regularity and insistence with which Egoyan's films explore the theme of belonging and longing in relation to memory, mourning and trauma.²⁰ Paul Coates, one of the few critics to look in detail at Egoyan's presentation of bereavement, has addressed *Exotica* in relation to "faulty mourning," noting how the film "questions the Freudian dream of final healing."²¹ In other words, the film challenges the idea that mourning is always attended by eventual recovery or recuperation, and a return to normality. Egoyan, in a discussion of *Exotica*, has spoken of this particular response to bereavement, this management of grief, thus: "'Faulty mourning' is a term I've found only recently, a compelling psychoanalytic term to describe people who have found a way of mourning their loss or their sense of grief, but in a way that exaggerates it, as opposed to really dealing with it."²² However, the questioning of the Freudian "dream of final healing" suggests that it is this type of mourning that is at fault, and needs to be challenged, shown to be but a "dream." The questioning of Freudian mourning is necessarily a questioning of whether mourning can be said to succeed or fail at all. Faulty mourning can be seen paradoxically as the "faulty" structure of 'successful' mourning: the "exaggeration" which characterizes this "faulty mourning," I suggest, should be seen in relation to idealisation, and concomitant structures of denial and fantasy. Mourning is 'at fault' to the extent that the relation with the other it sustains is one in which mourning transforms the other, is a false "dealing" which denies the other its otherness and instead "exaggerates" or reconfigures that other, fixing it in a idealised relation. However, whereas Coates sees faulty mourning as a critique of Freud's "dream of final healing," it is this final healing which is 'at fault,' since healing, and, therefore,

hurting, “finishes” in Freud. For the purposes of this thesis, I will not be using the term “faulty mourning”: as will be shown below, Freud’s model of “successful” mourning has been addressed as failing to represent the pain of mourning, and therefore “at fault.” Subsequently, it is the mourning that is “unsuccessful,” that is not structured by a “dream of final healing,” that is seen to provide the basis for an ethical responsibility. It is the notion of mourning as doing justice to the other, as a just relation with the other that has died, that provides a significant consonance between Derrida’s rethinking of the ethical in mourning and Levinas’s description of ethics as responsibility as a survivor, as responsibility to the other, a responsibility which is mournful insofar as it is not predicated on reciprocity or reward, and is figured in relation to the other’s potential suffering and violent death.

Egoyan’s interest in traumatic mourning and responsibility should also be seen in relation to their significance in critical and philosophical discourses during the last two decades. My discussion of mourning and responsibility in Egoyan’s films, like the films themselves, attempts to connect philosophical considerations with material form. I shall be examining mourning and responsibility as they have been figured in the work of Jacques Derrida and Emmanuel Levinas, and how their considerations respond to psychoanalytic theories of the mournful or traumatised subject. William Watkin has noted how both Levinas and Derrida “insist on the responsibility of mourning *to* the lost other, turning attention away from those who grieve and towards *those who have been lost*.”²³ In the scene from *Exotica* described above, Christina asks Francis “to what” her responsibility might be; I suggest that it is responsibility “*to* the lost other” that Egoyan examines in these films. It is due to Egoyan’s interest in a mourning without end, a mourning that fails, a responsibility without end, a responsibility without reward, that I turn in particular to this work. In these films young women respond in different ways to the deaths of other young women: I read these responses in relation to impossible and endless forms of mourning and responsibility. However, in both films there are further deaths which remain beyond or outside the remembrance being offered; as I shall discuss below, while some women are mourned, others remain unmourned and unremembered. Furthermore, in films which deliberately deform genre through a peculiar emphasis on the painful task of remembering and naming the dead, these are deaths of unnamed women. The mourning work in these films fails due to the presence of these other deaths, these unmourned lives. Therefore the work of mourning and the assumption of

responsibility are presented as impossible and endless (because incomplete) despite these films' narrative privileging of mourning and responsibility. However, I will argue that the impossibility of mourning and responsibility, the necessarily incomplete and unsuccessful response to the death of the other, is in many ways the subject of these films. Bringing philosophical discourses into a critical relation with these films is consonant with their attempt to bring the visual, narrative and thematic conventions of popular genre and the formal and self-reflexive operations of art cinema into a close and vulnerable proximity. In this discussion of Egoyan's critical relation to genre, I attempt to bring contemporary philosophical considerations of mourning and responsibility into a productive conversation with the work of a contemporary film director. The films I discuss reinterpret the thriller genre by exploring the ways in which we remember the dead, how the responsibilities we take on *in memory* of the dead suggest our responsibility *to* the dead. Judith Butler describes grief as a form of "undoing," that "[brings] to the fore the relational ties that have implications for theorizing fundamental dependency and ethical responsibility."²⁴ Discussing how "ethics requires us to risk ourselves" she notes that "our willingness to become undone in relation to others constitutes our chance of becoming human. To be undone by another is a primary necessity, an anguish, to be sure, but also a chance ..."²⁵ I read Egoyan's films in relation to the discussion of mourning and responsibility in the work of Jacques Derrida and Emmanuel Levinas; their philosophical rethinking of bereaved memory and survivor responsibility can be effectively interlaced with a consideration of these films' interest in the mourning of violent death. Furthermore, the mourning of the friend, with which Derrida is concerned, and the responsibility to the stranger, which Levinas considers, are braided together in Egoyan's work, in which responsibility is increasingly examined in relation to the possibility of mourning the stranger. In Egoyan's films, I discern a developing consideration of responsibility which approaches the possibility of mourning someone *unfamiliar*, something as much *unknown* as *known*, in which mourning and remembering is structured on the impossibility of full knowledge, and emerges through imaginative proximity rather than historical and physical relation. Levinas discusses responsibility in relation to a relationship with the other; he insists, however, that responsibility cannot be thought in relation to "an order which can be 'embraced', or 'grasped'": "If one could possess, grasp, and know the other, it would not be other."²⁶ I suggest that Egoyan's films provide a consideration of mourning and responsibility in which the

otherness of the other is preserved and glimpsed precisely through an impossible or incomplete possession of knowledge. R. Clifton Spargo, in *The Ethics of Mourning*, explores how in the thought of Levinas “a vulnerability to the other, an imaginative proximity to her suffering and death ... define what it means to be ethical”.²⁷ I am here interested in how Egoyan’s films approach this idea of vulnerable responsibility, how in his films women respond to the murder of other women through a kind of “imaginative proximity to [their] suffering and death.” I am interested in addressing how Egoyan’s films stage the way in which, as Spargo puts it, “the mourner [enacts] a fantasy of care in which grief functions as a belated act of protection, expressing an ethic exceeding self-concern,” and how “a resistant and incomplete mourning stands for an ethical acknowledgement of—or perhaps a ceding to—the radical alterity of the other whom one mourns.”²⁸ In these films Egoyan presents the encounter with the unjust death in order to examine how such imaginative proximity to the other’s suffering and death provides the inauguration of an ethical responsibility. Egoyan’s approach to film, his use of both generic conventions and narrative structure, involve certain dispossessions which in some respects duplicate those his films examine. Egoyan’s cinema should be seen as an attempt to contribute to critical and philosophical theory through the medium of film; his films present complex ideas through their material, affective and narrative forms. Patrick Feury has suggested that contemporary cinema can and should be seen as directly informed by but also contributing to the critical and theoretical work associated with post-structuralism and postmodernism. He suggests that “the relationship between cinema and different theoretical projects has become entwined,” that “cinema itself has come to be a space and praxis for analytic processes and issues,” and that “theory and film perform the same sorts of tasks.”²⁹ Sylvia Harvey writes: “A recognition of the special, even ‘sacred’ character of the film image, its capacity in both emotional and rational terms to render visible that which is invisible and to lead an audience from the particularity of sensuous form to the abstraction of ideas must be an important element in our ‘balance sheet’ of commemoration and celebration in the period of the centenary of cinema.”³⁰ Egoyan’s films seek to carve a cinematic space with which to perform theoretical tasks in the way Feury describes; similarly, they work to “lead an audience from the particularity of sensuous form to the abstraction of ideas” in the way Harvey suggests. Egoyan’s cinema attempts to communicate complex ideas about trauma,

pain and memory, and about mourning and responsibility, while utilizing the ambiguous relation between art cinema and mainstream genres.

Chapter One: The Work of Mourning and the Trauma of Responsibility

The present chapter introduces Freud's discussion of mourning, as well as various critical responses to his ideas, particularly those of Jacques Derrida, before providing an outline of Levinas's descriptions of responsibility, which is then compared with Derrida's account of mourning, specifically in relation to the impossibility of resolution. The relevance of their thought for a discussion of Egoyan's cinema is not only due to his films' consistent preoccupation with traumatic bereavement and accountability; it is further supported by the language used by Derrida and Levinas to describe our response to the deaths of others; references to images, genre, plots, intrigue, *mise-en-scène* and so on suggest how effectively their work can be deployed for the consideration of cinematic representations of the very processes they describe.

In "On Transience" (1915), one of several essays written during this time that dealt with death and mourning, Freud wrote that "[mourning] over the loss of something that we have loved or admired seems so natural to the layman that he regards it as self-evident. But to psychologists mourning is a great riddle, one of those phenomena which cannot themselves be explained but to which other obscurities can be traced back."¹ He addressed the "great riddle" of mourning in more detail in "Mourning and Melancholia" (also 1915), although this was principally in order to better discuss pathological melancholic states, the "obscurities" of which he sought to "trace back" to mourning.² As Jean Laplanche notes, in "Mourning and Melancholia" mourning is described as "the 'normal prototype' of melancholia—it is that which sheds light, and thus that on which there would be no light to be shed: how could light be illuminated?"³ 'Normal' mourning itself, in other words, remained for Freud an obscure process, despite his attempt to use mourning to 'reveal' the mysteries of melancholy. The ambiguous account of 'normal' mourning delineated by Freud in "Mourning and Melancholia" has, perhaps unsurprisingly, provoked a considerable amount of discussion and disagreement, even while it has proved and remains influential.⁴

Freud explains that "although mourning involves grave departures from the normal attitude to life, it never occurs to us to regard it as a pathological condition and to refer it to medical treatment. We look upon its being overcome after a certain lapse of time, and we look upon any interference with it as useless or even harmful. [...] It is

really only because we know so well how to explain it that this attitude does not seem to us pathological.”⁵ However, Freud does refer to a pathological strain of mourning, in which the “grave departures from the normal attitude to life” are sustained beyond “a certain lapse of time.” In other words, mourning becomes pathological if it resists a temporal itinerary which aims towards “its being overcome.” The time of ‘normal’ mourning is characterized as definite (“a certain lapse”) rather than indefinite; it is limited, rather than limitless; determinate, rather than indeterminate. Furthermore, ‘normal’ mourning is easily explicable, or, rather, easily explicable mourning is ‘normal.’ For Freud, mourning characterized by departures from the normal attitude to *death* is, therefore, pathological.

Laplanche suggests that for Freud mourning is “a kind of *work*, the work of memory (*Erinnerungsarbeit*)” and “an affect with a *duration* (*daueraffekt*),” with “a beginning and an end.”⁶ Mourning takes a distinctly telic form in which mourning uses up the time it takes for pain to lapse away: the work of mourning is the diminishment of pain in time, and is resolved by the recovery of, and the return to, normality after a certain period. Loss, Laplanche suggests, “is probably co-extensive with temporalisation itself.”⁷ Similarly, Alessia Ricciardi has argued that, for Freud, “mourning operates as a strategy of temporalisation specific to the individual subject,” and that “[the] value of the temporality of mourning inheres in adding ethical weight and historical specificity to the economics of human time.”⁸ Ricciardi suggests that it is through the work of mourning that an ethical dimension of “human time” manifests itself. If loss is co-extensive with temporalisation, as Laplanche argues, we might ask whether the temporal is equally co-extensive with loss, and, for that matter, whether the same might be said about the ethical. How might thinking about the time of mourning be co-extensive with thinking about ethics? How do normal and abnormal temporalities of mourning relate to appropriate and inappropriate ethics of remembrance? What kind of work ethic characterizes mourning? How does the work of mourning work *as* an ethic?

Mourning is described by Freud in relation to a kind of energetic activity, or labour, which he calls “*trauerarbeit*,” sorrow-work, or, in Strachey’s translation, “the work of mourning.” The “work which mourning performs” consists of severing the attachment to the lost object. The “work of mourning” is a labour that reaches a conclusion, a resolution; it is a work which is completed, successfully, with the

substitution of the lost object. In this respect, mourning has an achievable end, an obvious goal. Freud explains the work of mourning thus:

Reality-testing has shown that the loved object no longer exists, and it proceeds to demand that all libido shall be withdrawn from its attachments to that object. This demand arouses understandable opposition—it is a matter of general observation that people never willingly abandon a libidinal position, not even, indeed, when a substitute is already beckoning to them. [...] Normally, respect for reality gains the day. Nevertheless its orders cannot be obeyed at once. They are carried out bit by bit, at great expense of time and cathectic energy, and in the meantime the existence of the lost object is psychically prolonged. Each single one of the memories and expectations in which the libido is bound to the object is bought up and hypercathected, and detachment of the libido is accomplished in respect of it.⁹

The work of mourning Freud describes abides by strict narrative and telic rules, whereby completion and recuperation is coincident with the substitution of the lost object by a new object and the restoration of the libidinal investment in the other. The disruption caused by the death of the other is temporary. The disequilibrium caused by the other's death is not irreversible. Mourning may consist in what Freud called "grave departures," but the return to normality is expected after a certain period of time. Opposition to reality functions as a structuring force determining the time mourning will take. "Reality" is experienced as a demand for obedient submission and compliance to an order for withdrawal (of libido) and severance (of attachment). Obedience is not instantaneous; the duration of the mourning will be determined by the strength of the opposition against this order, since the greater the opposition the greater the "expense" of energy required to accomplish detachment of the libido. The abandonment of the lost object that must be achieved for mourning to be completed functions as a kind of aggressive response to the abandonment felt by those left behind to mourn when another has died. The eventual detachment achieved in 'normal' mourning answers the separation that originated with the physical departure of the other. The agency with which the mourner resists the abandonment of the lost other functions as a reassertion of her will in response to an abandonment she was unable to prevent.

In "Mourning and Melancholia" Freud declared that "[why] this compromise by which the command of reality is carried out piecemeal should be so extraordinarily painful is not at all easy to explain in terms of economics. It is remarkable that this painful unpleasure is taken as a matter of course by us."¹⁰ Similarly, in "On Transience" he wrote: "why it is that this detachment of libido from its objects should be such a painful process is a mystery to us, and we have not hitherto been able to frame any hypothesis to account for it."¹¹ The pain of mourning is mysterious and inexplicable, but at the same time "taken as a matter of course by us." The endurance of this mysterious pain thus becomes the pain *of* that which remains mysterious. A mysterious pain experienced in time becomes a mysterious experience of time *as* pain, and, perhaps, mystery itself as pain. Mourning, in other words, involves another loss - the loss of fully understanding the process, the loss of a cognitive mastery over the experience. We might consider the work of mourning, then, as a narrative in which an enigmatic and ambiguous experience comes to an eventual halt, in which the resolution of the mourning process need not provide a solution to the mystery of that mourning.

The description of the resistance to renunciation that is overcome in normal mourning and sustained in pathological mourning follows more general ideas in Freud's thought. For Freud, an "unpractical bondage to the past," and an "inability to cut oneself off from something in the past" were, Michael S. Roth has suggested, important signs of pathology.¹² The successful completion of mourning demonstrates, in other words, an ideal "practical" relation with the past. Psychoanalysis, as Roth observes, is fundamentally interested in "the ways the past can cause pain in the present."¹³ The work of mourning suggests the pain involved in being practical, and also suggests the problem of differentiating the practical from the pathological. Roth notes that the process of mourning was for Freud a way of "letting go of the past without denying it."¹⁴ However, the problem of mourning is implied by the impossibility of detaching oneself fully and remaining in relation at the same time.

It should be noted that after the deaths of his daughter and young grandson Freud's personal references to grief reflect a different attitude about mourning. For example, in his letter to Dr. Ludwig Binswanger (11 April 1929) Freud wrote:

Although we know that after such a loss the acute state of mourning

will subside, we also know we shall remain inconsolable and will never find a substitute. No matter what may fill the gap, even if it is filled completely, it nevertheless remains something else. And actually, this is how it should be. It is the only way of perpetuating that love which we do not want to relinquish.”¹⁵

In this description of mourning, however, the perpetuation of “that love which we do not want to relinquish” seems to take place in spite of any efforts to find a substitute and fill the gap. That “this is how it should be” feels almost like a submission to the fact of irreplaceability and to interminable mourning, a submission which utterly contradicts the order of reality which demands withdrawal and detachment in “Mourning and Melancholia.” In both his earlier and his later thoughts about grief, then, Freud presents a subject which submits painfully to a reality, to either a reality which demands the severance of all attachment and the substitution of the object, or a reality in which attachments are perpetuated interminably and in which substitutions are never found (or, if they are, never really work).¹⁶

The time of mourning is inextricable from a mournful remembrance of the past. Kathleen Woodward has remarked that for Freud mourning proceeds through a kind of passion of hyper-remembering, a “dizzy phantasmagoria of memory.”¹⁷ However, if the time it takes to carry out these orders depends upon submitting to reality-testing “[*each*] *single one* of the memories and expectations in which the libido is bound to the object,” then a strangely quantitative dimension to the accomplishment of withdrawal complicates matters.¹⁸ If “each single one” of the memories must be hyper-catheted for mourning to be completed, then the completion will depend as much upon the number of available memories as upon the opposition to the actual process of hyper-cathexis. Furthermore, how, exactly, might memories of the dead become available to us, or become objects for us? And how might another person’s memories (and another person’s losses) have meaning for us, or become part of us? How might the knowledge of another’s death inaugurate a kind of mourning or remembrance in the absence of actual memories of that other person? Can mourning take place, in other words, in the absence of any personal memories if such ‘memories’ are provided *for* us, or if such knowledge *otherwise* comes to us? What kind of mourning can take place for others who were never present to us, who were never in our physical presence? If no ‘memories’ are available, then how can

relinquishment function in the mournful remembrance that such knowledge entails?

Clinical work on mourning is now highly critical of the Freudian relinquishment model.¹⁹ Woodward is among the cultural critics who have also argued against the relinquishment model proposed by Freud in “Mourning and Melancholia” and since entrenched in psychoanalysis. She writes: “[Our] responses to the deaths of figures who play different roles in our lives will depend in great part on whether those persons can in some measure and in due time be ‘replaced.’”²⁰ In the “unequivocal distinction” between successful mourning and unsuccessful or pathological mourning (in which attachment is sustained), Woodward detects “a peculiar kind of piety, an almost ethical injunction to kill the dead and to adjust ourselves to ‘reality.’”²¹ She suggests that grief might be interminable without also being pathological in the sense Freud describes; that “some people come to terms with their grief by learning to live with their pain and in such a way that they are still *in* mourning but no longer *exclusively* devoted to mourning.”²² An interminable mourning might be considered as operating according to a different “ethical injunction,” one oriented towards a remembrance of the dead. However, if the response to the deaths of others depends on the original relation their death severed (their role in our lives), then the response to the deaths of those who played *no* role in our lives prior to their death, but are remembered nonetheless, remains obscure in Woodward’s account of mourning. The ethical injunction to remember and mourn the deaths of strangers, however, is important for the formation of, for example, national and civic identity, as war remembrance demonstrates. But how might the mourning of strangers function outside culturally sanctioned and ritualized forms of collective remembrance? How might the mourning of the stranger proceed if the role she played in our life begins with the work of mourning itself?

Other critics have also addressed what Woodward calls the “ethical injunction to kill the dead.”²³ For example, the normative work of mourning, Mark Edmundson has suggested, is one of Freud’s most guarded idealisations. He writes: “Freudian grief derives not from the loss of some unique and irreplaceable person or thing but from the drive’s temporary failure to locate a source of satisfaction. Mourning, for Freud, works its way toward an implicit realization of the arbitrariness of the object, its constitution by the drive in the image of earlier imagos.”²⁴ Thus the normative subject is one who would “mourn the lost object and accept substitution and the exigencies of an efficient psychic capitalism that encourages one to cure rather than to

interpret and refigure one's situation."²⁵ Using the very same phrase employed by Woodward, Edmundson argues that "[to] figure mourning as "work" is to issue, however subtly, an ethical injunction that one undertake mourning economically, proceed to work thoroughly but without waste, cut the failed investment, suspend losses. One might call this an "ethic of substitution."²⁶ Similarly, Tammy Clewell has argued that since Freud presents the reclamation of libido from the lost object as the prelude to forming a new attachment, "Freudian mourning involves less a lament for the passing of a unique other, and more a process geared toward restoring a certain economy of the subject."²⁷ Freudian mourning must disavow "unique" and "irreplaceable" aspects of the other (which is always already a substitution for an earlier loss) for the sake of what Edmundson and Clewell describe as an economic restoration of the subject.

Responses to Freud's essay challenge a perceived "ethic of substitution" or "injunction to kill the dead" within a mourning which puts the psychic integrity of the subject above the unique or irreplaceable nature of the lost object. There are further significant aporias in Freud's essay that also deserve mention. These further considerations open out the problem of mourning towards a contemporary ethics (and politics) of the grievable and question the efficacy of a model of mourning which has nothing to say about the precise nature of the death which has ended the relation, or the possibility of a mourning for a barely known or fully *unknown* other.

Freud's essay does not distinguish between different kinds of death. The death which is experienced as inexplicable, a death characterized by mystery, a particularly traumatic death, a death seen as unjust, remains, perhaps, beyond the scope of Freud's essay. As we saw, Freud privately revised his relinquishment model of grief after the deaths of his daughter and grandson; when generations do not die in ordered succession, death is seen as particularly unfair. Beyond a death experienced as unjustly premature in this respect, however, is the death caused by another; the mourning of a death from murder is often seen as the most difficult to overcome, particularly, for example, in the absence of an accurate account of the event itself. Freud focuses on the death or loss of "the loved one." Can a relation develop *after* the death of the other? Can there be mourning for the death or the loss of another which isn't based on the mourning of a severed or disrupted relation, and which instead *inaugurates* relation? Andrew Benjamin has described what he calls "mourning's dependence on the structure of knowledge"; he writes:

[A] fundamental part of mourning is the proximity of the loved object. It must be familiar, almost in every detail. It must be known, almost absolutely. What is known has to do with a body, one that touches, was touched, but now no longer reaches out; a mouth that opened, but now is silent; a body that was animated and is animated no longer. It is almost as though knowing both states of animation—from the quick to the dead—is essential for mourning.²⁸

Knowing another “almost absolutely” is here the precondition for mourning. But such knowledge, even if it is qualified as being *almost* absolute, implies the impossibility of mourning someone who had in any significant way evaded such knowledge, and who remained in some way (and not necessarily obdurately) unfamiliar, or strange. Mourning, in this account, cannot be undertaken for the stranger. The possibility of a mourning work oriented towards strangers, however, is central to any consideration of the responsibility to respond ethically to history. In his essay “Memory and Forgetting,” Paul Ricoeur writes:

To reflect upon the ethics of memory is, at first sight, a puzzling task. This is so because memory is not in the first instance an action, but a kind of knowledge like perception, imagination and understanding. Memory constitutes a knowledge of past events, or of the pastness of past events. [...] So how is it possible to speak of an ethics of memory? It is possible because ... remembering is a way of *doing* things, not only with our words, but with our minds; in remembering or recollecting we are exercising our memory, which is a kind of action.”²⁹

Ricoeur reminds us that Freud saw memory as a kind of work or *travail* (*Erinnerungsarbeit*) and suggests that “it is quite possible that the work of memory *is* a kind of mourning, and also that mourning is a painful exercise in memory.”³⁰ Ricoeur suggests that “a basic reason for cherishing the duty to remember is to keep alive the memory of suffering over against the general tendency of history to celebrate the victors,” and that we need, or need to respond to as to a task, “a kind of parallel history of, let us say, victimisation, which would counter the history of success and victory.”³¹ Memory is here conceived as a duty “to keep alive the memory of

suffering,” and perhaps specifically the suffering of those who we have never known, those who we ‘know’ only through a work of imaginative identification that enables the work of mournful remembering. Ethical responsibility must be considered in relation to the possibility and necessity of remembering that which was never experienced and mourning those who we have never known. In *The Ends of Mourning* Alessia Ricciardi has suggested that “we have been left with the ability to relate to the past only as a spectacle, as an image to be consumed in the virtual reality of mass culture.”³² According to Ricciardi, the ethical project of historical memory is in this way forgotten, and the concept of mourning is devalued. Ricciardi is concerned with “the different facets of mourning that our current consumer society all too quickly has forgotten—psychological, spiritual, intellectual and ethical facets that today seem radically intertwined and often enigmatic.”³³ The “enigmatic” and “open-ended” aspects of mourning are denied; contemporary culture, Ricciardi suggests, refuses a genuinely critical relation to the past.³⁴ Thus mourning is seen in relation to the enigmatic and the endless, and the possible relation between the two, in which endlessness constitutes and sustains the enigma. Significantly, Ricciardi suggests that certain kinds of art can counter the tendencies of popular culture to “present itself as operating beyond the necessity of mourning and thus to transcend the ethical language of responsibility” and that art cinema in particular (she addresses Godard and Pasolini), by questioning “the linear itinerary of forgetting posited by Freud,” provides a space in which “the enigma of mourning” can resonate.³⁵ Freud’s model of the individual’s work of mourning, in other words, is for Ricciardi metonymic of a larger cultural failure to remember the past responsibly, to remember responsibility. By extension, it is precisely through their questioning of linearity that art films can privilege the more enigmatic aspects of mourning, since linearity itself is here synonymous with the narrative of finite mourning-as-forgetting.

The distinction between mourning someone who was known and loved and mourning a stranger depends upon the idea that the other who was known and loved was truly known or even knowable. For Jean Laplanche, to contemplate the mysterious nature of the mourning process leads inexorably to a confrontation with the ineffability of the lost object. He writes: “[The] enigma of mourning takes us to the function of the enigma in mourning: what does the dead person want? What does he want of me? What did he want to say to me? The enigma leads back, then, to the otherness of the other.”³⁶ Laplanche proposes that the desire of the dead person is the

root and terminus of mourning's riddle. Exactly what the dead person may "want of me" (we might say "want *with* me," or "want *from* me") begs the questions: for how long with the dead person want something, or anything, of me, or from me? What does the dead person *deserve*, or *need*? What are its rights, and our obligations? What would *satisfy* the dead person? The difficulty of knowing what it is the dead want of us, Laplanche seems to suggest, leads back to the difficulty of knowing what others want of us, and the difficulty of living with others more generally. It is a difficulty, perhaps, precisely of *not* knowing, of living with *this* mystery, the pain of this lack.

The following sections consider the process of mourning and the mystery of the other by looking at Derrida's account of an eminently unsuccessful mourning and Levinas's description of a traumatic responsibility for the other. In their work, the relationship between memory and mourning, between mourning and ethics, and between mourning and responsibility are further delineated. For both, the subject's psychic integrity depends upon the disavowal of the other's needs, but, they argue, it is precisely this fantasy of psychic integrity that must be abandoned. The other's needs must come first, at the cost of the subject. Both mourning and responsibility involve privileging the impossible demands of the other; it is this 'reality' to which the subject surrenders and submits, and not a self-serving or narcissistic itinerary.

Derrida and Mourning

In the following section, I suggest that Derrida's discussion of mourning raises questions concerning both form and ethics, or, to fuse the two together, the ethics of form. The descriptions of mourning provided by Derrida criticize the temporal and telic strictures of the Freudian model, and as such, offer a model of mourning in which resistance to genre and narrative are associated with an ethical privileging of otherness. Furthermore, the description of memory in mourning provided by Derrida is remarkably resonant with an experience of filmic *mise-en-scène*. As we shall see in the third section, Levinas's descriptions of responsibility also employ language associated with aesthetic form, and, more specifically, film. The use of such language in the philosophical discussion of mourning and responsibility provided by Derrida and Levinas, I suggest, will mesh productively with an investigation of Egoyan's presentation of similar ideas in his films.

For Jacques Derrida, the “work of mourning” is a “confused and terrible expression,” one that “remains ... the name of a problem.”³⁷ The “discourse of mourning,” he suggests, “is more threatened than others, though it should be less, by the generality of the genre.”³⁸ The refusal to mourn, or rather the refusal to complete one’s mourning, the resistance of mourning’s temporal itinerary, opposes the threat, or the rule, of genericity. To resist completing one’s mourning work is simultaneously to resist the narrative and generic conventions of mourning. It is a mourning-work that persists, persists painfully, and endlessly, that Derrida elaborates. Derrida’s rethinking of mourning is both tender and challenging; he gently, insistently emphasizes the “impossibility” of mourning, the impossibility of mourning ending, and the impossibility of mourning “succeeding” in the way it does in the “work” Freud describes. Derrida rethinks mourning by suggesting that the “successful” work of mourning fails to properly acknowledge the other, the other’s resistance to idealisation in interiorization, and argues further that it cannot admit of interiorization’s failure to preserve the other *as* other, *as* “unique” and “irreplaceable” (as Edmundson and Clewell described it, above). It is only an endless mourning which preserves the other’s otherness, preserves *for* the other her otherness. The work of mourning always involves the risk of turning away from an obligation “to address oneself directly *to* the other, and to speak *for* the other whom one loves and admires, before speaking *of* him.”³⁹ It is this obligation “*to*” and “*for*” the other that for Derrida constitutes mourning, and in this respect the Freudian work of mourning, the self-serving restoration of the subject (which Clewell and Edmundson described in economic terms) is displaced in the same way that the subject itself is displaced by the other. For Derrida, mourning involves a wholly other “ethic of substitution,” to use Edmundson’s phrase, in which it is the subject that is substituted by the other (the lost object), and not the lost object that is substituted by a living other. The “ethical injunction to kill the dead” that Woodward discerned in Freud’s theory of mourning work is here replaced by an ethical obligation to resist even the violence of idealising interiorisation and generic threnody.

For Derrida, interiorization in the “normal” “work of mourning” entails an idealization in which the death and memory of the other is comprehended only through the forgetting or the disavowal of the other. This interiorization, therefore, fails where it most succeeds; it is an interiorization, in other words, “[where] *success fails*.”⁴⁰ Derrida argues that “faithful interiorization bears the other and constitutes

him in me (in us), at once living and dead. It makes the other a *part* of us, between us—and then the other no longer quite seems to be the other, because we grieve for him and bear him *in us*, like an unborn child, like a future.”⁴¹ Inversely, “*failure succeeds*: an aborted interiorization is at the same time a respect for the other as other, a sort of tender rejection, a movement of renunciation which leaves the other alone, outside, over there, in his death, outside of us.”⁴² It is precisely the idea of success and failure that must be rethought when considering mourning and our fidelity to the dead. Derrida writes:

I speak of mourning as the attempt, always doomed to fail (thus a constitutive failure, precisely), to incorporate, interiorize, introject, subjectivize the other in me [...] Faithful mourning of the other must fail *to succeed/by succeeding* (it fails, precisely, if it succeeds! it fails because of success!). There is no successful introjection, there is no pure and simple incorporation.

In mourning, Derrida says, “I must and I must not take the other into myself.” If mourning is successful it is unfaithful, and if mourning is faithful it is unsuccessful. This is the “double-bind” which structures our fidelity to the other. When mourning “succeeds in interiorizing the other ideally” it is an “unfaithful fidelity” that fails to respect the other’s “infinite exteriority.”⁴³ Elsewhere Derrida writes:

Is fidelity mourning? It is also the contrary: the faithful one is someone who is in mourning. Mourning is an interiorization of the dead other, but it is also the contrary. Hence the impossibility of completing one’s mourning and even the will not to mourn are also forms of fidelity. If to mourn and not to mourn are two forms of fidelity and two forms of infidelity, the only thing remaining—and this is where I speak of semi-mourning—is an experience between the two. I cannot complete my mourning for everything I lose, because I want to keep it, and at the same time, what I do best is to mourn, is to lose it, because by mourning, I keep it inside me.

This is the fatal necessity of mourning, “this fatality, this necessity: the double constraint of mourning.”⁴⁴ For Derrida, we are “entrusted” or “bequeathed” with the

memory of the dead upon the death of the other. He writes: "All we seem to have left is memory, since nothing appears able to come to us any longer, nothing is coming or to come, from the other to the present." Furthermore: "We weep *precisely* over what happens to us when everything is entrusted to the sole memory that is "in me" or "in us." The memory of the other, for Derrida, is "greater" than what we can "bear, carry, or comprehend."⁴⁵ In "By Force of Mourning," he suggests that if the interiorization associated by Freud with the mourning of the lost object "must not—and this is the unbearable paradox of fidelity—be possible and completed" it is due to a specific "organization of space and of visibility," "of the gazing and the gazed upon": "When we say "in us," when we speak so easily and so painfully of inside and outside, we are naming space, we are speaking of a visibility of the body, a geometry of gazes, an orientation of perspectives. *We are speaking of images.*"⁴⁶ Where Freud described "memories," Derrida describes these memories as "*visible* scenes that are no longer anything but *images.*"⁴⁷ The description of mournful memory Derrida provides here seems strangely similar to cinema. Bodies, space, "scenes," "a geometry of gazes, an orientation of perspectives," describes, quite accurately, a film. However, the quasi-cinematographic experience of memory during mourning is one which resists comprehension during its endurance, and which therefore cannot be fully possessed, or mastered. The dispossession of the subject's mastery is emphasized when Derrida proposes that "[the] image sees more than it is seen. The image looks at us."⁴⁸ Diarmuid Costello has suggested that we respond to artworks as we respond to other persons, because "artworks, like persons, *look back*, and thereby make a claim on us": "[Our] relation to works of art functions, structurally, as a place-holder for our relation to other persons. Artworks are the face of the other."⁴⁹ Derrida's description of memory during mourning suggests a mysterious encounter with images, an encounter with mysterious images, a multiplication of other gazes, even the gaze of the other. Not only, then, is the work of mourning for Derrida something which must resist genericity and a narrative or telic itinerary aimed at resolution and restoration, it is something which is experienced as a disruption of self-possession and self-preservation, and a disruption of one's masterful comprehension of images through an assertion of another's gaze. Derridean mourning, I wish to suggest, is surprisingly analogous with cinematic experience, and provides an unexpectedly effective way to consider a film's "successful" or "unsuccessful" relation to generic and narrative conventions.

However, it is also in relation to an ethics of responsivity or responsibility that Derrida re-conceives the work of mourning. In *Aporias* Derrida writes that “the relation to the other ... will never be distinguishable from a bereaved apprehension”⁵⁰ In other words, then, our relation to the other is constituted by an obligation to preserve the other’s otherness, as if the other was already dead, and as if the other was already “in us,” as if we were already speaking (or acting) “for” the other, even in their absence, and beyond any possibility of reciprocity. According to Brault and Naas, Derrida’s ‘impossible mourning’ invokes “the possibility of an interiorization of what can never be interiorized, of what is always before and beyond us as the source of our responsibility.”⁵¹ Mourning, as Derrida admits and describes, provides, and *is*, a means to rethink responsibility as impossibility, and failure as a form of fidelity. Mourning is “the *duty* and movement of fidelity.”⁵² Derrida writes:

Is the most distressing, or even the most deadly infidelity that of a *possible mourning* which would interiorize within us the image, idol, or ideal of the other who is dead and lives only in us? Or is it that of impossible mourning, which, leaving the other his alterity, respecting thus his infinite remove, either refuses to take or is incapable of taking the other within oneself, as in the tomb or the vault of some narcissism?⁵³

Mark Dooley and Liam Kavanagh write how for Derrida “[the] work of mourning is essentially the desire to do justice to the *other*.”⁵⁴ It is exactly this notion of mourning as doing justice to the other, as sustaining or inaugurating a just relation with the other that has died, that provides a significant consonance between Derrida’s rethinking of the ethical in mourning and Levinas’s description of ethics as the responsibility of a survivor. Joan Kirkby has noted that Derrida “argues that the death of the other is constitutive of our self-relation and the occasion for an ongoing engagement with them, for they are now both “within us” and “beyond us”.”⁵⁵ Levinasian responsibility to and for the other is mournful in the Derridean sense insofar as it is figured in relation to the other’s potential suffering and violent death, and is, furthermore, *not* predicated on reciprocity, reward, or resolution.

Levinas and Responsibility

Levinas's elaboration of "ethics as first philosophy" and "ethics as compassion," is increasingly discussed in a variety of disciplines outside of ethics, indeed outside of philosophy.⁵⁶ Barry Smart states: "It is precisely the dissipation of responsibility towards the other with which Emmanuel Levinas has been preoccupied and to which his ethical discourse constitutes a critical response."⁵⁷ Similarly, R. Clifton Spargo writes: "Levinas has done perhaps more than any other contemporary figure to develop the connotation of ethics as relationship given over already to the meanings of alterity or, more specifically, to the particularity of alterity that the other always signifies."⁵⁸ Furthermore, the alterity of the other for Levinas raises questions concerning knowledge comparable to those which are central to Derrida's refutation of Freudian mourning. As Spargo usefully glosses, responsibility, in the Levinasian sense, "exists on the hither side of knowledge, "a modality not of a knowing, but of an obsession, a shuddering of the human quite different from cognition."⁵⁹ Such a responsibility is not a mode of knowledge, and is not to be confused with cognition. Responsibility is here figured as a belated and traumatic response to an otherness which can never be fully understood or known. This responsibility, furthermore, can be compared with our response to artworks, since artworks similarly resist or refuse 'full' understanding. In "Reality and its Shadow," Levinas discusses the "order of the poetic," the aesthetic, and in particular the image, in relation to sensibility and apprehension.⁶⁰ Levinas claims that art substitutes for the object its image, and that the value of images for philosophy lies in their ambiguity and their obscurity: "Art contrasts with knowledge. It is the very event of obscuring, a descent of the night, an invasion of shadow". Apprehension's "commerce with the obscure," which takes place as a kind of consensual participation with the work, and in which we enter and are entered by the work, is a "totally independent ontological event," distinct from cognition: thus the artwork "prolongs, and goes beyond, common perception. What common perception trivializes and misses, an artwork apprehends in its irreducible essence. It thus coincides with metaphysical intuition."⁶¹ Levinas stresses the ungraspable obscurity of the image and the sensation of an imaginative commerce with this obscurity, in which one *enters* but is also *entered*. In other words, the relation with the artwork would appear to chime with certain aspects with the relation with or to, the response to or responsibility for, the other, insofar as the openness towards and opening by the work (as with the other) refers to an order distinct from total cognition or conceptualisation.⁶²

This responsibility is traumatic precisely because it a response to something unknowable: Levinas writes: “We name this calling into question of my spontaneity by the presence of the Other ethics. The strangeness of the other, his irreducibility to the I, to my thoughts and possessions, is precisely accomplished as a calling into question of my spontaneity, as ethics.”⁶³ Furthermore: “I am an ‘I’ because I am exposed to the other ... my inescapable and incontrovertible answerability to the other makes me an I, I become a responsible or ethical I to the extent that I agree to abdicate my ... position of centrality in favour of the vulnerable other.”⁶⁴ As we can see, Levinasian ethics is based on a primordial alterity, which inverts ethics as a language of obligation into a thinking of relation, and of relation that is always already in place. In Levinas’s ethics, responsibility is inordinate, exorbitant, infinite, is “the essential, primary and fundamental structure of subjectivity. [...] I am responsible for the Other without waiting for reciprocity.”⁶⁵ As Barry Smart suggests, “if subjectivity is addressed in ethical terms by Levinas, ethics in this instance is not a metaphysical ‘what ought to be’, rather it represents *a critical disturbance of being, of the complacency of our being.*”⁶⁶ It is the other that disturbs the complacency of our being, that otherness which is irreducible in its alterity. Intentionality is displaced by vulnerability, passivity, open sensibility, in which, as Simon Critchley writes, “the deep structure of subjective experience ... is structured in a relation of responsibility or, better, responsivity to the other.”⁶⁷ The responsibility to the other Levinas discusses offers a distinct challenge to the “economy of the subject” we saw preserved through the successful work of mourning in Freud’s essay. This responsibility is not experienced as something which can be completed; the debt cannot be paid. The other to whom we are responsible cannot be thought of as responding in kind. This is a responsibility without reciprocity or reward, and it cannot be thought in terms of success. Colin Davis discusses the “extreme nature” of Levinasian responsibility thus: “This form of responsibility is nothing like philanthropic altruism. It allows of no calculation of costs and benefits”.⁶⁸ The responsibility Levinas seeks to describe is the responsibility as a survivor for whom there is no reward except survival itself, a responsibility that precedes consideration of or concern with our self, or our own death, in the preoccupation with the death of the other. He writes:

[In] its expression, in its mortality, the face before me summons me, calls for me, begs for me, as if the invisible death that must be faced

by the Other ... were my business. [...] The other man's death calls me into question, as if, by my possible future indifference, I had become the accomplice of the death to which the other ... is exposed; and as if, even before vowing myself to him, I had to answer for this death of the other, and to accompany the Other in his mortal solitude."⁶⁹

Elsewhere, he argues: "My relation with death is ... made of the emotional and intellectual repercussion of knowing the death of others," "[the] death of the other who dies affects me in my identity, even in my responsibility"; "[in] the culpability of surviving, the death of the other is my affair."⁷⁰ In using such language, Levinas argues that the death of the other, or the death of others, is of central importance to the subject; the subject is constituted by her knowledge of and response to the death of the other, even when this death is "invisible," or, in other words, *only* imaginable. This "constitution" of the subject, however, is simultaneously a calling into question of the subject. This permanent calling into question of the subject by the death of the other is quite clearly similar to the endless mourning Derrida describes. Judith Butler has discussed in distinctly Levinasian terms how grief "contains the possibility of apprehending a mode of dispossession that is fundamental to who I am" and that it qualifies the claim of autonomy by revealing "the ways in which we are ... already given over, beyond ourselves, implicated in lives that are not our own."⁷¹

In "Diachrony and Representation," Levinas says: "Here I am in this responsibility, thrown back towards something that was never my fault or of my own doing, something that was never within my power or my freedom, something that never was in my presence and never came to me through memory."⁷² This responsibility is therefore not only distinct from a "remembered present of past commitment," but refers to "the dia-chrony of a past that cannot be gathered into representation."⁷³ Levinasian responsibility, therefore, emerges as a kind of traumatic responsibility, in which the possibility of representing the past is impossible. Michael Newman has examined the relationship between alterity and ethical responsibility in Levinas and suggested it hinges on "the memory of that which cannot be made present," "a past that cannot be recuperated," and how in Levinas' thought a "specifically ethical claim, one of responsibility" is "derived from the traumatic way in which the subject is affected by the Other, and indeed constituted as subjectivity in that affection."⁷⁴ The response to "a memory of that which cannot be made present"

might be usefully compared with the possibility of mourning the death of the stranger, of mourning in the absence of memory, or of mourning as a remembering of what (or who) was never present.⁷⁵ In keeping with the traumatic nature of the responsibility the other demands, the other itself is frequently figured through the language of violence and murder. For Levinas, “[the] face is that possibility of murder, that powerlessness of being and that authority that commands me: ‘Thou shalt not kill.’”⁷⁶ Levinas’s ‘concept’ of the face, through which he figures the unrepresentable alterity and singularity of the other to whom we are responsible, is repeatedly described in relation to violence, and specifically murder. Jill Robbins has noted how in Levinas’s work “[the] violation of the ethical, exemplified by murder, precisely brings the ethical, the infinite alterity of the other, into view.”⁷⁷ Murder, as Robbins suggests, is a central motif in Levinas’s account of being responsible to and for the other. Similarly, Tina Chantor has observed that “Levinas approaches death as a scandal, as if it were murder, as always premature.”⁷⁸ R. Clifton Spargo described how for Levinas “the scene of murderous violence” is “archetypal for the institution of ethics”: “For Levinas an injustice inheres, at least potentially, in every death. If for this reason alone, the other’s death is always possibly, perhaps even characteristically, apprehended under the hypothesis of murder.”⁷⁹ The “scenarios of emergency,” which Spargo discerns in Levinas’s figuration of ethics, are, however, distinctly non-narrative in form, since they are never “given the full status of story”:

By suppressing the narrative dimension of his anecdotal figures for responsibility, Levinas empties the scene of emergency of a dramatic quality it would require to hypothesize a moral intervention. The point is not that the subject might be exempted from a response of nearly heroic proportions, but rather that the requirement of responsibility is never met by the agent’s self-conception or by her singularly heroic actions.⁸⁰

Responsibility for Levinas, in other words, fails to respect formal conventions of narrative and dramatic representation in the same way that mourning for Derrida should expressly ‘fail’ to reach resolution. The ‘failure’ to comply with or respect the conventions of narrative, dramatic and generic representation, therefore, might be understood in relation to such a radical re-thinking of mourning and responsibility.

Spargo has suggested as much, in a discussion of literature's "capacities for irresolutions that challenge the normative, often reductive capacities of the social rules presiding over representation": he argues that "habits of self-consciousness, the impulse to interrogate the generic conventions an author inherits, or the strategies of formal incompleteness ... mark the realm of the aesthetic by patterns of thought readily bridged to the realm of ethics."⁸¹ Strategic and self-conscious interrogations of generic and formal conventions can be therefore be considered in relation to ethics, according to Spargo, precisely because they are involved in examining the responsibility of form itself. Such strategies, in other words, seek to deploy form itself for a philosophical questioning of representation which simultaneously becomes a representation of philosophical questioning.

In *Film in the Aura of Art* Dudley Andrew has suggested that the art film (as opposed to the genre film) "is more insistently different, disrupting integral vision and cohesiveness."⁸² Art films, "[promise] pleasure through the disruption and deformation of the system."⁸³ The difference between the art film and the genre film, if we take Andrew's distinction to Spargo's remarks, implies the impossibility of ethical activity in the genre film due to its fidelity to the genre (or the system) and to the preservation of integrity and cohesiveness. However, the commerce between art cinema and genre cinema is much more ambiguous than Andrew's comments suggest, as will be discussed in the following chapter, and, as will be argued in this thesis, the art film's 'unfaithful fidelity' to a particular genre enables a particularly effective (and ethical) disruption.

The similarities between Levinasian responsibility and Derridean mourning have, perhaps surprisingly, been largely overlooked in discussions of either thinker. An exception is Dennis King Keenan, who has argued that "Levinas has articulated, like Jacques Derrida ..., an irreducible ambiguity at the heart of death," and briefly compares the relation to the other in Levinas with Derrida's description of "bereaved apprehension."⁸⁴ In another context, Keenan discusses Derrida's rethinking of mourning in ways that emphasize its consonance with Levinasian responsibility:

Since Freud ... the normal work of mourning is described as an interiorization of the other, an attempt to keep the other in me, in memory. But faithful interiorization is unfaithful in that it effaces the radical otherness of the other, and unfaithful interiorization is

faithful in that it respects the radical otherness of the other. This is what Derrida calls “ex-appropriation.” In mourning one is “obliged to harbour something that is greater and other” than oneself.⁸⁵

Unfaithful (faithful) interiorization suggests a Levinasian work of mourning, in which the other cannot be reduced to memory. Levinas insists that the other, if thought of as already dead, should not be thought of as a lost loved one; the other must be thought of as someone who approaches as a stranger, and still demands of you an impossible responsibility. In an interview, Levinas’s is asked: “When one has lost someone close, one enters in some sense into intimacy with death, and we discover more intensely to what degree it is part of the fabric of our lives,” to which he answers: “I am not thinking of intensity and my analysis does not begin in a relation to the death of those who “are dear to us,” still less in the return to “oneself,” which would bring us back to the priority of my own death.”⁸⁶ Levinas makes it clear that responsibility cannot be reduced to a mournful response to loved ones, and must instead be thought in relation to the impossible demands made upon us by the deaths of those unknown and unknowable to us. Spargo has also recently discussed what he calls Levinas’s “conflation of mourning and ethics”:

What seems most surprising about the mournful cast of Levinasian ethics is that it not only figures ethics as a responsibility for the death of the other, but insists that the imperative of responsibility is not diminished by the apparent end of relation. In fact the death of the other demands a renewal of responsibility—on the other side of loss, as it were, in a beyond that structurally resembles the obligation that precedes the event of death.⁸⁷

For this reason, he writes, we should see ethics as “a connotation of responsibility already characterized by mournfulness.”⁸⁸ Spargo suggests that it is through an interiorization that remains incomplete, and through a mourning that thus fails, that respect for the other as other “yields.”⁸⁹ In other words, just as the work of mourning in Derrida refuses the narrative of Freudian mourning, with its movement towards recovery, recuperation, and substitution, responsibility in Levinas refuses to admit an intervention that could somehow complete the responsibility. Neither mourning nor

responsibility can be completed; both therefore resist the narrative form whereby disruption is temporary and equilibrium is restored. As Spargo notes, there are no possible “heroic actions” with which this responsibility can be “met,” and therefore “completed.” This is comparable with the mode of fidelity to the dead with which Derrida counters the “triumphal” mourning Freud described. Rather than lead to heroic triumph, these forms of mourning and responsibility are “[emptied]” of such “dramatic quality” and are instead suspended in indefinite and indeterminate structures which resist the completion and closure associated with narrative telos.

Levinas insistently uses language that refers to violent scenarios of trauma and violence—specifically murder—of victimisation and vulnerability, as well as mystery. The use of scenarios such as this is not the only aspect of his writing that suggests how productively it might be taken towards an analysis of cinema’s presentation of similar narrative scenarios: he also uses language that belongs and is germane to (cinematic) representation, just as Derrida’s discussion of mourning coincides with a discourse of the cinematic. Levinas describes being for the other thus:

In human existence, there is, as it were, interrupting or surpassing the vocation of being, another vocation: that of the other, his existing, his destiny. Here, the existential adventure of the neighbour would matter more to the I than does its own, and would thus posit the I straightaway as responsible for this alterity in its trials, as if the upsurge of the human within the economy of being overturned ontology’s meaning and plot. All of the culture of the human seems to me to be oriented by this new “plot,” in which the in-itself of a being persisting in its being is surpassed in the gratuity of being outside-of-oneself, for the other, in the act of sacrifice or the possibility of sacrifice, in holiness.⁹⁰

Furthermore, Levinas describes his particular conception of responsibility, “this new plot ... of being outside-of-oneself, for the other” in terms which imply a refusal of a certain kind of resolution: “It is always believed that the source of an obligation in the world has to include the *happy end*. If I propose the difficult burden of responsibility for the other, I naturally cannot deduce its source out of some kind of promise of the *happy end*. It’s not pleasant, it’s not enjoyable, but it is “good.” Responsibility for the other is the experience of the good, the very meaning of the good, goodness.”⁹¹ Colin

Davis has noted that there is no “happy resolution” for responsibility in Levinas’s thought.⁹² This suggests the extent to which Levinasian responsibility is comparable with Derridean mourning: in both, the possibility of a resolution (“happy” or otherwise) is foreclosed. Neither Levinasian responsibility nor Derridean mourning, therefore, can be construed in narrative terms, since both resist closure. If the “new plot” of this responsibility refuses certain narrative and generic conventions, this is due to its privileging of the other above all else, since, as Levinas suggests:

When I talk about responsibility and obligation, and consequently about the person with whom one is in a relationship through the face, this person does not appear as belonging to an order which can be ‘embraced’, or ‘grasped’. The other, in this relationship of responsibility, is, as it were, unique: ‘unique’ meaning without genre. [...] The essence of responsibility lies in the uniqueness of the person for whom you are responsible.”⁹³

The other is defined by its refusal, in its insistent alterity and singularity, to submit to a generic identity, a genericity which nevertheless remains necessary at some level for the other’s relation to (resistance to) this order to be understood.

Levinas has used the specific term “mise-en-scène” regularly in his work: for example, he writes:

To do phenomenology ... is above all to search for and recall, in the horizons which open around the first “intentions” of the abstractly given, the human or interhuman intrigue which is the concreteness of its unthought (it is not purely negative!), which is the necessary “staging” (“mise-en-scène”) from which the abstractions are detached in the said of words and propositions. It is to search for the human or inter-human intrigue as the fabric of ultimate intelligibility.⁹⁴

Certain critics have picked up on this. For instance, Sam B. Girgus writes: “Levinas’s reliance upon a basic term of film art to describe and dramatise a fundamental process of phenomenology suggests an inherent compatibility between film as thought process and philosophy.”⁹⁵ In *Art and its Shadow* Mario Perniola discusses the question of the relation between cinema and philosophy, and notes that some have asked whether it is

possible to make a film “that could be considered a relatively autonomous philosophical work,” and whether “there [is] a thinking which is visual, sonorous, ritual, spatial?”⁹⁶ Levinas’s use of the theatrical (and cinematic) term suggests that philosophical thinking can be achieved through the staging of representations of such “intrigues.” And a number of critics have recently discussed film specifically in relation to Levinas’s work.⁹⁷

Sarah Cooper has based a discussion of post-war French documentary on that which in Levinas’s thought “attempts . . . to take us beyond appropriating ways of sensing and knowing others” and “challenges the transcendent position of the viewing self.”⁹⁸ Cooper argues, informed by Levinas, that “others can never be fully comprehended within the space or time of the cinematic encounter.”⁹⁹ Although her focus is documentary, the same arguably applies to the fictional ‘others’ encountered in cinema, especially cinema which refuses to provide for the spectator the transcendent position of full comprehension. Brian K. Bergen-Aurand has discussed the films of Michelangelo Antonioni in relation to Levinas’s notion of the “difficult freedom” of ethics, and suggests that the “elliptical narrative structures, non-displays of characters and paradoxical situations filled with more questions than answers” which characterize Antonioni’s most mysterious films demands or institutes an infinite response analogous to the “difficult” or “painful” responsibility to and for the other.¹⁰⁰ Bergen-Aurand argues that in *L’avventura* (1960) “[the] absence of Anna demands viewers respond to her without totalizing her.”¹⁰¹ In a different context, Lisa Downing has argued that rather than “*apply* Levinas to film” the critic should seek “parallels between the project of filmmakers and Levinas.”¹⁰² Downing suggests that Levinas’s suspicion of the image “may encourage us to look at film particularly acutely, in the awareness of the ethical dangers of unproblematic viewing,” and that his work “may be understood as a critique of the culture in which looking equates with possessing,” and instead proposes “a way of looking that does not yoke the realm of the visible to the desire for knowledge and power.”¹⁰³ For Downing, in a way similar to Bergen-Aurand, Levinas’s thought provides a way to rethink feminist theories of gender and representation, specifically the representation of femininity.

In “Proust and the Other,” Levinas discusses the way the representation of female characters in Proust in terms familiar from his more general discussion of the alterity of the other. He suggests how works of literature may be addressed in relation to, or be seen as approximating, the thinking of the other and of responsibility with

which his own work is characterized. Levinas writes that “[the] mystery in Proust is the mystery of the other,” and, with reference to the figure of Albertine, that “[here] death is the death of the Other”: “Proust’s most profound lesson, if poetry can contain lessons, consists in situating reality in relation with something which for ever remains other, with the other as absence and mystery ...”¹⁰⁴ Edith Wyschogrod has argued that Levinas perceived in the work of writers such as Proust strategies that enable or encourage the conveyance of what might be considered “otherwise than being”: Albertine, Proust’s heroine, is an absence, a mystery; she “eludes plenary presence, cannot become a datum of consciousness.”¹⁰⁵ For Levinas, Wyschogrod suggests, Albertine demonstrates “the Other’s concealment,” and “not because of the Other’s artifices of camouflage ... but because to be other is to remain hidden *en principe*.”¹⁰⁶ Critics who approach cinematic representations of femininity with reference to Levinas’s descriptions of otherness are thus continuing and elaborating upon his own discussion of fictional female others in the essay on Proust. As will be shown below, in Egoyan’s films certain strategies are deployed for the representation of the women whose deaths have taken place before the narratives begin; these strategies position these women in problematic relation to the cognitive or conscious apprehension of the protagonist *and* the spectator. These women are both absent (because they have already been killed when the films begin) and present (because the films nevertheless present images of these women in the films). The visual representation of these women raises the question of the knowledge such representation affords or otherwise reveals, and of how representation might paradoxically convey that which remains hidden or concealed. I am interested in tracing how Egoyan’s films stage scenarios in which responsibility originates from what Spargo calls an “imaginative proximity” to the mystery of the other, and to the death of the other. The films I will be discussing offer suggestive representations of how a responsibility is experienced in relation to what is beyond, or, rather, *before* absolute knowledge, and to what cannot be remembered. At the same time, these films present strategic manipulations of film form that organize their viewers’ response, their comprehension and ability to ‘know,’ in a manner which can be compared with the incomplete apprehension of the other staged *in* the films. the formal properties of Egoyan’s cinema contribute to their ambiguous affective force by making it impossible to always know exactly what it is we are being shown, or to fully grasp the truthfulness of what we are being shown. Conventions of popular genre cinema are disrupted at the same time as our

conventional position of narrative and visual mastery is disrupted. I will suggest that in Egoyan's Thrillers he attempts to stage a phenomenology of that which cannot be fully recovered (from), in which the representation of the mystery of the other, the death of the other, and the response to this death, are characterized by a strategic and suggestive resistance to the plenitude of presence. Egoyan's cinema suggests how the incomplete knowledge of the death of the other leads to responsibility. In the two films I am discussing, the staging of these ideas threatens their very identity as genre films, as thrillers. The "failure" of the genre in these films, therefore, becomes a critical project that reproduces the very structure of bereaved memory's unfaithful fidelity to the other who is without genre.

These films present scenarios which give narrative form and affective force to the limit, possibility, or "premise" of responsiveness which Spargo describes as the "imaginative and impossible defence of the other against a death that has already occurred."¹⁰⁷ In Egoyan's films, the "ungraspable" aspect of death is glimpsed in his images and narratives, and is also suggested by the various ways in which the murdered women appear in the films, how they haunt the minds of those who survive them, figure as absent presences which are nowhere but everywhere in their actions and rituals. The ways in which the actual material bodies of the various 'lost girls' and of Maureen O'Flaherty are presented in the films preserves for them and for their death a certain otherness through the device of the flashback. Not only is time dislocated and subjective memory privileged, but the mode of representation itself suggests a particular failure or loss, whether the loss of resolution in the scrambled degraded video footage in *Felicia's Journey*, or the loss of verifiability in the unreliable glossy reconstructions in *Where the Truth Lies*. The representation of the murder victims in these films preserves for them their alterity through the formal strategies deployed that contain them within a specific mode of filmic presentation or narration that resists visual and epistemological plenitude and the pleasures with which these are associated. In other words, Egoyan's suspense thrillers present a certain suspension of the spectator's mastery which mirrors that of the protagonist. Both, I suggest, must remain "suspended in the time of the other," to adopt a phrase Lacan used to describe Shakespeare's Hamlet. These films are also, as I will show, suspended between art cinema and genre cinema. Lidia Curti has said of *Hamlet* that

[the] ambiguous position of the characters in the drama finds a

correspondence in its suspension among different modes and genres. This suspension is reflected in the disregard—common in Shakespeare—for the classical rules. [...] The drama is ... poised between a number of genres: revenge, crime or ghost story; political chronicle or domestic melodrama; and so is its hero, unable to decide in which of them he is going to act, whose *mise en scène* to perform, whose 'law' to follow. His rebellion against the law of the father in the end is also a refusal of the law of genre.¹⁰⁸

The play, she suggests, is a tale of crime and detection, and for that reason “[the] thriller in particular is a modern genre that has developed after the play and in its wake,” but that *Hamlet* “proposes both the genre and its transgression and enfeeblement.”¹⁰⁹ In Egoyan’s thrillers, there is a mournful refusal of the law of genre and of resolution, a strategic failure of fidelity which I will address in relation to their presentation of the work of mourning and their female protagonists’ responsibility to and for the death of the other.

Chapter Two: Suspense Thrillers, Generic Identity, and Strategic Infidelity

This chapter introduces ideas concerning genre, specifically the thriller genre, and suspense, the genre's dominant affect, to provide a context for the discussion of Egoyan's auteurist experiments with the thriller genre in the later chapters. It also introduces various theoretical considerations of narrative structure, and particularly the use of flashbacks, in relation to both narrative form and suspense.

Jonathan Romney has suggested that one of the reasons for the suspicion and resistance Egoyan has elicited from critics throughout his career is his "unashamedly, unfashionably highbrow affiliations and detachment from pop culture and genre."¹ As Romney notes, "Egoyan's work is remarkable for its consistency, its unusual degree of what one might call auteur coherence. Such continuity is often an effect traced retrospectively by critics onto a film-maker's work, so as to level out discontinuities, but in Egoyan's case it is very much programmed in by the film-maker himself."² Egoyan's "detachment" from popular genre, by implication, plays a significant part in the deliberate and self-conscious construction of his "auteur coherence." Egoyan is here presented as a "highbrow" film-maker whose artistic originality and consistency is the result of the director's systematic and "programmatic" approach to his oeuvre. As Thomas Schatz has argued: "[The] auteur approach, in asserting a director's consistency of form and expression, effectively translates an auteur into a virtual genre unto himself, into a system of conventions which identify his work."³ The auteur, in other words, "systematically" reproduces the "systematic" aspect of genericity within his or her oeuvre. Egoyan's cinema, moreover, is both detached (from the genre system) *and* characterized by an interest in emotional detachment

(alienation, for example): Romney suggests Egoyan's films are "a cinematic model of passionate detachment *par excellence*."⁴

More recently, however, David L. Pike has noted: "It is a peculiarity of auteurist studies of Egoyan's oeuvre that they tend to elide the presence of non-auteurist works from the very beginning of the director's career [...] Nevertheless, the early work as director-for-hire must have played a role in preparing Egoyan for his superlative work with mainstream actors and the popular genres he tackled in *Felicia's Journey*, *Ararat* and *Where the Truth Lies*."⁵ While these recent films, according to Pike, show how the director "has managed to play both sides of the fence, maintaining his auteur identity by making films that purport to subvert the generic conventions on which their increased funding increasingly relies," the "critical enthusiasm" which greeted his earlier work "has been confused, if not defused altogether, by his recent turn to the popular."⁶ Egoyan's most recent features, Pike has suggested elsewhere, "require different critical paradigms" than those traditionally used to discuss his work.⁷ In this reading, Egoyan's recent "turn to the popular" is seen as problematic for his auteurist status (his critical reputation), despite the fact that the auteurist identity of his films are maintained by their subversion of generic conventions. On the one hand, then, as Romney notes, Egoyan's detachment from popular creates suspicion, while, on the other hand, as Pike suggests, Egoyan's turn to the popular produces confusion.

This thesis begins from the proposal that Egoyan's films have repeatedly examined or appropriated elements from popular entertainment, including genre cinema. For example, *Family Viewing* (1986) adopts the format of the television sitcom in several early sequences; *Speaking Parts* (1989) concerns the production of a made-for-television movie; *The Adjuster* (1991) features a character who works as a

director, watching (and secretly recording) hardcore pornography. These three films, however, which deal with extreme or chronic states of emotional alienation, are also characterised by the formal alienating strategies associated with Egoyan's early cinema, and therefore differ in obvious ways from the conventional affective address of the popular forms of entertainment they examine or self-consciously imitate. The two films I discuss below, on the other hand, engage with popular genre more explicitly, and, through their more traditional affective force, demonstrate the distinctly ethical dimension of this aspect of Egoyan's work.

In the chapters which follow I will look at two films by Egoyan which appropriate the conventions of the thriller genre. I will address *Felicia's Journey* in relation to the 'serial killer' film, a subgenre positioned between the horror and the thriller and which enjoyed a particular resurgence in the 1990s, and *Where the Truth Lies* in relation to contemporary neo-noir, which, within a broad thriller mode, revisits both the original film noir of the 1940s and the neo-noir of the 1970s and 1980s. Egoyan's interest in the thriller genre has not been adequately analysed. The Canadian Film Encyclopedia's profile of Egoyan, however, which begins by noting his "unequivocal authorial vision and inimitable style," also succinctly describes the specific aspects of this director I will be investigating here:

The content, aesthetics and production contexts of Egoyan's films are decidedly interstitial. Multi-directional, they spring from national and diasporic contexts, between art cinema narration and the recent adoption of popular genres, chiefly the thriller, that coalesce into an unprecedented brand of filmmaking.⁸

As recently as 1999, Egoyan discussed his desire to make an "all-out thriller."⁹ In order to provide a context for the examination of Egoyan's "interstitial" cinema's relationship with the thriller genre, the present chapter addresses contemporary

theories of film genre and considers the relationship between the auteur (and art cinema) and popular or mainstream genre. The theory of the auteur, or the *politique des auteurs*, emerged in the 1950s when critics writing for *Cahiers du Cinema*, such as François Truffaut, examined and celebrated Hollywood directors such as Howard Hawks and John Ford, who were working with and within the limits of genre film production inside the strictures of Hollywood's studio system; the first directors to be considered auteurs were, paradoxically, making films in a popular and dominant idiom, and one which might be seen as anti-authorial.¹⁰ The notion of the auteur which developed in discussions of movements such as the French New Wave and New German Cinema, and directors such as Jean-Luc Godard and Rainer Werner Fassbinder, was distinct from its earlier application insofar as these directors wrote and directed their films in more independent modes, rather than stamping their individual signatures on studio productions through the expressive use of *mise-en-scène*.

Mise-en-scène, which literally means 'to put on stage,' is commonly used in film studies to refer to the content of the frame in relation to the motion of the frame. In John Gibb's useful recent definition, *mise-en-scène* "encompasses both what the audience can see, and the way in which we are invited to see it. It refers to many of the major elements of communication in the cinema, and the combinations through which they operate expressively." For Gibb *mise-en-scène* comprises "framing, camera movement, the particular lens employed and other photographic decisions."¹¹ Elements of *mise-en-scène* such as lighting and colour are generally conceived as working in "patterns developed across the length of the film," while "it is the interaction of different aspects of *mise-en-scène* which enables filmmakers to accomplish the most interesting effects."¹² According to Anne Rutherford, *mise-en-*

scène is “the critical link in the relationship between the material dimensions of cinema and its affect.” She wishes to consider *mise-en-scène* “the energetic work of the film.”¹³ She has described how film “orchestrates” various elements such as camera movement and sound design and performance producing “affective agitation.”¹⁴ David Bordwell and Kristen Thompson suggest “we should notice how *mise-en-scène* is patterned in space and time to attract and guide the viewer’s attention through the process of watching the film, and to create suspense or surprise” and “relate the system of *mise-en-scène* to the narrative system of the film.”¹⁵

A discourse of art- or auteur-cinema also developed as festivals increasingly provided exhibition space for, and promoted interest in, international cinema and films which were understood as challenging the commercial modes and forms of film production. Art cinema privileges images and representations that challenge immediate intelligibility, and presents characters and situations that often remain obscure and indeterminate, or which do not resolve in conventionally determinate ways. Art cinema is traditionally understood as a cinema which self-consciously investigates the possibilities of film form and practice from a position outside, and often in opposition to, dominant or mainstream norms of filmmaking.¹⁶ Susan Hayward has recently defined art cinema as a mode of film-making which, “in its rupture with classical narrative cinema, intentionally distances spectators to create a reflective space for them to assume their own critical space or subjectivity in relation to the screen or film.”¹⁷

Egoyan’s cinema is one that self-consciously seeks to create such a space for critical reflection. His approach to film, to *mise-en-scène* and to the image, is characterized by a desire to create a consciousness of the image as an image. Egoyan has explained: “I’m very attuned to the screen as a canvas ... and the relationship that

the viewer has is as exploratory as it might be in a gallery. I also recognize that for a great number of viewers films don't work that way, but I can't afford to acknowledge that."¹⁸ Egoyan's presentation of time in his cinema, furthermore, is characterized by the intricate intersection of different time frames, heightening the viewer's experience of his films' narrative organisation. And his approach to narrative resolution, the way in which he concludes and dissolves the epistemological and moral puzzles (or suspense) produced by his elliptical and ambiguous style of storytelling creates a heightened awareness of the general inadequacy of narrative form and of narrative closure, to represent the complexity of experience.¹⁹

Since the two films I will discuss appropriate elements from subgenres related to the thriller, the present chapter also introduces various critical accounts of the thriller, and looks at suspense, the dominant affect produced by the thriller. The chapter will conclude by arguing that Egoyan's experiments with the thriller form should be understood in relation to art cinema's resistance to, and refusal of, the conventional pleasures associated with generic repetition and resolution. Egoyan's approach to suspense in these thrillers denies the spectator the satisfactions traditionally provided by the genre. This deliberate frustration (or failing) of the pleasures associated with popular genre, I suggest, corresponds in significant ways to the refusal (or failure) to mourn discussed in the previous chapter. I argue that the closer his films seem to resemble works of popular genre, the more vulnerable his critical project is to being misunderstood. The apparent "failure" of these films (as either auteurist works or genre films) needs itself to be carefully examined.

This thesis will also focus on the significance of female characters in Egoyan's thrillers, an aspect of Egoyan's cinema that has not received the critical attention it deserves. Due to their difference from the typical female characters in the genres to

which the films belong, as well as their narrative centrality to the films, it is specifically the female characters in Egoyan's thrillers that embody the films' subversion of generic conventions. It is female characters who are murdered in these films, and it is, crucially, also female characters who assume responsibility for the memories of others. The subversion of generic conventions in these films is, in this way, associated with a responsibility to violence that is an explicitly gendered responsibility to violence which is itself explicitly gendered. The 'failure' of these films, furthermore, will be addressed in relation to the films' ambiguous 'resolution' of their female characters' narrative trajectories.

As explained above, this thesis approaches Egoyan's auteurist appropriation of the thriller in relation to 'success' and 'failure,' which in the previous chapter were shown to be inverted in Derrida's description of the unfaithful fidelity of bereaved memory. I will argue that Egoyan's self-conscious failing of genre in these films needs to be addressed in relation to an ethics of interrogative appropriation. The intellectual impulse that characterizes Egoyan's auteurist interrogation of generic conventions, in which the ambiguities and irresolutions of art cinema function to defuse and refuse the pleasures associated with mainstream genre cinema, constitutes, I suggest, a profoundly ethical programme.

Postmodern cinema has often understood as reviving or reconfiguring historical film genres (and their associated pleasures) in self-conscious ways; films such as *Chinatown* (Roman Polanski, 1974), *Body Heat* (Lawrence Kasdan, 1981), *BladeRunner* (Ridley Scott, 1982) and *Blue Velvet* (David Lynch, 1986) are regularly discussed in these terms.²⁰ Critics discuss postmodern cinema in relation to its self-conscious references to the conventions of familiar and popular genre cinema. For

instance, in a discussion of Tim Hunter's dark 'teen-pic' *River's Edge* (1986), Fred Pfeil notes how the film is "resonant with ... generic allusions and the expectations they provoke," and how it "reprocesses," even "debases" these generic materials.²¹ This cinema can perhaps be traced back to the French nouvelle vague, and films like Godard's *A bout de souffle* (1960), a film routinely discussed as being 'about' American gangster movies and film *noir*.²² Rick Altman has argued that in contemporary cinema, the relationship between film and reality has been replaced by the relationship between films and other films, or memories of other films. For this reason the contemporary genre film is, for Altman, a "pseudo-memorial." The responsibility to serve real concerns has been supplanted by a tendency to activate film experiences of the past:

Whereas genres once served as a monument to real world configurations and concerns, today's genres have increasingly taken on what we might call a pseudo-memorial function. That is, they count on spectator memory to work their magic ... they themselves implant in spectators the necessary memories, in the form of other genre films.²³

Egoyan's films' appropriation of generic conventions, his reconfiguration of the thriller genre, while dependent upon this kind of "spectator memory" to *work*, also seeks to examine real world concerns, specifically the politics of mourning and responsibility, and, therefore, processes such as that "pseudo-memorialisation" which Altman employs figuratively in order to discuss contemporary genre.

What I wish to examine can be compared with what John G. Cawelti has called "generic transformation," a "creative mode" in which films "set the elements of a conventional popular genre in an altered context, thereby making us perceive these traditional forms and images in a new way."²⁴ An auteur's resuscitation of a historical

genre, or reconfiguration of a contemporary genre, must be understood in relation to audiences' familiarity with that genre, and the intelligibility of a film's appropriation and transformation of particular conventions. Linda Ruth Williams suggests that that the genre film "both nourishes and feeds from" what she calls the "intelligent (in the sense of one who renders a code intelligible) genre reader."²⁵ Similarly, Andrew Tudor has argued:

To methodically analyze the way in which a filmmaker utilizes a genre for his or her own purposes (at present a popular critical pursuit) requires that we clearly establish the principle components of that filmmaker's conception of the genre. But this is not all. The notion that someone utilizes a genre suggests something about audience response. It implies that any given film works in a particular way because the audience has certain expectations of the genre. We can meaningfully talk of, for example, an auteur breaking the rules of genre only if we know what these rules are. And, of course, such rule-breaking has no consequence unless the audience knows as well.²⁶

Tudor's remarks suggest that the "utilization" of a genre by a filmmaker involves not only the director's "conception" of a genre but also an audience's "expectations" concerning that genre. The film that breaks the rules governing the genre to which it nevertheless appears to (at least, originally or superficially) belong subsequently depends upon the audience's knowledge of these rules in order that its subversive operations become intelligible. The intelligibility of subversion nevertheless depends upon an audience's knowledge of and expectations concerning the 'rules' that govern the subversion of genre itself (in, for example, art cinema) and, furthermore, distinguish between a film's innovation of generic conventions that is not intended to

be subversive in a critical sense and a film's utilization of generic conventions for explicitly critical purposes. Genres have been understood as processes, dominated by repetition, but also marked by difference, variation and change. Neale writes: "the elements and conventions of a genre are always *in play* rather than being simply *replayed*; and any generic corpus is always being expanded."²⁷ The norms of genre are always being subtly, or even radically, reworked, extended and transformed, with each new film which positions itself within or in relation to the genre.²⁸ Art cinema's subversion of popular or mainstream genres, in other words, needs to be distinguished from other forms of playful or radical development and change. It has been suggested that the audience's encounter with the art film is distinct from their encounter with the genre film due to the art film's demanding of a specific kind of critical or reflective activity. Dudley Andrew is a typical proponent of this position. The genre film, he writes, in which "everything, even the enigma of the plot, ultimately makes sense," "reads itself, passing smoothly through the viewer in to the canon of the acceptable."²⁹ With the art film, on the other hand, active and self-conscious interpretation is necessary in order "to reconcile the new to the known, the deviation to the system."³⁰ While in what Andrew refers to as "standard cinema" (such as detective films and horror films), "novelty is carefully regulated so as not to disturb our sense of the intelligibility and authority operating in the films," the art film (what he also calls the "ambitious film") "is more insistently different, disrupting integral vision and cohesiveness."³¹ This is comparable with Barthes's celebrated differentiation between the "text of pleasure," "that contents, fills, grants euphoria; the text that comes from culture and does not break with it," and which is linked to "a *comfortable* practice of reading," and the "text of bliss: the text that imposes a state of loss, the text that discomforts (perhaps to the state of boredom), unsettles the reader's historical,

cultural, psychological assumptions, the consistency of his tastes, values, memories, brings to a crisis his relation with language.”³²

However, like Tudor, Andrew acknowledges that such films are “unreadable without the system whose sameness they hope to escape,” without, in other words, knowledge of the rules governing both the system and its subversion.³³ Andrew clearly links art cinema to the auteur when he writes that the impetus for us to permit such disruption “comes only from our respect for the authentic vision of the creator.”³⁴ For Steve Neale, genres “consist ... of specific systems of expectation and hypothesis which spectators bring with them to the cinema and which interact with films themselves during the course of the viewing process. Memories of the films within a corpus constitute one of the bases of generic expectation.”³⁵ By summoning “memories of the films within a corpus” the genre film proceeds in a way which is analogous, as we shall see, with the work of mourning, since memories of the lost object are the principle material to be dealt with in that work. I propose that the relationship between a film and its fidelity to a generic identity can be thought in relation to the work of mourning; each genre film can be considered to mourn, with different degrees of fidelity, the absent or lost ideal of the genre as a whole. Jauss suggests:

[the] relationship between the individual text and the series of texts formative of a genre presents itself as a process of the continual founding and altering of horizons. The new text evokes for the reader ... the horizon of expectations and “rules of the game” familiar to him from earlier texts, which as such can then be varied, extended, corrected, but also transformed, crossed out, or simply reproduced.³⁶

The “new text,” according to Jauss, works initially through evocation of earlier texts. There are, in this account, various ways in which that evocation proceeds, including

the straightforward reproduction of those texts. The film that seeks to “simply [reproduce]” the “expectations” familiar from an earlier experience, appears to proceed in a way that is analogous to that mode of mourning-work which seeks to substitute for the lost object another, new object, and in which the founding of the new attachment absorbs all the expectations that were originally attached to that earlier object. The subversion of generic expectations, by extension, I want to suggest, is a form of mourning (genre) that resists the ethos of “simple” substitution and reproduction.

Max Cavitch is the only critic I have discovered to explicitly link the work of genre to the work of mourning, in a study of American elegiac poetry.³⁷ He writes: “The dynamic relation *between* mourning and genre is itself largely overlooked in twentieth-century criticism and theory” even though, according to Cavitch, thinking about genre has often been a way of thinking about human loss.³⁸ For Cavitch, genre is, like mourning, “processual” - they are homologous dynamic activities.³⁹ The “work of genre” and the work of mourning involve “ways of seeking to understand the relation between the singularity of an event (a poem, a death) and its inevitable repetition.”⁴⁰ Genericity, in this reading, is a system which, like the work of mourning, organises “the relation between the lost object and its so-called substitutes.”⁴¹ The genericity of a textual object involves a recognition of its singularity, and of the degree and nature of its difference from other, similar textual objects. The valuation of a generic text’s particularity is in this account analogous to the recognition of the lost object’s irreplaceability.

This thesis asks whether the subversion of generic conventions can be understood as a kind of improper or (deliberately) unsuccessful mourning. The work of mourning, according to Freud’s “Mourning and Melancholia,” if it is to work, must

abide by certain rules (like the work of genre) and take a certain narrative shape (it must have a telic propulsion towards its own completion). Mourning work that fails to follow these rules fails *as* mourning (but, for Derrida, succeeds precisely because of this). The work of mourning, like the film work, can adhere to, or resist, the rules of genre. Memories of the genre are summoned by the film in ways that are analogous with the bringing up in mourning of the memories of the lost object. The deliberately 'improper' inhabitation of a genre is therefore like the resistance to mourn 'properly,' by, that is, seeking a substitute for the lost object. The 'improper' inhabitation of a genre refuses the ethos of substitution through its departures from the conventions of the genre. The refusal to provide a conventional generic triumphal resolution in the film work is analogous with the refusal of mourning's resolution or completion (in the successful substitution of the lost object). The work of mourning works to extinguish the frustration that loss brings. Egoyan's films, as Jonathan Romney has suggested, are deliberate exercises in frustration. A certain relinquishment is necessary: we have to relinquish certain pleasures and accept that certain desires will not be satisfied, resolutions will not be clear or 'satisfactory,' knowledge will not be complete. In other words, in these experiments with genre, we suffer a relation marked by the absence of generic fulfillment and 'successful' resolution. Egoyan's approach to narrative resolution, then, provides an effective formal analogue for an attitude which is sceptical of mourning coming to an end, a critique of the way the period of mourning is expected to conclude with the recuperation of or return to a kind of equilibrium (as in traditional comedies or classical narrative), or in which the pain of mourning diminishes and is dissipated. Furthermore, in relation to resolution, Bordwell suggests that in art cinema "the pensive ending acknowledges the narration as not simply powerful but humble; the narration knows that life is more complex

than art can ever be, and ... the only way to respect this complexity is to leave causes dangling and questions unanswered.”⁴²

This has implications for an “interstitial” film poised or suspended between art cinema and commercial genre cinema. Patrick McGee, in a discussion of Neal Jordan’s *The Crying Game* (1992), suggests that the film’s “objectively self-reflective dimensions ... force the spectator to assume a critical attitude that subverts the work’s stability as a commodity.” The “critical attitude,” which critics have suggested is distinctive of art cinema, prevents the consumption of this commodity proceeding in the conventional fashion; McGee argues that “the film negates its commodity form through the self-conscious articulation of that form.”⁴³ Drawing on Adorno’s *Aesthetic Theory*, McGee suggests that “[the] utopian dimension of art emerges through its failure to live up to its concept.”⁴⁴ I suggest that, similarly, that what Monique Tschofen has called Egoyan’s “utopian praxis” can usefully be traced through his thrillers’ “failure” to live up to the “concept” of the commercial genre film.

Suspense Thrillers

Charles Derry’s study of the genre, *Suspense Thrillers: Films in the Shadow of Alfred Hitchcock* affirms the thriller’s relationship with Hitchcock.⁴⁵ Both Rick Altman and Steve Neale note how Hitchcock’s work and name became and remains synonymous with the suspense thriller.⁴⁶ Martin Rubin suggests that the films Hitchcock made in the 1950s “represent the most impressive sustained individual achievement in the history of the movie thriller,” adding that “Hitchcock’s films from this period function as critiques and commentaries on the specific genres to which

they relate, and on the general nature of filmmaking, film watching, and art itself.”⁴⁷

Brian Davis argues that beginning with Hitchcock’s thrillers of the late-1950s, many films in the genre (in which he includes films by Godard and Roman Polanski) sought to create a new form of suspense by exploiting audience familiarity with the genre and challenging the familiar conventions of the thriller’s framework.⁴⁸ John Orr has more recently argued that Hitchcock’s impact on and influence over contemporary popular and art cinema cannot be ignored: “At the turn of the century Hitchcock is ubiquitous.”⁴⁹ Orr argues that “in the history of Western cinema Hitchcock himself became something of a matrix figure”:

Through his work so much of the entire life of Western cinema has been nurtured and dispersed. So much shock, so much suspense, so much montage, so much mystery, so much watching, so much doubling, so much disaster, so much redemption: it all goes back to him. Or rather, because it also precedes him, it all goes through him.⁵⁰

In particular, by stamping his authorial mark on the thriller, Hitchcock “refashioned the relationship between auteur and genre” and “thus mediates the future, between a system of cinephile authorship and a Hollywood genre system reworking plots and narrative.”⁵¹ The most valuable effects of this impact, Orr argues, are seen in “the incorporation of Hitchcock into a strong existing auteurist vision.” Notable here, Orr suggests, is “a sharing of key qualities,” such as “the use of the camera to replicate fundamentals of human vision in the exploration of cinematic space,” and “the attention to detail in the *mise-en-scène*,” out of which “the essential Hitchcock elements of the extra-ordinary flow – mystery, memory, suspense, ambivalence, terror.” This is what Orr calls the “translation of vision,” or the translation or transfiguration of the “key elements of the Hitchcock narrative formula: a dynamics of exchange based on guilt, sexuality and memory.”⁵² Those who successfully take

Hitchcock in their own direction, such as Lynch or Chabrol, “are all successors to him precisely because they are all *unlike* him. That is to say, they absorb him into the world of their *own* vision, because they all have a starting point that is independent of his.”⁵³

The relationship between Egoyan’s thriller cinema and Hitchcockian suspense is best understood in relation to this radical “translation of vision.” Egoyan has often discussed Hitchcock, who he has called “the master of self-consciousness.” He has stated: “Philosophically, I think, he was able to introduce and normalize in mainstream cinema a stronger sensitivity to psychological analysis ... He was nearly able to normalize obsessive states ... [He] broke ground with that, and I think more than anything else, I’d say that is where I feel his influence.”⁵⁴ In an interview in which he discusses *Felicia’s Journey*’s relation with his previous work and the thriller genre, Egoyan suggests that his approach to filmmaking “is about trying to enter into the characters’ experience, about how they would see themselves. The suspense is more about the dislocation between how they see themselves and how they really are, as opposed to traditional Hitchcockian suspense.”⁵⁵ For Egoyan, then, suspense is connected to a psychic splitting (or separation) between identity or self-perception and reality; suspense here suggests the distance between, and the tension between, fantasy and reality.

In “Film and the Radical Aspiration,” Annette Michelson looks at the work of (amongst others) Jean-Luc Godard, in particular his *Alphaville*, to argue for the importance of “a *critical* allegiance, shared by the major European film-makers, to the conventions of Hollywood’s commercial cinema, and of the conversion of those conventions to the uses of advanced cinema.”⁵⁶ In the case of Godard, who, Michelson notes, has defined his practice as the attempt “to make “experimental”

films in the guise of entertainments,” she suggests that this allegiance “*has* acted as context and precondition of formal radicalism.”⁵⁷ *Alphaville*, in Michelson’s reading, is “an anxious meditation, in the form of a suspense story, on the agony and death of love, liberty and language in a society trapped in the self-perpetuating dialectic of technological progress.”⁵⁸ Michelson goes on to suggest:

The importance of the suspense story, as refined by Hitchcock for the further use of men such as Resnais and Godard, lies in its paradigmatic character as narrative form, as a “vehicle” of dramatic and formal invention. Perfected in the Hollywood of an era following upon the Crash, it was adopted and refined, sublimated in the interests of a formal radicalism.⁵⁹

Similarly, Robert L. Carringer, in a 1975 discussion of Michelangelo Antonioni, writes of *L'Avventura* (1960) that “all the apparatus of a typical mystery situation is put into place, but any pretence of interest in its possible solution is eventually abandoned.”⁶⁰ The plot of *Blow-Up* (1966) is “fashioned ... along the lines of a typical suspense thriller”: as Godard before him, Carringer suggests, Antonioni “uses a stereotyped plot from popular movies as an instrument for developing a serious theme.”⁶¹ Egoyan continues this tradition of auteurist appropriation and inhabitation of popular genre, in which forms of popular entertainment are experimentally occupied – at the level of form and theme - and reconfigured from within. Conventions are converted or inverted to serve specific purposes. For Michelson and Carringer, Godard and Antonioni have shown how the suspense thriller or mystery are available for subversive refashioning, amenable to more cerebral concerns.

Claude Chabrol, the director whose work (beginning with the emergence of the *nouvelle vague*) is central to the development of an Euro-American ‘Hitchcockian’

suspense cinema, discussed (in 1955) the thriller in relation to the possibility of integrating an auteur's "vision" with constituent elements of genre.⁶² While the mainstream thriller, according to Chabrol, was "locked in the prison of its own construction" by around 1948 and is, by 1955, "no more," it nevertheless "remains a wonderful pretext."⁶³ Genre provides a space in which the auteur can assert her own individual vision. Chabrol states:

A film's total assimilation within a genre often means nothing more than its complete submission to it; to make a thriller, the essential and only prerequisite is that it be conceived as such and, by corollary, that it be constituted exclusively of the elements of the thriller. It is the genre that reigns over inspiration, which it holds back and locks into strict rules. Therefore it clearly takes exceptional talent to remain oneself in such a strange enterprise ...⁶⁴

Chabrol's comments suggest that a film which avoids "complete submission" to its genre requires an "exceptional talent" whose resistance to the genre's "strict rules" will inevitably be reflected in his or her film. Success, for Chabrol, depends on "a pre-existing detective story plot that fits in with the film-maker's purpose, or, more exactly, demands of the film-maker a vision that can be integrated into a given thriller theme." On the one hand, the pre-existing plot is submerged within the auteur's purpose, and, on the other, the director's vision is "integrated" into the pre-existing genre. It is the latter, Chabrol suggests, that is more likely: it is the director who "adapts to the genre."⁶⁵ Chabrol refers to several films which demonstrate how the thriller "can also be beautiful and profound," but that such works become "a question of style and conviction" – these are "personal and *sincere*" films.⁶⁶ Otto Preminger's *Laura* (1944), for example, marks both the "liberation of the genre" and the "shattering of its formulae."⁶⁷ In such films, the "thriller theme" is "only a pretext or a means, but never an end in itself." These films "set themselves miles apart from the

genre, attached to it only by tenuous links that have nothing to do with their qualities.” What might appear to be a problematic “dilution of the detective story element within the films” is, in fact, “nothing less than enrichment,” for it allows, in the films of Fritz Lang or Hitchcock, a privileging of more metaphysical themes (as with the films by Godard and Antonioni discussed above).⁶⁸ But what, exactly, are the constituent elements and dominant characteristics of the thriller, and of what, exactly, would a “thriller theme” consist?

Martin Rubin has noted that the thriller label is “widely used but highly problematic,” that “[the] thriller is by nature an imprecise concept, loosely and at times arbitrarily applied,” and that the “very breadth and vagueness of the thriller category discourage efforts to define it precisely.”⁶⁹ He claims that the thriller requires a certain excess:

It involves not just the presence of certain qualities but also the extent to which they are present. Virtually all narrative films could be considered thrilling to some degree, because they contain suspense and action and a sense of departure from the routine world into a realm that is more marvellous and exciting. At a certain hazy point, however, they become thrilling enough to be considered thrillers. [...] [The] thriller often involves an excess of certain qualities and feelings beyond the necessity of the narrative: too much atmosphere, action, suspense – too much, that is, in terms of what is strictly necessary to tell the story – so that these thrilling elements, to a certain extent, become an end in themselves.⁷⁰

Egoyan’s thrillers, as we shall see, are characterized by an excessive self-consciousness at the level of the construction of the image and the narrative structure, resulting in a formal and visual dimension that is more than is “strictly necessary to tell the story.” This then becomes the “necessity of the narrative,” the careful

reconfiguration of the conventional organisation of suspense and action that characterizes the thriller form.

In a recent dictionary of film terms, the thriller is described as “a very difficult genre to pin down because it covers such a wide range of types of films.” Thrillers, or, as they are often known, “psychological thrillers,” are defined as “films of suspense,” which “[rely] on intricacy of plot to create fear and apprehension in the audience”⁷¹ Rick Altman notes that the horror film and the thriller, unlike other genres, are both “designated by terms describing spectator’s reaction rather than filmic content.”⁷² The psychological or emotional aspects of the spectator’s reaction is mirrored by the psychological states that the films investigate. The “psychological thriller” is often abbreviated to the “psycho-thriller,” particularly if the film features a killer whose character can be traced back to Norman Bates in Hitchcock’s *Psycho* (1960). Kim Newman has examined the “psycho-thriller” in relation to developments within the horror genre following Hitchcock’s film.⁷³ Maureen Turim also uses the term to refer to the “psychological suspense thriller,” which, she argues, is in turn related to the “psychological melodrama.”⁷⁴ For Turim, the psycho thriller “[uses] concepts of memory and psychosis loosely borrowed from Freud.”⁷⁵ Turim links the thriller to women’s genres by way of the melodrama. More recently, Sabrina Barton has addressed the contemporary “woman’s psycho thriller,” looking at Jonathan Demme’s *The Silence of the Lambs*.⁷⁶ It is this strain (which mixes the woman’s melodrama and horror to produce a gothic romance thriller) which I shall discuss in more detail as I address *Felicia’s Journey*. The thriller “genre” blends easily with other genres, and promiscuously mutates into or spawns new forms. For example, Linda Ruth Williams has recently provided an account of the “erotic thriller,” a subgenre of the thriller she suggests developed partly from neo-*noir*.⁷⁷

Taking this fluidity into consideration, we might begin by recalling that in the (suspense) thriller, at the very least, as was noted above, “intricate” form is linked with affect of a specific kind. Rubin suggests that if genres are understood in relation to “a certain conventionalized category of story,” then “[one] cannot consider the thriller a genre in the same way that one considers, say, the western or science fiction a genre. The range of stories that have been called thrillers is simply too broad.”⁷⁸ While the “story,” then, cannot determine a film’s identity as a thriller, it is the intricacy of that story’s plotment in the film that does earn the film its status as a thriller. The affective force of the thriller is derived, then, from formal qualities more than it is from story elements. Rubin notes that, as the name suggests, the thriller “works primarily to evoke such feelings as suspense, fright, mystery, exhilaration, excitement, speed, movement. In other words, it emphasizes visceral, gut-level feelings rather than sensitive, cerebral, or emotionally heavy feelings, such as tragedy, pathos, pity, love, nostalgia.”⁷⁹ However, as I noted above, I will suggest that Egoyan’s in-dolorous deconstructions of the thriller, the generic conventions (the “intricate” narrative’s production of “apprehension”) are marshalled towards an explicitly ethical consideration of what Rubin calls “sensitive, cerebral, or emotionally heavy feelings” (though not exactly the ones he goes on to mention), even though the films may also involve stories which feature violent crime. In contrast to Rubin, Gordon Gow has suggested that suspense thrillers can be intellectual, moral, existential or philosophical, and that there is such thing as “cerebral suspense,” “more intellectual than emotional,” in which suspense “[lingers] when a film is over.”⁸⁰ Gow, like Carringer after him, discusses Antonioni’s *Blow Up* as a “mystery without solution,” presenting “an interior battle to adjust and survive, to live with the knowledge that sometimes, and perhaps quite often, there are no

explanations.”⁸¹ For Gow, it is the violence which regularly features in thrillers that determine their importance: he quotes Claude Chabrol: “[A] thriller must be profound, because it speaks of life and death.”⁸²

Charles Derry emphasizes the thriller’s difference from the traditional crime film, however, by arguing that one of the films’ distinguishing features (therefore, perhaps, one of the thriller’s criteria) is the absence of figures representative of law enforcement. Derry writes: “The suspense thriller is a crime work which presents a generally murderous antagonism in which the protagonist becomes either an innocent victim or a non-professional criminal within a structure that is significantly unmediated by a traditional figure of detection.”⁸³ For Joel Black, too, the suspense thriller is one “in which the hero is neither a detective nor a murderer, but a victim, or rather, a potential victim,” in which suspense is a “lurid torment” added to their, and our terror.⁸⁴ Of the six categories of the thriller Derry delineates in his study, two are particularly relevant for Egoyan’s work: the “psychotraumatic thriller,” organised around “the psychotic effects of a trauma on a protagonist’s current involvement in a love affair and a crime or intrigue” in which “[the] protagonist is always a victim—generally of some past trauma and often of real villains who take advantage of his or her masochistic guilt,” and the “thriller of moral confrontation,” “organized around an overt antithetical confrontation between a character representing good or innocence and a character representing evil” and often emphasize parallels between the two.⁸⁵ As we shall see below, trauma and guilt are the dominant psychological and emotional processes which Egoyan examines in his films, through their appropriation of the thriller’s intricate formal approach to stories that revolve around crime in which no figure representative of the law appears. And, in Egoyan’s thrillers, innocence and evil are rarely presented in obviously or overtly “antithetical [confrontations],” and

are instead presented much more ambiguously, as aspects of projection and performance rather than objective states.

Flashbacks

Raymond Durnat, in a discussion of “gloomy, brooding” and “expressionistic” films of the 1940s, notes how their concerns with psychological states (such as guilt, confusion, anguish, suspicion) is enacted by complex and elaborate narratives whose “incomprehensible plots ... express a kind of oppressive bafflement about human intention” and whose labyrinthine flashback devices suggest “past sins looming over the present.”⁸⁶ Durnat calls these films “mosaic-flashback thrillers,” again linking the narrative structure of the films to the affective responses associated with the genre. Durnat suggests that there may be something “thrilling” in the flashback structures themselves. I will now consider some theoretical work on the flashback device, to provide a critical context for the discussions of the films that follow.

Egoyan’s approach to film form is defined by the radical disturbance of our ability to always situate the image precisely in relation to either time (the present and the past) or objectivity (reality and fantasy, including memory’s mingling of the two). As such, Egoyan’s cinema should be seen in relation to the experiments with form and the representation of memory and time in the work of such directors as Alain Resnais, Andrei Tarkovsky, and Nicolas Roeg. The complexity of Egoyan’s narrative structures derives from the way flashbacks repeatedly punctuate the temporal unfolding of events in the film. Often, it is difficult to clearly distinguish the temporal or chronological status of the image and the relationship of one image or scene to the

image or scene which preceded it. As will be discussed in the following chapters, specific strategies belonging to *mise-en-scène* are regularly (and systematically) used as each film shifts and slides back and forth across and between past and present 'planes' of time and objective and subjective 'registers' of experience.

Discussions of (film) narrative tend to refer to the distinction formulated by the Russian Formalists between *fabula* (story) and *sjuzet* (discourse). The former refers to the events to which the narrative refers, while the latter is the order of events which the narrative presents. Peter Brooks writes:

Plot as we need and want the term is hence an embracing concept for the design and intention of narrative, a structure for those meanings that are developed through temporal succession, or perhaps better: a structuring operation elicited by, and made necessary by, those meanings that develop through succession and time.⁸⁷

When the order of events in the narrative departs from the order of the events to which the narrative ultimately refers, we have what in *Narrative Discourse* Gérard Genette called "anachrony."⁸⁸ Anachrony arises when the narrative departs from the chronologically ordered story, and has two main variants, *analepsis* (a movement back in time) and *prolepsis* (a movement forwards in time). Movements back, analepses, are much more common than the "foreshadowing" provided by prolepses. There are, furthermore, in Genette's typology, three variants of the analepsis: the "external analepsis," in which the narrative jumps back to a point in the story *before* the main narrative (what Genette calls the 'first narrative') starts; the "internal analepsis," in which the narration goes to an earlier point in the story, but this point is inside the main story; and (the relatively uncommon) "mixed analepsis," in which the

time period covered by the analepsis starts before but *leads up to* or *jumps into* the main narrative.

Brian Henderson is clear that “[aside] from a reference or two, Genette does not treat film [in *Narrative Discourse*], and his work cannot be directly applied to film,” but nevertheless suggests his categories should (and therefore can) be “rethought on the ground of film analysis.”⁸⁹ He writes: “[In] cinema analysis the interesting questions have to do not with narrative order itself, but with *how* films indicate this order, both straight chronology and deviations from it.”⁹⁰ My discussion of narrative structure in Egoyan’s films will concentrate on his use of the flashback device, and how the relationship between the events of the *fabula* and the organisation of the *sjuzet* contributes to the creation of narrative suspense.⁹¹ Several critics have looked specifically at the flashback device, and it is to their work that I now turn.

Maureen Turim describes the flashback as “simply an image or a filmic segment that is understood as representing temporal occurrences anterior to those in the images that preceded it.”⁹² Turim asserts, however, that the flashback, as a “privileged moment in unfolding,” creates a “junction” between the present and the past, but also between memory and history.⁹³ Flashbacks, for Turim, “immediately imply a psychoanalytic dimension of personality” in which “memory surges forth, it strengthens or protects or it repeats or haunts,” and thus constitute “a cinematic discourse on the mind’s relationship to the past and on the subject’s relationship to telling his or her past.”⁹⁴ It is due to the flashback’s potential for the representation of subjective memories taking place in the present that Bruce Kawin has suggested that the flashback should be thought of in relation to what he calls “mindscreen.”⁹⁵

“Mindscreen cinema,” for Kawin, “participates in one of the central concerns of

modernism ... which is to present the world as it unfolds to, and is determined by, the present-tense consciousness of its characters.”⁹⁶ For Turim, the “modernist flashback” that emerged after World War Two, in films by Ingmar Bergman and Alain Resnais, sought in explicit fashion the mimetic representation of mental processes and thus constituted a shift in cinema’s representation of memory. At the same time, multiple and modernist flashbacks “can make the spectators more aware of the modalities of filmic fiction, of the process of narrative itself.”⁹⁷ It is because of this that certain films self-consciously deploy the flashback device in order to “[question] ... the reconstruction of the historical.”⁹⁸ Turim notes that the binding of the flashback device to the psyche was a major tendency in American thrillers of the forties and fifties.⁹⁹ She writes: “The emphasis on suspense and surprise in the temporal structure and hermeneutic coding in these thrillers creates unique aspects of their flashbacks, similar to the crime/detective narrative structure typical of film noir and its use of flashbacks.”¹⁰⁰ While the withholding of information is to some extent characteristic of all narrative, the suspense thriller, for Turim, exaggerates the structure of withholding.¹⁰¹ In such films, flashbacks are used “to develop an enigma and delay its resolution before reaching the final flashback of revelation, or conversely, revealing the solution to the enigma by other means.”¹⁰²

Edward Branigan suggests that a subjective flashback is “often stubbornly independent of the character’s recollection.”¹⁰³ He writes: “[When] we see what we believe a character to be thinking about, we may only be seeing the object or his or her thought as it exists independently in the world even if an obsessive desire for the object continues to be represented. Similarly, when a character remembers the past, we may only be seeing the past as it might have been represented earlier in the story when the character was then living it as the “present.””¹⁰⁴ For this reason, “our

narrative comprehension of objective and subjective, past and present, may be profoundly challenged and, in some cases, rendered inadequate” by films which “exploit the intricacies of flashback narration.”¹⁰⁵ Branigan discusses the “subjective flashback” in classical cinema as exemplifying the system through which cinema determines meaning. He notes how classic film narration specifies the flashback as subjective memory by showing “the character who will be responsible for the narration (through ‘memory’)” which is “enclosed or marked at both ends (e.g., by dissolves to and from the same character)”¹⁰⁶ The use of a dissolve, for example, has no inherent meaning; in order for such a device as superimposition to indicate that an image is to be attributed to a character’s dream state (as opposed to the character’s ‘objective’ reality),” it must be within a system established both within an individual film, but, more importantly, through repetition from film to film. Henderson notes how in classical cinema’s most intense interest in analeptic structure, which he suggests was from 1941 (the year of *Citizen Kane*) to 1957, various devices, such as voice-over, titles, rippling, fades and dissolves ‘set up’ the return to the past. This was because, Henderson suggests, classical cinema responds to shifts in tense “as though to a cataclysm; the viewer must be warned at every level of cinematic expression, in sounds, in images, and in written language, lest he/she be disoriented.”¹⁰⁷ While systems emerged within classic cinema for presenting the anterior past as subjective recollection various other films have periodically presented flashbacks in what Branigan calls “deviant forms,” which “in one way or another, challenge the rules we use to make sense of classical discourse, and hence challenge assumptions about our knowledge of characters and the world.”¹⁰⁸ In these examples, there are clearly three simple ways in which a flashback can “challenge assumptions about our knowledge of characters and the world,” concerning the bracketing of the flashback, the relationship

between the flashback image and the images within which it is bracketed, and the way in which the movement from the bracketing images to the flashback image is marked. These three variants of the deviant form suggest that the ideal and intelligible flashback is one which is clearly anchored and contained within the representation of a single character's memory, and that flashbacks which are not signalled at either end as belonging to a single character, or which signal as the end of the film's entire narrative, are "deviant," and perhaps should not be accepted without reservation. The intelligibility of a flashback is in many ways determined by the system with which cinema conventionally presents flashbacks and the devices which a particular film adopts as its own system.

It is film's ability to present temporal disjunction through the use of flashbacks that has enabled the medium to present what Janet Walker calls the "poesis of trauma". For Walker "trauma cinema" is that which seems to reflect on or otherwise refer to traumatic memory, characterized by fantasy and error, and which concerns the reliability of memory and (therefore) disrupts a stable knowledge of and relation to the past. She writes:

Films do not exactly "theorize" memory processes, but alongside psychological writing on trauma and memory (and alongside the mass-mediated public debates on the history of violent catastrophes), the years from the 1980s to the present have seen the development of a theoretically informed "trauma cinema." By *trauma cinema* I mean a group of films that deal with a world-shattering event or events, whether public or personal. Furthermore, I define trauma films and videos as those that deal with traumatic events in a nonrealist mode characterized by disturbance and fragmentation of the films' narrative and stylistic regimes.¹⁰⁹

Walker refers to what she calls “a trauma aesthetic” which, through, for example, “fragmented linearity,” “testify to the necessary imbrication of truth and fantasy in traumatic historiography.”¹¹⁰ Egoyan’s cinema regularly uses the flashback device in order to suggest how the past can be remembered or represented in ways which, while truthful to the vulnerability of the past as it is recovered through various modes of recollection and reconstruction, may not provide reliable or definitive access to the past as it actually took place.

Egoyan’s cinema participates in what Gilles Deleuze, in his discussion of the time-image (associated with post-war and post-classical cinema) has called “the powers of the false ... [where] narration ceases to be truthful, that is, to claim to be true ... because it poses the simultaneity of impossible presents, or the coexistence of not-necessarily true pasts.”¹¹¹ In Egoyan’s cinema it is not always immediately clear whether an image refers to an objective or subjective ‘reality.’ Subsequently, as Deleuze noted of this kind of cinema,

we run into a principle of indeterminability, of indiscernibility: we no longer know what is imaginary or real, physical or mental, in the situation, not because they are confused, but because we do not have to know and there is no longer even a place from which to know. It is as if the real and the imaginary were running after each other, as if each was being reflected in the other, around a point of indiscernibility.¹¹²

Edward R. O’Neill discusses the ways in which contemporary narrative cinema can respond to a postmodern understanding of history as “at once unrepresentable (because traumatic), overwhelmingly present, and constantly replayed in versions we can locate as neither simply false nor simply true,” through the use of complex formal

and temporal structures which “interweave multiple pasts and presents in such a way that clear relations are only achieved in momentary “knots” that tie different temporalities together” and in which “[different] forms of history play uneasily against each other: subjective memory, transmitted testimony, imagination, and documentation.”¹¹³ This mode, which he calls the “transcendental phantasmatic” (and which he discusses in relation to Egoyan’s *Ararat* (2002)), is one in which “our ability to locate the images as memories, fantasies, flashbacks, and so on becomes unstable.”¹¹⁴

Suspense

‘Suspense’ was originally a legal term referring to any execution’s state of abeyance, deferral, or interruption, before the word acquired its contemporary meaning of mental uncertainty, apprehension, anxiety or simply curiosity experienced while waiting. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines suspense as “[the] state of being suspended or kept undetermined (chiefly *to hold, keep in suspense*); hence, the action of suspending one’s judgement” and as “[a] state of mental uncertainty, with expectation of or desire for decision, and usually some apprehension or anxiety; the condition of waiting, especially of being kept waiting, for an expected decision, assurance, or issue.” Martin Rubin states that “[suspense] is one ingredient that everybody seems to agree is central to the otherwise cloudy, ill-defined concept of the thriller ... The basic elements of suspense are inherent in virtually all storytelling; but in the case of full-fledged, thriller-level suspense, these elements become so acute that other aspects of the narrative are overridden by our curiosity and anxiety over what is going to happen next.”¹¹⁵

Gilles Deleuze's study of masochism, identifies "a certain atmosphere of suffocation and suspense" in von Sacher-Masoch's novels.¹¹⁶ In his works, the body is suspended, in masochistic torture and suffering, and belief too is suspended, in fetishistic disavowal.¹¹⁷ Pure and indefinite waiting is the essential characteristic of the masochistic experience, which necessitates an understanding of masochistic pleasure-in-pain in relation to the "temporal form" this mechanism takes: suspense.¹¹⁸ That the suspense film's operative logic is one which transforms time into pleasurable discomfort and the desire for knowledge into "a kind of torture" (through the delaying of information) suggests how readily the narrative strategies associated with the form might lend themselves to an affective presentation of loss and trauma, since mourning and trauma are both experienced in relation to temporality, experienced as the pain of duration and the loss of memory itself.

The relation between the thriller's narrative form (for example, mosaic-like intricacy) and the affective experience of suspense, which we have noted forms the basis of the identity of the thriller film, can be further illuminated through a consideration of Roland Barthes's discussion of narrative: He writes:

Suspense is clearly only a privileged – or "exacerbated" form of distortion: on the one hand, by keeping a sequence open (through emphatic procedures of delay and renewal), it reinforces the contact with the reader ... while on the other, it offers the threat of an uncompleted sequence, of an open paradigm ... that is to say, of a logical disturbance, it being this disturbance which is consumed with anxiety and pleasure (all the more so because it is always made right in the end). "Suspense," therefore, is a game with structure, designed to endanger and glorify it, constituting a veritable 'thrilling' of intelligibility: by representing order (and no longer series) in its fragility, "suspense"

accomplishes the very idea of language.¹¹⁹

Suspense's "game with structure," involving particular and insistent "procedures of delay," produces, if only temporarily, the threat of incompleteness or irresolution, leading to a "disturbance which is consumed with anxiety and pleasure" (in other words, masochistically), but which, importantly, "is always made right in the end," as the "sequence" is completed, concluded, resolved. In the 1930s, Hitchcock had argued that the cinema screen was the best medium to provide vicariously the experience of "emotional disturbances which, for convenience, we call 'thrills.'"¹²⁰ The "thrilling" of intelligibility" that Barthes refers to here is a pleasurable painful disturbance that lasts until the narrative itself is "made right in the end." Charles Derry argues that "suspense ... remains operative until the spectator's expectations are foiled, fulfilled, or the narrative is frozen without any resolution at all ... During those moments that suspense is operative, time seems to extend itself, and each second provides a kind of torture for a spectator who is anxious to have his or her anticipations foiled or fulfilled."¹²¹ There is here a masochistic pleasure in a "torture" that may not even be resolved, that may, along with the narrative itself, be (and therefore remain) "frozen."

Steve Neale describes how "[in] the interplay between expectation and narrative development, what becomes suspended in suspense is time."¹²² Narrative time, in other words, is so equated with the eventual resolution of certain developments that if these expected developments are not provided it is the forward movement of time itself that seems to be suspended or stopped. John G. Cawelti suggests that suspense derives from the evocation of "a temporary sense of fear and uncertainty about the fate of a character we care about," and that "[it] is a special kind of uncertainty that is always pointed toward a possible resolution."¹²³ Suspense, Dennis Porter notes, is "a state of anxiety dependent on a timing device": "That state

of more or less pleasurable tension concerning an outcome, which we call suspense, depends on something not happening too fast,” since “the longest kept secrets are the ones we most desire to know.”¹²⁴ Significantly for this thesis, Porter also suggests that while “[there] is obvious suspense as long as imminent danger goes uncontained ... there is also suspense where an orphan is without parents, a lover without his loved one, or a problem without a solution. The need for the relief from tension which comes from a concluding term is felt in such situations just as much as in those that threaten violence or death,”¹²⁵

Stefan Scharff describes the relationship between release (of information) and relief (of tension) as following from or constituted through a specific strategic use of *mise-en-scène*: “In essence, one can perceive a succession of filmic images as a continuum of disclosures. Potentially, each new image brings forth something new.”¹²⁶ Scharff suggests that the viewer looks for cues in images to predict the next image, as if reaching out for the latent image beyond the limits of the screen:

When the cues are neutral or intentionally misleading, another cinematic dynamic starts operating: the structural element I call slow disclosure. ... [Slow] disclosure can be conceived of as a particular system of distributing narrative information. Used throughout the length of a film, it involves a prolonged delay in giving away crucial facts in a story, like the secret of Anthony Perkins’s mother in *Psycho*. The final resolution occurs in most cases as a *tour de force* toward the end of the film.¹²⁷

Furthermore, slow disclosure also works within a single scene, in which the movement of the camera in space and time operates to reveal information in a way that reproduces the narrative organisation as a whole. Slow disclosure is thus

another instance ... of retarding direct expository statements and making the flow of information more complex. This increases the participatory involvement of the viewer, forcing him [*sic*] continuously to reassess previous signals so that they will confirm to new ones. [...] By delicately complicating clarity, it kindles cinematic illusion that is both intelligible and pleasing.¹²⁸

In other words, *mise-en-scène* (e.g., camera movement) and narrative structure can both contribute to the film's mode of suspense, of "kindling" the intelligibility of cinematic illusion (as suspense itself is the thrilling of intelligibility, according to Barthes). The pleasure of this "kindling" could, then, be compared with the "thrilling" of intelligibility which Barthes discusses in relation to narrative suspense. Barthes had previously discussed a form of indefinite or infinite suspense, and specifically in relation to film:

[The] cinema, even the kind which doesn't seem at the outset to be commercial, is a discourse in which the story, the anecdote, the plot (with its major consequence, *suspense*) are never absent [...] Meaning is so fated for mankind that art (as liberty) seems to be used, especially today, not for *making* sense, but on the contrary for keeping it in *suspense*; for constructing meanings, but without filling them in *exactly*.¹²⁹

For Barthes, the cinema is a medium which "finds it difficult to provide clear meanings and that ... it ought not to"; film, "by its material and structure," he writes, is suited "for a very particular responsibility of forms" he called "the technique of suspended meaning."¹³⁰ The best films, for Barthes, are those that withhold meaning, those in which meaning never become definite.¹³¹ However, in language which

evokes Chabrol's decription of the "exceptional talent" necessary to resist reproducing the conventions of genre cinema, Barthes notes that withholding meaning, and keeping sense itself in suspense, is "an extremely difficult task requiring at the same time a very great technique and total intellectual loyalty."¹³² More importantly, in contrast to the suspense he later discussed, Barthes here suggests an infinite suspension of meaning, in which meaning remains indefinite indefinitely, infinitely.

Peter Brooks, referring to Barthes's discussion (in *S/Z*) of two "codes" operative in the text—the *proairetic* (the code of actions) and the *hermeneutic* (the code of enigmas and answers)—notes how this latter code concerns "questions and answers that structure a story, their suspense, partial unveiling, temporary blockage, eventual resolution, with the resulting creation of a "dilatatory space"—the space of suspense—which we work through toward what is felt to be, in classical narrative, the revelation of meaning that occurs when the narrative sentence reaches full predication."¹³³ The hermeneutic code, Brooks suggests,

acts as a large, shaping force, allowing us to sort out, to group, to see the significance of actions, to rename their sequences in terms of their significance for the narrative as a whole. We read *in the suspense created by the hermeneutic code*, structuring actions according to its indications, restructuring as we move through partial revelation and misleading clues, moving towards the fullness of meaning provided by the "saturation" of the matrix of the sentence now fully predicated.¹³⁴

For Barthes, reading amounts to a deciphering "in terms of codes derived from the 'already read'"; given that narratives weave their individual patterns from pre-existent codes which derive from the "already written," then, "[plot] ... might best be thought

of as an ‘overcoding’ of the proairetic by the hermeneutic, the latter structuring the discrete elements of the former into larger interpretive wholes, working out their play of meaning and significance.”¹³⁵ In this respect, the “dilatatory space” of suspense is also a space in which the text’s execution of pre-existing generic codes and conventions can either reach full predication or be held in abeyance.

Mary Ann Doane has used this idea in order to talk about feminist film.

Discussing how a feminist film practice “addresses itself to the activity of uncoding, de-coding, deconstructing ... given images” and “exposing the habitual meanings/values attached to femininity as cultural constructions,” she turns to Sally Potter’s avant-garde film *Thriller* (1979). Potter’s film, Doane suggests, “‘quotes’ the strategies of the suspense film (as well as individual films of this genre—for example, *Psycho*)” as part of its “engagement with the codification of suspense” and its attempt to construct “another syntax which would, perhaps, collapse the fragile order,” by which Doane means the ‘dominant’ rule or law of syntax as it is operative in (the) genre. In this respect, for Doane, Potter’s film’s “uncoding” and “de-coding” of the dominant “syntax” of the genre demonstrates how what Barthes called the “thrilling” of intelligibility can be harnessed for a specific critical and political project.¹³⁶

Similarly, I argue that Egoyan’s thrillers represent an attempt to work with and within the traditional “codification of suspense” in order to to explore traumatic states of grief and responsibility as part of an explicitly ethical consideration of mourning, one which presents a critique of the relationship between mourning and genre *and* genre cinema. The dominant rules or laws of both mourning and genre are, in these films, questioned, and this questioning is then suspended. Because it is the concept of mourning as a generic activity which Egoyan’s films investigate and question, it is not

surprising that these films also question the generic operations and procedures of cinema.

The Failing of Genre

Spargo has noted that the “scenarios of emergency” with which Emmanuel Levinas describes the subject’s responsibility for the other, specifically the subject’s responsibility for the vulnerability, suffering and death of the other, are peculiar in as much as they are “[emptied] ... of a dramatic quality.” This is due to the fact that the death of the other has always already taken place – it is not an event that can be prevented. The suffering of the other cannot be interrupted and alleviated. In other words, the “scenarios of emergency” Levinas provides to illustrate responsibility for the other are not situations that permit the possibility of development or resolution. Responsibility, for Levinas, is reducible to neither the narrative representation of heroic or triumphal action nor the generic resolution of conflict. Egoyan’s thrillers, I suggest, are similarly characterized by an absence of conventional heroic action and a refusal of traditional narrative resolution. Violent death has already taken place when the films begin. Responsibility for the suffering of the other, which these films present shaping in significant ways the protagonists’ lives, is posthumous and, therefore, potentially interminable. The films’ privileging of this kind of interminable responsibility is inextricable from their refusal to provide the conventional satisfactions of generic and narrative resolution. Egoyan’s thrillers are much more concerned with showing characters who assume a mournful responsibility for the memory of the other than they are interested in capitalising in a conventional fashion on the dramatic possibilities offered by narrative situations in which characters are

actually in mortal danger. In this way, the films deliberately move from the conventional suspense which accrues from the perceived peril of the protagonists' situation towards conclusions which seem much more ambiguous, and much less dramatically satisfying, than is usually the case in commercial thriller narratives. The films set up relations and situations which in some ways belong to typical suspense thrillers; however, since they are concerned with questioning the dramatic and narrative forms of mourning and responsibility, and with challenging the notion that mourning and responsibility can ever end or be complete, they are less interested in abiding by conventions of narrative resolution. In an interview with Tom McSorely, Egoyan remarked:

I am frustrated with having to structure explanations. [...] I prefer to leave mystery intact, but also recognize that audiences are not always engaged by that unresolved narrative strategy [...] Genre films demand a resolution [...] The danger is that the form of the genre, its conventions, may trivialize the ideas I'm trying to express.¹³⁷

The two films I discuss end with scenes which suggest the relationship between the responsibility to the other and various kinds of trauma, loss and failure. By doing this, the films resist resolutions in which pain and suffering, disruption and dissatisfaction, are completely dispelled or dissolved. As the following chapters will examine in more detail, both films conclude with scenes in which young women are shown in relation to various kinds of trauma, failure and loss.

Egoyan's thrillers can be seen in relation to various distinct traditions or modes of film; I understand them as troubling studies of loss and responsibility which, in turn, trouble the demarcations of contemporary cinema. Films such as *Three Colours: Bleu (Trois Couleurs: Bleu*, Krzysztof Kieslowski, 1993), *Under the Sand*

(*Sous le sable*, François Ozon, 2000) and *The Son's Room* (*La Stanza del Figlio*, Nanni Moretti, 2001) demonstrate the recent interest in examining domestic experiences of accidental death, grief and bereavement, in which the potential melodrama of mourning is marshalled within austere but empathic studies of loss and recovery that belong firmly to the tradition of European art cinema.¹³⁸ *In the Bedroom* (Todd Field, 2001) and *Mystic River* (Clint Eastwood, 2003) might represent how the melodramatic mode of American cinema is self-consciously restrained in these studies of murder and mourning. Egoyan's exploration of mourning can be seen in relation to the ways in which recent cinema has presented the traumatic response to death, loss and murder in stylistic modes that reorganize traditions of melodrama and crime or mystery films in different ways and for different purposes and audiences. However, I read Egoyan's thrillers in relation to another kind of film in which the conventions of genre are more explicitly reorganised in order to examine ambiguous psychological and emotional experiences through a mode which is also ambiguously positioned. For example, *Don't Look Now* (Nicolas Roeg, 1973) presents a study of parents grieving the death of their daughter, but at the same time uses conventions of both the supernatural and serial killer thriller. Similarly, *Solaris* (Steven Soderbergh, 2002), a remake of Tarkovsky's 1972 film, presents many of the conventions of the science fiction thriller, but gradually becomes a study of the loss of and desire for the protagonist's wife. In these films, then, genre provides a context or a pretext with which to suggest how the representation of memory and mourning either forms connections with popular genre or evacuates a genre's conventions of their traditional purpose. I suggest that Egoyan's thrillers work in similar ways: on the one hand, the popular genres to which they belong are a context and a pretext. The familiar environments and events of popular genre relate in peculiar ways with the films'

eventual narrative deferral to or privileging of traumatic mourning and responsibility. At the same time, the films explore the strange forms traumatic mourning may take, forms which simultaneously evoke and deform the codes and conventions of popular genres: the psycho-thriller's serial murders in *Felicia's Journey*, and the noirish thriller's blackmail and deception in *Where the Truth Lies*. In both films, traumatic mourning takes forms associated with popular genre; both films, on the other hand, function to traumatize, but responsibly, their respective genres.

Egoyan's reconfiguration of conventions of the thriller genres develops from his interest in psychological and emotional conditions, particularly his interest in obsessive or compulsive behaviour, and his interest in how the experience of or response to loss and pain shapes identity and seeks expression in our actions. The films refuse to separate the fact or event of death from the experience of mourning and trauma; while both films revolve around acts of murder, it is the emotional response to violent death, and the psychological disruption caused by the knowledge of death, which is of interest here, and which is entwined with other experiences of trauma, traumatic separation and traumatic loss. The generic convention of violent death is here appropriated for a wholly different exploration of how our encounters are shaped by our response to the deaths of loved ones, and how our living, our survival, is always in relation to death, and the deaths of others. These films suggest how our identities are shaped by experiences impossible to endure, ignore, or fully understand. Unjust death provides Egoyan with a particular form of loss for which traditional mourning practices might be terribly inadequate. But for Egoyan, the impossibility of mourning the murder of a child, for example, suggests the potential impossibility and inadequacy of all forms of response, of all responses that can take particular forms. His films explore how the work of mourning and remembrance or

commemoration begins, but suggests that the response to death and to the knowledge of violent death may never actually end, may be a permanent disruption, an unalterable transformation of our selves. These films paradoxically explore the emotional and psychological labours of separation through their own work of vulnerable relation, through their attempt to combine art cinema and genre film; in these films, it is often difficult to determine past from present, and reality from fantasy. Confusion threatens character, viewer and film. Egoyan's thrillers deliberately risk a kind of failure through their relation with popular genre, since these films seek to confound many of the expectations audiences bring to both popular genre films and art cinema. These films risk failure. However, this is related to their concern with the work of mourning, and specifically a work of mourning which fails. In the discussions which follow I examine how mourning fails and succeeds in different ways in Egoyan's cinema. "Unfaithful fidelity" might help us understand their relation to art cinema and popular genre. There is "no pure and simple incorporation" of either art cinema within popular genre or popular genre within art cinema, instead there is a "tender rejection."¹³⁹ I discern in Egoyan's films the attempt to open a space in which failure succeeds. Discussing Egoyan's "future direction on the big screen" after *Ararat*, Jonathan Romney suggests that his "output will surely remain haunted by its own paradoxes and agonies, torn from within by a perplexed fascination with, and scepticism towards, the seductions and dangers of the moving image."¹⁴⁰ The haunting and perplexing qualities of his films bespeaks this ambivalent relation. These dolorous films are often demanding and sometimes dissatisfying; it is their strange and singular openness to failure that is most intriguing. In simple terms, I examine how these films *succeed* as art cinema through a *failure* of fidelity to popular genre, and how their success or failure as films depends on understanding this relation

to failure. Their perceived proximity to popular genre constitutes their vulnerability. At the same time, these films risk failing as works of art cinema through their engagement with the conventions of popular and mainstream genre practices.

I discern in Egoyan's appropriation of popular genre a "tender rejection" in which associations are mobilized only as part of a paradoxical project of unfaithful fidelity, of aborted interiorization. The relation between art cinema and genre cinema has traditionally been understood in relation to a critical antipathy, in which each is the other *of yet for* the other. But the interaction and relation between the conventions of art cinema and of genre cinema can also be understood as constituted by an ongoing unfaithful fidelity. Of course, Derrida has discussed genre in relation to the problem of purity and identity. "The law of the law of genre," Derrida suggests, "is precisely a principle of contamination, a law of impurity," marked by "*participation without belonging—a taking part in without being part of.*"¹⁴¹ Egoyan's cinema, marked by what Barthes referred to as the formal responsibility of suspended meaning, demonstrates the vulnerability of unfaithful fidelity. These films are open to a number of different responses. While they can be seen to challenge many of the fundamental operations of classical cinema, they belong to the traditions and conventions of art cinema; indeed, the distinctions between art cinema and mainstream cinema are becoming more and more difficult to keep apart. However, as genre pictures, they may be unsatisfying for the very reasons that make them succeed as, belong to, art cinema, and, as art cinema, they may be unsatisfying for the very reasons that aim to work as, belong to, genre cinema. While art cinema has historically privileged elliptical and ambiguous structures and irresolutions, it is less sure of its relation to genre cinema, or whether it represents a genre itself. While genre cinema traditionally functions by constantly evolving, the relationship each film has

with the genre to which it belongs can privilege continuity or a kind of traumatic discontinuity. These films seem to want to work on the strange space between these two worlds. Furthermore, they wish to explore the aspects of mourning and responsibility which are most difficult to discern in popular culture within forms which are most visible in popular culture.

Stephanie Barbé Hammer, in her *The Sublime Crime: Fascination, Failure, and Form in Literature of the Enlightenment*, discusses the “formal failure” of various “criminal narratives” (such as William Godwin’s *Caleb Williams*), of “fictions torn between opposing narrative modes,” and suggests that “these texts “fail” insofar as the generic/formal modes chosen by the authors tend to self-destruct.”¹⁴² The works she studies are both studies *of* failure (characters fail to achieve what they set out to do) and formal exercises *in* failure; here, artistic failure and artistic success amount to the same thing: “[Their] very “failure,”” she writes, “points paradoxically to their richness as works of art and to the complexity of the hermeneutic that informs them.”¹⁴³ Her approach to failure, as both a thematic concern and as a strategic practice (in which “opposing” generic, formal and narrative modes are brought into “self-destructive” interplay), is one which is relevant to my argument here. Egoyan’s films present failure at both the thematic and formal/generic level: on the one hand, they are not interested in presenting conventional forms of recovery, triumph, justice or resolution, and, on the other hand, they are concerned with the “failing” of genre cinema, insofar as their failure of generic conventions reveals the failing of genre cinema to provide narrative space for an ethical consideration of death, mourning and responsibility.¹⁴⁴ An approach to Egoyan fails, I suggest, to the extent that his desire to fail genre specifically in order to show genre’s failings goes unnoticed. We could take this one step or two steps further: the demand that we understand this

vulnerability to failure, the films risky venturing between genre and art cinema, is comparable with the demand that in these films is examined as a response which is made to the other that has already been killed. While a more obvious point is that the resolutions of these films maps onto their concern with unresolved mourning, a subtler point may be that their vulnerability to misunderstanding, their attempt to combine sabotage with camouflage, is comparable with the vulnerability to violence with which the other is constituted. The commercial (and critical) failure of *Felicia's Journey* and *Where the Truth Lies*, I suggest, was due to the fact that their art cinema practices are perhaps too successfully occluded within genre practices. Increasingly, Egoyan is read in relation to failure; he is regarded as both failing to deserve critical success and failing to achieve commercial success. Egoyan's films, however, have always been concerned with enduring a certain failure of relation, with questioning the possibility of triumph. This, I argue, provides the key to understanding the films' own relation with genre, a relation in which failure and success are inverted, in which a failure of relation *succeeds* as an ethical responsibility.

The films I address in the following chapters are among Egoyan's most explicit appropriations of popular mainstream genre cinema. The promotion and marketing of these films, as well as their popular and critical reception, demonstrate the risks and rewards that are involved when the auteur produces works which present themselves ambiguously in relation to mainstream genres. *Felicia's Journey* and *Where the Truth Lies* present distinctive reconfigurations of the thriller film, specifically the suspense thriller which developed in the post-war period and in the shadow of Alfred Hitchcock. Both films, moreover, will be addressed as blending aspects of other genres with the thriller, including the gothic melodrama, the horror film, and film noir. The films I address in the following chapters will be discussed in

relation to the tradition by which contemporary art-cinema, or auteur cinema, appropriates, for various purposes (critique, homage, and so on), the forms and conventions of popular, mainstream genre cinema. I will argue that it is within Egoyan's distinctive appropriation of the conventions of mainstream genre cinema that his auteurist vision is most clearly discernible. The idiosyncratic interests and obsessions that constitute his auteurist coherence are particularly intelligible as they are channeled into the narrative conventions of mainstream genres. The formal strategies with which his films are characterised are also more provocative when used to disrupt the conventional story-telling associated with popular genre. I see these films as deliberately failing particular conventions of the genre to which they nevertheless, and paradoxically, belong. This failure I will read as a resistance that is markedly ethical. The films' deliberate failing of certain conventions associated with the thriller will be addressed as both the risk they desire to take and the space they attempt to stake. The suspense associated with the thriller is in these films marshalled for other means, as will be shown below. I seek to read the films' suspension of time in relation to the films' representation of the subject's encounter with death. In his essay on *Hamlet*, Jacques Lacan suggests that at the beginning of the play Hamlet, melancholically mourning his father's death (which, it is soon clear, is the result of murder) seems a subjectivity suspended in the "time of the other."¹⁴⁵ Lacan writes elsewhere in that essay: "The one unbearable dimension of possible human experience is not the experience of one's own death, which no one has, but the experience of the death of another."¹⁴⁶ In the discussions which follow, I address the relationship between the work of mourning and the narrative representation of time in order to suggest how Egoyan's thrillers present the subject's disruption by and suspension in an imaginative encounter with another's death. By refusing the conventional

resolution of suspense, these films suspend suspense itself. This suspension can also be understood to characterize the situation of the films themselves, stretched across and suspended between the antithetical spheres of commercial genre films and art cinema.

Chapter Three: *Felicia's Journey* (1999)

This chapter will address how *Felicia's Journey* develops Egoyan's investigation of traumatic mourning and responsibility through a reconfiguration of the generic conventions associated with the Gothic and, more specifically, the serial killer film or psycho thriller. Generic conventions are appropriated for the purposes of refusing the very pleasures they typically afford. Egoyan's failure to conform to the conventions of the serial killer film is a deliberate act of infidelity towards the genre to which the film superficially belongs, achieved through the repetition of his own, rather than the genre's narrative and formal strategies. Patricia Gruben has argued that Egoyan's "radical manipulation of time, space and causality" leads, for the spectator, to a "loss of a sense of narrative control" in which "sadistic voyeurism ... fails." By focusing on a character who is both a voyeur and a serial murderer, *Felicia's Journey* strives to sever the continuities between the spectator's experience and the overdetermined viewing habits of its psychopathic protagonist.¹

In the discussion that follows, I will address *Felicia's Journey's* exploration of traumatic mourning by examining the film's reconfiguration of certain generic conventions, and its strategic use of mise-en-scène, narrative structure (specifically, flashbacks), and video imagery. Among the generic conventions reconfigured here are those of the serial killer film, particularly those that feature a lone, female survivor, beginning with Hitchcock's *Psycho*, but particularly familiar due to the cult or commercial success of films such as *Black Christmas* (Bob Clarke, 1974), *Halloween* (John Carpenter, 1978), and *Friday the 13th* (Sean S. Cunningham, 1980).² The relationship Egoyan maintains between *Felicia's Journey* and the serial killer genre, I will suggest, can be understood as an emphatic and insistent infidelity, a refusal to

provide a substitute equal to the absent generic ideal. In this respect, the film's concern with the characters' desires to find an adequate substitute for a severed relation (with a mother or a father) resonates with its own refusal to present itself as an adequate substitute for its generic antecedents. To conclude, I will argue that Egoyan's film's remarkable resolution privileges a traumatic responsibility for the other which resembles an impossible and infinite mourning.

Felicia's Journey, Serial Killer Cinema, and Hitchcock

Felicia's Journey (1999) is a contemporary fairy tale or Gothic fable, a serial-killer film, a Hitchcockian domestic thriller, and a self-conscious elaboration of particular narrative scenarios and formal strategies from his previous films, particularly *Family Viewing* (1986), *Speaking Parts* (1989), *Exotica* (1994) and *The Sweet Hereafter* (1997). Adapted from the 1994 novel by Irish writer William Trevor, it is the second of Egoyan's feature films to be based on an existing source, following his adaptation of Russell Banks's *The Sweet Hereafter* (1991) in 1997. Linden Peach, discussing Trevor's novel, notes that it is "a mixture of genres: exile narrative, innocent abroad narrative, psychological thriller and serial killer narrative."³ Egoyan's film is faithful to the novel's mixing of generic ingredients, its temporal shifts (as it presents characters' memories), as well as to what Egoyan has called its "slightly absurdist and humorous tone."⁴

Mark Seltzer has suggested that "serial murder and its representations ... have by now largely replaced the Western as the most popular genre-fiction of the body and of bodily violence in our culture."⁵ The serial killer, according to Selzer, has become an over-determined figure, a "superstar" in what he calls contemporary

“wound culture,” by which he refers to “the public fascination with torn and open bodies and torn and opened persons, a collective gathering around shock, trauma, and the wound”⁶ In a discussion of *Felicia’s Journey*, Egoyan has said that

serial killing has become an occupation we come to expect in films, like the lawyer character or the doctor character, one of those jobs that people have. I don’t think presenting a serial killer—and maybe this says more about our culture than I want to admit—has become that odd. It’s almost become one of those things that people might do. The question then becomes, “What does it mean in terms of the film?” and “What do the inherent ramifications of that occupation have to do with the moral content of the piece?”⁷

It is the “moral” (or even ethical) content of *Felicia’s Journey* which is of interest to me here; Egoyan’s presentation of the serial killer invokes the serial killer genre, and departs from (or fails) its conventions, in order to emphasize the more general failure of the serial killer genre to responsibly represent the crimes it repeatedly translates into entertainment. Cynthia R. Freeland, in her discussion of the slasher film, which she uses as “a generic label for a movie with a psychopathic killer, usually a male, whose assumed blood lust drives him to a sort of extreme violence against women,” notes how the violence in these film is often eroticized, and “showcased by the camera in increasingly graphic and disturbing ways.”⁸ *Felicia’s Journey* strategically refuses to provide visual access to the multiple murders typically requisite for a serial-killer film. As Egoyan has suggested, “Hilditch ... doesn’t see those acts. He doesn’t see himself as being violent at all. He doesn’t remember those moments. To have glorified or to have included those acts would have been a denial of what his

experience of it was.”⁹ Amy Taubin has suggested that in popular serial killer cinema “serial killing is a function not of character, but of the internal narrative structure and motifs (the piling up of bodies one after another). Even more importantly, it is a function of the relationship of each film both to its sequels and to all the other serials in the genre.”¹⁰ The genre, in other words, has capitalized on the reality of serial killing by reproducing the serial aspects of the crime at the level of the narratives’ punctual repetition of violent spectacle and the repetition of these internal patterns of violence across the entire genre. Egoyan’s failing of the genre can be discerned in his presentation of the women Hilditch kills; the victims of the serial killer in *Felicia’s Journey* are depicted as young, homeless women, several of whom are sex-workers. In other words, despite its formalist and self-reflexive aspects, Egoyan’s film nevertheless attempts to anchor its representation of the serial killer’s victims in recognizable social realities familiar to us from real life cases of serial killers. Richard Dyer has noted that “serial killers—in fact and fiction—are not just people who kill people; they are men who kill women or socially inferior men (boys, blacks, queers).”¹¹ Indeed, several of Hilditch’s victims in the film are young black women. *Felicia’s Journey* emphasizes the marginalised status of the women who become the serial killer’s victims. As will be discussed below, the film preserves for the victims of its central serial killer a representational strategy which emphasizes ‘the real,’ and effectively separates them from the rest of the film, which carefully interweaves references to a wide range of cultural and cinematic traditions and which, in its privileging of memory, dream and fantasy, utilizes a stylized *mise-en-scène* that is not strictly realist.

Egoyan has stated that “[in] typical serial-killer movies, you have these acts unfolding and a character trying to stop them. That’s the dramatic point of tension.

Felicia's Journey is different; it's not constructed like a thriller. I consider this more of a drama than a thriller."¹² Egoyan's comments suggest an anxiety about the film's identity being misunderstood, its "difference" being mistaken for a failure to provide generic fulfilment. For Egoyan, the conventional thriller creates dramatic tension by, for example, focusing on a character "trying to stop" the serial killer. *Felicia's Journey*, significantly, includes no such figure. Egoyan has also said that *Felicia's Journey* is "one of those films where there is a serial killer, but it is not a serial killer movie."¹³ Egoyan's denial of the film's relationship with its cinematic forbears is perhaps in keeping with the film's exploration of the processes of denial and deception, and the difficulty of responding to one's history and one's heritage. The director's provocative refusal to label the film "a serial killer movie" reflects an anxiety about the film's identity and reception; the presence of the figure of the serial killer is a 'red herring' which we are warned to largely disavow when categorizing (and therefore understanding and appreciating) the film. The presence of a serial killer in this film, it is suggested, fails to secure the film's identity as a serial killer movie. Such comments reassure Egoyan's regular audience that *Felicia's Journey's* generic identity remains fully under the control of the auteur. *Felicia's Journey's* strategic failing of the serial killer genre is achieved precisely through its successful continuation of Egoyan's examination of mourning and responsibility, in which generic and narrative conventions and pleasures are subverted by the formal strategies through which Egoyan habitually expresses his intellectual interests and obsessions. Jonathan Romney has observed that Egoyan's film "shows a cavalier disregard for the logical coherence and clarity we might expect of a Hitchcockian thriller."¹⁴ It is through the film's baroque temporal structure and *mise-en-scène* that this

reconfiguration assumes cinematic form, destabilizes interpretation, and produces affective force.

Egoyan's handling of generic material here produces a considerably greater range of responses, as his fidelity—to the genre, or to his own *oeuvre*—is measured and assessed. Its relation with popular or mainstream genre is emphasised in various contexts. The popular newspaper *The Sun* called the film “a mesmerising psycho-thriller.”¹⁵ The blurb on the UK DVD describes how Felicia is drawn into a “macabre world of terror and suspense,” and calls the film an “utterly compulsive journey into fear.”¹⁶ Similarly, the American DVD reproduces a critic's observation that the film is “[the] richest, most provocative serial killer movie in cinema history.”¹⁷ While the film is clearly attached to specific genres (the psycho-thriller, the serial killer movie), its *critical* relation to those genres is here somewhat obscured, unless it is the film's refusal to abide by the relevant conventions (rather than its excessive provision of typical pleasures) that is implied when it is called “the richest, most provocative” example of the genre. However, this would be to equate (almost ironically) its “richness” with the film's refusal or failure to provide the repeated presentation of certain sequences associated with the genre (such as brutal slayings). Critics regularly described the film by describing the film's relation with popular and mainstream cinema. As Donato Totaro and Simon Galiero have noted, *Felicia's Journey* refuses to provide its audience with “the traditional serial killer pile of corpses and bloody mayhem”; indeed, the most violent scenes in the film consist of Hilditch spearing a joint of meat while dutifully following his mother's cookery show.¹⁸ Egoyan has described how the “tension” in *Felicia's Journey* is related to “whether we're going to see the horror or not.”¹⁹ For these reasons, then, Scott Tobias has noted how the film “defies the lurid conventions of the serial-killer genre,” while Richard Porton has

suggested the film “brilliantly subverts the conventions of the standard Hollywood thriller as well as the clichés of the by-now hackneyed serial killer subgenre.”²⁰ Jonathan Romney’s response implies that the way the film is approached—as either a work of popular genre or an Egoyan film—will determine its success: for him, the film “feels strangely unsatisfying and inconclusive if we approach it as a mainstream psychological thriller; read as an Egoyan film, however, with all the gaps and discontinuities that implies, it takes on a more teasing, complex appearance.” As a genre film, Romney suggests, *Felicia’s Journey* is “an exercise in misdirection”: the spectator is (deliberately) misled by the film, and the director strategically fails to provide the pleasures associated with the genre to which the film initially or superficially belongs.²¹ For Romney, *Felicia’s Journey* is “a film which, in its deceptively understated way, is arguably Egoyan’s most baroque: an attempt to stretch the parameters of mainstream crime cinema, if not altogether to subvert them.”²² Similarly, Egoyan has suggested that the film approaches suspense in markedly different ways than Hitchcock’s films. He has said: “[If] you call [*Felicia’s Journey*] Hitchcockian, people go in expecting some sort of payoff which the film isn’t really prepared to deliver.”²³ As such, *Felicia’s Journey* exemplifies the “translation of vision” John Orr sees in those directors who negotiate an “incorporation of Hitchcock into a strong existing auteurist vision.”²⁴ For Egoyan, the suspense provided by *Felicia’s Journey* is based on whether its characters are able to overcome their inability to recognize who they are (or what they have become).²⁵ The refusal to “deliver” the conventional conclusion is emphasised by the film’s obvious amalgamation of tropes familiar from both Hitchcock’s cinema and the serial killer films it inspired and influenced. The subversion of the conventions of the serial-killer film attempted by Egoyan’s film can, however, be usefully distinguished from the

satirizing of the genre demonstrated by the highly successful *Scream* trilogy, directed by Wes Craven, and released in 1996, 1997 and 2000. For David Sanjek the *Scream* franchise epitomises the “painful self-consciousness that permeates postmodern culture” and in which radical critique, or even genuine subversion, is absent. In Sanjek’s view, the *Scream* trilogy represents only a cynical and playful evolution of the genre.²⁶ *Felicia’s Journey*, on the other hand, presents a profoundly radical (and radically profound) critique of the serial killer genre. Egoyan’s formal experimentation (with, for example, narrative structure), as well as his use of *mise-en-scène*, demonstrates how *Felicia’s Journey* approaches the genre in order to explore complex moral and ethical issues concerning memory and responsibility. Egoyan’s strategic *misuse* of the genre illuminates the conventional failings of the genre. The distance Egoyan’s interest in mourning and responsibility takes him from the genre illustrates the distance the genre has established (at the narrative level) between its exploitation of violent death and *any* consideration of properly mournful response or mournful responsibility.

Combining in equal parts macabre menace and whimsical comedy, self-reflexive suspense and poignant pathos, *Felicia’s Journey* addresses a range of cultural myths and popular iconography as part of its critical examination of the cinematic representation of serial killing. The film presents a subtle evocation of the Bluebeard myth, by dwelling on a young woman who is drawn inside the house of a man who has killed women in the past, and a strategic incorporation of the story of Salome, by including a scene in which Hilditch watches William Dieterle’s 1953 film *Salome*. While the former fairy tale, according to Marina Warner, represents a cultural fantasy reflecting women’s fears about men, the latter, according to Bram Dijkstra, represents men’s fantasies and fears concerning women.²⁷ Egoyan carefully

emphasizes those aspects of the conventional Gothic thriller which connect the genre to other historical sources and traditions. *Felicia's Journey* resists, rejects and refuses the exploitative conventions of serial-killer film entertainment, in which violent death is traditionally presented as a gory spectacle. Fidelity to established formula characterizes the serial killer film, in which audience familiarity with the conventions is fully exploited. Discussing *Felicia's Journey*, Egoyan has remarked: "The whole issue of how to locate expectation and to satisfy – or perhaps disrupt, and thereby satisfy at a deeper level – our expectations is of great interest to me."²⁸ In Egoyan's film Trevor's characters and narrative are subtly reconfigured so that the film presents a coherent continuation of Egoyan's own interests in, for example, fragmented families, traumatic mourning, and obsessive ritual, and a concerted development of his idiosyncratic formal devices, such as the use of fractured narratives and video imagery.

The film focuses on the relationship between Felicia (Elaine Cassidy), a young Irish girl, and Hilditch (Bob Hoskins), a middle-aged catering manager, whose paths cross in present-day Birmingham. The film begins after Felicia leaves her village in Ireland and travels to the city of Birmingham, desperately searching for her erstwhile lover, Johnny Lysaght, by whom she is pregnant. He has told her he has found work in a lawnmower factory, but her father has heard he is barracked there with the British Army. Felicia's father has cast out Felicia as a result of her relationship with Johnny. Upon her arrival, she meets Hilditch, a mild-mannered catering manager, who tells her where she might look for Johnny and find somewhere to stay. Hilditch, who appears to live alone, spends his evenings cooking meals while watching old tapes of the television cookery show once hosted by his mother, Gala. In his storeroom, along with dozens of the food processors his mother endorsed on her show, Hilditch keeps

an archive of videotapes of young girls he has befriended and which he has covertly recorded while driving them about; over dinner, he watches a video tape recording of his second meeting with Felicia. After meeting Felicia a third time, Hilditch offers to drive her to a factory outside Birmingham, telling her he is visiting his wife Ada in a nearby hospital. He steals the money Felicia took from her great-grandmother, at which point he begins to remember episodes from his own childhood, specifically an incident when he stole money from a wallet dropped by one of the production crew during the shooting of his mother's show. Inside the hospital, Hilditch discovers a television showing William Dieterle's 1953 *Salome*, and recalls attending a theatrical production of *Salome* as a child with his mother. He also recalls the young women he had befriended, and specifically incidents in which they struggled with him in his car.

Felicia is invited to stay at a hostel by Miss Caligary, a door-stepping evangelist who encounters Felicia in the street, but leaves upon discovering her money is missing, and returns to Hilditch's house; he tells her Ada has died. Hilditch persuades Felicia to have an abortion, while keeping from her his discovery of Johnny at the local barracks. He then drugs Felicia's cocoa, and tells her the names of the other "lost girls" who he had befriended in the past and "laid to rest": "Beth, Elsie, Sharon, Gail, Bobby, Jackie, Samantha." As Felicia slips into unconsciousness, Hilditch begins to dig a grave in his back garden. Interrupted by Miss Caligary, Hilditch confesses to having stolen Felicia's money after learning that Felicia had spoken kindly of him to her, at which point Miss Caligary flees. Felicia struggles downstairs, and is first stopped, and then released by Hilditch, who repeats to her Miss Caligary's proclamation that "the pain will wash away, the healing will commence"; he then hangs himself. The closing scene shows Felicia working in a city

park, having written a letter to Johnny's mother, in which she describes her abortion, and lists the names of Hilditch's victims.

Mise-en-scène, Memory and Mourning

Felicia's Journey is dominated by sequences depicting Felicia's arrival in Birmingham and her meeting with Hilditch, as well as Hilditch's life at work and home. In scenes showing Felicia in Ireland, she is often presented in extreme long shots, such as when she walks to Mrs. Lysaght's house (see fig. 39). Viewers familiar with Egoyan's previous films might be reminded of earlier sequences in which he has presented human figures dwarfed by their surroundings, such as the empty space around the Renders' house in *The Adjuster*, the meadows and fields in which the search for Lisa's body takes place in *Exotica*, or the expanses of snow through which Stephens trudges in *The Sweet Hereafter*. The sequences of Felicia arriving in Birmingham emphasize her vulnerability by showing her as a tiny figure in the surrounding spaces, whether they are urban (see figs. 9 and 10) or more rural (see figs. 21 and 79). The industrial landscape of Birmingham is repeatedly depicted in surreal compositions which emphasize various foreboding structures beneath which Hilditch's car beetles along (see figs. 18, 50, 112). Cooling towers, which feature so prominently in Egoyan's film, also appeared on the front cover of the original publication of Trevor's novel, as Stephanie McBride has noted.²⁹ Romney suggests that Egoyan's films gives Birmingham "a bleak, Antonioni-esque vastness" in which Felicia is "[engulfed] ... in wide-angle space."³⁰ In other words, the presentation of urban space is here simultaneously suggestive of the heroine's physical and emotional fragility. Egoyan has discussed how scenes showing Felicia encountering Hilditch

while he drives around Birmingham were influenced by the photography of Jeff Wall, and specifically how for him Wall “locates people in a space of tension.”³¹ Egoyan discusses these shots in relation to “suddenly [suspending] a scene which is non-dramatic or seem to slow or suspend the narrative.”³² Significantly, the suspense Egoyan is most interested in here is of a distinctly formal or pictorial, and non-dramatic, kind. The experience of watching *Felicia’s Journey* is analogous to its heroine’s negotiation of a mysterious and foreboding landscape, in which nothing is quite what it seems. Egoyan has described wanting to give his viewers “the space and time to find their own paths through the film.” For Egoyan, “[a] very entertaining way to watch a film is to be in a space where you have to lose yourself to a world of surprise and enchantment, but also be aware of the distance you have to go to lose yourself.”³³

The composition of individual shots contributes to the film’s production of suspense concerning Felicia’s fate as she is drawn under Hilditch’s control: that Felicia, like the young women who Hilditch previously befriended, may eventually share their fate, is suggested by various shots in which Felicia is framed in ways which anticipate her potential posthumous preservation in Hilditch’s video archive. For instance, she is framed by Hilditch’s car door window in several shots, including one in which she is effectively beheaded by the edge of the frame (fig. 49), and one in which she is already reduced to a low-resolution video image (fig. 74). That her encounter with Hilditch might eventually lead to her death is initially suggested by a shot showing him watching her in his wing mirror (fig. 16), which suggests his desire to regard her, but regard an image of her. She is also repeatedly shown within square window-frames, such as when she visits Mrs. Lysaght (figs. 42-3), which eerily

contain her in squares comparable with the dimensions of the television screen on which Hilditch watches his mother and the lost girls.

The relationship between Hilditch and Felicia in *Felicia's Journey* can be compared with scenarios in Egoyan's previous films in which men attempt to form attachments with younger women who then take the place of their own daughters, such as Francis's ritualized relationship with Christina in *Exotica*, or Stephen's professional focus on Nicole in *The Sweet Hereafter*. At the same time, Hilditch's recourse to video technology to maintain a relationship with his dead mother invites comparison with Van from *Family Viewing*, who seizes control of his father's home movie archive in order to access footage of his absent mother, and also evokes Clara from *Speaking Parts*, who repeatedly watches home movie images of her dead brother, Clarence.³⁴ Furthermore, Hilditch's obsessive viewing of his mother's television cookery show resembles Lisa's ritualized contemplation of Lance's films in *Speaking Parts*, particularly since in both films the viewer (Hilditch, Lisa) is addressed directly by the person they are watching (Gala, Lance), or at least imagine that they are. Hilditch's obsessions are thus typical of the "fetishistic [relationships] with recording technologies" that Monique Tschofen argues are repeatedly examined in Egoyan's cinema.³⁵ At the textural level, *Felicia's Journey* is repeatedly punctured by simulated television and video images. Video images showing various young women who Hilditch has befriended in the past punctuate the narrative present of *Felicia's Journey* in much the same way that video images of Lisa, Francis's daughter, repeatedly interrupt the narrative present in *Exotica* (see figs. 45-7).³⁶ The film also incorporates black and white television footage of Hilditch's mother's cookery show. The materiality of these images is emphasised through the visual static or snow which characterizes these sequences (see for example figs. 56 and 126). The

loss of pictorial clarity during these sequences, in which the image appears grainy, fuzzy, and ill-defined, emphasizes the spectral nature of these dead women's presence in Hilditch's consciousness. Egoyan has suggested that the incorporation of video images in his films is intended not only to make the viewer aware that the image is a construct, but of "how frail and delicate and precarious that image is."³⁷ Timothy Shary argues that video images in Egoyan's early cinema function as a "real or imaginary sites for depictions of death."³⁸ The otherness of death is linked to the materiality of the video image throughout *Felicia's Journey's* representation of the 'lost girls.' In one sequence, Felicia is crying in the front passenger seat of Hilditch's car, outside a hospital. Hilditch looks down at her from the verge beside the car, approximating (though from the opposite direction) the downward angle of the video camera with which he records his passengers, the car door window provides an internal supplemental frame for the image of Felicia blowing her nose, at which point there is a sudden cut to a video tape image of a 'lost girl' blowing her nose. The repetition of the gesture is an ominous indication that Felicia has taken the place of this girl (in the car) and is similarly vulnerable in her despair, while the material dissonance between the two images, the discrepancy made visible in the cut from film to low-grade video, suggests a difference which for now at least pertains, whereby Felicia has not yet been killed, and so has not yet been completely reduced to this kind of image (in Hilditch's archive and/or in his memory). The cut from/difference between the film image and the video image also insists on the loss that the video image always makes palpably and perceptually present or felt, in which the sudden impoverishment of the image's clarity (the sudden diminishment of the image due to the lower level of light sensitivity in the recording technology) evokes here the lost girl, and the violence of the loss, or end of her life. As Hilditch walks around the

hospital, several other scraps of video footage showing other young 'lost girls' interrupt the film image track. The materiality of the video tape is emphasized when we see the image itself furling and wrinkling as the pausing of the playback halts and distorts the image surface, for instance when one of the girls says "I've got nowhere to go" and cries into her hand, at which point image freezes and switches to black and white, or when Hilditch is shown struggling with another girl, and the image begins to rewind, the girl violently obscured by horizontal lines. While Hilditch may desire a viewing position of transcendental mastery over these women by accessing images of them in this way, the failure of the image to fully represent them, the loss of resolution that characterizes these images, implies the ultimate failure of this attempt. The desire to possess the other (the mother, the young women) by collecting and accessing video archives in this way suggests the way mourning can reduce the other, disavowing her exteriority and reducing her to an image. Low-grade (or low resolution) video presents an image characterised by what Laura U. Marks (referring to Egoyan's *Calendar*) has called "tactile opacity," because the image involves a "haptic perception" which "privileges the material presence of the image" and as such "[refuses] visual plenitude."³⁹ The collection of videotapes kept in Hilditch's storeroom represents an interiorisation of the other in which it is only an *image* of the other that is preserved. Hilditch's collection of his mother's cookery shows has allowed him to replace his actual memories of her with a physical archive. For Derrida, however, the memory of the other is always "greater" than what we can "bear, carry, or comprehend."⁴⁰ Hilditch's storeroom thus functions as a symptom of what Derrida called "most distressing, or even the most deadly infidelity," when one which interiorizes "the image, idol or ideal of the other," which results in memories "[consisting] of visible scenes that are no longer anything but *images*" in which "the

other of whom they are the images appears only as the one who has disappeared or passed away, as the one who, having passed away, leaves “in us” only images.”⁴¹ In such “faithful interiorization,” Derrida writes, “the other no longer quite seems to be the other ...”⁴² Derrida even suggests that such interiorization stores the other within a kind of vault, for which Hilditch’s room becomes a displaced manifestation.⁴³ Jacinto Lageira, describing characters in Egoyan’s first four feature films, suggests that “when they turn to the past, they only search for memories fixed in images ... the projection of memory in an act of anamnesis often seems to replace real memory.”⁴⁴ The graininess of these images suggests how such interiorisation fails, how this preservation, rather than protect the other, violates her. The relationship between visible grain and death is emphasized when, following Hilditch’s suicide at the end of the film, the black and white image of the young Hilditch and his mother fades to black. The film is momentarily suspended at this point (much like Hilditch, hanging from his kitchen ceiling) during which we see tiny pocks of white, the visual static that signifies the end of the recording, speckling and winking within the image, and hear the scratchy sound of a gramophone needle shirring around the label of a record. The end of Hilditch’s life, therefore, is represented by the visual and audible signs that indicate the end of a recorded image or sound.

Flashbacks

In *Felicia’s Journey* Egoyan presents another scenario in which a vulnerable young woman and an older man form an ambiguous attachment haunted by the traumatic loss of previous relations, and another film in which video technology functions for the characters as a means to access (or be assailed by) the past. The

various flashbacks to Hilditch's childhood, and to Felicia's experiences in Ireland, may appear to delineate the characters' pasts but arguably function to suggest only the traumatic recollection of their past experiences in the present. The flashbacks in *Felicia's Journey* are firmly anchored in the characters' troubled consciousnesses, rather than in any objective historical reality. The flashbacks presented as Felicia's memories depict her relationships with Johnny, her father and her great-grandmother in Ireland. Hilditch's memories of his childhood are presented with a garish palette to suggest they are less anchored in reality than Felicia's memories (see figs. 52-4 and 71-3), but, as we shall see, Felicia's memories are also carefully presented so as to privilege the present tense of her recollection rather than simply show the past events. Certain scenes are repeated in serial fashion in various ways that suggest how significant events can be preserved (through being recorded) or reconfigured (through the work of recollection). For example, Gala is shown picking rosemary first as part of the television program (fig. 25) and subsequently during one of Hilditch's memory-flashbacks (fig. 52). Felicia's encounter with Hilditch, in which he offers to drive her to the factory (figs. 34-5), is 'shown' again when Hilditch watches the video he had secretly made (figs. 40-1).

The flashbacks representing Felicia's memories revolve around a kiss Johnny planted on Felicia's face immediately prior to his departure (see figs. 7-8, 36-8 and 104), and the flashbacks representing Hilditch's memories revolve around a kiss planted on his face by his mother, Gala (see figs. 73, 75-7 and 124-6). The scene of Johnny's kiss is presented three times, each time at a different speed and from a different distance, as Felicia remembers the event at pivotal junctures during her time in Birmingham. Egoyan links the two characters by having both Felicia and Hilditch remember being kissed on the face several times during the film. During the sequence

at the hospital when Hilditch is apparently assailed by various recollections of his mother and the 'lost girls' there is presented first an image representing what Egoyan has called his "organic" memory, "the first glimmerings of consciousness," in which Gala holds his head and cuddles his face in their garden, and then an image representing the television recording of that same moment.⁴⁵ The kiss is therefore shown in the first instance in the garish colours and over-exposed light which Egoyan uses to represent the intensity with which Hilditch experiences the return of these childhood memories to his consciousness, and then again with the fuzzy monochrome image which Egoyan uses to simulate the kind of image achievable with standard television recording technology in the 1950s. The kiss is also preserved in a photograph Hilditch has on his mirror (see fig. 44). For both Felicia and Hilditch, reassessing the relationship metonymically signified by the scenes in which they are kissed on the face becomes a traumatic relinquishment of an idealised other, and of a relation (and a regard) that was arguably based in fantasy rather than reality. For Felicia, the moment Johnny kisses her goodbye is visually twinned with a scene in which her father holds her head in his hands (fig. 33). For Hilditch, the moment Gala kisses him is visually matched to his recollection of a performance of Salome, specifically the scene in which Salome kisses the severed head of John the Baptist (fig. 72). For both Felicia and Hilditch, memories of others (lovers, fathers, and mothers) are linked to violence, descriptions of historical bloodshed or theatrical stagings of bloodlust; Felicia's father takes her to the ruins of a castle and reminds her of the murder of her great-grandfather by the British, and Hilditch's mother passes the young Hilditch a pair of opera glasses during the performance of Salome (fig. 71), perhaps the same glasses he uses to watch his mother's television show from the dining table (fig. 27). There is a clear distinction presented between Felicia's

memories of Johnny's departure: the first time is a memory-in-the-present (and is shown accordingly to represent the way she remembers it as she arrives to try and find him and re-find that kind of intensity) but the second time it is a flashback, and the third time it is an even more intense form of memory-in-the-present, in which the camera is even closer, he is kissing her on her eyes, and she is remembering (in the present) him kissing her in a way which isn't faithful to the departure scene we have by this time seen unfold objectively in the flashback. When she arrives at the coach station she 'remembers' Johnny holding her head and telling her that "Every minute I'll be thinking of you"—this is a moment she holds onto in order to convince herself that he is worth looking for, worth finding. We actually see this scene again a little later, in one of the flashback sequences. He says the same words to her, although they seem much less earnest; seconds later, his friend shows up and he ignores Felicia, and then jumps on the coach without giving her his address. The first version suggests the way she remembers (needs to remember) that unhappy scene; she 'remembers' it in slow-motion, in close-up. The second time we see it the camera is much further away; it is clear that her denial has worked on this event in order to make it more dramatically romantic, by 'editing' out the arrival his friend, his hasty departure, and keeping, intensifying, and amplifying his words of love, which sound all the more sincere – the presentation of that scene. Here, formal technique represents the way Felicia needs to represent and remember that scene. The presentation of these memories illustrates how, as Egoyan has suggested, Felicia "believes that this young man loves her, and clearly he doesn't, but she has to believe that and repeat that to herself."⁴⁶ Incidentally, his promise that he will be thinking of her always might be compared with her final letter to his mother, in which she explains that she will remember the names of the lost girls with every new face she meets. His empty

promise to consider and remember her is contrasted with her own remembrance of the dead women. The murdered women eventually occupy the position previously occupied by Johnny in Felicia's thoughts.

The repetition of these paralleled kissing scenarios illustrates Egoyan's desire to present a narrative which presents "a dramatic equivalent to counterpoint," a technique of repetition associated with baroque fugue.⁴⁷ Subjective flashbacks punctuate the narrative, but so do sequences representing the characters' dreams and fantasies. For instance, Hilditch imagines Felicia exploring his house (figs. 97 and 99) and Felicia has two dreams, the first about Johnny (figs. 102-3) and the second, during her abortion, about Johnny, her father and her child (figs. 106-10). *Felicia's Journey* privileges the interior or inner life of its central characters: an emphasis on memory and fantasy contributes to the film's slightly dreamlike tone.

The attachment between Hilditch and Felicia in *Felicia's Journey* presents a reconfiguration of similar fatherly-daughterly relationships in previous Egoyan films at the same time as it functions in the narrative as a way for Hilditch and Felicia to find a substitute for a previous relation that has been severed. In other words, the relationship between Hilditch and Felicia (in *Felicia's Journey*) and, for example, Francis and Christina (in *Exotica*) can be compared with the way Hilditch functions as a substitute father for Felicia or the way Christina functions as a substitute daughter for Francis: in Egoyan's films the search for a substitute with which to resolve a severed relation functions to sustain a relationship (a continuity) between the films themselves. Similarly, the repeated punctuation of *Felicia's Journey's* narrative with video images, suggesting the interruption of Hilditch's consciousness by past experience, also functions to link the representation of interiority within this film to Egoyan's previous works: as Hilditch's past experience is represented through the

interruption of the film by video images, so are Egoyan's previous films evoked through this particular strategy's return in *Felicia's Journey*, particularly since video images had played a relatively marginal part in *The Sweet Hereafter*. As Emma Wilson has noted, "It is not merely in the return of video in the structure and texture of his filmmaking but in the specific association of video with intimacy and the family, here with a lost mother and surrogate daughters, that Egoyan creates kinship between his films."⁴⁸

With the relationship between Hilditch and Felicia, Egoyan also evokes Gothic fairy tales (such as the story of Bluebeard or Beauty and the Beast); in the same way that Egoyan uses Robert Browning's poem *The Pied Piper of Hamelin* (1842) (and the legend to which it refers) to produce a mythical resonance around the loss of the town's children in *The Sweet Hereafter*, Gothic and fairy tale motifs are evoked in *Felicia's Journey* to render more ambiguous and suggestive the film's presentation of the archetypal serial murderer and the young heroine.⁴⁹ In several startling scenes, the legend of Salome (and the decapitation of John the Baptist) is added to the film's disarming accumulation of citation and homage (see figs. 64-5, 68).⁵⁰ The film's generic forbears also include Hitchcock's Gothic or domestic melodramas such as *Rebecca* (1940), *Suspicion* (1941), and *Shadow of a Doubt* (1943), all of which concern a young woman's fears that the man to whom she has formed an attachment has either killed in the past or will kill again in the future. While the women are eventually revealed to be either hysterical or paranoid in *Rebecca* and *Suspicion* (and the husbands' innocence confirmed), *Shadow of a Doubt* presents an adolescent heroine who eventually learns that her beloved uncle is actually a serial murderer. Similarly, *Felicia's Journey* concludes with Felicia's response to the truth she eventually learns from Hilditch concerning the fate of the

women he has befriended before her. More recently, films such as *Le Boucher* (Claude Chabrol, 1970) and *M. Hire* (Patrice Leconte, 1989) have focused on attachments between young women and serial killers in ways that are comparable with *Felicia's Journey* due to their emphasis on the psychological and emotional aspects of the characters rather than the actual crimes. Introducing Hilditch's mother's cookery show allows Egoyan to combine in a slightly surreal fashion the absurd pretensions of *haute cuisine* with the serial murder plot, much like the blackly comic scene in Hitchcock's *Frenzy* (1972) in which Chief Inspector Oxford (Alec McGowan) discusses the gruesome crimes of the 'necktie murderer' while his wife (Vivian Merchant) presents him with gourmet dishes such as *soupe de poisson* and *piéd de porc*. But it is with the relationship between Hilditch and his mother, Gala, that Egoyan most self-consciously plays with conventions of the serial killer film that can be traced back to Hitchcock's *Psycho* (1959) (as well as to Michael Powell's *Peeping Tom* (1960)) and which were being revived and parodied in Wes Craven's *Scream* trilogy (1996, 1997 and 2000), Dan Gillespie's *I Know What You Did Last Summer* (1997) and Danny Cannon's *I Still Know What You Did Last Summer* (1998) at around the time of *Felicia's Journey's* release. With *Felicia's Journey* Egoyan's cinema for the first time makes explicit allusions to classic examples of genre cinema, while maintaining thematic and formal continuities with his own films.

When, towards the very end of the film, Hilditch climbs his staircase with a mug of cocoa with which he intends to drug Felicia (figs. 113-4), the film reminds us of the famous scene in *Suspicion* in which Cary Grant ascends the stairs with a suspiciously incandescent glass of milk. However, when Hilditch stares into the camera for a full half-minute upon reaching the top of the stairs (fig. 115), the film's apparently playful citation of Hitchcock's film is abruptly displaced by a much less

comfortable moment, in which the film effectively freezes, and demands we recognize and respond to the protagonist's 'impossible' recognition of, and interruption of, *our* engagement with this particular moment, which would otherwise be a straightforwardly self-reflexive sequence of cinematic suspense. Jonathan Romney describes this scene as "a striking but perplexing moment" which threatens the very logic of the film.⁵¹ Hilditch's stony stare into the camera is perplexing precisely because it violently disrupts the film's fictional world with a clichéd distancing strategy at the very moment that it appears to be initiating a final act in typical suspense-thriller climactic fashion.⁵² Egoyan has called this moment "an homage to Hitchcock," and suggested that "from that point on, the film is sort of Hitchcockian," despite the film's general attempt to "deconstruct" Hitchcock.⁵³ *Felicia's Journey* archly acknowledges the cine-literate spectator's appreciation of its presentation of recognizable and familiar situations and characters and its strategic appropriation of generic *and* auteurist elements (both Egoyan's and Hitchcock's). In this respect, *Felicia's Journey* "[forces] the spectator to assume a critical attitude that subverts the work's stability as a commodity," and potentially "negates its commodity form through the self-conscious articulation of that form."⁵⁴ However "Hitchcockian" the final sequences appear, the resolution of the film is emphatically "Egoyanian," due to its suggestive representation of a traumatising responsibility for the other.

Felicia's Journey, like *Exotica* and *The Sweet Hereafter*, ends with an image of the young female protagonist, but whereas *Exotica* ends with a flashback showing the teenaged babysitter Christina (Mia Kirshner) walking slowly into her house (in which, it has been subtly suggested, she endures an abusive relationship), and *The Sweet Hereafter* ends with a flashback showing another babysitter, Nicole (Sarah Polley) bathed in the headlights of a returning car (indicating that she too must return

to her home and her abusive father), *Felicia's Journey's* final scene presents a young woman who has managed to free herself from abusive and potentially violent relations with older men (Hilditch, but also her father) and also from the romantic attachment to her lover Johnny Lysaght. *Exotica* and *The Sweet Hereafter* both conclude with flashbacks to times *before* the tragedies with which the narratives are concerned (the murder of Lisa in *Exotica*, the deaths of the schoolchildren in *The Sweet Hereafter*) in order to privilege the female protagonists and the domestic scenarios which may explain their strange responses to the tragedy (Christina's striptease act, Nicole's lie). In *Felicia's Journey* the young heroine's response to the tragic death of others is rooted in her experiences at home in Ireland, and specifically her treatment by her father. However, the shape this response will take is only subtly hinted at during the film's closing moments. Unlike *Exotica* and *The Sweet Hereafter*, which both fold back upon themselves, *Felicia's Journey* seems to end slightly more optimistically, but the future which Felicia contemplates in the film's final scene is nevertheless one which will be marked by trauma, specifically a traumatic responsibility inaugurated by an imaginative apprehension of the historical violent death of the other. *Felicia's Journey* attempts to subvert the serial-killer genre from within through this narrative privileging of trauma, mourning and responsibility.

Felicia's "memories" of the murdered women are based on no more than Hilditch's testimony, for which there is no material archive. Felicia's "encounter" with the women who have been killed in the past remains one of imaginative proximity, and, as we shall see, this encounter (with *their* deaths) transforms her relationship with (the face of) the other. The most obvious way *Felicia's Journey* differs from the paradigmatic serial killer films Carol J. Clover has discussed is through its presentation of its heroine, since she is not the androgynous, intelligent

and resourceful woman who “grapples with [the killer] energetically and convincingly” and who can thus provide a “congenial double” for the adolescent male spectator the genre typically addresses.⁵⁵ Not for Felicia the trousers worn by Laurie Strode (Jamie Lee Curtis) in John Carpenter’s *Halloween* (1978) – Felicia wears a pretty floral frock, and high-heeled shoes (see fig. 14) and a baby-blue hooded duffel-coat, explicitly evoking, as Emma Wilson, amongst others, has noted, fairy tale heroines (see fig. 93).⁵⁶ Indeed, Kevin Lewis called the film “a chilling brief encounter between a Little Red Riding Hood and a Big Bad Wolf,” and Liam Lacey has referred to Egoyan’s interest in the “fractured fairy tale ... where updated Goldilocks or Little Red Riding Hood heroines make their way through the wicked world.”⁵⁷ Ewa Mazierska and Laura Rascaroli also compare Felicia to traditional fairy tale heroines, being in “a liminal phase, in between dependence on paternal figures ... and self determination,” and note how “[she] is not only on a journey from childhood to adulthood, but also on a traditional feminine quest – she is looking for the man who impregnated her, seeking his love and support.”⁵⁸ The clearest way *Felicia’s Journey* subverts its fairy tale elements is through its narrative resolution, and its presentation of its heroine’s journey’s end. This journey ends not in a romantic reunion (and union) between Felicia and Johnny (her lover), or between Felicia and her father, but in her traumatic assumption of responsibility for the memories of the women Hilditch has murdered, whose own journeys he brought to violent and premature ends. Vera Dika states that in the ‘stalker’ film the heroine who survives may triumph over the killer but is not liberated, because “she has come to face the reality of death and violence” and “now ... has to live with the memory of her murdered friends.”⁵⁹ However, in *Felicia’s Journey* Hilditch’s victims are *not*

Felicia's friends, she has never met them, nor witnessed their deaths, nor discovered their remains. Indeed, they are complete strangers to her, known only by (first) name.

The film ends with Felicia (in a letter to Johnny's mother) reflecting on their deaths, recounting their names, and remarking on their killer. The film ends, in other words, by suggesting how one may live with the 'memory' of murdered strangers, the 'memory' of the deaths of unknown others. Felicia can imagine the women who had previously occupied the position she has recently occupied (the passenger seat in Hilditch's car, but also the position in his life more generally). The commemoration of the murdered women by Felicia which concludes the film signifies the oral transmission of their memories from Hilditch to Felicia (and thence to Mrs. Lysaght), despite the fact that for Felicia the women are 'known' only by and through their first names. Felicia's remembering of their names and responsibility for their memory functions as the only form of justice to emerge in response to their deaths. Their deaths are otherwise un-mourned. Their 'disappearance' took place *before* Hilditch killed them, for they were already 'lost,' as he explains.

Felicia moves from an intense desire for (and idealisation of) her lover Johnny towards a sober commemoration of the deaths of various and specific strangers; in this way, conventional resolution (romantic union) is displaced by a singular responsibility. In this respect, the resolution of *Felicia's Journey* challenges the typical conclusion associated with the Gothic heroine, who, as Raymond W. Moseley has noted, is ultimately rewarded—for the loss of her familial security and subsequent persecution—with imminent "matrimonial felicity."⁶⁰ The conclusion provided by the film for its heroine also challenges what Teresa de Lauretis has called the "itinerary of the female's journey" provided by psychoanalytic paradigms: "The end of the girl's journey, if successful, will bring her to the place where the boy will find her, like

Sleeping Beauty, awaiting him, Prince Charming.” The female’s journey (“the positions she must occupy”) is ultimately organised around the fulfilment of his “biological and affective destiny.”⁶¹ De Lauretis notes that in the narrative representation of women in films (and, specifically, women’s films), “the “happy” ending” is achieved when the female protagonist reaches the place where “a modern Oedipus” will find her.⁶²

As Egoyan himself has suggested, Felicia resembles the female protagonists of *Exotica* and *The Sweet Hereafter* since all three women “have to find the means of their own protection and they have to do that by rejecting the patriarchy that has been presented to them.”⁶³ Elsewhere, Egoyan has discussed how Felicia, and Karen O’Connor in *Where the Truth Lies*, “become responsible” or “give themselves the position of becoming responsible ... for the preservation of something that would otherwise be forgotten.”⁶⁴ The resolution of *Felicia’s Journey* must reject for its heroine the Oedipal trajectory due to its commitment to mourning (and responsibility) ‘without end,’ in which the ethos of substitution (central to both successful Oedipal development and what Derrida called ‘triumphal’ mourning) is refused. This resolution emphasizes the ethical dimensions of Egoyan’s radical critique of conventional serial-killer narratives.

Egoyan has recognized the film’s special relationship to the melodrama by noting its emphasis on domesticity.⁶⁵ Hilditch’s house, which dominates the film, was constructed at Shepperton Studios in England; it is perhaps the most overdetermined domicile in Egoyan’s cinema since the show home in *The Adjuster* (1991). The opening shot in *Felicia’s Journey* snakes slowly around the ground floor of the house, lingering on various cabinets containing different kinds of collections, beginning with a collection of bird eggs (see fig. 1). While, as Emma Wilson has noted, this may

evoke for viewers familiar with Egoyan's previous films the hyacinth macaw eggs that Thomas (Don McKellar) incubates in the opening scenes of *Exotica*, such collections, housed in domestic space, also represent a trope in the cinematic representation of serial killers (one thinks of Norman Bates's stuffed birds, or the butterfly collections belonging to Freddie Clegg (Terence Stamp) in *The Collector* (William Wyler, 1965) and Jame Gumb (Ted Levine) in *The Silence of the Lambs* (Jonathan Demme, 1991)).⁶⁶ As the film proceeds, we discover other collections belonging to Hilditch, such as the food processors that his mother advertised on her cookery show, as well as the video tapes he has surreptitiously made while driving young women around Birmingham, and Hilditch's obsessive psychology is suggested by these collections as much as it is by his ritualized behaviour (see fig. 48). It is Gala's carefully constructed public persona that is preserved and repeated on the images of her that adorn the boxes containing the food processors. The collection of videos, on the other hand, presents a series of different young women, whose various faces are preserved on Hilditch's video tape. The women discuss their private lives on the videos, and the images have been produced without their knowledge. Hilditch replaces his broken food processor with a new one from his collection, and his substituting of the broken food processor with a duplicate might be compared with the way in which Hilditch has collected his videotapes, seeking a substitute each time the relationship breaks down. Since Hilditch makes video recordings of the women he kills, and clearly experiences traumatic recollections of his childhood, he seems to deliberately invite comparison with Mark (Carl Boehm), the killer in Michael Powell's *Peeping Tom*, which Egoyan has called "the *uber*-serial-killer film."⁶⁷ Indeed, the cookery show in which the young Hilditch is humiliated by his mother may evoke Mark's father's films, in which the young Mark is deliberately frightened

as part of his father's scientific experiments, but only to raise questions concerning the identification of abuse. By videotaping his victims, Hilditch also evokes Henry, the protagonist of John McNaughton's *Henry: Portrait of a Serial Killer* (1986), but, as previously mentioned, Hilditch's tapes do not show the deaths of his victims.

Felicia's Journey, Murder and the Gothic Melodrama

Egoyan has said of Hilditch that he "comes from a place where history is mediated, expressed through mechanical images."⁶⁸ With his collection of videotapes, Hilditch is a Bluebeard in the age of mechanical reproduction; before Felicia is invited to stay in his house, Hilditch attaches a large padlock to the door of the room in which he keeps his mother's food processors and the videos of the young women, transforming it into a 'secret space' within his house. As Felicia sleeps on Hilditch's sofa, he fantasizes about her attempt to gain entry into the room (see fig. 97). Hilditch pictures Felicia as a Gothic heroine exploring his house; Egoyan also repeatedly presents Felicia and the house in ways that emphasize their continuity with Gothic conventions. With Hilditch's house, *Felicia's Journey* presents a seemingly cosy space which at first may appear antithetical to the kind of "Terrible Place" Carol J. Clover has suggested is a central location for the slasher or serial killer film, but this space is suspiciously benign, since it appears suspended in the past, as does the character of Hilditch himself.⁶⁹

The house seems preserved in a somewhat remote past (the middle of the century), and due to this it appears strangely discontinuous with the contemporary period in which the film takes place. As Elizabeth MacAndrew has noted, the old house, identified in an intense way with its owner, is an omnipresent characteristic of

the Gothic.⁷⁰ Egoyan has suggested that both Hilditch and Felicia are “suspended in a period piece,” that Hilditch is “removed from his own time,” and that Felicia has “a romanticized vision” of her rural culture; through their encounter, they “shock each other into recognition of who they are and what their current situation is.”⁷¹

Furthermore, Hilditch’s house is a space dominated by the presence of Hilditch’s dead mother Gala in ways which evoke Mrs. Bates’s posthumous presence in Hitchcock’s *Psycho*. For example, the initial tracking shot in *Felicia’s Journey* lingers on a large framed photograph of Gala (see fig. 2), and most evenings Hilditch watches recordings of her cookery show. Domestic interiors in *Felicia’s Journey* evoke those in Hitchcock’s Gothic melodrama *Rebecca* (1940), which were deliberately scaled and shot so as to suggest the vulnerability of the Joan Fontaine character. Egoyan has remarked that Hilditch’s “absurdly large” house is “overscaled and heightened to emphasise his loneliness” (see fig. 3) but it also functions to emphasise Felicia’s vulnerability once she enters Hilditch’s house (see fig. 94).⁷² Egoyan has referred to Cocteau’s *Beauty and the Beast* (1946) when describing how he presented Felicia being driven to Hilditch’s “dark castle.”⁷³ As Norman N. Holland and Leona F. Sherman have suggested, “woman-plus-habitation” is a central and unchanging element in Gothic mysteries.⁷⁴ Carol Ann Howells has suggested that an “emphasis on feeling” is “the distinctive attribute of Gothic—feeling as it is explored and enacted in the fictions themselves, and feeling as the primary response elicited from the reader.”⁷⁵ The thriller is therefore suited to Gothic scenarios since, as Rick Altman has noted, it is a genre organised around creating specific reactions rather than representing specific narrative content, and, as Martin Rubin has suggested, it is marked by “an excess of certain qualities and feelings beyond the necessity of the narrative.”⁷⁶ The Gothic thriller film, then, while suggesting a very particular kind of

narrative content, is nevertheless defined primarily by an emphasis on depicting and eliciting emotion. Michelle A. Massé has described the typical Gothic plot as “a terror-inflected variant of Richardsonian courtship narrative in which an unprotected young woman in an isolated setting uncovers a sinister secret,” and in which “the narrative is shaped by the mystery the male presents and not by the drama of the supposed protagonist, the Gothic heroine.”⁷⁷ Susanne Becker suggests that the “maiden-in-flight” is perhaps the central convention in Gothic fiction, but notes that these narratives “[gravitate] around the villain” rather than the heroine. Egoyan’s film focuses on a vulnerable young woman who becomes involved with a mysterious older man who eventually reveals to her his “sinister secret.” However, Egoyan’s film ultimately privileges the traumatic maturation of the heroine over the mystery of the male protagonist. Felicia is not a conventional “maiden-in-flight,” since she is already pregnant before she leaves Ireland. Furthermore, she has also stolen money from her great-grandmother; she is, therefore, comparable with Marion Crane in Hitchcock’s *Psycho*, who sleeps with her lover and steals money from her boss before her fatal stay at the motel owned by Norman Bates.

Carol Ann Howells has noted that the Gothic heroine is a “deceived victim” whose persecution by the villain (who is often a father or fatherly figure) dominates the narrative, and whose experience “in no way lend to the growth of her self-awareness or a modification of any of her attitudes; at the end she emerges with sensibility intact, even if on rare occasions, physically violated.”⁷⁸ Egoyan’s film certainly concerns intense emotional states, and focuses on various kinds of traumatic experience and memory. However, the film is ultimately interested in privileging, at the narrative level, a potentially traumatising responsibility for the other. It is this traumatising responsibility for the other which defines the “growth” of Felicia’s self-

awareness, following her escape from Hilditch, and in contradistinction to the conventional Gothic heroine described above. While Hilditch deceives Felicia from the outset of their relationship, the film is ultimately more interested in charting Felicia's emergence from *self*-deception, specifically her belief in the legibility of the other's goodness. In challenging some of the conventions associated with the Gothic heroine, Egoyan's film simultaneously subverts several of the conventions associated with the contemporary slasher film, itself continuous (in certain respects) with Gothic traditions. The "psycho-thriller," according to Kim Newman, developed after Hitchcock's *Psycho*, and combined the horror film with the psychological thriller, "using the Gothic trappings of the former to emphasize the extreme mental states of the latter."⁷⁹

Carol J. Clover has noted that in the slasher film "the victim is a beautiful, sexually active woman" and that the heroine, the survivor, the "Final Girl," is *not* sexually active; it is she who "encounters the mutilated bodies of her friends, and perceives the full extent of the preceding horror and of her own peril; who is chased, cornered, wounded; whom we see scream, stagger, fall, rise, and scream again," and "alone looks death in the face" and "finds the strength either to stay the killer long enough to be rescued ... or to kill him herself"⁸⁰ However, beginning with Lila Crane in *Psycho*, the Final Girl is more likely to be rescued than survive by herself. As Tony Williams has argued, with reference to Clover's analysis of *Halloween*, the Final Girl trope is not inherently progressive, and often involves a climactic return to a male order.⁸¹ Vera Dika has, similarly, noted that the heroine of the stalker film (Dika's term for the same series of horror films) "survives not only by her ability to see the evil, but also by her ability to use violence," and that "the confrontation between the heroine and the killer is the culminating action of the film and is characterized by a

long, protracted battle of wits and strength.”⁸² The presentation of the female victims in *Felicia’s Journey*, like the presentation of the “Final Girl” Felicia, challenges the conventions Clover and Dika note, specifically those concerning the relationships between sex, ‘sight,’ strength and survival. Felicia is not rescued (she is instead released) and does not kill Hilditch (he kills himself). Felicia’s perception of “the full extent of the preceding horror” remains particularly ambiguous, as indeed it does for the spectator. As Timothy Shary has noted, Egoyan’s cinema explores “a landscape of tenuous knowledge.”⁸³ Diane Waldman has argued that a central feature in the Gothic is ambiguity, “the hesitation between two possible interpretations of events by the protagonist and often . . . by the spectator as well.”⁸⁴ Suspense in *Felicia’s Journey* is produced through this very hesitation, as the facts of Hilditch’s past are slowly revealed to the spectator in ways which maintain an ambiguity concerning the exact nature of his crimes. Significantly, Waldman notes, the protagonist (and, usually, the spectator) is a woman: our perception (and therefore our interpretation) of events in *Felicia’s Journey*, however, is from the very beginning greater than Felicia’s – we learn much more about Hilditch than Felicia ever does. In Vera Dika’s account of the stalker film, which in her description portrays “the struggle between a killer, who stalks and kills a group of young people, and a central character, usually a woman, who emerges from this group to subdue him,” she argues that the “single most distinctive characteristic of these films . . . lies in their representation of the killer: he is either kept off-screen or masked for the greater part of the film.”⁸⁵ While Hilditch is clearly presented throughout *Felicia’s Journey*, we do not immediately suspect he is a serial killer, and he is thus ‘masked’ to the extent that his mild manners and homely ways conceal—in a thoroughly conventional manner, it might be noted—a deeply disturbed individual, much like Richard Attenborough’s character in Richard

Fleischer's *10 Rillington Place* (1971) (based on real life serial killer John Christie), the sociopath played by Terence Stamp in *The Collector*, or Mark, the protagonist of *Peeping Tom*. As Cynthia A. Freeland has noted, it was by "chillingly [depicting] "ordinary" men who were unable to connect with the reality around them," that films such as *Psycho* and *Peeping Tom* "naturalized the horror-movie monster by turning him into the boy next door" and thus "permanently altered the face of the horror-film monster."⁸⁶ Such homely ordinariness, however, has since become a staple of cinematic representations of psycho killers.⁸⁷ William Indick has suggested that "[in] the post-modern era following *Psycho* and the many, many films it inspired, the typical psycho killer in the movies is a serial killer – a modern day monster, an evil villain – who's motivations have been explained and illustrated so many times in so many movies, as to make any psychological explanation for the psychotic serial killer's motives completely redundant and unnecessary."⁸⁸ Egoyan's film certainly exploits the conventional "psychological explanation" of the archetypal cinematic serial killer's actions by presenting Hilditch's memories of his childhood so as to invite the spectator to interpret his relationship with his mother as having determined his subsequent violence against women, but such an interpretation is not definitively validated by the film itself.

Felicia's Journey suggests that Hilditch maintains his mother's regard by ritualistically watching and re-watching the cookery shows in which she addressed her television audience, as a way to sustain a relationship with her that perhaps, in reality, was originally experienced as more confusing due to his mother's 'performance' of her maternal function for the cameras and her occasional impatience due to her son's clumsiness, for instance when he wanders into a shot being filmed in the garden, or attempts to stuff the turkey with the piping bag (fig. 85). Egoyan has

stated that Hilditch “clearly has wanted his mother’s regard, which he has never received, and now electronically is able to. Through this ritual of the tapes, she’s able to look at him all the time. And it is a very intimate, very adoring relationship that they have, which never existed in his childhood.”⁸⁹ Furthermore, the director has noted how “[He] has a ritual where he can command Gala’s full attention. He can play her films and redirect her gaze electronically, to be watching him. He can pretend that this relationship was completely nurturing. And that ritual has perverted him more than anything she ever did or didn’t do.”⁹⁰

Indeed, whether this childhood was actually the *cause* of Hilditch’s psychopathic behaviour is something the film carefully raises in order to reflect on both serial-killer movie conventions *and* clichés of Freudian psychoanalysis. As Cynthia A. Freeland has noted, the earlier influential films such as *Psycho* and *Peeping Tom* “imply that the killer is a sympathetic, conflicted man who commits crimes against women because of a particularly abusive childhood,” and that, furthermore, “this bad parenting is often held to be the particular fault of the mother.”⁹¹ Richard Dyer has discussed how serial killer movies offer a “commanding pattern of explanation for the killer’s behaviour,” often putting the blame on “dominating and teasing mothers.”⁹² Mark Seltzer writes:

[The serial killer] is a case history and, perhaps above all in the popular understanding, a childhood. This follows in part from the modern belief that childhood experience forms the adult, the founding premise, for example, of psychoanalysis. It is also the basic premise of a contemporary scene in which public life is everywhere referred back to scenes of an endangered, or dangerous, domesticity or privacy, and not least to the scenes of childhood

trauma. Child abuse—wounded as a child, wounding as an adult—
is one of the foundational scripts in accounting for the serial killer.
It has a sort of *a priori* status, even when evidence for it is absent.⁹³

In *Felicia's Journey* Egoyan provides a portrait of Hilditch's childhood that exploits the very phenomenon Seltzer describes, and which the director has referred to as the "bad mother cliché."⁹⁴ As Egoyan acknowledges, however, "we're so predisposed toward the bad mother as the site of blame ... that anything that even hints of that is seized on. People talk about [Gala's] cruelty to [Hilditch] in the garden. But it's not that extreme really: she just asks him to move out of the range of the camera."⁹⁵ As the cruelty of the mother is related to the production of an image, so Hilditch's memorialisation of his mother is the preservation of those images.

Resolution and Traumatic Responsibility

Egoyan claims that Felicia "comes from a place where her history is being drilled into her."⁹⁶ He has also suggested that Felicia's traditional culture in Ireland "is all about remembering the names, but the names that her father has given her don't have any meaning for her anymore, whereas the names that she's ... heard from the mouth of this killer do."⁹⁷ Despite being presented with what Egoyan calls a "sacred duty" to remember certain names (and the historical violence accessed through these names), Felicia is presented with another list of names, which represent an alternative history of violence, an individual "parallel history of victimisation," to use the phrase from Paul Ricoeur discussed in Chapter One, above.⁹⁸ Egoyan suggests that the duty to remember violence is a duty which is violently maintained (history, and her duty to

history, is being “drilled into her”); the duty to remember the names of the women Hilditch has killed, on the other hand, which also derives from ‘knowledge’ transmitted orally to her, is not presented to her *as* a duty (which is not to say, however, that she chooses this responsibility). In *The Politics of Friendship* Jacques Derrida explores the law of friendship and the law of mourning in relation to names and naming: to have a friend, and to call him or her by name, is always already to know that one of the two of you will be left to speak the other’s name in his or her absence. Friendship, Derrida argues, is structured by the inevitability that one will be left to commemorate and mourn the other. The name itself, Derrida has suggested, is always related to death and to the eventual absence of the named person. Mourning, he argues, begins with the name.⁹⁹ Hilditch gives Felicia the names of seven “lost girls” and Felicia lists these names in the letter she writes to Mrs. Lysaght. As Egoyan has suggested, Felicia’s culture “is all about oral traditions, passing things on through storytelling, and people talking about things.”¹⁰⁰ The names given to Felicia by Hilditch will be repeated by Felicia, but this mournful relation is not based on a relation severed by their deaths; for Felicia, the names of these women are spoken in their absence, but she has no memories of them, had never called them by these names when they were alive, nor been addressed in turn by them. However, after hearing their names from Hilditch, Felicia nevertheless responds as if to the impossible demand of the other who is already beyond protection. This response is to assume responsibility for ‘their’ memories by remembering their names. Felicia’s response, furthermore, is not clearly presented as a choice; it is arguably a response which she is unable to refuse: with every new face she meets, she explains, she remembers the names of the women Hilditch killed. Earlier in the film, Miss Caligary says to Hilditch “[none] of us can flee the one who dies, for the one who dies awaits

us.” Her description of the impossibility of avoiding Christ’s final judgement is arguably transformed into a secular ethic of traumatic responsibility for the mortal other, which evokes Levinas’s account of being “thrown back towards something that was never my fault or of my own doing, something that was never within my power or my freedom, something that never was my presence and never came to me through memory.”¹⁰¹ As Felicia’s voice-over proceeds, we see Felicia, who appears to be working as a gardener in a park, give a young woman directions; this stranger, who Felicia helps on *her* journey, represents the new faces Felicia will meet.

On one level, the municipal garden in which the film’s final scene is shot must be considered in relation to several gardens that have featured in the film prior to this: the garish garden, recalled by Hilditch, in which Gala shot sequences for her television cookery show, and the equally vivid picture book illustration of the Garden of Paradise that Miss Caligary shows to Felicia and to Hilditch. On another level, the scene evokes earlier scenes in which Felicia herself asked strangers for directions and help when she arrived in Birmingham, which led, ultimately, to her encounter with Hilditch, and the knowledge and responsibility she took from that encounter.

Each stranger Felicia meets, furthermore, will be encountered within, and as a continuation of, her response to her ‘knowledge’ of the deaths of the women who had the misfortune to encounter Hilditch. Each new face she meets, in other words, is encountered *in* memory of the other whose death was (and will remain) impossible to prevent, and, as it were, impossible *not* to remember. As Levinas writes, “The face is that possibility of murder, that powerlessness of being and that authority that commands me: ‘Thou shalt not kill,’” and, furthermore, “[the] coming of the human to ethics passes through this ethical suffering, the disturbance brought by every face ...”¹⁰² While seven names are provided by Hilditch, eight different women appear in

the video footage which punctuates the film.¹⁰³ Since only six of the women are shown introducing themselves by name to Hilditch, there remains one name (Samantha) which might refer to either of the two unnamed women, leaving one woman without a name, or rather, one woman whose name we never learn. It is the very first two women we see in the video footage whose names we aren't given (who we see when Hilditch is labelling the video he has made of Felicia) and they are also the women who we most clearly see struggling with Hilditch and trying to leave his car. The list of names is therefore incomplete, unless we are to believe that Hilditch's video footage represents eight women all but one of whom he "laid to rest."

Furthermore, that there are eight different women shown in Hilditch's car is unlikely to be noticed, since the women are shown in rapid succession and several appear only once or twice during the entire film. However, the presence of the eighth woman in the video footage usefully suggests that Hilditch fails to remember the names of all the women he has befriended and killed, and that therefore the list of names he passes onto Felicia fails to represent all of his victims. One remains unnamed, and is therefore neither remembered nor mourned. The mournful work of responsibility Felicia assumes at the end of the film, in other words, is a work that fails inasmuch as it fails—through no fault of her own—to include all those Hilditch has killed. The work of mourning, in this respect, is incomplete. On the one hand, concluding the film with Felicia's letter to Mrs. Lysaght represents a radical narrative privileging of a traumatic responsibility for the deaths of others while, on the other hand, there is 'concealed' within the film the presence of the eighth and unnamed woman whose absence from Felicia's letter suggests, even more radically, the failure of this mournful responsibility. In her letter, however, Felicia tells Mrs. Lysaght that she remembers the names of the murdered women with every new face she meets; never

having seen the original women, but knowing only their names, she nevertheless recalls them with every new person she meets, presumably prior to knowing the new person's name. The strangers she meets, she acknowledges, compel her to remember those strangers she had never met but who she knows to have been killed by Hilditch. In other words, the violent deaths of strangers in the past, events she is incapable of remembering herself, nevertheless haunt her future interactions with others. Miss Caligary had previously said: "None of us can flee the one who dies, for the one who dies awaits us ..." Felicia's is an open-ended response to her encounter with Hilditch, suggesting a traumatic and permanent privileging of the unavoidable and unpreventable death of the other in her all her future interactions.

The video footage of the young women in Hilditch's car form the basis of Egoyan's single channel video installation piece titled *Evidence* and shown as part of *Notorious: Alfred Hitchcock and Contemporary Art* at the Oxford Museum of Contemporary Art in 1999.¹⁰⁴ In this piece, the "lost girls" of *Felicia's Journey* are represented in an entirely new context as a gallery piece, and (originally at least) as part of an exhibition concerned with Hitchcock as an influence on, and inspiration for, contemporary visual artists. In this context, outside the narrative of the film for which the footage was originally made, the "lost girls" are presented as 'evidence,' which refers back to their presence in *Felicia's Journey* as the visible 'proof' of Hilditch's crimes. In this work, the video loop reproduces the serial and ritual re-playing of the tapes suggested in the film, and also emphasizes the serial nature of Hilditch's compulsion to befriend young women. The endless temporal structure of the piece, consisting of a nineteen minute video loop, transcends the narrative organization of the feature film into a beginning, a middle, and an end. Violence and death remain implicit in the piece, present and absent at the same time. Leo Bersani and Ulysse

Dutoit have argued that when violence is represented in narrative, the “pacifying power” of beginnings, middles and ends mean that violence “can be isolated, understood, perhaps mastered and eliminated.”¹⁰⁵ The “suspenseful expectation of climaxes” produced by such narratives, they argue, contributes to a “fascination with violent events,” “a mimetic excitement focused on the very scene of violence.”¹⁰⁶ While *Felicia’s Journey* strategically refuses to provide the spectacle of violent events despite its deliberate exploitation of spectators’ suspenseful expectations, *Evidence*, as a supplementary text which is both inside and outside—interiorized by *and* exterior to—the film, challenges even more effectively our desire for the narrative organization (narratives’ *misrepresentation*) of historical or fictional violence. In Egoyan’s *Evidence*, the death of the other is suggested without being represented, and, in our response, which will inevitably fail to fully interiorize a work which never ends, the “thrilling of intelligibility” is permanently suspended.

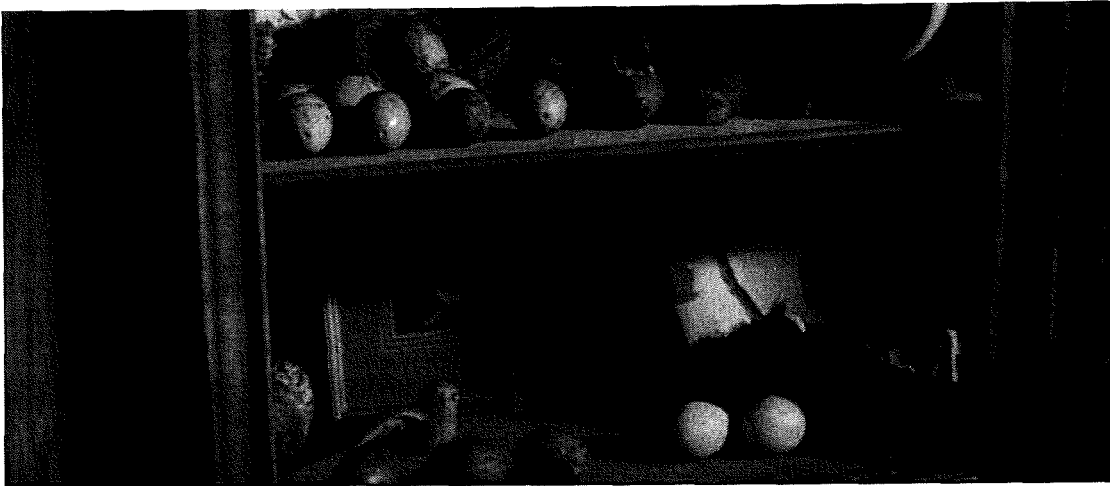


Fig. 1: Hilditch's collection of birds' eggs

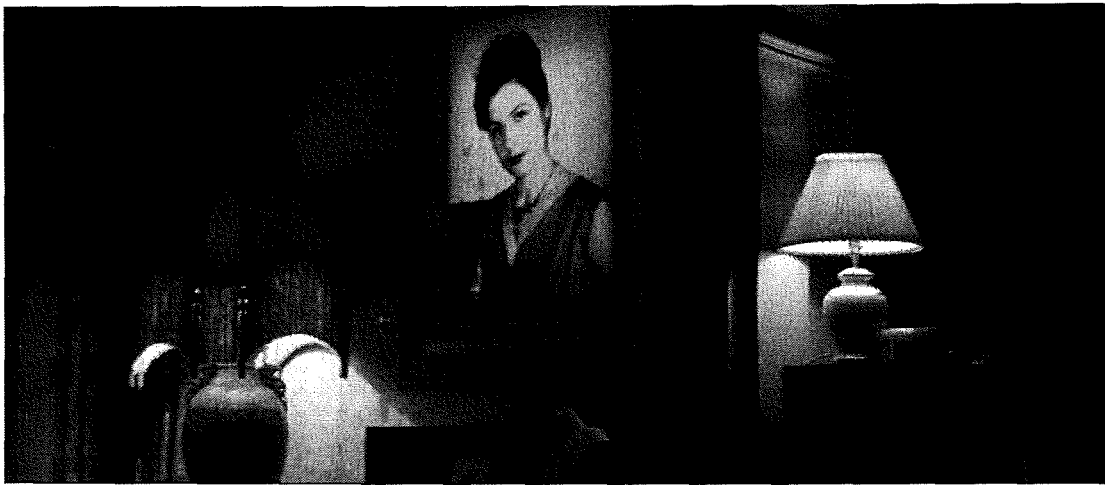


Fig. 2: The photograph of Gala.

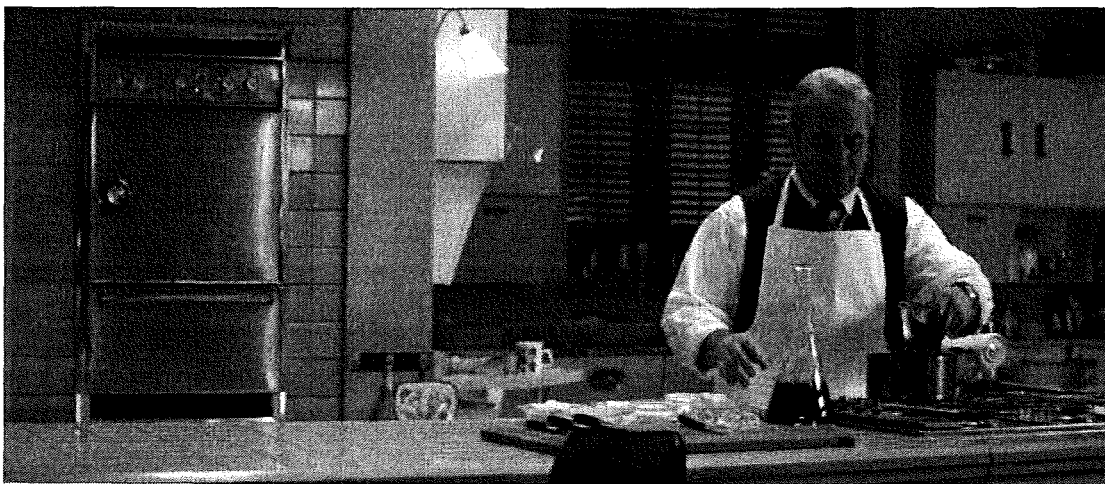


Fig. 3: Hilditch cooking in his kitchen



Fig. 4: Gala's television show



Fig. 5: Gala's television show



Fig. 6: Felicia at Customs

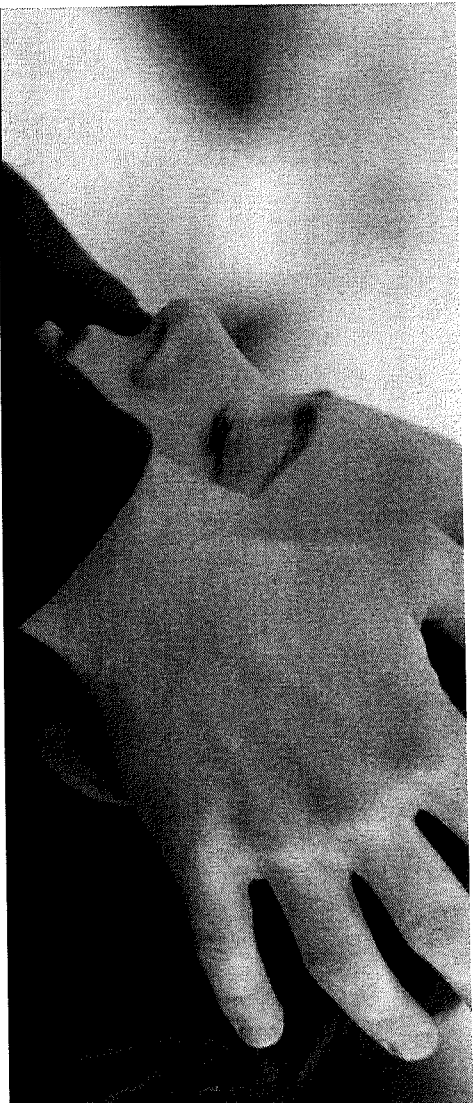


Fig. 7: Johnny's departure

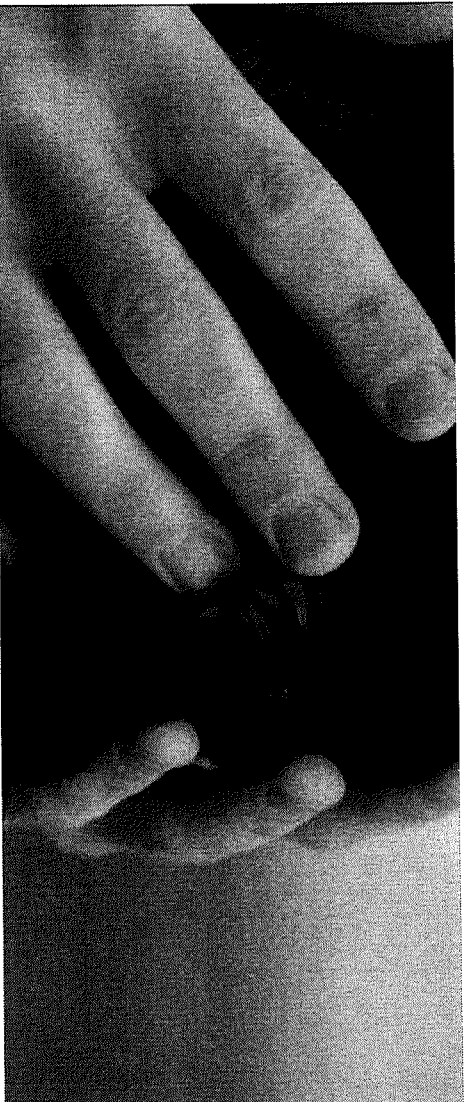


Fig. 8: Johnny's departure

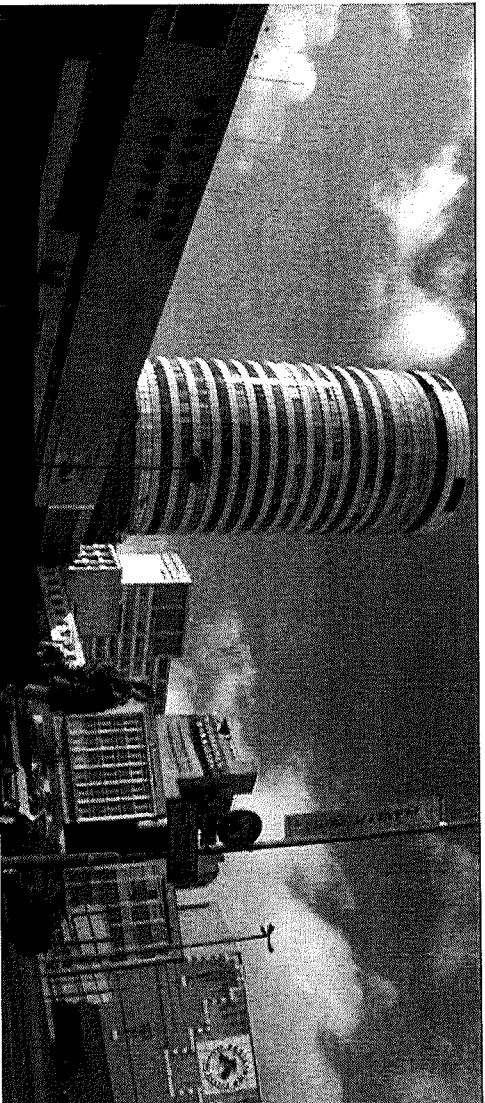


Fig. 9: Felicia arrives in Birmingham

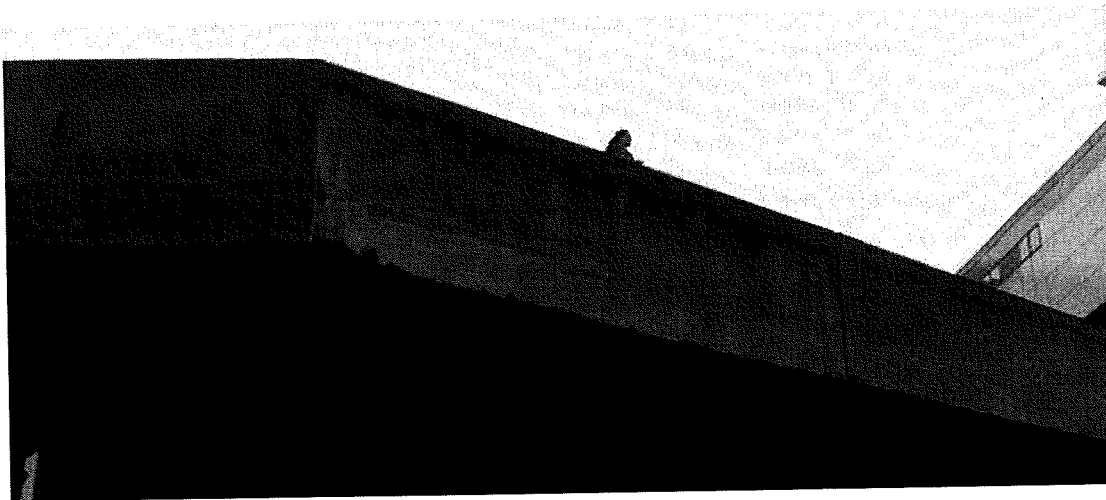


Fig. 10: Felicia arrives in Birmingham

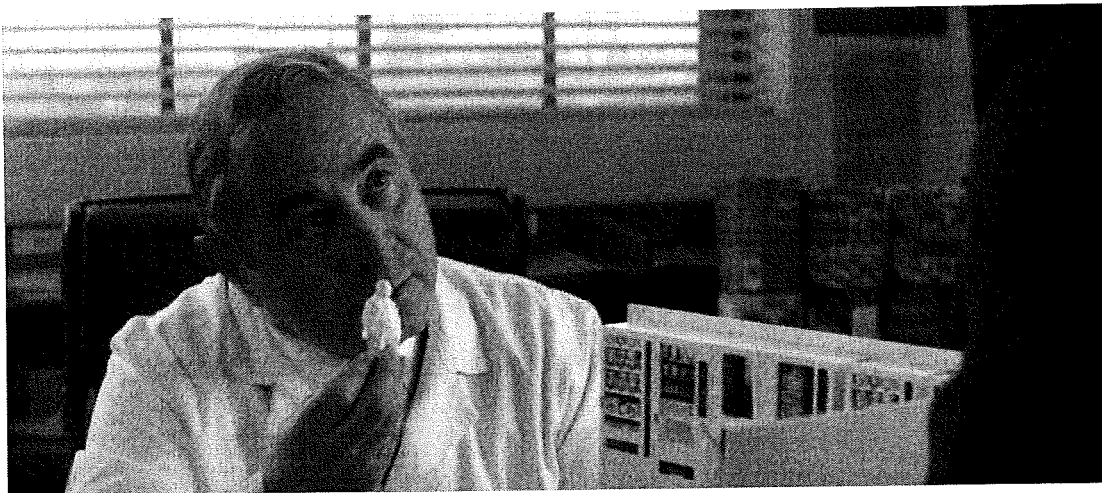


Fig. 11: Hilditch with the figurine

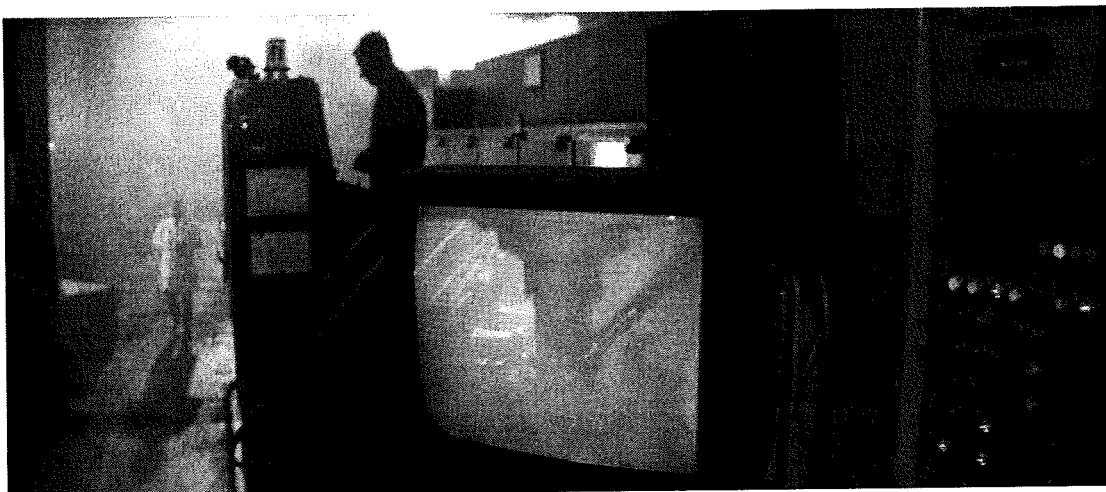


Fig. 13: Hilditch in the works



Fig. 14; Felicia and Hilditch meet



Fig. 15: Felicia walks away ...

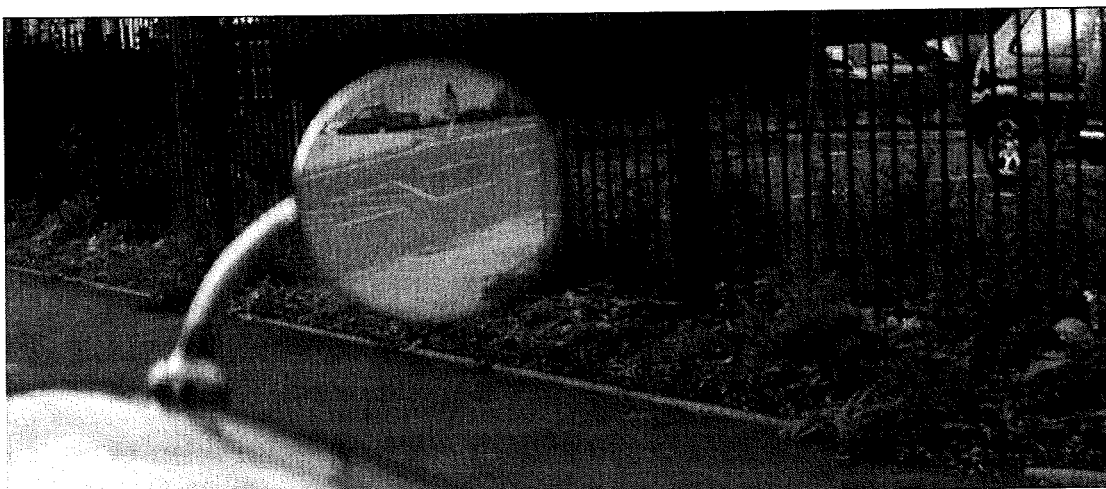


Fig. 16: ... watched by Hilditch



Fig. 17: Staff photographs



Fig. 18: Felicia and Hilditch meet for the second time



Fig. 19: Felicia with Johnny

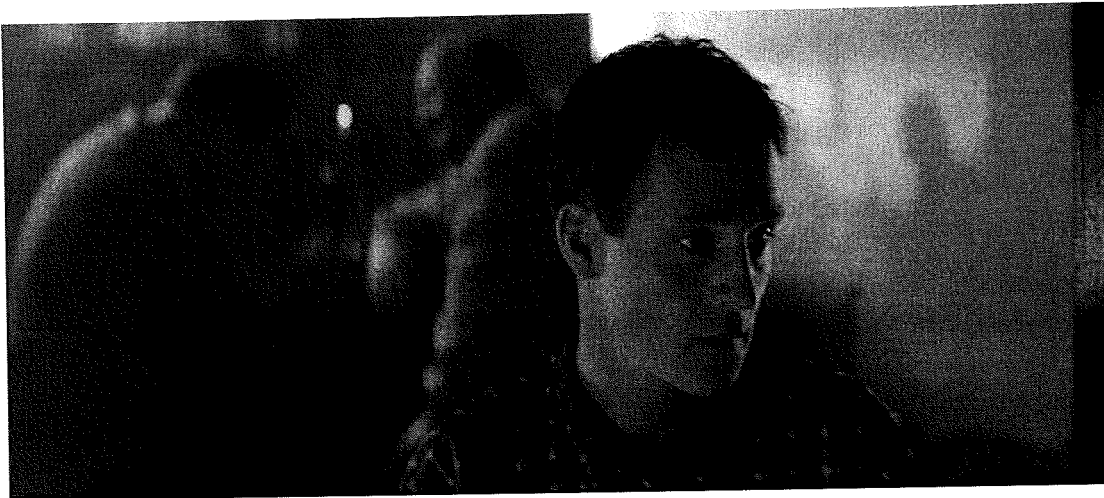


Fig. 20: Felicia with Johnny



Fig, 21: Felicia by the canal

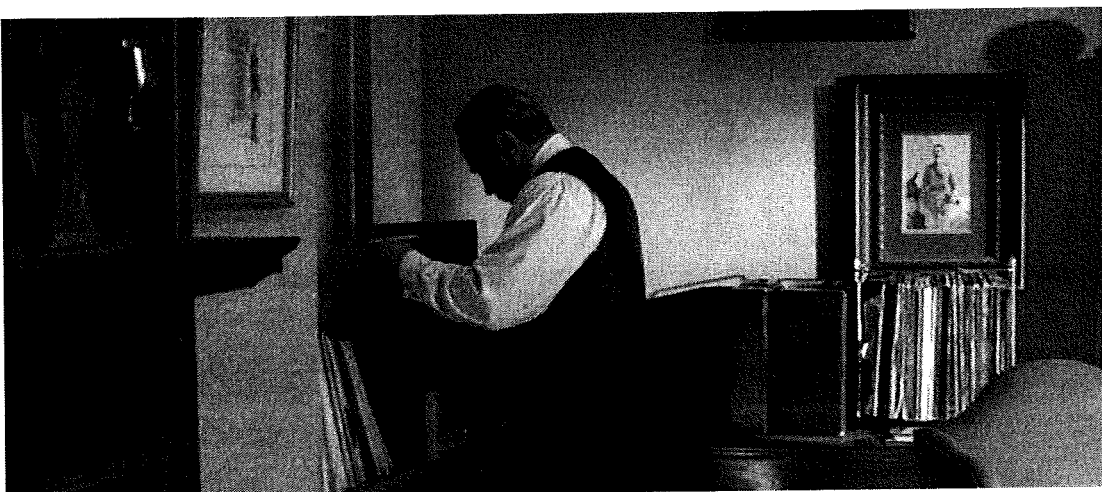


Fig. 22: Hilditch puts on a record



Fig. 23: Gala's food processor

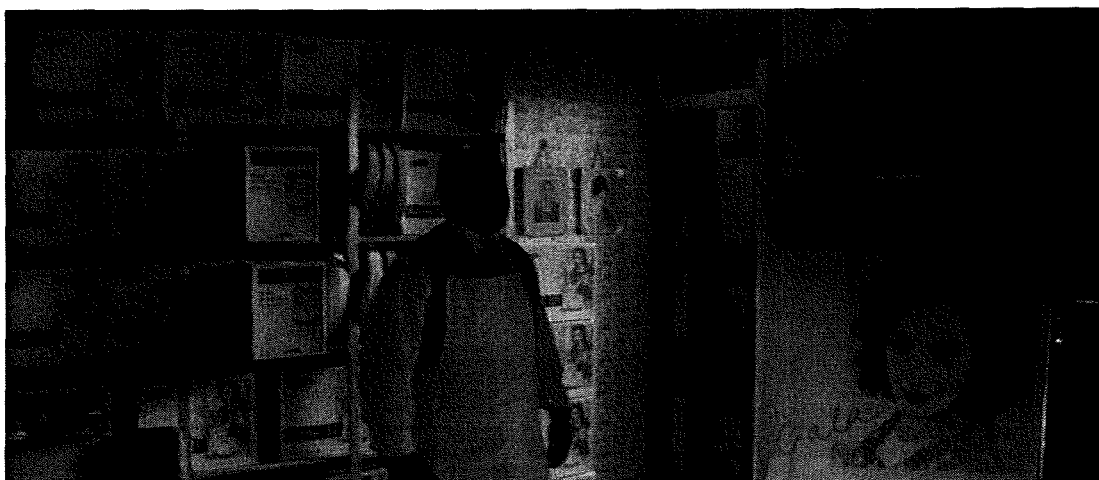


Fig. 24: Hilditch collects a new food processor



Fig. 25: Gala and the rosemary

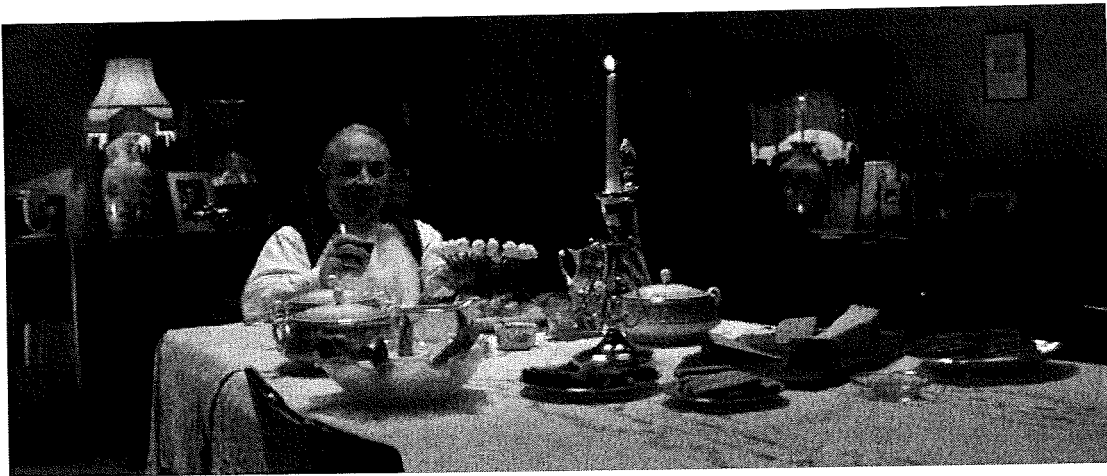


Fig. 26: Hilditch having dinner

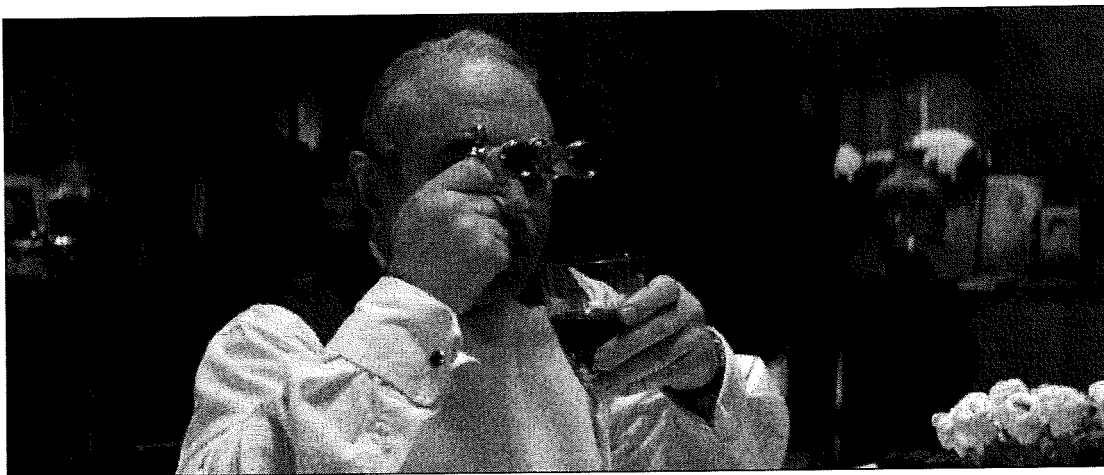


Fig. 27: Hilditch's opera glasses



Fig. 28: Gala's regard

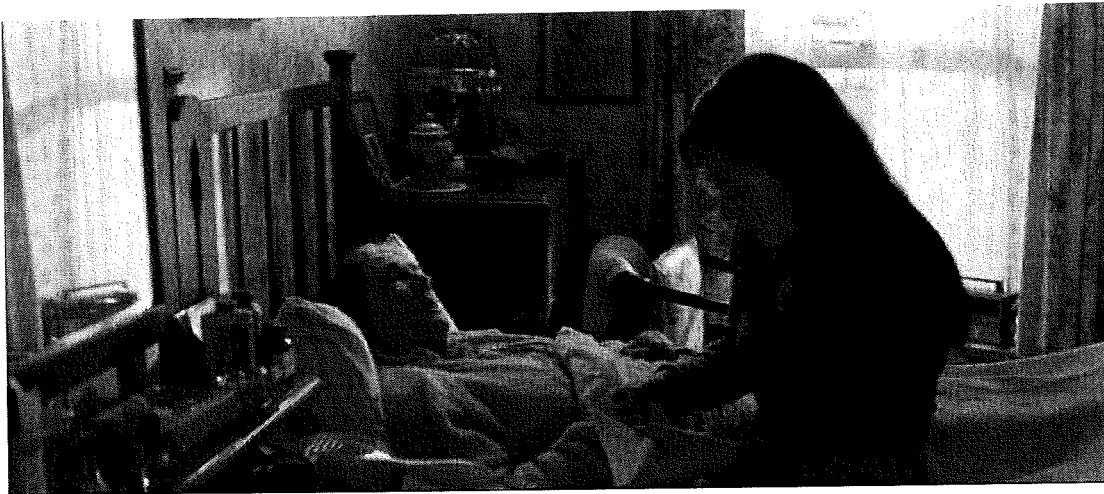


Fig. 29: Felicia steals her great-grandmother's money

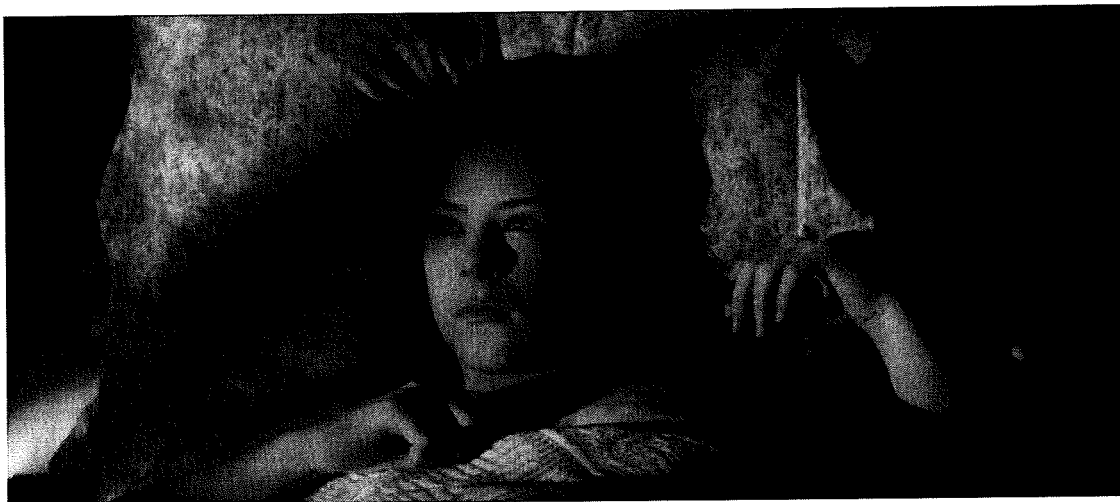


Fig. 30: Felicia in the bed-and-breakfast



Fig. 31: Felicia and her father

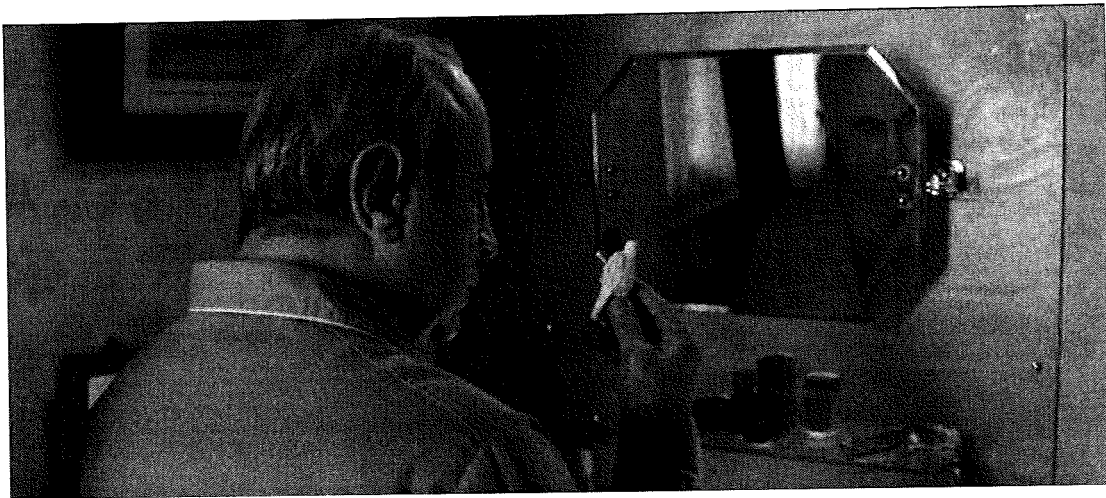


Fig. 32: Hilditch and the figurine



Fig. 33: Felicia and her father



Fig. 34: Felicia and Hilditch meet for the third time

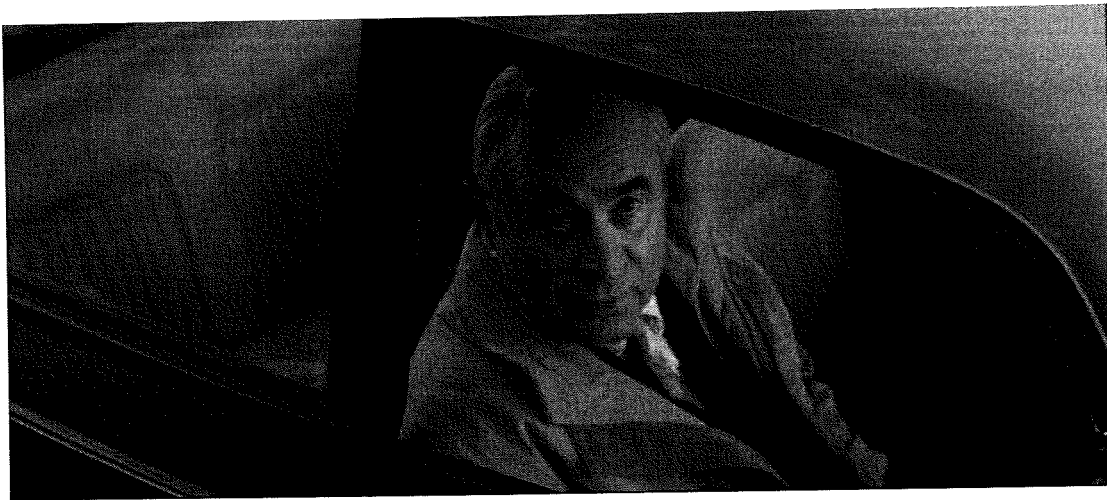


Fig. 35: Hilditch framed by the car door window



Fig. 36: Johnny's departure

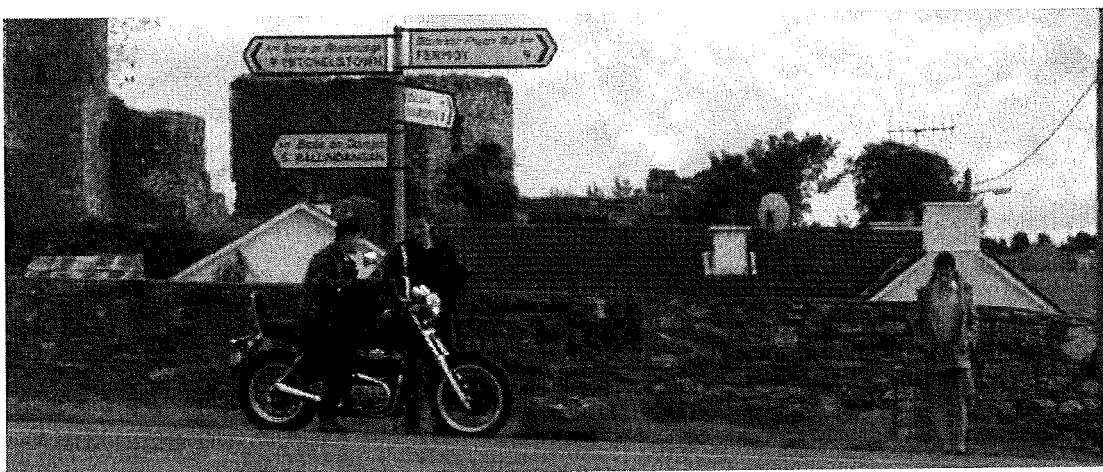


Fig. 37: Johnny's departure



Fig. 38: Johnny's departure



Fig. 39: Felicia visits Mrs. Lysaght

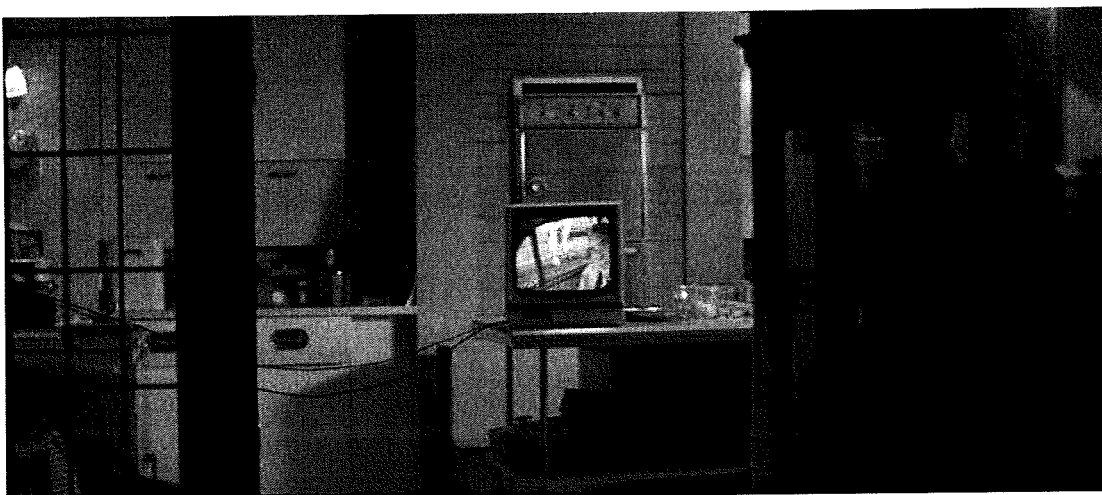


Fig. 40: Hilditch watches the video of Felicia



Fig. 41: Hilditch's video of Felicia



Fig. 42: Felicia framed in Mrs. Lysaght's window



Fig. 43: Felicia framed in Mrs. Lysaght's window



Fig. 44: Hilditch's photographs



Fig. 45: a lost girl

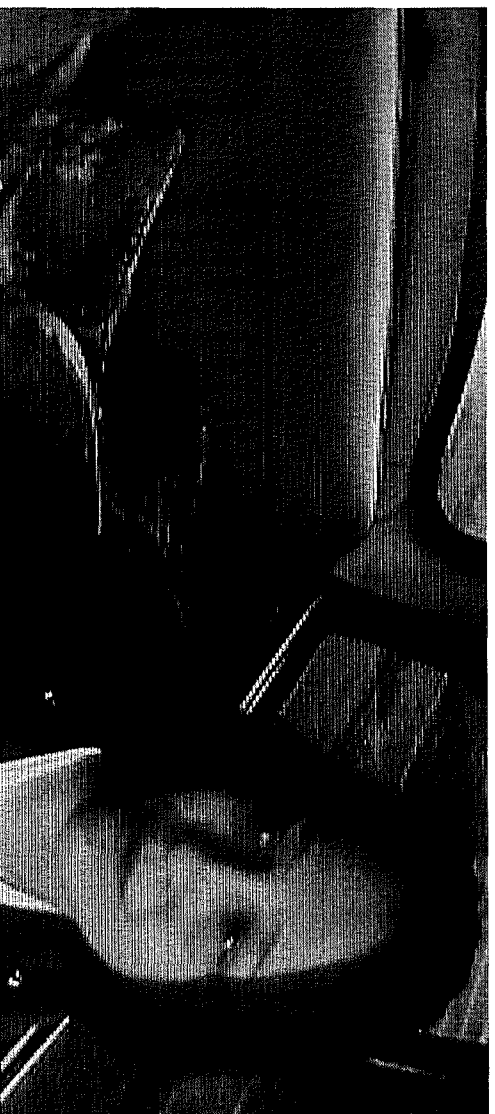


Fig. 46: a lost girl

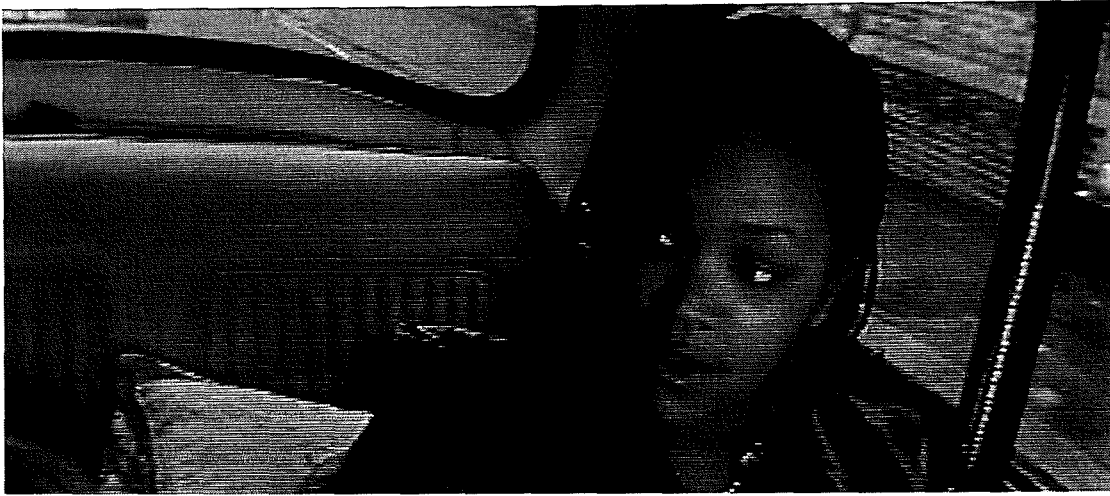


Fig. 47: Jakki



Fig. 48: Hilditch's videos

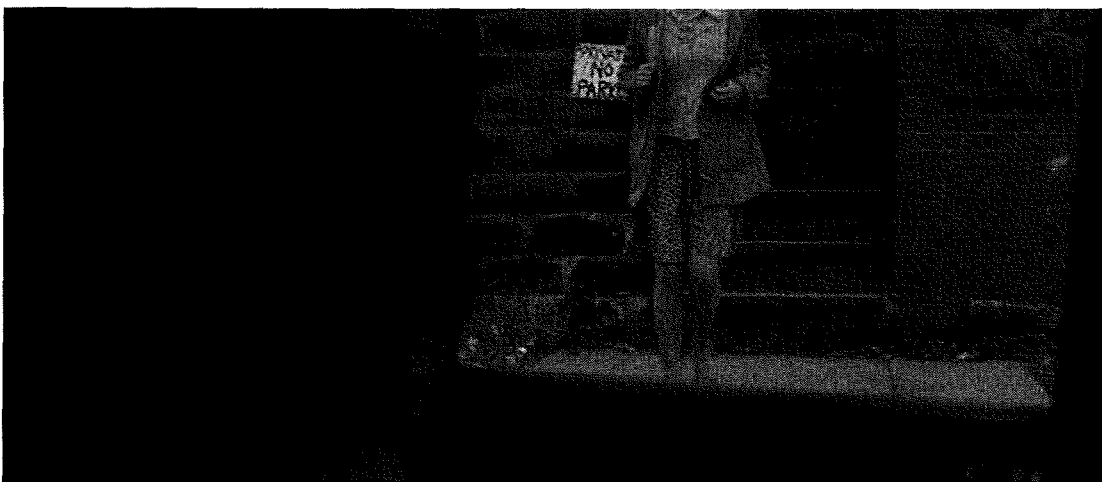


Fig. 49: Felicia framed (and beheaded) by Hilditch's car door window

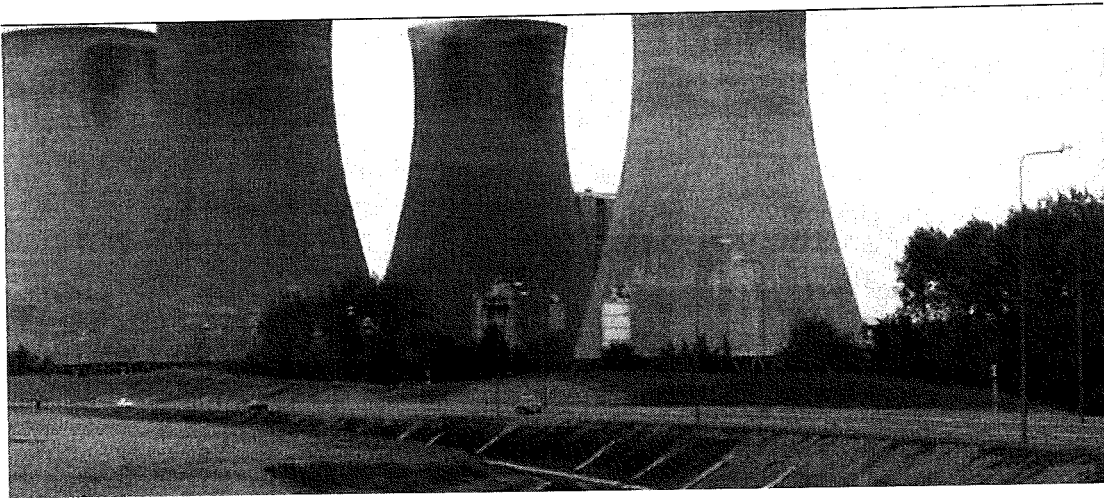


Fig. 50: Towers

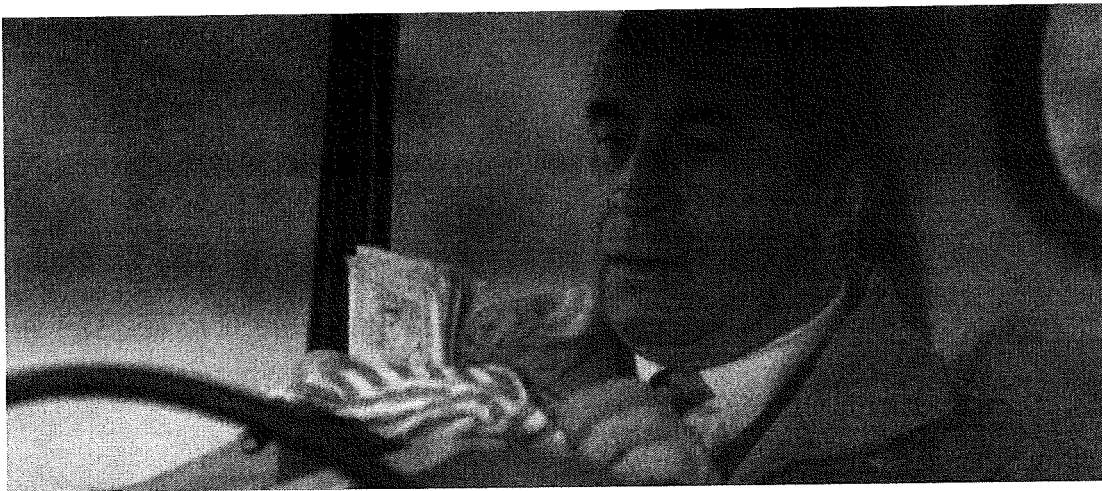


Fig. 51: Hilditch steals Felicia's money



Fig. 52: Gala with the rosemary



Fig. 53: Joey finds the wallet



Fig. 54: Joey buries the wallet



Fig. 55: Felicia blows her nose

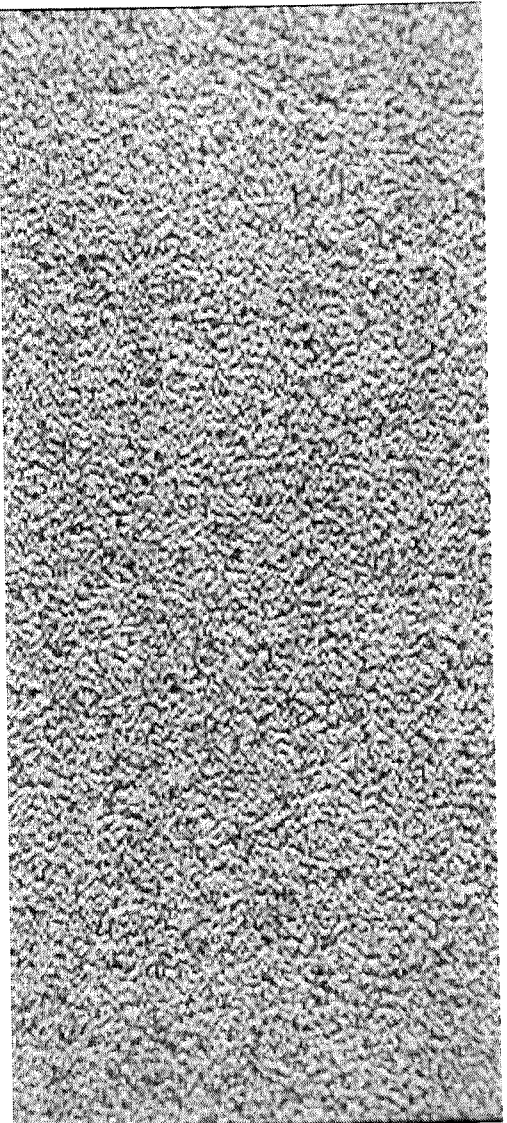
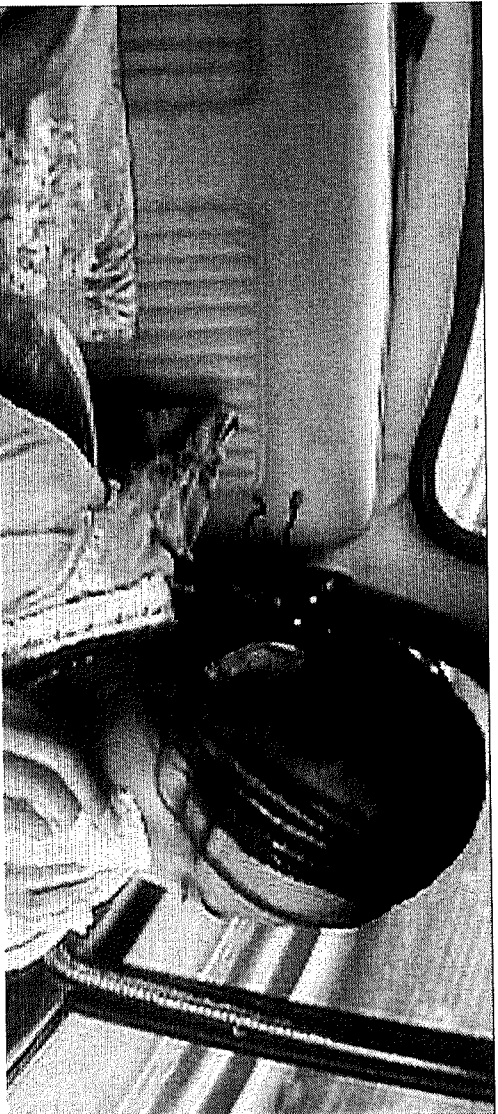


Fig. 56: Video snow



Figs. 57 and 58: Sharon blows her nose





Fig. 59: Beth



Fig 60: Bobbi

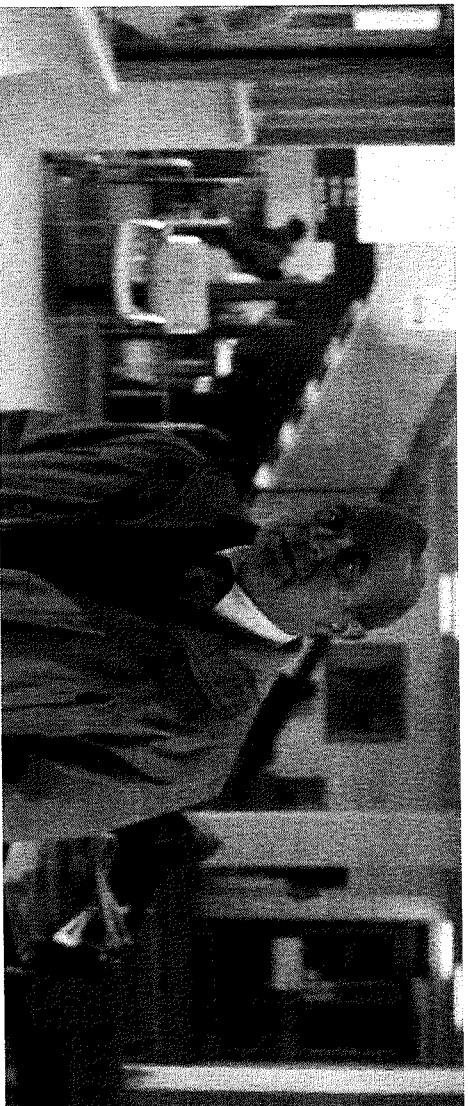


Fig. 61: Hilditch in the hospital



Fig. 62: Gaye



Fig. 63: Elsie

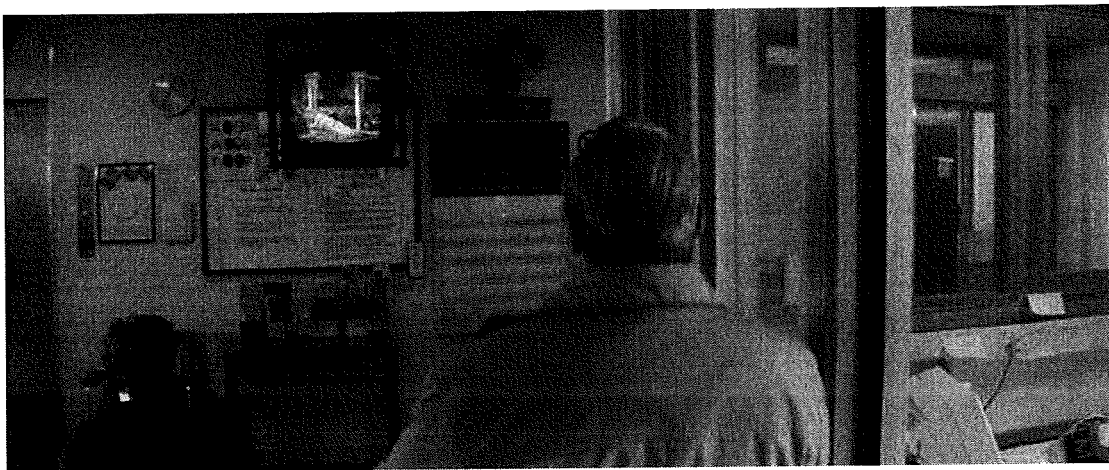


Fig. 64: Hilditch and the television set in the hospital



Fig. 65: Rita Hayworth in William Wyler's *Salome* playing on the hospital television



Fig. 66: Hilditch grabs a girl



Fig. 67: Elsie



Fig. 68: The head of John the Baptist



Fig. 69: the lost girl tries to leave

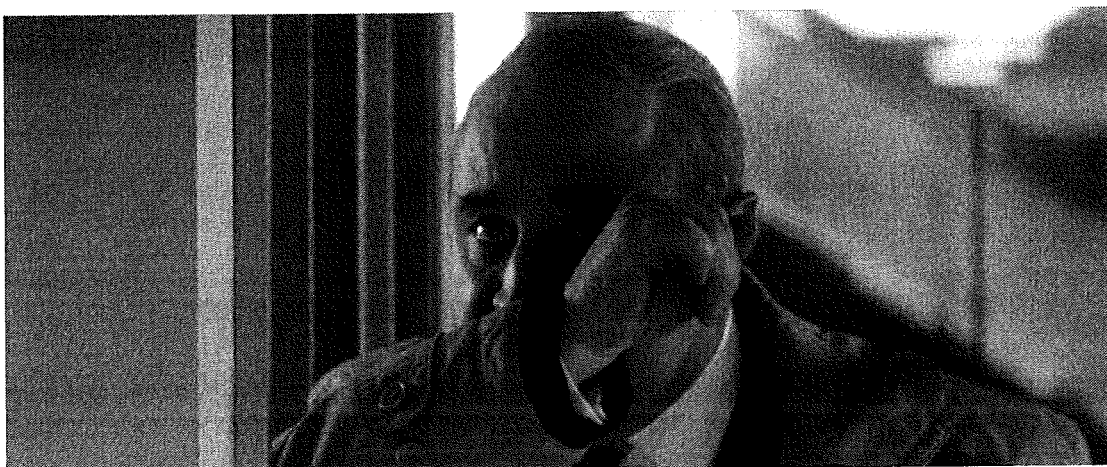


Fig. 70: Hilditch shields his face



Fig. 71: Gala and Joey in the box



Fig. 72: Salome on stage



Fig. 73: Gala kisses Joey



Fig. 74: Hilditch's video: Felicia framed in Hilditch's car door window



Fig. 75: Gala kisses Joey



Fig. 76: the image fades ...



Fig. 77: ... to nothing



Fig. 78: Felicia and Johnny have sex



Fig. 79: Felicia in the field

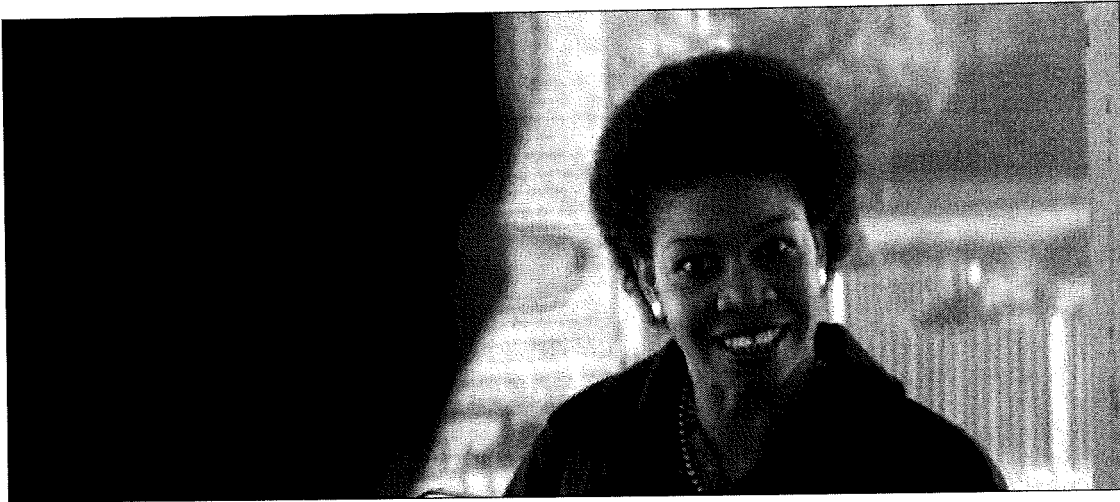


Fig. 80: Miss Caligary



Fig. 81: Miss Caligary with Felicia



Fig. 82: Gala and the turkey

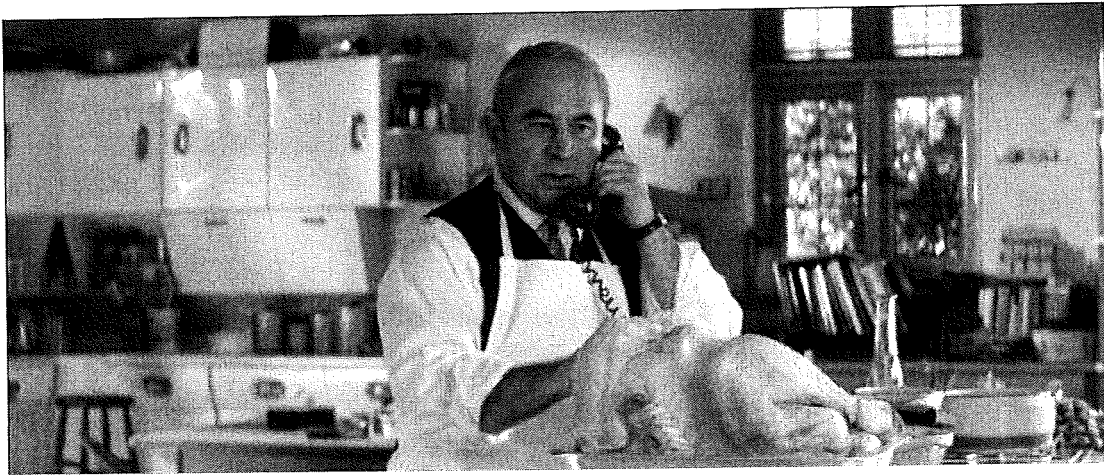


Fig. 83: Hilditch and the turkey



Fig. 84: Joey with Gala



Fig. 85: Joey

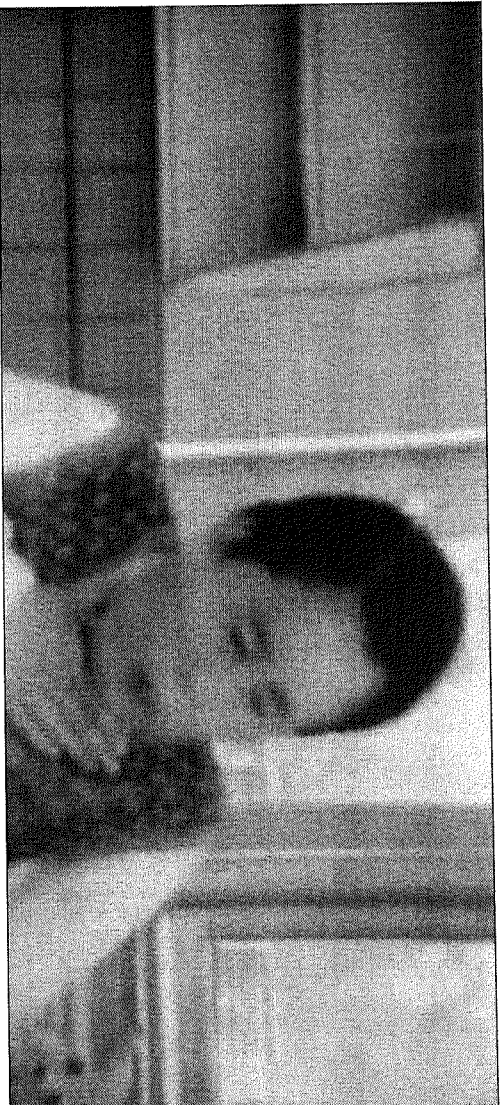


Fig. 86: Joey gags

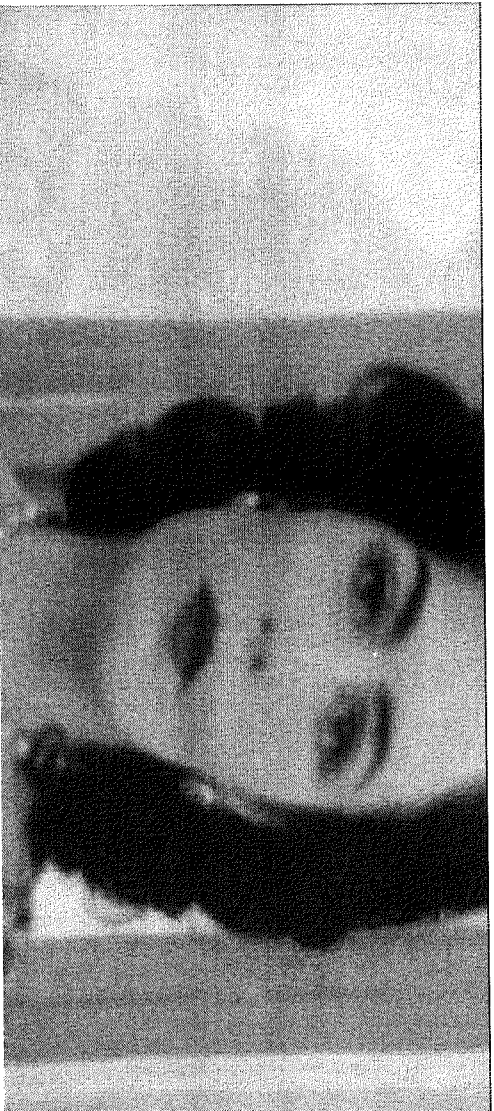


Fig. 87: Gala's regard

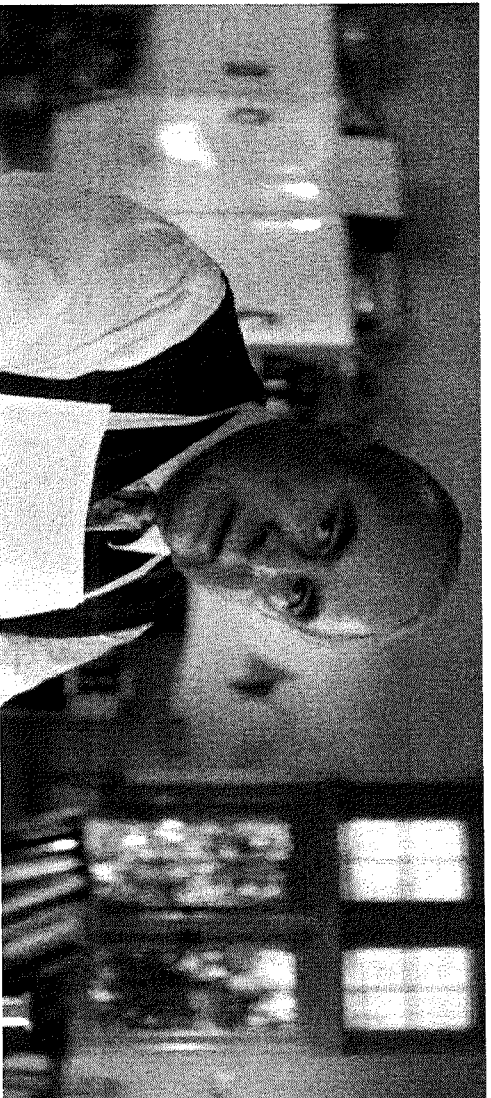


Fig. 88: Hilditch



Fig. 89: Hilditch finds his mother's cookbook

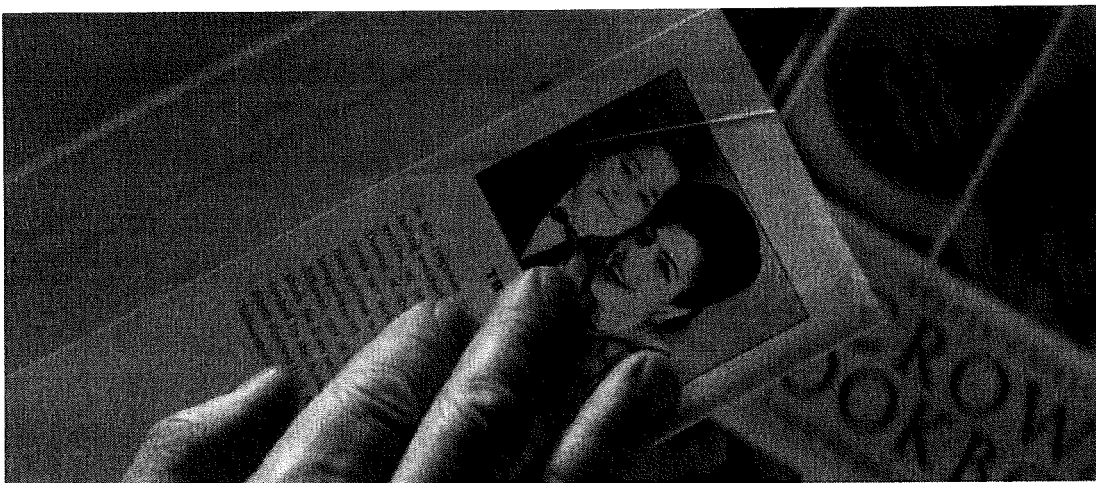


Fig. 90: Gala and Joey



Fig. 91: Hilditch gags



Fig. 92: Gala feeds Joey the liver

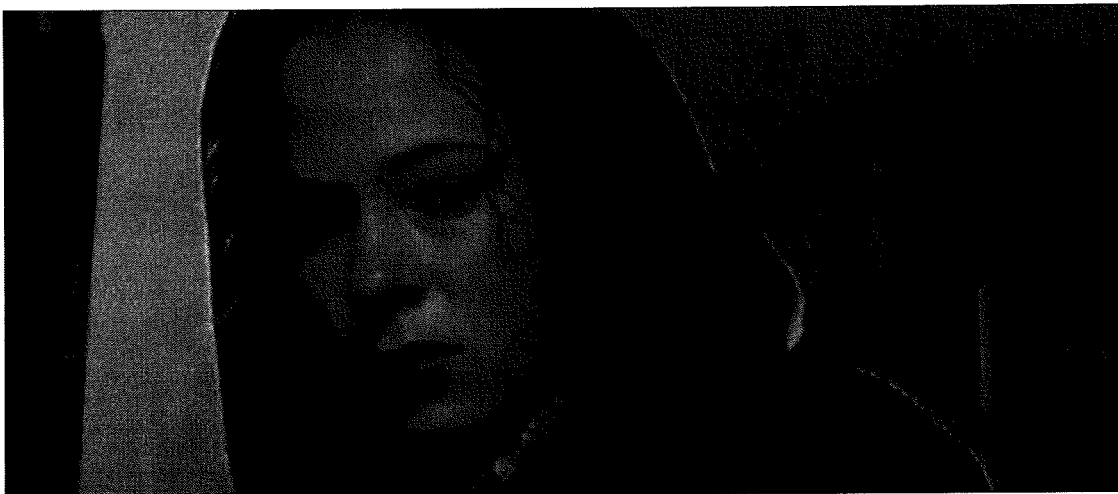


Fig. 93; Felicia in her hooded duffel coat

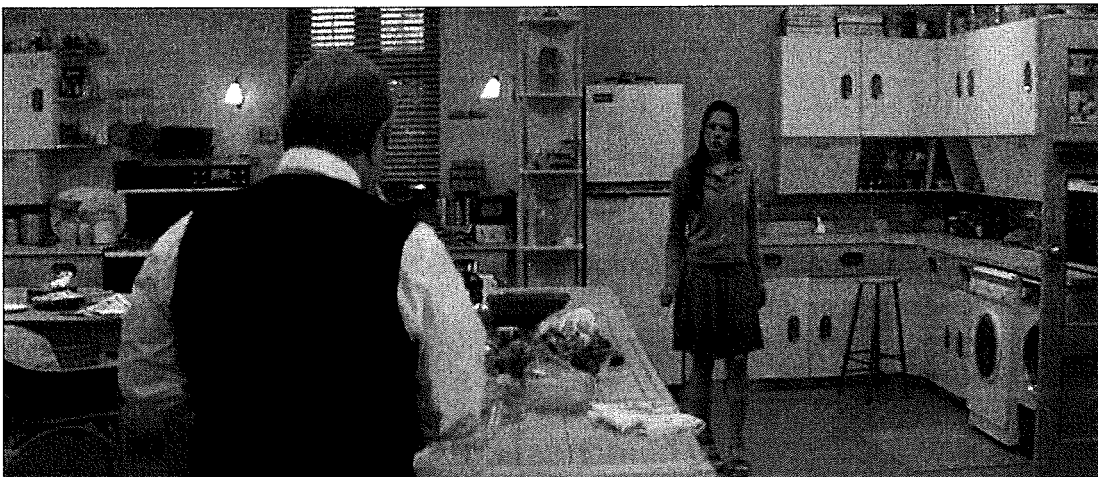


Fig. 94: Felicia and Hilditch in his kitchen



Fig. 95: Johnny and Felicia in The Bartons Arms



Fig. 96: Johnny and Felicia in The Bartons Arms



Fig. 97: the locked room

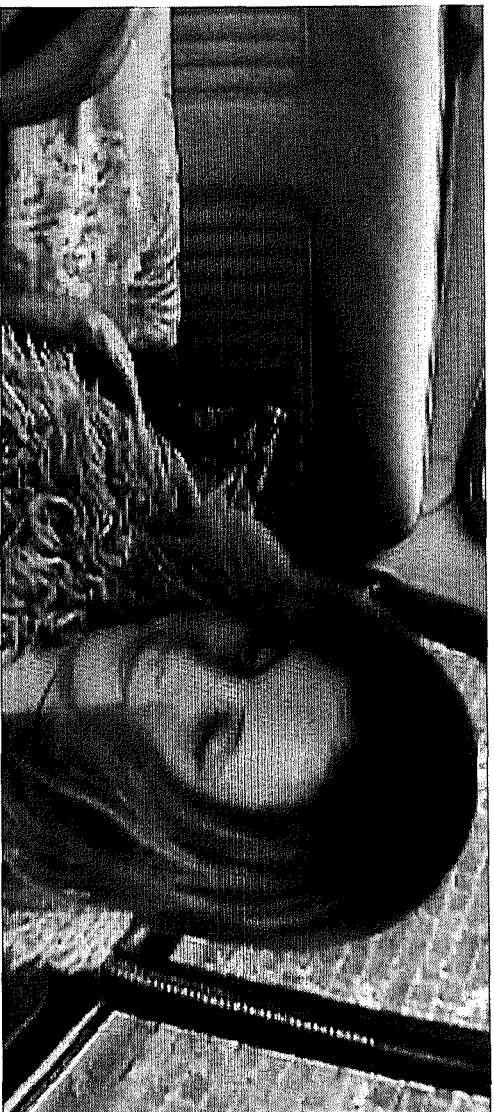


Fig. 98: Elsie describes her work

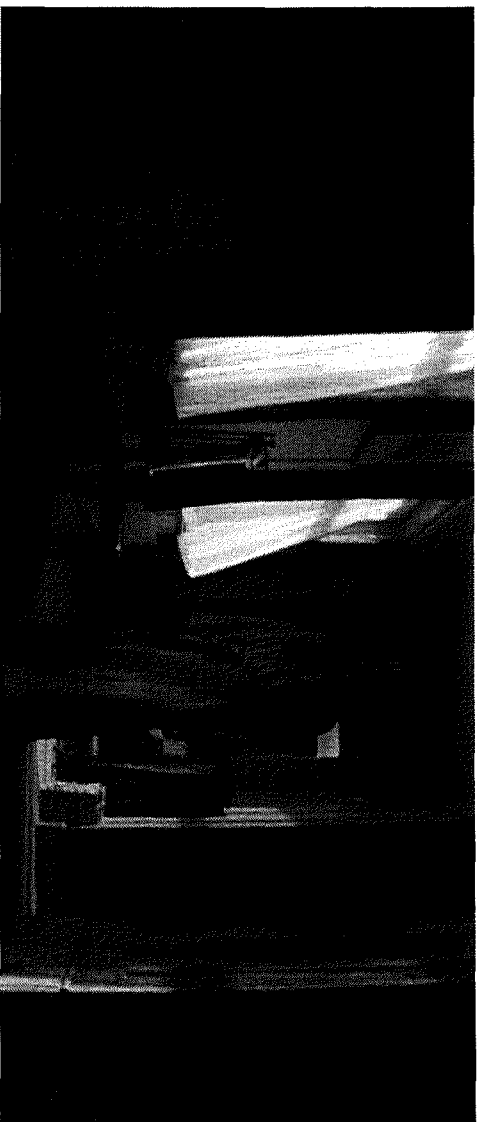


Fig. 99: the robe



Fig. 100: Hilditch

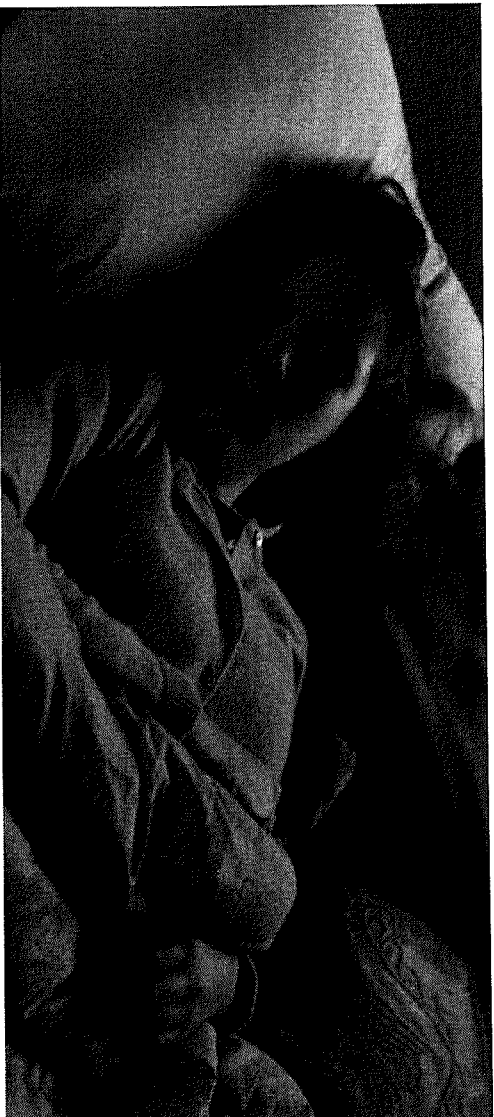


Fig. 101: Felicia sleeps

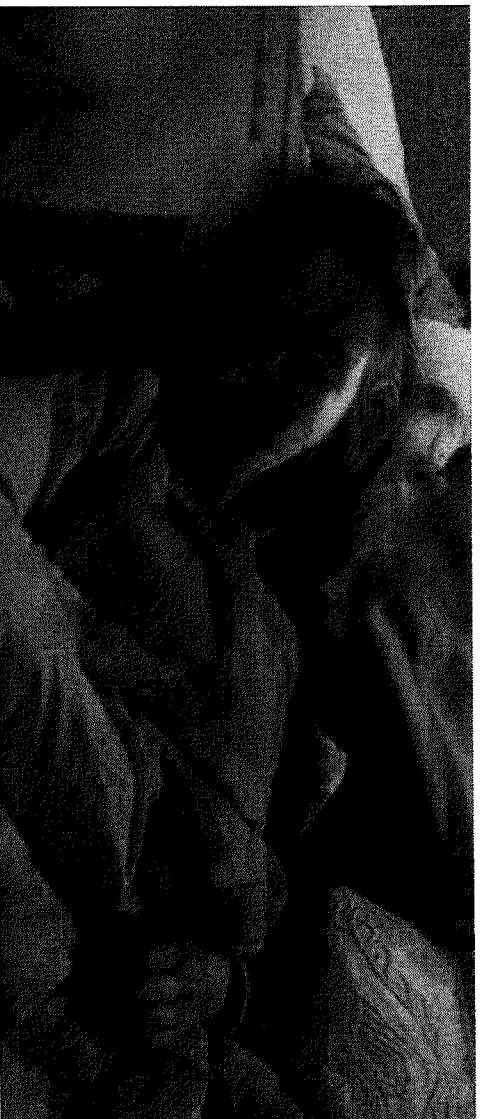


Fig. 102: Felicia dreams of Johnny



Fig. 103: Johnny

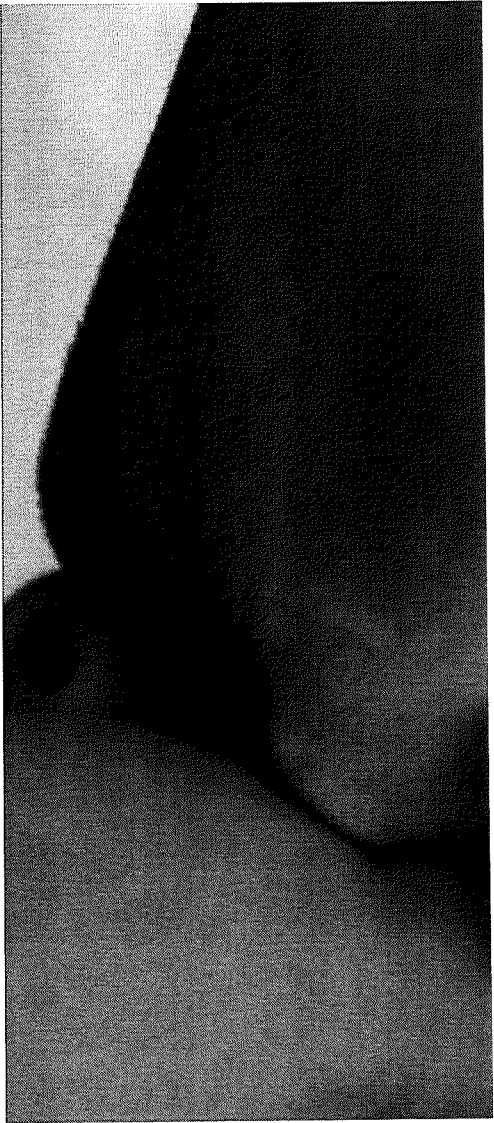


Fig. 104: Johnny's departure



Fig. 105: Hilditch



Fig. 106: Felicia's dream

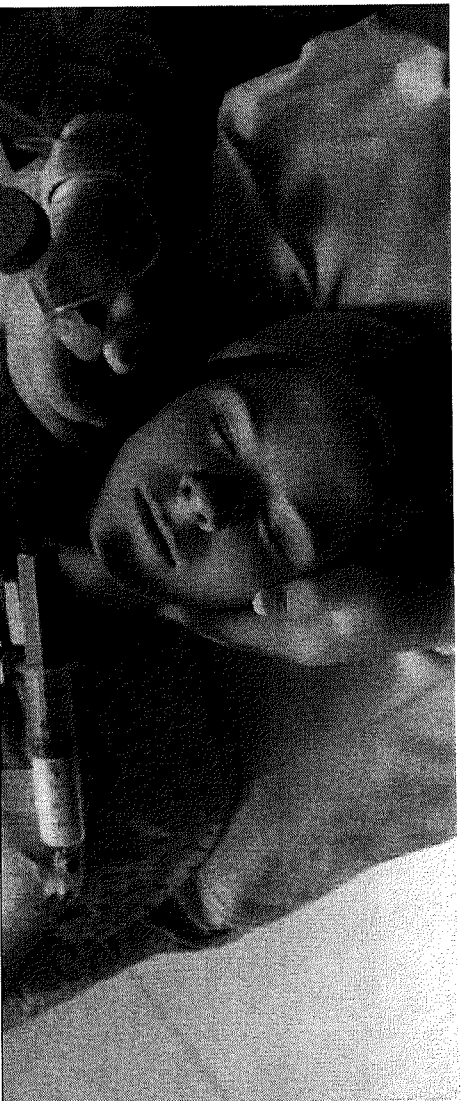


Fig. 107: Felicia



Fig. 108: Felicia's dream



Fig. 109: Felicia's dream



Fig. 110: Felicia's son in a blue duffel coat



Fig. 111: Felicia leaves the clinic



Fig. 112: towers



Fig. 113: Hildtich prepares the cocoa

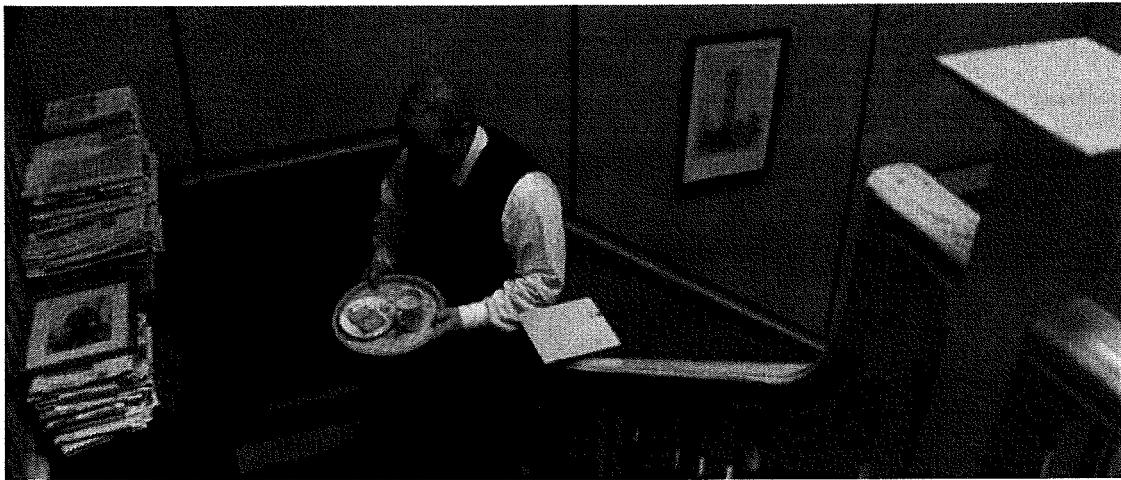


Fig. 114: Hildtich with the cocoa

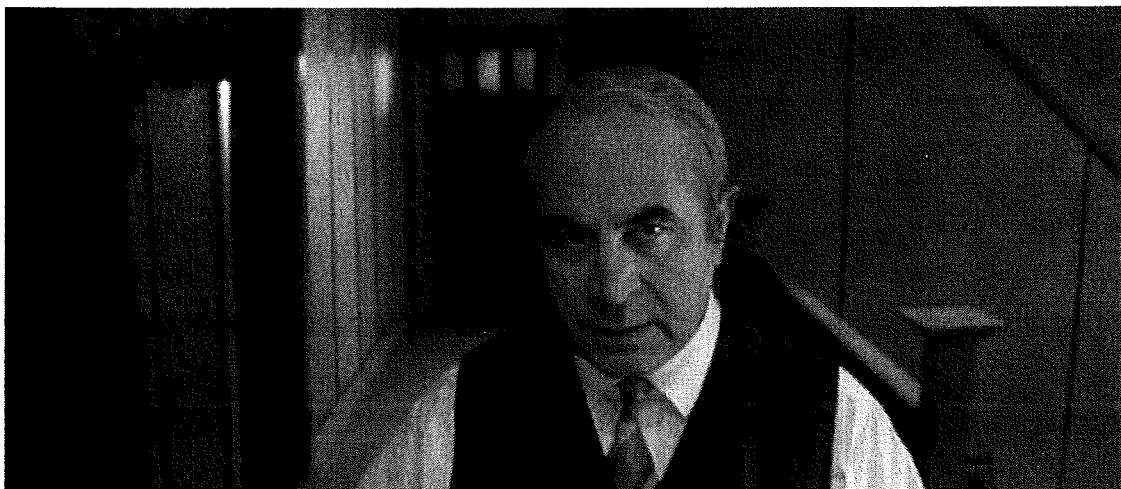


Fig. 115: Hildtich

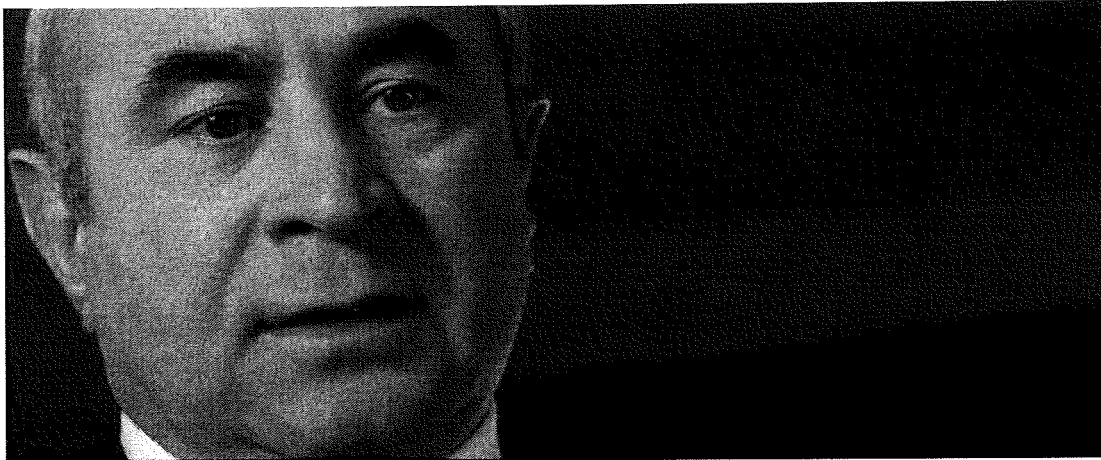


Fig. 116: Hilditch gives Felicia the names of the lost girls



Fig. 117: Hilditch digs a grave



Fig. 118: Hilditch finds the wallet



Fig. 119: Miss Calligary visits Hilditch

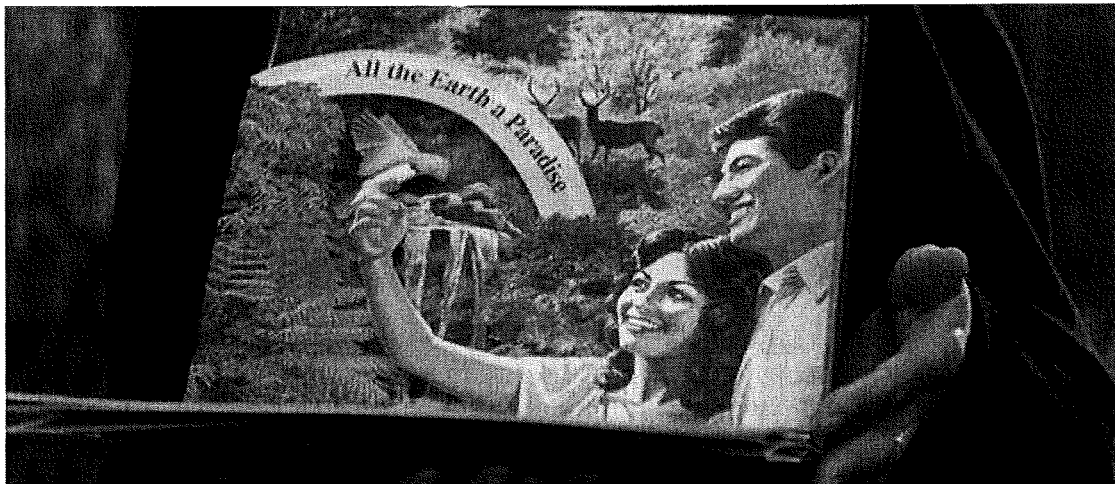


Fig. 120: "All the Earth a Paradise"



Fig. 121: Felicia and Hilditch



Fig. 122: Felicia leaves



Fig. 123: Hilditch hangs himself ...



Fig. 124: Joey and Gala



Fig. 125: Joey and Gala



Fig. 126: static



Fig. 127: "The pain will wash away, healing will commence"

Chapter Five: *Where the Truth Lies* (2005)

Where the Truth Lies is a self-consciously lurid and lustrous examination of excess, exploitation and deception, with a dizzyingly baroque structure utilizing multiple voice-overs, unreliable narration, and false flashbacks. The film explores stardom, sexuality and scandal in America in the late-1950s and the early-1970s. On the surface, *Where the Truth Lies* is a sleek murder-mystery, with distinctly Hitchcockian, *noirish* and neo-*noirish* overtones, but the film nevertheless constitutes an intriguing extension of Egoyan's profound exploration of how the traumatic work of mourning and responsibility shapes our identities, our understanding of the past, and our relations with others. The story revolves around the kind of "locked-door" mystery associated with classic detective stories and films. But Egoyan is ultimately less interested in answering *whodunit*, and is more concerned with examining psychological and emotional responses to violent crime and traumatic loss. *Where the Truth Lies* is simultaneously Egoyan's most explicit engagement with mainstream genre and his most experimental exercise in narrative form. J. Hoberman called the film "a lush, if not entirely coherent ... showbiz *Rashomon*."¹ The incoherence of *Where the Truth Lies* must be understood as a deliberate attempt to exploit and examine the conventions of *noir* and neo-*noir* narration. Egoyan has stated that he "fought against simplifying the film's strategy, and was punished by critics who refused to read it as anything but an incoherent attempt to make something commercial."² *Where the Truth Lies* resembles those "mosaic-flashback thrillers" identified by Raymond Durnat, since it presents the kind of "incomprehensible" plot which "[expresses] a kind of oppressive bafflement about human intention," and in which labyrinthine flashback devices suggest "past sins looming over the present."³ If

the structure and strategies of *Where the Truth Lies* appeared to critics as oppressively convoluted or overwrought, this only illustrates the vulnerability of Egoyan's strategic appropriation of generic conventions and mainstream lustre. Emma Wilson accurately states that "[the] coruscating achievement of the film" lies precisely in its offering of "divergent, inflected accounts, each seductive or strangely plausible in its own right, yet none entirely reliable."⁴ The film is deliberately dizzying, and dazzling: as I shall discuss in more detail below, light, here, can both reveal and obscure, illuminate and overwhelm. Egoyan's approach to generic fulfilment and narrative resolution, which I understand as a strategic failing, is demonstrated here once again by the film's privileging of open-ended mourning and responsibility, but with this film the strategy arguably involves considerably greater commercial and professional risks than was previously the case. This chapter addresses the film's mobilization of *noir* and neo-*noir* conventions, its formal intricacy, and its exploration of trauma, loss and responsibility.

Liam Lacey has suggested that *Where the Truth Lies* is, like *Felicia's Journey* (and *Exotica*) before it, a "fractured fairy tale ... where updated Goldilocks or Little Red Riding Hood heroines make their way through the wicked world."⁵ The heroine of this film is a young journalist called Karen O'Connor (Alison Lohman), who begins an investigation into the private lives of Lanny Morris (Kevin Bacon) and Vince Collins (Colin Firth), a famous comedy double-act from the 1950s, and Karen's childhood heroes. In several respects, Egoyan's film resembles Todd Haynes's *Velvet Goldmine* (1998), in which the journalist Arthur (Christian Bale), investigating the disappearance of glam rock idol Brian Slade (Jonathan Rhys Myers) ten years earlier, must reassess his adolescent identification with, and erotic investment in, Slade's provocative public persona. *Where the Truth Lies* is explicitly concerned with tracing

a young woman's psychological and emotional relationship with two glamorous stars, in which her early and complete surrender to their seductive power is eventually, and traumatically, relinquished. Like *Velvet Goldmine*, which is set in 1984 and the early 1970s, Egoyan's film is located in two distinct historical periods (1972 and 1957), and both films are characterised by a retrospective melancholy associated with the difficult loss of one's idols, and the fantasies associated with them. Haynes's film appropriates *Citizen Kane*'s intricate narrative conceit, in which different characters relate their earlier experiences with Kane to a journalist; Egoyan's film, similarly, presents flashbacks based on testimonies whose reliability remains uncertain.⁶

Specifically, Karen is interested in the mystery surrounding the duo's break-up, which followed the discovery of the body of a young woman called Maureen O'Flaherty (Rachel Blanchard) in their hotel suite. The subjects of Karen's investigation were the objects of her adolescent desire, and it as much her refusal to believe that they are in anyway responsible for the death of Maureen, as it is the fame, the money, or the wish to follow in her journalist father's footsteps, that motivates her project. Only by fully exonerating Morris and Collins can she preserve and sustain her earlier idolisation of the duo. Her increasing suspicions concerning their collusion in the cover-up following the discovery of Maureen's body, or even their involvement in the crime itself, involve a thorough, and traumatic, reassessment of her previous relation with them. As she discovers certain facts about Maureen, and uncovers aspects of the dynamic between Morris and Collins, Karen must readdress her earlier relation with them. The death of Maureen ultimately brings about, fifteen years later, the irrecoverable loss of Karen's cherished memories of the duo, specifically the fantasy that they had saved her life while she was sick with polio. While the unbridled sensual gratification that characterizes the "wicked world" Karen explores is matched

by the intense gorgeousness of the film's *mise-en-scène*, Egoyan ultimately and finally privileges a responsibility to the other that is inextricable from traumatic dispossession. Karen must abandon the idealizations that characterize her memories of her childhood heroes, that have arguably remained the same since the comedy duo retired. However, in taking on responsibility for Maureen's mother's memory of her murdered daughter, Karen replaces the idealization of Lanny and Vince with the selfless protection of the memory of the very woman whose death was responsible for the loss of that earlier relation, since Maureen's murder ended the public partnership of Collins and Morris.

The complexity of the narrative requires a careful synopsis. In 1972, Karen O'Connor is hired to write a book about Vince Collins, one half of a successful comedy duo from the 1950s. The million dollar deal depends upon Vince revealing the truth about his split with Lanny Morris in 1957 and the circumstances surrounding the death of Maureen O'Flaherty. Karen had met Morris and Collins at the telethon because she was a "miracle girl" who had triumphed over polio, and whose story, significantly, was widely publicized. (In sequences which were removed from the finished film, it is made clear that Karen's own father was a journalist covering the story of his own daughter's miraculous recovery.) Karen is promptly informed by Morris's lawyer, John, that Lanny has already begun writing what will be the duo's definitive autobiography, and she is formally invited to read an early excerpt, which provides an account of the drug-fuelled sex and violence which took place behind the scenes during their hey-day; it also describes the discovery of Maureen's body in the hotel in New Jersey following the end of the telethon. Karen then by chance meets Vince, and his attentive valet Reuben, on a flight to New York, but conceals her identity from him. Bonnie, Karen's friend, reads Karen another chapter of the

memoirs that has been mysteriously sent to Karen's home. It describes the night before the telethon, and how Lanny and Vince had sex with Maureen and several prostitutes in the hotel in Miami. Karen goes on a date with Lanny, and they have sex. The following morning, Lanny leaves before she wakes. Karen visits Maureen's Catholic mother, who beseeches her to find out how and why her daughter died, and then a retired chief of police, who insists that Maureen accidentally overdosed. Flying back to Los Angeles, Karen imagines how Maureen's body must have been shipped from Miami to New Jersey in a crate of lobsters sent to Miami by the mobster who had booked the duo to perform at the hotel in New Jersey. Karen continues to interview Vince, but after he invites Lanny to join them he discovers she has met and slept with his ex-partner without Lanny knowing either her true identity or her professional relationship with Vince. Vince then drugs Karen and photographs her having sex with a female singer he manages, hoping to blackmail Karen into publicly absolving him of any responsibility for Maureen's death. When Karen asks Vince whose idea it had been to ship Maureen's body from Miami to New Jersey in the crate of lobsters, he unsuccessfully tries to strangle her. Vince then returns to the original hotel suite in New Jersey, takes an overdose of champagne and sleeping pills, and dies in the bath. Karen then receives a private testimony written by Lanny in which he explains how Vince tried to sodomise him in front of Maureen, how Maureen planned to blackmail them, and that Vince killed Maureen in a stupor. It emerges that Lanny's memoirs were written expressly to prepare Vince for Karen's questions. Reuben tries to sell Karen a tape-recording made by Maureen the night she died which, so Reuben says, corroborates Lanny's private testimony. Karen works out that it must have been Reuben who sent her Lanny's chapters and his testimony, and that it was he who killed Maureen, so that he could blackmail Vince. However, with no evidence, Karen

is unable to do anything, and Reuben walks away. She again visits Maureen's mother, and promises her that she will write down the truth she has learnt *only* when there is no one left alive for whom it would cause suffering. Finally, Karen recalls how Lanny had posed for a photograph with her on stage at the telethon, and had tearfully whispered to her "Forgive me."

Throughout the film, Lanny's memoirs provide a basis for extended flashbacks showing the events of 1957. At the same time, Karen's own memories of appearing at the telethon intersect with these flashbacks, as if her own recollections were being recovered for the first time. As with Hilditch's traumatic recovery of his memories in *Felicia's Journey*, Karen's memories centre around events that were also being filmed for television, recorded for posterity. Like Hilditch on his mother Gala's cookery show, Karen, as a child, is paraded before the public's gaze, and made into a televisual spectacle. Throughout *Where the Truth Lies*, memories of the telethon, and accounts of events immediately preceding and following it, trouble the official representation of the event preserved by the television broadcast, and the public image of the celebrity duo. During Karen's meetings with Lanny, Maureen's mother, the chief of police, and Reuben, as well as during her flight back to Los Angeles, various sequences depict conflicting versions, speculations, and reconstructions of the events in Miami and New Jersey.

At the beginning of *Where the Truth Lies*, a camera slowly glides around a luxurious hotel suite, floats into the bathroom, and comes to a halt over the bathtub, in which a young woman's naked body is submerged (fig. 4). The film will return to this image several times (figs. 5-6), and also present the same body in a different container, a crate filled with lobsters and ice (figs. 46-8). The film is interested in our desire to respond to an image as if it provided access to the truth. An encounter between Lanny

and Karen at the telethon, captured on television and reproduced as a photograph (shown several times during the film), apparently records Lanny's emotional response to Karen's recovery, but, as the film eventually suggests, this was not the case at all. Whereas *Exotica* withholds from the viewer for the longest possible time the image of the body of Lisa, the school girl whose murder has dramatically shaped the lives of the film's central characters, *Where the Truth Lies*'s opening sequences immediately present us with a disturbing image of a female corpse. However, despite this, the film is ultimately interested in withholding the truth related to this death for as long as possible. In *Exotica*, the story of Lisa's murder, and of the police's initial suspicions concerning her father Francis's guilt, have become public property: as Zoe, the manager of the Exotica strip club, tells Francis, his tragedy is known to others, to all. As if to emphasise this, Christina's striptease act is performed to the song "Everybody knows." In *Where the Truth Lies* the story of Maureen's death is, perhaps, a "known unknown," since, as Karen's commission suggests, the publishers believe that the public 'know' that they do not know everything there is to know about the case.⁷ Egoyan's approach to narrative structure in *Where the Truth Lies* deliberately exploits our desire, as spectators, to know. Karen, like the spectator, seeks the truth, while Lanny, and with him the film, prefers to conceal the truth by revealing an alternative 'truth'.

In *Where the Truth Lies* several actors who appear regularly in Egoyan's earlier films return in cameo roles: David Hemblen, Don McKellar, Gabrielle Rose and Arsinée Khanjian all appear in short scenes, while Maury Chaikin plays Sally San Marco (see figs. 43-45). The film is dominated instead by the performances of major stars such as Kevin Bacon and Colin Firth, as well as less established actors such as Alison Lohman and Rachel Blanchard. With *Where the Truth Lies*, then, well-known actors with specific star personae occupy the centre, while faces familiar from

Egoyan's previous films appear unexpectedly and momentarily. The presence of major stars such as Bacon and Firth is in keeping with the film's focus on (fictional) celebrities; Egoyan has described his desire to allow Firth to deconstruct his dominant public image, in a manner which adds another layer to the film's examination of aura and desacralization.⁸ The casting of *Where the Truth Lies*, however, also raises the question of the film's relationship to both Egoyan's previous films and contemporary mainstream Hollywood cinema: the dual allegiance is neatly represented by the different familiar faces that we encounter during the film. As will be discussed below, critical response to this film, more than any previous Egoyan film, focused on whether his shift towards the mainstream compromised his distinctive practice as a filmmaker. Tom McSorley noted that "[while] undeniably more commercial in tone and generic in construction than his previous films, *Where the Truth Lies* ... is nonetheless a continuation of his examination of the fissures in the foundations of how we come to know ourselves [and] each other."⁹ For McSorley, the film belongs squarely within Egoyan's "cinema of uncertainty," and demonstrates his interest in "the often opaque mysteries of knowing or, more precisely, not knowing."¹⁰ In order for *Where the Truth Lies* to fit neatly within Egoyan's body of work, the film must be understood to exploit its generic pretexts in order to examine more profound ideas. Egoyan has described how mysteries produce "that feeling of being suspended in a place where you're trying to figure out what has happened, or you have characters who are trying to put pieces together."¹¹ Characters *and* viewers, then, are involved in a search for meaning or completion; the conventional mystery is a jigsaw puzzle, presumably to be finished. However, for Egoyan, it is identity itself that is the ultimate mystery, and, furthermore, identity is a mystery without a solution, and without a resolution. He has spoken of his interest in "characters who think they know

themselves but who remain a mystery to themselves, and are trying to figure out the nature of their own identity,” in which there is “a constant investigation these characters are doing, both to maintain the myth of who they are, but also to reveal who they might become.”¹² The female protagonist in *Where the Truth Lies* responds to the suffering of others (Maureen, but also Maureen’s mother) in ways which are determined by her own traumatic experience (with Lanny, and with Vince). I will here examine how traumatic response, and traumatic responsibility, is presented in relation to the desire to either exploit or protect both the private and the public memories (and images) of others. *Where the Truth Lies* is explicitly concerned with how people represent traumatic events from the past, and with how the traumatic events from the past shape the attempt to recount them in the present. As Marie-Aude Baronian has suggested, Egoyan’s work “questions the link between the possibility of remembering and our access to what must be or what cannot be remembered.”¹³ Egoyan has claimed that “history . . . is formed by the way that competing versions of an event try and struggle to determine their authority.”¹⁴ The film depicts this struggle; the struggle begins to determine what kind of film it ultimately becomes. In this film, characters compete to author (and authorize) the story (and history) of a woman’s death; here, the generic “locked-door” mystery becomes an allegory for history more generally. Narration, in this film, is characterized by unreliability and the dramaturgy repeatedly defers to unverifiable speculation, or deliberate fabulation. The film is an example of what Elliot Panek has called the “psychological puzzle film” in which “the orientation of events in the plot to diegetic reality is not immediately clear, thus creating doubt in the viewer’s mind as to how reliable, knowledgeable, self-conscious, and communicative the narration is.”¹⁵ In *Where the Truth Lies*, we are dispossessed

of narrative mastery, of the comforts of coherences, as Karen is traumatically dispossessed of her childhood idealisation of Collins and Morris.

As stated in the Introduction, I discern in Egoyan's thrillers a careful consideration of a responsibility which is related to the possibility of mourning someone *unfamiliar*, someone "almost absolutely" *unknown*, in which memory is structured on the *impossibility* of ever acquiring full knowledge, and emerges instead through imaginative proximity rather than any historical, physical relation.¹⁶ Levinas insists that responsibility for the other cannot be thought in relation to "an order which can be 'embraced' or 'grasped'": "If one could possess, grasp, and know the other, it would not be other."¹⁷ In *Where the Truth Lies* Karen assumes responsibility for the memory of Maureen after her attempt to "know" or "grasp" fully the truth concerning Maureen's death has, on the whole, failed. The film's narrative strategies privilege and reproduce her failure to ever fully possess or know the truth concerning the death of the other. Its resolution privileges the traumatic assumption of responsibility for the other after the failure of her investigation, and after the dispossession of her cherished and idealised objects, her childhood heroes. With this film, then, Egoyan examines a variety of idealisations, losses and responsibilities. Here, characters' traumas are related to both the loss of a loved one following their violent death, *and* the loss of a specific relation with one's idols. Egoyan's film is a meditation on loss which takes seriously the forms of emotional and psychic attachment that characterize our relations with stars; the film examines the nature of idolisation, and the loss of a regard for (and relation with) the star, whose power and status have been sacralised. Idolisation, we may recall, is a form of that idealisation that, for Derrida, characterizes the "the most distressing, or even the most deadly infidelity" whereby mourning "[interiorizes] within us the image, idol, or ideal of the other."¹⁸ In *Where the Truth*

Lies, Karen has preserved an image of her saviour idols (Lanny and Vince), an image which is a distortion of these men, their relationship with each other, and their relationship to her.

Where the Truth Lies presents “the real and the imaginary ... running after each other, as if each was being reflected in the other, around a point of indiscernibility.”¹⁹ The “point of indiscernibility,” around which “the real and the imaginary” compete with one another, is the mysterious death of Maureen O’Flaherty. Tina Chantor has suggested that “Levinas approaches death as a scandal, as if it were murder, as always premature.”²⁰ The scandal of death is, in this instance, literally a scandal. The film is explicitly concerned with the way popular scandal functions to collapse the private sphere with the public sphere. Atom Egoyan has said: “[What] I found really exciting about the story was that this very public space, this television show that millions of people were seeing and had access to, was being contrasted to this room in a hotel that no one had access to, that existed only in people’s imagination ... And then what happens over the course of the film is that the public space, the telethon, becomes more and more private as we come down to this moment between [Lanny Morris] and [Karen] where we see this private thing that he says to her, where he begs for forgiveness, and meanwhile this hotel room, which no-one sees, becomes more and more public as we understand what has happened in it.”²¹ William A. Cohen has suggested that:

[in] temporal terms, scandal is composed of two discrete moments: the first comprises the alleged event that transgresses community moral standards and is therefore hidden; the second publicly recapitulates that earlier moment, lending the scandal its narrative form. [...] As scandal recasts secret activities into a public story of exposure, it makes questions about truth almost impossible to answer,

however deliberately it mobilizes truth-determining institutions.²²

Scandal then shares a temporal and epistemological structure with trauma; an event which is “hidden” is belatedly given “narrative form,” whereby the truth of the event in the past remains somehow *other* to its re-presentation in the present. Adrienne L. McLean has argued that “[if] scandal makes the hidden visible, it also forces us to acknowledge that something *is* hidden (which we thought did not exist, or did not know was there) or that something is true that we did not have the psychic equipment to understand or do not want to believe.”²³ It is precisely this process of coming to terms with something that has been hidden, that has for that reason remained unknowable, and that has subsequently become unbelievable, that Egoyan’s film examines through Karen’s involvement with Morris and Collins. *Where the Truth Lies* examines the desire to exploit for commercial gain a person’s pain or trauma, and the public’s assumed thirst for scandal. Karen O’Connor, at the film’s opening, attempts to extract from Vince the “provocative stories” her publishers need to sell their magazines and books. Of course, Karen’s has other, more personal motivations. Since it focuses so squarely on the commercial exploitation (and transformation into scandal) of people’s privacy and pain, *Where the Truth Lies* is all the more ambiguously and ambivalently positioned as a commodity itself belonging to a sometimes self-consciously scandalous genre. Ironically, *Where the Truth Lies* became somewhat scandalous due to its ‘explicit’ depiction of Vince’s attempt to have sex with Lanny. Certain responses to the film, then, perpetuate the interrelated logics of scandal and capital that the film is interested in exploring: while Karen does not capitalize on the truth concerning Vince’s sexuality that she eventually discovers, the film found itself positioned in the market as a ‘sordid’ erotic thriller, despite its own critique of such exploitation. *Where the Truth Lies* ultimately presents the failure of a commercial

project (Karen's book); its own fate as a commercial venture is foreshadowed by the story of Karen's failure. However, Karen, and the film along with her, is shaped by a much less marketable property, that of responsibility.

In his interview with Brad Balfour, Egoyan acknowledges that while the novel by American composer and playwright Rupert Holmes, on which the film is based, is "incredibly entertaining and fun," it "[assumed] a tone" as it was "filtered" through his own "obsessions."²⁴ Egoyan has further remarked that the source novel "has a very different tone than the film," that it is "very light," and that his adaptation has "given it this ... weight. When you find material you have to ultimately make it your own, and sometimes that means also breaking the spirit or the tone of the source material, which is always a bit strange."²⁵ More generally, Egoyan has explained that with this film he wanted to take "all [his] obsessions and filter them through something more accessible."²⁶ Jessica Reaves is among the critics who saw the film as a failure precisely due to its lack of fidelity to the humour of the novel; she writes: "[entertaining] and even affecting, *Where the Truth Lies* is a failure primarily because it doesn't do justice to its originator ... Does Egoyan want us to forget Holmes's bracingly tongue-in-cheek vision and give ourselves over to something far more bleak?"²⁷ Similarly, Liam Lacey writes that "Rupert Holmes's novel of showbiz backroom sleaze was sassy, slick and straightforward. Egoyan's film is baroque and complicated."²⁸ Brian D. Johnson notes that "[basing] his script on a breezy novel ... Egoyan did the opposite of what most filmmakers do to books: he made it more complicated."²⁹ The most important alteration in Egoyan's adaptation of Holmes's novel is the encounter between Karen and the duo at the telethon in 1957; in the novel, though she was a fan of the duo's films, she had not been "saved" by them in the way Egoyan has Karen, the "miracle girl," recall. By having Karen at the telethon, the

hidden traumatic events concerning Maureen's death occupy the same historical time as the duo's public consecration as Karen's "saviours" on live television; Egoyan explains that "those three days on the telethon were somehow sacred to her, and she had to find out what really happened over those three days."³⁰ This "major reinvention," Egoyan notes, "[skewed] the tone in a way," but enabled him to continue examining the nature of moral and emotional responsibility and sexual and psychological trauma in relation to parent-child or quasi-parent-child relationships: Egoyan suggests that by "[exploring] what these two men must have meant to a young girl," the film relates to his interest in parenting, and what he describes as "the responsibilities that you have to live up to a certain image people have of you."³¹ Part of his attraction to the project, Egoyan has said, was that it allowed him to examine how "fantasy relationship" with a celebrity "becomes an essential part of who we are."³² Karen's identification with Collins and Morris is particularly intense; her childhood relation with Collins and Morris, the fantasy that they have indeed saved her life, is disrupted by their split following the discovery of Maureen's body in their hotel suite. Adrienne L. McLean writes: "To identify with a star means to accept the pretence that he or she is worth identifying with; to be shamed by that star's behaviour is to have one's own status degraded as well."³³ In seeking to exonerate Morris and Collins, Karen is in some respects exonerating herself, and her previous attachment to them.

Egoyan has said that his "attraction to the dark side of human behaviour comes from this idea of the responsibilities people have and what happens when they don't take these responsibilities seriously."³⁴ Having Karen worship Lanny as a child, and having Lanny ask her at that time for her forgiveness, makes much more complicated and disquieting her involvement with him as a woman; Alison Lohman

was cast in the role of Karen because she was able to convincingly play Karen as a child and as a young woman. Brian D. Johnson notes that “erotic scenarios between creepy father figures and vulnerable “girl-women” have emerged as an obsessive refrain in Egoyan’s movies.” Egoyan explains that it allows him to explore “where you have to weigh your sexual instinct with a degree of responsibility.”³⁵ He is fascinated, he has said, by characters who are “emerging from childhood,” who can assess that parental figures are fallible, or failing, and must respond to this knowledge: Karen, he suggests, “adores these two men ... and maybe even wants to exonerate them and restore their reputations, but instead ... realizes that these are very dark characters,” and must, therefore, both “re-evaluate” her regard for them, and “respond” to her new knowledge.³⁶ Significantly, Karen, through her involvement with Lanny and Vince, takes the place of Maureen: as much as she returns to a place between them that she herself experienced as a child on stage at the telethon (and which is repeated just once, when Lanny arrives at Vince’s house and Karen stands between them on the driveway), she also fuses the reoccupation of that position with that of Maureen’s position, by sleeping with Lanny in New York (as Maureen did in Miami, according to Lanny’s account, which Karen had read the night before), and by having become a journalist (which Maureen, it transpires, intended to become).

Karen’s deliberate and perhaps reckless insertion of herself between Vince and Lanny, her occupation of the position which proved fatal for Maureen fifteen years previously, is reflected in the physical resemblance between Karen and Maureen, which several critics noted, some going so far as to say that Karen’s similarity with Maureen explains Lanny’s attraction to her when they meet on the plane. Roger Ebert, commenting on the physical similarity between Karen and Maureen, suggested that Karen “represents for both men ... an eerie shadow from the past.”³⁷ This is one way

in which Hitchcock's *Vertigo* is evoked by this film, since the suspense inheres in whether Karen is destined to discover what happened to Maureen only by it happening again to her. There is a moment in *Where the Truth Lies* where an image of Maureen, a close-up of her face in death, morphs into Karen's (see figs. 40-42). This dissolve evokes the iconic scene from Ingmar Bergman's *Persona* (1966), which Egoyan has described as being particularly significant for him, in which the faces of Elisabeth (Liv Ullman) and Alma (Bibi Anderson) merge.³⁸ The relationship between Karen and Maureen is one which is constantly haunted by the threat of their merging (in death). Egoyan has described how in Holmes's novel Karen is "like a classic *femme fatale*, this woman who comes in and basically reveals this story. But from the moment I read it I saw this possibility of having her as a child on the telethon and having this fantasy relationship with these two men that she adores."³⁹ In this respect, Egoyan's Karen is more similar to the gothic heroine, since, as Egoyan explains, "she has no idea about the violence that she's moving into, she has no sense that these two men are potentially killers because she wants to believe that they're gods, and yet we know there is something very sick and diseased in this situation, and we're kind of dreading and yet wanting to know what it is."⁴⁰ The suspense, and dread, therefore, comes from Karen's complex relation with the men she is investigating, her desire to exonerate them, and her growing dread that she has worshiped false idols.

In the discussion which follows, I examine in a little more detail the film's relation to Hitchcock's cinema, and to *noir* and *neo-noir*. I then consider how Lanny's idealization of Vince is suggested by sequences depicting the events in 1957, and how his anxiety over his involvement in the events before and after Maureen's death manifests itself in the film's visualisation of Lanny's memoirs. I also consider how Vince's attempt to blackmail Karen functions as a traumatic response to Maureen's

death which inadvertently (and paradoxically) enables her to re-fuse with her childhood self at the very moment her cherished idealisation of Vince is irrecoverably lost. I then consider Karen's eventual assumption of the responsibility for Maureen's mother's memory of her daughter. To conclude, I look at a figure I read as the film's un-mourned victim. *Where the Truth Lies* presents the failure to remember and mourn *fully* at the same time that it fails *fully* to fulfil the desire for a just resolution.

Where the Truth Lies, Hitchcock, Noir and Neo-Noir

Egoyan's *homage* to *noir* and *neo-noir* centres on a female protagonist in the role of detective, in search of, and yet also in fear of, the truth. She eventually discovers that, like her, Maureen was also an aspiring journalist, and that she was murdered to prevent her from revealing what she had inadvertently discovered about Collins and Morris. *Where the Truth Lies* presents several characters all of whom attempt to capitalize on the knowledge they have acquired or might acquire, whether through blackmail or lucrative publishing contracts. The film thus evokes Fritz Lang's classic *noir* from 1953, *The Blue Gardenia*, in which Casey Mayo, a male journalist (Richard Conte) attempts to capitalize on an infamous and mysterious murder, and forms a relationship with Nora Larkin (Anne Baxter) who thinks, mistakenly, that she is responsible for the murder. Significantly, in *Where the Truth Lies* a female journalist investigates the murder of another woman, and becomes involved with a man who believes (again, mistakenly) that he is responsible for the crime. While *noir* elements are mobilized, Egoyan's film refuses to provide a conventional romantic triumph for its heroine. Furthermore, the heroine's romantic involvements with men are displaced by an assumption of responsibility for the memory of another woman.

The film demonstrates once again Egoyan's interest in the specifically Gothic scenario I examined in the previous chapter. The "locked room" at the centre of the mystery in *Where the Truth Lies* is comparable with the secret room in the Bluebeard myth that was an influence for *Felicia's Journey*. With *Where the Truth Lies* Egoyan reminds us of the Gothic elements exploited by classic *noir* films. Steve Neale has suggested that *noir* has more in common with Gothic romance than is usually admitted. Both *noir* and Gothic romance "frequently centre on an element of potentially fatal sexual attraction; they stress the risks, emotional and physical, this may entail for the central protagonist; they lay a great deal of emphasis on the protagonist's perceptions, feelings, thoughts and subjective experiences; and they share the context of a culture of distrust."⁴¹ However, of course, in the Gothic romance the protagonist is usually a woman. Frank Krutnick has noted that when the woman is entrusted with the conventionally masculine task of investigative detection in classic thrillers, such as *The Stranger on the Third Floor* (1941) or *Phantom Lady* (1944), this is "motivated by, and ultimately bound within, her love for the wrongly-convicted hero."⁴² *Where the Truth Lies* presents an intriguing reconfiguration of these traditions. Karen wants to exonerate her childhood heroes, but her involvement with the men is marked by a series of deceptions (both hers and theirs) and increasingly dangerous scenarios in which Karen is seduced, manipulated, and exploited. As an investigator seeking to discover innocence, Karen's motivations are not as straightforward as her generic predecessors. Guilt and innocence, in Egoyan's cinema, is rarely reassuringly unambiguous.

For Egoyan, there are no negotiations to be made when considering the ideas he is interested in examining, the genre templates to which his film appears to belong,

and the mainstream audience to which the film is to some extent oriented. Egoyan has stated:

I am frustrated with having to structure explanations, and don't like films that wrap things up, like the endings of *Psycho* and *Vertigo*. I prefer to leave mystery intact, but also recognize that audiences are not always engaged by that unresolved narrative strategy. The element of the *whodunit* in *noir* fiction is pleasurable ... that need to have answered who actually did it ... but for me it's a treacherous moment in the film because I am more attracted to this idea of non-explanation. Genre films demand a resolution, so it's a negotiation, and the danger is that the form of the genre, the conventions, may trivialize the ideas I'm trying to express."⁴³

By in certain respects failing conventions of generic and narrative resolution, denying his viewers the pleasures associated with the protagonist's triumph, and by dispossessing his viewers of cognitive mastery through his approach to narrative and form, Egoyan's film, I suggest, is destined to fail as a straightforward genre film. That failure, however, must be seen as part of Egoyan's critical project, his appropriation of genre and his investigation of the ethics of an impossible responsibility, and the dangers of a completed work of mourning. Karen's final protection of Maureen's memory, which follows the failure of her attempts to clear her idols' names and write her book, dramatises, therefore, the film's, and the filmmaker's, ambiguous and ethical consideration of responsibility and failure.

Most critics argued that *Where the Truth Lies* failed as a suspense or mystery thriller: Nick James, for example, wrote that the film "lacks in particular any notion of suspense."⁴⁴ Andrew Sarris argued that "[the] solution to the "mystery"" in Egoyan's film "becomes anticlimactic."⁴⁵ Richard Neupert has suggested that "metafictions, or

fictions that reflect upon narrative traditions and processes, use their endings to disturb rather than reaffirm reading and interpretation.”⁴⁶ Viewers, he notes, may interpret narratives differently:

Resolution and closure then become functions of the spectator, and, depending on background and past narrative experience, some of us will impose resolution where others will grant open ambiguity. [...] Hence, for some, the textual markers may suggest that these stories are incomplete and suspended, while other spectators, especially those inspired to find unity in all things, may interpret these endings as complete ... and conclusive.⁴⁷

Egoyan, describing the “strange game” of *Where the Truth Lies* suggests that “it provides a conclusion for the person or the viewer who needs it,” which can be contrasted with how the film is intelligible in a slightly different way for “the person who’s looking at it in terms of what it’s presenting, in terms of the narratives and who’s telling the story and how is it being shown, in terms of who is actually imagining Maureen. Who is she, ultimately, if not a product of Karen’s imagination?”⁴⁸ *Where the Truth Lies*, like *Felicia’s Journey*, asks us to think about how remembering without witnessing might take place. Egoyan has remarked that the “solution” to the mystery which this particular *whodunit* offers in its final moments presents a kind of ultimate cliché, in which ‘the butler did it.’⁴⁹ The cliché ending, however, is carefully framed within subjective speculation rather than objective narration. As if to emphasize this, the final scene between Karen and Reuben takes place in a movie set; Reuben disappears into the generic space of a studio lot.

Egoyan has described how the film attempts to “activate our curiosity ... through an intense investigation of these human beings as opposed to ... formulaic shocks.” The film was, he explains, “tricky,” because while it uses genre, and

activates viewers' expectations concerning genre, it is "what's happening between the human beings" that is of interest and importance.⁵⁰ The film's potentially problematic suspension between commercial and art cinema was noted by several critics. Todd McCarthy wrote in *Variety* that the film was "Atom Egoyan's most mainstream and genre-oriented picture" on which was applied a "thick *noir* lacquer."⁵¹ Geoffrey Macnab saw the film's "unevenness" as "inevitable," due to "a cerebral arthouse director like Egoyan tackling populist genre material."⁵² Linda Williams, noting Egoyan's films' concerns with "psychological culpability," suggests that while this "genre-piece" presents "[sensational] mainstream-style entertainment," Egoyan "still expects you to have your wits about you as you watch."⁵³ In other words, there is significant risk in the attempt to approach genre from a cerebral perspective, or in order to examine serious themes, since the resulting film requires or expects more from the viewer than conventional "genre-pieces," but seeks to (or might appear to) provide more "mainstream-style entertainment" than conventional art cinema.

Bruce Kirkland, for example, suggests that "[with] its intellectual conceits, time-shifting story and challenging ideas, it is a film with a mainstream sheen and an arthouse complexity," while Peter Brunette argues that "Egoyan's chief virtue and biggest problem has always been his intensely intellectual approach to his filmmaking, and this film is no different."⁵⁴ Donald Clarke, acknowledging that the film met with a tepid response for "the sin of being more frivolous than [his] earlier work," argues, paradoxically, that "Egoyan may be too much of a cinematic highbrow to tailor his story to genre templates."⁵⁵ The film, potentially, fails as a genre piece (for being too complex) at the same time that it fails as an Egoyan picture (for being too frivolous): it is this vulnerability that, ultimately, determines the film's mixed critical and commercial fate. The film's problematic identity, furthermore, is in keeping with the

film's interest in characters who attempt to present themselves as other than they really are.

Christy Lemire suggested that with this film Egoyan “wallows so devilishly in the conventions of film noir, he approaches parody.”⁵⁶ The repeated close-ups of various characters' cigarette cases which punctuate the opening sequences of the film might be seen as a self-conscious parody of Hitchcock, since they ultimately serve no narrative significance whatsoever, unlike the various shots of neatly folded clothes on beds (which eventually serve to ‘prove’ to Karen that Reuben murdered Maureen).⁵⁷ Furthermore, repeated shots of Maureen's body in the bath present us with an image of something which (we eventually discover) never actually took place: as with the famous duplicitous flashback which opens Hitchcock's *Stagefright* (1950), flashbacks in *Where the Truth Lies* present a combination of truths and half-truths and lies, not all of which are fully identified as such by the film's conclusion. As will be discussed below, several of the flashbacks function like dream-works which reveal the way Lanny, in the present, *wishes* to present (or remember) the past, and the way the traumatic past nevertheless seeks (and finds) representation *within* these reconstructions. Egoyan acknowledges that the film provided “an opportunity to pay homage to a tradition of filmmaking that has really influenced [him]”:

Not only the classic *noir*, but also the neo-*noir* of the films of the 70s, like *Body Heat*. Also the construction of Hollywood glamour, like *Gilda* or Hitchcock movies ... The whole tradition of *noir* and Hollywood glamour is something that has inspired this movie completely. But I also didn't want this film to be a pastiche. I wanted these influences to be references but not adhered to slavishly – certainly not in a sort of parody.⁵⁸

Egoyan recognizes how the film allowed him to focus not only on “[traditions] of

filmmaking” (*noir* and *neo-noir*) but on “the construction of Hollywood glamour”; *Where the Truth Lies* attempts to work within and against the traditions he mentions, and to present and investigate glamorous images. His description of how these influences were “to be references but not adhered to slavishly” suggests the mode of unfaithful fidelity I wish to trace in his films’ relation with genre. Most critics linked the film to either Hitchcock’s films, or to *noir* or *neo-noir*, remarking on the film’s elaborate, intricate and convoluted storytelling, the untrustworthy, morally ambiguous and unreliable narrators, the concern with sordid and violent behaviour, and its self-conscious evocation of the genre.

Peter Bradshaw thought the “brooding and insistent” music suggested the film’s “aspirations to Hitchcock status”; Owen Gleiberman saw Mychael Danna’s score as “[working] so hard to evoke *Vertigo* that it may leave you dizzy”; Geoffrey Macnab noted the film’s “nods” to *Vertigo*, referring both to the “lush” score and the blonde “doppelgangers.”⁵⁹ John Orr has argued that Hitchcock’s “end-of-century legacy is one where a new generation ... has run Hitchcock and *noir* together, blending them with surprising results.”⁶⁰ *Vertigo* is the model for what Orr calls “post-Hitchcock noir”; Lawrence Kasdan’s *Body Heat* (1980), “with its languid pacing and sensuous retro-style,” for example, is “inconceivable without *Vertigo*.”⁶¹ After *Body Heat*, Orr suggests, “memory noir” develops as a dominant strand of post-Hitchcock noir. Furthermore, *Vertigo* is also a “primal source for a *meta-noir* that overlaps the physical and metaphysical, the actual and the virtual. For it raises the question through the persona of Madeline of key relations: past and present, the origin and the copy, cause and effect, and the question too of parallel worlds.”⁶² *Where the Truth Lies* is concerned with the parallel worlds of public fame and private pain. The film’s ambiguous doubling of Karen and Maureen is made more complicated by the

film's insistent focus on the relationship between events and their photographic or televisual records, and particularly the failure of the latter to adequately capture the 'truth' of the former.

Nino Frank, in his 1949 discussion of "dark films, films noirs," suggested that while their "dynamism derived from violent death and mysteries that must be solved," "[the] essential question no longer has to do with who committed the crime, but with how the protagonist handles himself [*sic*]." ⁶³ In these "purely psychological stories," which demonstrate how a film "might offer, as its main attraction, a gloomy story, well constructed and presented in an original way," "action, either violent or exciting, matters less than faces, behaviour, words." ⁶⁴ In *Where the Truth Lies* there is just such a tension between the delineation of "comprehensible adventures" and its concern with "enigmatic psychology." ⁶⁵ Furthermore, "action, either violent or exciting" and "comprehensible adventures" are less important here than Egoyan's narrative privileging of the heroine's enigmatic response to the other's suffering. Foster Hirsch suggests that noir's "recurrent use of a jumbled time sequence, its sometimes delirious flashbacks" corresponds with the "oblique, confusing" identities and motivations of "the fatally unstable *noir* world." ⁶⁶ J. P. Telotte argues that *film noir* "popularized the voice-over and flashback devices which implicitly challenge conventionally linear narratives," and presented a remarkable and consistent experimentation with "the mechanics and *possibilities* of storytelling." ⁶⁷ Egoyan's experiments with storytelling in *Where the Truth Lies* necessarily risk confounding audiences with bewildering levels of narration precisely because the *noir* tradition is characterized by an unstable moral universe reflected in convoluted narrative structures; Egoyan's film takes the conventional non-linearity of *noir* more emphatically towards the meta-cinematic conventions of the art film. *Where the Truth Lies* takes these *noir* conventions and

exploits them only in order to incorporate within the traditions stylistic excesses an insistent emphasis on epistemological crisis and ethical response.

As Egoyan explains, however, it is both *noir* and *neo-noir* that are revisited in this film. *Where the Truth Lies* relates to the cinematic tradition in complex ways, by revisiting an earlier revisiting of the past (*neo-noir*'s resurrection of *noir*); the film concerns how thoroughly events of the past can be mystified and their original aspects obscured. Egoyan's film focuses on characters in the early 1970s remembering and arguably reinventing the 1950s; in this respect, the film allegorizes the processes by which *neo-noir* and *noir* are the products of retrospection, recuperation and resuscitation. Tom Conley has suggested that *neo-noir* is characterized by a "baroque self-consciousness" and "an allusive force of citation."⁶⁸ Larry Gross, writing in 1976, discusses what he calls "film *apres noir*," referring to films such as John Boorman's *Point Blank* (1967) and Robert Altman's *The Long Goodbye* (1973), which suggest the influence of European art cinema (such as Godard and Resnais) on directors working in Hollywood, and which, "[by] turning the thematic materials of *film noir* into forms ... force the attentive viewer into a contemplation of his own expectations, demands, assumptions, his own complicity with a kind of "entertainment" which obscures the real character of contemporary life."⁶⁹ *Neo-noir* has on the whole been read in terms of a postmodern revisiting of *noir*; in particular, Fredric Jameson's work on *Body Heat* discusses the film in relation to the postmodern nostalgia film and stylistic pastiche.⁷⁰ However, James Naremore has argued that "*noir* is almost entirely a creation of postmodern culture—a belated reading of classic Hollywood," "both an important cinematic legacy and an idea we have projected onto the past."⁷¹ Egoyan's film, set in the early 1970s and the late 1950s, focuses on the way the past can provide the opportunities for certain "projections" and also be reassessed, "belatedly."

Furthermore, the film shuttles back and forth between the eras of New Hollywood (the 1970s) and the decline of its golden age (the 1950s), between the period which was characterized by a renewal of interest in Hollywood *film noir* and the very end of the original noir period.⁷² Therefore, while borrowing many conventions of *noir* and neo-*noir*, *Where the Truth Lies* is also concerned with the very processes Naremore sees at work in the “postmodern creation” of *noir*, and the simultaneous development of neo-*noir*; projection and belated re-evaluation. Naremore suggests that film *noir* “belongs to the history of ideas as much as to the history of cinema.”⁷³ Neo-*noir* is the playing-out or working-through of influences from *noir*, but it also contributes to an idea of that original *noir* period. In this respect, *noir* is retrospectively constructed, a past projected from a present that is paradoxically shaped in significant ways by that past; this, we might note, is the structure of trauma. In other words, *noir* signifies an imaginative relation with and construction of the past, of (film) history. Egoyan’s film, similarly, is concerned with how imagination can transform the past. *Where the Truth Lies*’s examination of the construction (and loss) of fantasised pasts thus thematizes aspects specific to the genre with which it is concerned. Naremore has suggested that the term is often used in relation to “a nostalgia for something that never quite existed.”⁷⁴ Egoyan’s film is, similarly, interested in how we remember “something that never quite existed,” or that we belatedly come to know as other than how it appeared at the time, and how traumatic experience and nostalgia inform and determine our desires to reconstruct the past.

Elizabeth Cowie suggests that *noir* “is now identified by a range of elements, not only thematic, such as the role of fate or a duplicitous woman, but also formal: the use of flashback, for example, and hence of voice-over, the frequent undermining or shifting of character point of view, and the investigative narrative structure, which

requires the posing of an enigma, or several, which the film attempts to resolve.”⁷⁵ It is this “posing of an enigma,” and the delaying of the enigma’s solution, that links *noir* to gothic melodrama and to the more general mode of the suspense thriller: according to Cowie, “the suspense film, unlike the classic detective film, always involves the production of a narrative hesitation about the truth concerning the enigma and about the protagonist’s perception of reality.”⁷⁶ Cowie notes how in the *film noir* voice-over narration is associated with the male hero (usually a detective or an investigator), while the female voice-over (in, for example, *Mildred Pierce* [Michael Curtiz, 1945]) is rarely “hard-boiled” and “as a result is associated with melodramas or ‘woman’s pictures.’”⁷⁷ Egoyan’s film’s ambiguous relation to genre is suggested by the two voice-over narrators; it is ultimately Karen’s story, however, and her responsibilities in the future eventually eclipse Lanny’s stories of the past. In this respect, therefore, *Where the Truth Lies* emphasises its female protagonist’s “perceptions, feelings, thoughts and subjective experiences” in the way Steve Neale suggested was typical in both gothic romance and *film noir*.⁷⁸ Lanny’s voice-over refers only to written documents which pass from character to character, and its raw and frank language and attitude is deliberately (and perhaps desperately) clichéd; Karen’s refers to a retrospective description of the events that unfold during the film, presented to the viewer by the narrative’s privileging of her consciousness. In other words, the more *noirish* voice-over, and the images that accompany it, is enclosed by the narrative’s privileging of a female consciousness or principle.⁷⁹ Mary Ann Doane argues that the male voice-over in *film noir* functions to contain the *femme fatale*, and to prevent her from controlling the narrative.⁸⁰ Christine Gledhill describes the typical *film noir* as “a struggle between different voices for control over the telling of the story.”⁸¹ In *Where the Truth Lies*, Lanny’s voice-over refers first to the chapters of the

autobiography that Karen reads and then to the confession he writes for his lawyer, and that Reuben steals and sends to Karen; while this confession admits his regret for his actions (though shows little sympathy for Maureen), it is only towards the very end of the film that Lanny's speech might be understood in relation to a desire for "absolution," which is when Karen is able, finally, to more fully understand why the weeping Lanny asked her for forgiveness during the telethon fifteen years previously. Lanny and Vince are the figures who are investigated in the film, however much Karen's quest demands she reassess her own past; in other words, Lanny and Vince are arguably the *hommes fatales* whose sexuality and secrets the female investigator-protagonist attempts to discover.

Karen's investigation is an attempt to discover what happened between Lanny, Vince and Maureen in 1957; she wishes to shed or throw light on the mystery, to illuminate and reveal the truth. Throughout *Where the Truth Lies*, the expressive use of lighting is integral to the film's complex staging of events in the present and in the past. Matthew Turner notes how in the film "rich, vibrant colours ... [contrast] brilliantly with the seedier elements of the plot."⁸² Kurt Loder suggests that the film is "classic *film noir* in tone—it is suffused with seediness and unsavoury secrets; but Egoyan has dragged the genre out of the shadows among which it was born and into the sparkling, almost stage-managed sunlight of Miami and Los Angeles, where the story's creepiness seems even more starkly perverse."⁸³ Paul Schrader suggests that *film noir* "was first of all a style," was "more interested in style than theme."⁸⁴

Discussing the expressionist aspects of film noir which reflected the influx of German and East European directors in Hollywood, Schrader describes how the films welded post-war realism with artificial studio lighting, whereby "the best *noir* technicians simply made all the world a sound stage, directing unnatural and expressionistic

lighting onto realistic settings.”⁸⁵ The difference with *Where the Truth Lies*, however, is that the film has a lustrous and vibrant palette. *Where the Truth Lies* presents exquisite contrasts of colour and light; throughout the film, bright colour and light is used to startling effect. Nicholas Christopher has suggested that in the handful of films which, though shot with Technicolor, should be considered film *noir*, such as John M. Stahl’s *Leave Her to Heaven* (1945) and Nicolas Ray’s *Party Girl* (1958), colour is exploited above all for its surreal and even hallucinatory qualities.⁸⁶ An intensely seductive palette and an artificial and excessive use of light is a central stylistic strategy in the *mise-en-scène* of this dreamlike and seductive film. The film’s use of lighting was remarked upon by several critics; J. Hoberman has more recently discussed the film in relation to what he calls “sunshine noir.”⁸⁷ Kurt Loder, for example, noted how Alison Lohman, the film’s female star, is “photographed to look as if she’s lit from within by a bundle of sunbeams ... the perfect incarnation of innocence waiting to be defiled.”⁸⁸ Christy Lemire, noting the film’s “glowing visuals,” and how, in one particular scene, events “in the living room of Vince’s modern Hollywood mansion” are “illuminated” by “the lights from the shimmering backyard pool,” adds that the film leaves you “not totally sure about everything you just saw, but too dazzled to care.”⁸⁹ As Emma Wilson has suggested, *Where the Truth Lies* is defined by “its ambition to go further than [Egoyan’s] other films in showing in the light of day what is intimate and illicit.”⁹⁰ An excess of light can paradoxically prevent full knowledge; dazzling or glaring light is potentially blinding, dangerous, and can conceal as much as it reveals. Anita Katz suggested that “[the] contrast of onstage glitz and offstage baseness comes across vibrantly.”⁹¹ Various critics described the film as glossy, hypnotic, fascinating, dizzying, intoxicating; this is, I suggest, as much to do with the film’s use of *mise-en-scène* as the complex, back-and-

forth narrative structure and unreliable narrators. Donald Clarke noted the film's "evocative Vaseline-fuzzy photography."⁹² Tim Robey called the film a "soft-focus showbiz murder mystery."⁹³ Egoyan has explained that the film is shot in a "very glossy studio style," that he "needed it to be very glossy and have a seductive image."⁹⁴ The diffusion lenses used for the scenes depicting the 1950s, Egoyan notes, enabled him to present specifically a "heightened view of that period," as "very glamorized, very seductive and lush," and to "[make] it seem as erotic as possible."⁹⁵ The film, in other words, attempts to create a space where the viewer can lose themselves to "a world of enchantment" while remaining aware of the way this enchantment works, whereby they are simultaneously seduced by but suspicious of the images this world presents, and most suspicious of those that are most seductive.⁹⁶

Flashbacks

Where the Truth Lies presents an elaborate interweaving of Karen's investigations in 1972, presented on the whole objectively, her memories of appearing at the telethon in 1957, presented in flashback form with Karen's voice-over, and Lanny's accounts of his and Vince's life leading up to, during and after the recording of the telethon, also presented in flashback but with Lanny's voice-over. The film illustrates how, as Edward Brannigan has noted, "our narrative comprehension of objective and subjective, past and present, may be profoundly challenged and, in some cases, rendered inadequate" by films which "exploit the intricacies of flashback narration."⁹⁷ The film also presents images from Karen's unconscious and conscious imaginative responses to what she learns: there is a dream sequence in which Karen enters the hotel suite in New Jersey where Maureen's body was discovered (figs. 25-

26), and there are episodes in which she imagines how Maureen's body was shipped to New Jersey (46-48) and how Reuben killed Maureen (fig. 66). Where Karen's voiceover represents her reflections on these events from a time (of speaking) in the future, and include the recollections of the past she had at that time, Lanny's voiceover refers to his written accounts of the past whose 'time' (of being written) are prior to the narrative but which refer back to 1957. These are made available to Karen in various ways, and so his voice-over refers not only to his writing but also to her reading.

Egoyan repeatedly presents sequences at the telethon in which Karen's voice-over and Lanny's voice-over interchange, so that her memories and his accounts of the events of 1957 begin to blur. The telethon sequences seem to belong both to Karen's voice-overed memory and Lanny's voice-overed memoir. The film's flashbacks present Lanny's and Karen's experiences in the past, during and after the telethon in 1957, and the images depicting these events relate to their negotiation of traumatic experience and loss in the present and in the past, namely Lanny's belief that Vince has murdered Maureen, and his wish to protect Vince, and Karen's belief that her life has been saved by Collins and Morris, and her desire to exonerate them.

In *Where the Truth Lies* Karen's memories of appearing at the telethon are presented so that our ability to identify with certainty that the 'miracle girl' is indeed Karen (and that, therefore, these are memories of her having met them as a child) is delayed until roughly halfway through the film (immediately before she has sex with Lanny in New York). Alison Lohman plays herself as a child: the first cut from Karen in 1972 to the telethon in 1957, accompanied by her voice over admitting that Lanny and Vince had been her heroes, is not enough in itself to suggest that Karen is the 'miracle girl' glimpsed on stage in the following scenes, simply that Karen had hero-

worshipped them during that time. The film has already presented images of the telethon (in the opening scene), which means that sequences showing the telethon, in which Karen's voice-over and Lanny's voice-over alternately feature, are shared 'impossibly' by Karen, Lanny and by the narrative itself. The initial images of Lanny and Karen on stage are either at a distance which makes it impossible to see it is Karen or, when the camera cuts in closer, are of her back or include only the very top of her head at the bottom of the frame. Similarly, it is only during the film's final moments, when Karen is in Mrs. O'Flaherty's garden, that, in the film's final flashback to the telethon, we see and *hear*, as Karen alone had heard, Lanny asking her for her forgiveness, although we first *see* this take place in the initial flashbacks. The distance between the camera and Karen in the earlier sequences delays for the first half of the film our full awareness that Karen had encountered Lanny and Vince the very weekend Maureen died.

Given Egoyan's consistent exploration of the ways in which the events from the past can be recalled, reconstructed, archived, and accessed, and, in particular, his approach in *Ararat* (2002) to the problem of cinematically reconstructing the traumatic historical past in the present, this film's exclusive period setting (shuttling back and forth between the early 1970s and the late 1950s) must be considered as a continuation of the director's interest in—and profound suspicion of—our relationships with and desire for images and narratives that however inadequately represent the past, and allow it to return. Maureen, whose death is at the centre of the story, is presented in images which suggest Karen's imaginative response to Lanny's testimonies, but is also present in ways which suggest Lanny's traumatic response to her death. Images of Maureen in the film are rarely reliable; her life and death are presented in ways which suggest her removal from a realm that the film can reveal

with confidence, her relegation to a reconstructions in which her life and death are the imaginative property of others. The flashbacks featuring Maureen belong to that “deviant” kind which Edward Brannigan suggests can “challenge assumptions about our knowledge of characters and the world,” to the kind which Maureen Turim suggests “can make the spectators more aware of the modalities of filmic fiction, or the process of narrative itself.”⁹⁸ The ambiguity concerning the origin of the narrative account of events is intensified as Lanny provides versions of the events that took place the night Maureen died which Karen’s voice-over immediately explains are only partly true, and as Karen’s memories of her meeting with Lanny on stage during the telethon gradually expand in length and detail. Since Lanny’s descriptions of the telethon and Karen’s own memories of her experience are in constant interplay, his manuscript triggering her recollections, their origin in the desire to sustain an idealization of another is particularly complex. Egoyan has admitted that he was “extremely disappointed” by critics’ failure to read the flashbacks based on Lanny’s memoirs in relation to the character’s pathology: the “entire structure of the film,” he explains, “is based on this idea.”⁹⁹ The flashbacks are realisations of the memoir’s representation of the past, and, as such, function to reveal his desire to fabricate, and obfuscate, his relationship with Vince and his association with Maureen. Referring to the film’s flashbacks, Egoyan has noted that Lanny Morris

is telling a story, giving a narrative ... but it’s the version he wants us to believe ... and so I had to transpose myself into another director in a way because if Lanny Morris was to tell his life story he wouldn’t hire Atom Egoyan to direct it, he would hire Vincent Minnelli or Stanley Donen, De Palma, maybe Scorsese ... so I had to imagine how he wanted to see those scenes ... it’s about indulging in a certain production design

... creating a level of voluptuousness which would somehow convey how these people saw their own lives ... glamour, I guess.”¹⁰⁰

In this way, the film’s presentation of Lanny’s narrative account of the past contributes to Egoyan’s interest in the suspense produced by a “dislocation between how [characters] see themselves and how they really are.”¹⁰¹

The complex flashback structure of *Where the Truth Lies* suggests both the past’s vulnerability to its reconstruction or recollection in the present, and the past as a shared experience, in which both Karen and Lanny remember the telethon in different ways, and the images depicting the events of 1957 are anchored in both Karen’s consciousness and Lanny’s narrative testimony, neither of which, it is suggested, can provide objective accounts of the past. Egoyan has explained how Lanny is “telling us the story but Karen is listening to the story ... so it’s Karen’s dramaturgy, it’s Karen who’s imagining these scenes.”¹⁰² Liam Lacey notes that the scenes depicting 1957 are staged to suggest their artificiality. All the sequences characterized by unnaturally lustrous light, which is ironic given that they have been written with the express purpose of providing Vince with the false (and therefore obfuscatory) version of events that he will give to Karen. The first two manuscript chapters attempt to conceal certain truths but unconsciously reveal aspects of Lanny’s regard for Vince, and the testimony, which provides what he believes to be the truth, only describes what he imagines to have taken place based on what he saw. The truth which persists within these false accounts, and the error which persists in the truth, I suggest, must be seen in relation to Lanny’s traumatic response to both his partner’s desire and to Maureen’s death. Similarly, Vince’s ill-fated attempt to force Karen to write her book according to his requirements represents *his* traumatic response to

Lanny's rejection and to Maureen's death. Both Lanny and Vince, it must be noted, act under the belief that Vince killed Maureen.

The first chapter, which Karen reads in John's offices, overlooked by Naomi, John's assistant, contains a description of an incident which suggests how Lanny's memoirs reflect an attempt to radically reconfigure a traumatic past and repress this trauma's effects: the scene in which Vince attacks a heckler at a nightclub. This incident is described as taking place three months before the polio telethon when Vince, performing with Lanny at the Belgrado, Sally's New Jersey nightclub, ushers backstage a member of their audience who has been heckling Lanny with anti-Semitic comments, and who Vince has persuaded to help them perform a turn. Out of view of the Belgrado's audience, Vince abruptly and maniacally slams the man's head against the ledge of the wall and then, repeatedly, on the floor, before returning to the stage, where he joins Lanny in song. Lanny notices a splodge of Joey's blood on Vince's face and so plants an exaggeratedly passionate kiss on his partner's cheek before the audience notices this visible mark or trace of Vince's violence backstage. While this incident may never have happened, it nevertheless represents Lanny's desire, by writing these memoirs, to help Vince maintain the public's perception of their innocence (their spotlessness), and presents an imaginary incident in which Vince's love for Lanny can be reconfigured into an acceptable and more normative expression whereby he lashes out at those who would attack Vince, rather than the desperate sexual advance which, witnessed by Maureen the night before the telethon, eventually led to their split and the end of their "marriage." When Lanny and Vince are on stage dealing with their heckler, Vince, in Lanny's memoir's account of this incident, says to Lanny, who is jostling Vince from behind, "please, don't try to mount me." While Lanny's memoirs emphasize his rampant libido, they also give to Vince this line of

dialogue which, in the context of the act, refers to Vince's role as controlling and civilizing Lanny, but which, given Vince's desperate advance to Lanny in Miami, suggest that Lanny's memoirs are deliberately (and perhaps too deliberately) reversing the roles and making it difficult (but perhaps not too difficult) to distinguish the erotic dynamic between the two men, which the routine presented here reconfigures in playful and harmless form. This scene figures prominently in the very first manuscript Karen reads at Lanny's lawyer's office in order to demonstrate, as the last lines she reads aver, that "there was nothing [they] wouldn't do for each other."

John tells Karen that Lanny is planning to publish a definitive joint autobiography; in their final meeting, Karen tells Lanny that he wrote it out of love for Vince. Lanny's work here, it is clear, represents the lengths to which he will go to help his ex-partner, and reveals his love and fear for Vince. While it transpires that Vince does not have blood on his hands, since he was not responsible for Maureen's death, Lanny, thinking his ex-partner had killed her, here represents with this gesture why and how these memoirs are written as an attempt to maintain, or save, Vince's face. The first chapter of the manuscript rushes towards a description of the discovery of Maureen's body in the bath, and then, as if unable right then to continue and actually provide an account of exactly how they had been "acquainted with the dead girl," it retreats back three months in time, to describe the night they agreed to travel to Sally's hotel in New Jersey following the telethon. The second chapter of the manuscript provides a false account of the night before the telethon in Miami, and concludes with the grim pun in which Maureen is "sent packing." While attempting to absolve both he and Vince from Maureen's death (admitting, however, to having slept with her), the memoirs, as they are realized by Egoyan's dramaturgy, reflect Lanny's conscious and unconscious struggles with his memories of the event, and reveal the

extent to which Lanny feels responsible for Vince, and therefore for the act for which he thinks Vince is responsible. After the show, later that night, in the account provided by the second manuscript chapter, which Bonnie reads to Karen on the telephone, Lanny and Vince are summoned to see Sally, and are told that they must perform for six weeks solid at his hotel in New Jersey, beginning immediately after the polio telethon. Sally assures them that not only will he send crates of grapefruits and lobsters to the hotel in Miami to travel with them to the hotel in New Jersey, but that he can provide them with hookers, that they can have their own “private cathouse.” This chapter concludes with Lanny describing how he and Vince spent the night before the telethon with Maureen and two prostitutes, which, as Karen’s retrospective voice-over in the following scene (her dream scene, in which she enters the hotel suite herself) makes clear, was “a complete fabrication.”

The scene in which Sally is shown promising Lanny and Vince the prostitutes illustrates how false accounts are retrofitted with specific details to appear more authentic. At the precise moment this promise is being made, however, Lanny is shown in the centre of the frame, standing on Vince’s right and before a large semi-circular window through which can be seen the bar area of the Belgrado. This area is dominated by a huge aquarium in which patrons can observe, through rectangular windows behind the bar, women in bikinis swimming through the illuminated water. With his back to the bar area, Lanny is framed in these shots by one of these windows which can be seen in the background behind him, and as he listens to Sally’s offer women in bikinis can be seen floating up or diving down, emerging from or gliding behind his head (see fig. 18). The *mise-en-scene* thus reflects Lanny’s thoughts of Maureen, to whose death his account must, ultimately, and carefully, lead. That Maureen’s death has haunted Lanny throughout the writing of these memoirs is

briefly suggested when, as he and Vince pass through the bar on their way to their meeting with Sally, Lanny pauses with perceptible discomfort when a waiter winds his way in front of them holding a tray on which can be glimpsed, at the very bottom of the frame, the distinctive form and colour of a lobster, despite the fact that at this moment in the narrative, Lanny's aversion to lobster, eventually traceable to them packing Maureen's corpse in a crate of shellfish, has not yet been made clear (see fig. 31). Dining with Karen in New York in 1972, in the scenes which follow on from this, Lanny sends back a lobster dish, telling the restaurant's manager that they make him sick. Having already read Lanny's account in which, when Sally asks them whether they liked lobster, Lanny had answered that they loved lobster, Karen, flying back to Los Angeles, and observing some passengers eating lobster at the same table at which she had met Lanny on the previous flight (see fig. 32), recalls how Lanny had returned the lobster at the restaurant (see fig. 33) and suddenly concludes that Maureen's body was shipped from Miami to New Jersey. The film's presentation of Lanny's version of events leading up to Maureen's death, therefore, presents tantalising clues which, on repeated viewing, make clear how carefully Egoyan has staged or realised Lanny's attempt to recount or rather reinvent the past and repress the guilt which attends his desire to protect Vince.

I now turn to Vince's response to the threat of exposure, his attempt to blackmail Karen by drugging her and documenting her having sex with Alice, a scenario which is traumatically connected to and reconfigures the incident Lanny eventually describes in his confession to his lawyer. The sequence at Vince's house in which Karen is shown responding to the drugs Vince gives her is one of the more startling episodes in the film, in which colour, light and editing strategies combine to create a strange and dream-like sense of intoxication, and spatio-temporal, and

psychic, fragmentation. This scenario is deliberately orchestrated by Vince and represents his attempt to recreate the events of the fateful night at the Versailles hotel in Miami but with a reconfiguration of power in which his witnessing and recording of Karen having sex with another woman will enable him to control the production of their book and force her to write it according to his demands. If the scenario orchestrated by Vince, in which he records with his camera Karen and Alice's lesbian tryst represents his attempt to reconfigure the original traumatic episode – his belief that after having revealed his bisexuality in front of Maureen he killed her – then it is in keeping with a psychoanalytic or traumatic logic that we see this scene first, and then eventually, via Lanny's "true" account of the night Maureen died, the scene which Vince has tried to recreate (the scene of his attempt to sodomize Lanny, and Maureen's attempt to blackmail Lanny). The following morning, when Karen turns the tables on Vince, turns on her tape recorder, and confronts him with her knowledge concerning Maureen having died in Miami, Vince attacks first the tape recorder, yanking the tape from its spool, and then leaps on Karen, beginning to strangle her, before collapsing in tears and hugging her while she continues to wrestle free. While his first gesture can (eventually) be recalled in relation to the tape recording Maureen made that night in the Versailles, with which Reuben is blackmailing Vince, the second gesture Karen initially and perhaps rightly takes as evidence that he *had* killed Maureen. This is then undermined by the tone of regret with which Karen's voice-over in the following scene accompanies the scenes in which Vince kills himself in the bathroom at the Versailles hotel (fig. 62).

The sequence begins with a shot showing Karen and Vince finishing dinner beside his swimming-pool at his house high in the Hollywood hills overlooking Los Angeles (fig. 49). Vince asks her whether she would like to take some pills that he

tells her are like “mild-mannered Quaaludes,” to which Karen agrees, her voice-over explaining that ever since her illness she had imagined that she could control her body and “will away the effect of any drug”. The scene functions as a heightening of suspense since Karen’s vulnerability (and her denial of this) means that she is more susceptible to manipulation and possible defilement by Vince. A fluctuating sense that Karen is potentially putting herself in danger through her intimate involvement with both Lanny and Vince is maintained throughout the film: Reuben tells her that her life may have been saved by Lanny apparently abandoning her at the hotel in New York. The heightening of suspense in this sequence is transformed into an intensification of film’s constituent elements, light and time, by an emphasis on the ravishing effect of light on colour, and the disorientating effect of rapid cutting and the non-linear shuffling of individual shots. Inside, while preparing to interview Vince (he has promised to talk, finally, about the night Maureen died), Karen is dazzled by the moonlight (fig. 50) and staggers across the room to adjust the blinds in Vince’s lounge (fig. 51). As she pulls the blinds open and shut, she looks from the window back to the sofa and the camera cuts to her vantage point to show Karen still sat shielding her eyes from the moonlight (fig. 52), at which point the following reverse shot shows Karen still at the blinds laughing and watching herself, with another slightly longer shot showing her still on the sofa reacting with increasing lethargy to the lilac light, within which there are two sudden jump cuts, suggesting that as her sense of herself has split, her experience of time is similarly fracturing. Then, a rapid succession of shots show first Karen and Vince on the sofa together, passionately kissing, in which Karen appears topless, Vince beginning to remove Karen’s top beside the blinds, and then the half-naked Karen being held by Vince on the sofa (fig. 54). Not only does this moment, which takes just more than a second of screen time,

reverse the order of events that have taken place (the removal by Vince of Karen's clothes) but includes two shots that appear for so short a period of time they are effectively hidden from normal perception and can only be perceived when the sequence is watched at a much slower speed, the flash-like traces of which are just about discernible, but discernible only as the inability to quite grasp something which somehow attends or insists at this moment. The two shots show Karen sitting before a white wall scored by single black lines on either side of her, looking across to her right (fig. 53). It is perhaps specifically the contrast between the white of the wall before which the 'concealed' Karen sits with the colour field created by the painting on the wall above the sofa, a solid block of royal blue, which dominates the screen during the shots into which these two are spliced, that makes the latter's appearance something that can be half-registered when watching the sequence at normal speed. Where is this Karen who seems to watch Vince remove her top and proceed to kiss her on the sofa? At no other time is such a white wall featured in the sequences in Vince's house. I suggest that this 'concealed' Karen refers forward to the time of Karen's retrospective voice-over, an anterior time when she reflects on the experiences she had with Vince and Lanny.

When the woman dressed as Alice-in-Wonderland appears, singing behind a translucent hanging, Karen approaches her and they touch hands through the sheer material of the screen that is between them, each a kind of reflection of the other. The character dressed as 'Alice', several critics noted, strongly evokes the image of Karen as a child at the telethon, since Karen wore a pale blue dress with a large white sash and an 'Alice' band. The sequence which follows, in which Karen and Alice have sex as Karen loses consciousness, can be construed in relation to the way her investigation into Maureen's death involves for Karen the reassessment of her feelings (about both

her body and her desire for Lanny and Vince) which crystallized and perhaps arrested during the telethon when she was presented on stage as a 'miracle girl.' The appearance of 'Alice' in this sequence, which Vince stages in order to trap Karen, can also be understood less literally as Karen's confrontation with (an image of) her younger self and with, therefore, a point earlier in her life immediately before the sudden loss of her relationship with her heroes. Her confrontation with 'Alice,' at Vince's house fifteen years later, might be seen to allow a merging of two aspects of Karen, Karen as an adult in the present and Karen as a child in the past. The encounter between them, therefore, suggests how Karen's investigation into the death of Maureen demands of her a reassessment of her own desires and, perhaps, the loss of an identity constituted by her younger self's arrested and disrupted relation with Lanny and Vince. Her encounter with 'Alice,' then, might be seen as reflecting how Karen's journey involves both complex processes of desire related to the loss of innocence as well as to her receptive response to new experience and knowledge, and her eventual responsibility for the memory of another.

The use of colour and light in the sequence presents space and form yielding to the transformative effects of light and colour which corresponds with Karen's physical surrender to 'Alice' under the influence of the drugs Vince has given her. This yielding is presented in a number of interrelated ways. Colour and light are used for expressive effect throughout this sequence: in the opening shot, beside the swimming pool, the image is dominated by the undulating surface of his swimming pool (beside which he and Karen are having dinner), which, seemingly illuminated from within, fills the bottom half of the image (extending beyond the bottom and right edges of the frame) with shifting and shimmering turquoise and white, which is reflected upon the white roof which reaches out across the pool and is similarly

dappling with shadows. When we cut closer to Karen and Vince, topaz, white and amber lights glint and spangle across the pitch black sky. When Karen and Vince move inside, the image is dominated again by a blue surface, this time extending beyond the top and left edges of the frame: Vince's royal blue painting which is a solid monochrome piece. Karen reaches for her tape-recorder, still intent on remaining in control, but then the moonlight reflecting off the surface of the pool and through the windows both dazzles Karen's eyes and transforms the solid hue of the blue painting as it is washed over with the light, so that the interior space begins to echo the more amorphous aspects of the pool shown earlier in the scene. The colour of the surface of the painting melts beneath the lilac-white light suffusing the room in shafts, at which point two mauve rays of light appear across the image. When Karen responds to the sound of 'Alice's singing, the blue painting which fills the frame behind and above her and Vince reproduces the undulating surface of the pool, its uniform shade transformed by the play of light and shadow (fig. 57). Karen's body is finally engulfed by light and colour in the following shots which show her surrender to her own sexual pleasure, as she and 'Alice' have sex. Close-up shots of Karen show her slowly arching back her neck (fig. 58); there is an instant in which she is momentarily bathed in a blast of effulgent pea-green, white gold and apricot-coloured light which almost, if not totally, obscures her form entirely (fig. 59). Bright light expending and expanding itself replaces the image of her throat and shoulders. The effect is that of the screen image being transformed into a more abstract field of colour and light. Brian Price has discussed the relationship between the use of colour in art and cinema, suggesting that in certain instances colour becomes an "erotic surface, soliciting visually our sense of touch" in direct contradistinction to the privileging of line and distance over colour in perspectival art (the optical mode of

vision).¹⁰³ Due to its privileging of the formless, the ascendancy of colour over line is, Price suggests, “linked closely to sensual pleasure.”¹⁰⁴ Twice more during the following shots Karen and ‘Alice’ are illuminated in this way, though with diminishing intensity. If Karen originally desired to keep the light from dazzling her eyes (as she began to prepare to interview Vince), Karen’s body, as she is seduced by ‘Alice’, is entirely submerged in light, her face and eyes are no longer visible since her head is thrown back, and her entire form is momentarily lost from view in the glistening ebullience which fills the screen. It is suggested that this represents Karen at the point of orgasm, since the following shot shows Alice’s face glistening with Karen’s vaginal secretions. There is a jump cut at the same time as the screen is filled with the apricot-coloured light, which cuts several inches closer towards her right shoulder on the left of the image, so that when she raises her head to look down towards ‘Alice’, her face and head emerge from a slightly different angle and at a slightly different distance as that which had initially framed her throat and shoulders, as if, again, a point in time had been lost, or experienced as loss (here, specifically, of control, of self, in orgasm) (fig. 60). This scene, then, presents a literal and tangible “point of indiscernibility” which might be compared with Maureen’s death, or, more generally, the events that took place fifteen years previously in the hotel suite in Miami.

However, it transpires that these instances of the image’s solarisation in pure light and colour refer to Vince’s having taken several Polaroid photographs of Karen and Alice having sex, with which he hopes to blackmail Karen into finishing the book without asking him about Maureen. The following morning he shows her the photographs (fig. 61). The moments when her body was dissolved in light, it now transpires, were produced by the flashing of the camera, which is never shown, except

by its flash, and thus by the production of *these* images, which he now tauntingly shows to Karen. Ron Burnett discusses Polaroid photography, suggesting that “temporal collapse” by which the photographer “can see the result of his or her intuition or reaction or sight of an event immediately after it happens ... could be described as one of the breaking points between modernity and postmodernity ... As a result of the Polaroid, everyday life can be transformed into an image without any pretence.”¹⁰⁵ It is significant, then, that Vince uses Polaroid instant photography (in 1972) to produce images with which to blackmail Karen, given the place Burnett gives them in relation to the crisis of temporality and referentiality in postmodernity. This scene of her ecstasy, when compared with the scene earlier in the film in which Karen has sex with Lanny, demonstrates how the emphasis on light and colour suggests the greater intensity of the moment as Karen experiences it. In the earlier sequence, Karen and Lanny are filmed and lit in an utterly conventional style, with Karen’s body supine across the bottom half of the shot, touched here and there with honey-coloured golden light, and Lanny’s descending down upon her, as the camera glides languorously up her body left to right past her breasts and towards her head.

Although the second scene clearly attempts to mimetically reproduce her disorientation and intense receptivity due to the drugs she has taken, it is also suggested that a confrontation with (an image of) her younger self is more transformative than the realization of all her adolescent fantasies or desires regarding Lanny, that the former scenario somehow relates to the latter, since by having slept with Lanny Karen has realized and so to a certain extent regressed back to her childhood self, and now perhaps, as she explains, is able to embody her fascination with “women who were willing to crossing the line between who you are and who you were willing to become” (as her voice over explains). Significantly, she refers to

Maureen as embodying this. It is also clearly suggestive of her receptivity to crossing this line (and her apparent nonchalance about it the following morning) which, when the film presents Lanny's final testimony and we see his account of how Vince tried to sodomise him, emphasizes the different ways one yields to transgression, which is at the root of the events that took place at the Versailles hotel. If at this point Karen is still motivated more by her memories of and feelings for the duo who were her heroes or saviours when she was a child, from this point on her relationship with Lanny (and her memory of Vince) is transformed by a growing response to the tragic death of Maureen as an event which is calling her out of her self (Maureen herself decentring Karen) and towards a new realm of responsibility for memory and mourning which displaces her initial identity, structured around or by her adolescent desire for Lanny and Vince.

Karen's final encounter with Mrs. O'Flaherty, in which her memory of Maureen is ministered to by Karen, partly as a response to her encounter with Vince and his death, and partly as a result of her failing to discover a truth she can prove, suggests how her imaginative response to Mrs. O'Flaherty's suffering is related to her own negotiation with traumatic loss and failure. Karen is first asked by Mrs. O'Flaherty to find out the answer to a question ("why did my daughter die?") and assumes responsibility for this task, despite having begun with the hope of clearing her heroes' names. Karen's promise, solemnly given to Mrs. O'Flaherty beside the tree around which Maureen's father spread her ashes the night he killed himself, represents an assumption of responsibility whereby she takes charge of Mrs. O'Flaherty's memory of her daughter because she recognizes that Maureen's mother would suffer should she fail to do so (or refuse to do so and write her book there and then). To some extent, however, Karen's final act also (inadvertently) protects Lanny,

who would be damaged by revelations that he had been part of a cover-up in order to protect his partner. Furthermore, at the conclusion of the film we (finally) learn what Lanny whispered in Karen's ear after kissing her on the head on stage during the telethon: "Forgive me." This moment from the telethon was photographed by the press and presumably became a celebrated public image of Lanny as this particular 'miracle girl's personal saviour. The many flashbacks to the telethon we see during the film centre on this exact moment, and Karen is shown studying a photograph of this moment that is on the wall of Lanny's offices. Lanny's tears, interpreted at the time as an emotional response to the girl's recovery, are belatedly revealed (in Lanny's testimony) to be the result of his realisation that he and Vince's partnership, or marriage, was over. Lanny's words, which only Karen was able to hear, remain ambiguous: Lanny asks Karen to forgive him, and when the film finally presents Lanny audibly asking for forgiveness, the image cuts (back) to the adult Karen in Maureen's mother's garden, deep in thought. Karen is now able to understand what this meant at the time (Lanny's apology for his role in Maureen's death and the cover-up that followed), but she does not tell Lanny her suspicions that Reuben killed Maureen, that might allow him to remember Vince otherwise (as she allows Mrs. O'Flaherty to remember Maureen as *she* needs to, since Mrs. O'Flaherty's Catholic beliefs mean she desperately needs to know whether Maureen killed herself before she can mourn her properly.

Egoyan has discussed how Karen resembles Felicia and *Exotica's* Christina, since "[all] three have fixated (or have needed to fixate themselves) on the girls and women who have gone missing before them as a way of situating themselves." Their maturation, he suggests, involves "[assuming] the spirits of these missing women": "They become responsible – or I should say they give themselves the position of

becoming responsible – for the preservation of something that would otherwise be forgotten.”¹⁰⁶ As such, I suggest Karen’s final gesture presents a scenario which dramatizes the responsibility Levinas describes in relation to “something that was never my fault or of my own doing, something that was never within my power or my freedom, something that never was my presence and never came to me through memory.”¹⁰⁷ R. Clifton Spargo has discussed mourning in relation to the enactment of “a fantasy of care in which grief functions as a belated act of protection, expressing an ethic exceeding self-concern.”¹⁰⁸ Spargo describes a “responsiveness to the other” that may be “premised on an imaginative and impossible defence of the other against a death that has already occurred.”¹⁰⁹ Karen’s encounter with Mrs. O’Flaherty, in complex ways, enables Maureen’s mother to sustain a fantasy of Maureen, while demonstrating Karen’s “belated act of protection,” the “impossible defence of the other against a death that has already occurred,” and a gesture which, in its compassion for Mrs. O’Flaherty’s requirements, “[exceeds] self-concern.” Karin Badt suggested that the conclusion of the film, like that of *Felicia’s Journey*, suggested that forgiveness becomes the only choice (for Karen, and for Felicia).¹¹⁰ Egoyan has stated: “I think that as dark as the film is, it ends with a tremendous beam of light, that the decision she makes is very optimistic.”¹¹¹

Linda Ruth Williams notes how “[when] *Where the Truth Lies*’s victim is finally named, in a ping-pong voiceover exchange, it is Lanny who says “Her last name was O’Flaherty,” but Karen who immediately supplies “Her first name was Maureen.” The female narrator gives the corpse its humanity, making this not just the pulp fiction of men who find, fuck and (fail to) forget but a complex tale of women remembering, naming themselves and each other.”¹¹² Linda Ruth Williams suggests that amongst all the convoluted homoeroticism in *Where the Truth Lies* “lies a

woman's corpse" and that "in the end this is Karen's story, and perhaps the men are not the point ... While Egoyan regularly presents us with spectacles of nubile young women conventionally eroticised, he also shows that these sex objects are someone's daughter, individuals with memories trying to make sense of their fate and pain."¹¹³ Karen ends the film in Mrs. O'Flaherty's garden, her book deal in tatters, her subject having killed himself, her relation to her childhood saviours permanently lost, her regard for them transformed, able at this point only, but significantly, to make a promise to Maureen's mother, that she will write down the truth she has learnt only when it can no longer hurt anyone, deliberately concealing from the grieving parent the choices she believes her daughter to have made and which resulted in her death, and suggesting the ethical responsibility that is entailed by an "imaginative proximity to ... suffering and death."¹¹⁴ Reuben, who Karen believes is responsible for Maureen's death, is neither exposed nor apprehended at the end of the film; similarly, and again in a radical departure from the novel on which the film is based, Karen's relationship with Lanny is over.

The resolution of the film provides neither the moral nor the romantic conclusions of the source novel, suggesting how much more interested Egoyan is in challenging, and questioning, the possibility of closure, the conventions of the just or appropriate conclusion, how the unjust death makes the just ending inoperable or undesirable. Referring to the sequence in which Karen imagines how Reuben could have killed Maureen, Egoyan explains: "What we see at the end of the film is all through the point of view of one individual who didn't have access to the room where the girl died ... I think that Karen's interpretation makes sense, but it's nothing she can ever really prove. What is true is the moment Lanny and Vince are elevated beyond any sort of human status in her eyes ... where she felt they were responsible for saving

her. That image is tarnished for her forever.”¹¹⁵ Since the person responsible for Maureen’s death is neither brought to justice nor exposed by Karen emphasizes all the more how radical his resolution is, since the presentation of a promise made and a responsibility to memory begun here replaces entirely rather than attends the convention of providing retribution and/or romantic reconciliation in order to effect the return to equilibrium at the narrative’s conclusion. One of the few critics to note this was Roger Ebert, who describes Egoyan’s “difference” in terms of the way he remembers (or refuses to forget) to present the “emotional cost” of the murder and intrigue; Ebert notes that “[the] mother and the reporter have a meeting during which we discover the single good reason why the solution to the murder should not be revealed” which “functions to end the film in poignancy rather than sensation.”¹¹⁶

To conclude, I now turn to the way the film presents incomplete mourning, by considering the ‘hidden’ death of the woman who discovers Maureen’s body. As with the eighth unnamed ‘lost girl’ in *Felicia’s Journey*, a character glimpsed only fleetingly in *Where the Truth Lies* suggests, similarly, how responsibility for mourning, remembering and naming the stranger, the other, is an impossible project that cannot ultimately be complete or completed. The loss of another life is almost but not entirely lost within the film’s narrative. Karen’s investigation into the mystery of Maureen O’Flaherty’s death, and the sequences representing Lanny’s memoir’s fabrication of the events leading up her death and the discovery of her corpse (the first two chapters of the manuscript) which punctuate that investigation, present fleeting references to and images of another woman, an unnamed publicist. The traces of this character in the film suggest another woman who, as the single female witness there at the discovery of Maureen’s body in the lobster crate, may have been killed in order

to prevent her knowledge or memory, her possible testimony, from contradicting the official version of events.

In the sequence representing Lanny's account of their arrival in New Jersey, this character chaperones Lanny and Vince from Newark airport to the press conference at the Palace del Sol, and then walks with them, Sally and Scaglia to the bridal suite where, according to the account being realized in the film at this moment, she discovered Maureen in the bathroom. These images are repeated when Karen, flying back to Los Angeles, recalls Mrs. O'Flaherty describing her fears of entering heaven only to hear her husband's and daughter's screams of torment, should it turn out that Maureen, like her father after her, had committed suicide and "consigned herself to hell." The sound of the marketing assistant shrieking (upon discovering Maureen's body) overlaps Mrs. O'Flaherty's dialogue, immediately preceding the repetition of the scene in which Lanny, Vince, Sally and Scaglia enter the bathroom and discover Maureen, her scream of horror representing at this point Mrs. O'Flaherty's fears of her daughter's eternal damnation. Karen then recalls her interview with Scaglia, during which he explains how Maureen was discovered in the bath by an assistant, but who says, when Karen asks him how she died, that "she" was killed in an automobile accident two weeks later, referring, in other words, to the publicist and not, to Karen's momentary confusion, Maureen. This assistant then reappears in the sequence representing Lanny's testimony to John, opening the crate of lobsters in which Maureen's body was discovered, at which point Lanny's voice-over concurs how the "official story" became that Maureen was "found in the tub," a cover-up which would undoubtedly have been made easier, one might speculate, by the death of this woman who, unlike the others, had nothing to lose in telling the truth about what had happened (except, perhaps, as Scaglia's mistaken remarks suggest, her

life). Her silence, in death, would ensure the official version stuck. When we first see this character, standing beside Lanny and Vince as they alight from their jet at Newark airport, she explains to the crowds of reporters that Morris and Collins will answer all their questions at the Palace del Sol, and her voice can be heard repeating this three times over the image of Lanny and Vince being driven off in their limousine (fig. 71). This is significant since the memoirs have been written by Lanny to help Vince answer Karen's questions; this sequence, representing the account his memoirs provide, suggests the way in which the publicist was a potentially threatening figure related to the truth, and the promise to tell the truth, which Lanny and Vince together must replace with their false version of events. When Scaglia confuses this woman's death with Maureen's, and when the sound of her scream coincides on the soundtrack with Mrs. O'Flaherty's description of her daughter's potential torment in hell, the film effectively suggests a correspondence between their fate, yet this unnamed woman's marginal appearance in the various accounts of the past with which Karen attempts to piece together the truth concerning Maureen's death represents the way in which the work of mourning and commemoration remains an impossible project: the truth concerning the murder of the publicist cannot be fully known.

The truth of Maureen's death is withheld from Mrs. O'Flaherty in Karen's final act of responsibility, but the truth of the death of the female publicist who discovered Maureen's body is withheld by the narrative itself. Due to her presence in the sequences realizing Lanny's memoirs and in Scaglia's conversation with Karen, the film supports, I would suggest, the idea that her death was deliberate rather than a coincidence, despite what Scaglia says. In Scaglia's slip she, simply as the word "she," slides into Maureen's place in his memory; in Lanny's memoirs, she is shown declaiming that all questions will be answered, thus his knowledge of her death has

here emphasized her relation to a promise or obligation to tell the truth, to confess, to reveal all, the kind of promise on which Vince's million-dollar book deal depends. It is worth noting that it is for the purposes of helping Vince appear to honour such a promise that these memoirs have been written in the first place. In this way, the presence in the film of this unnamed woman complements the narrative's refusal to divulge the definitive truth of Maureen's death, and its privileging, instead, of Karen's assumption of responsibility, and her decision to withhold the truth from those it would hurt.

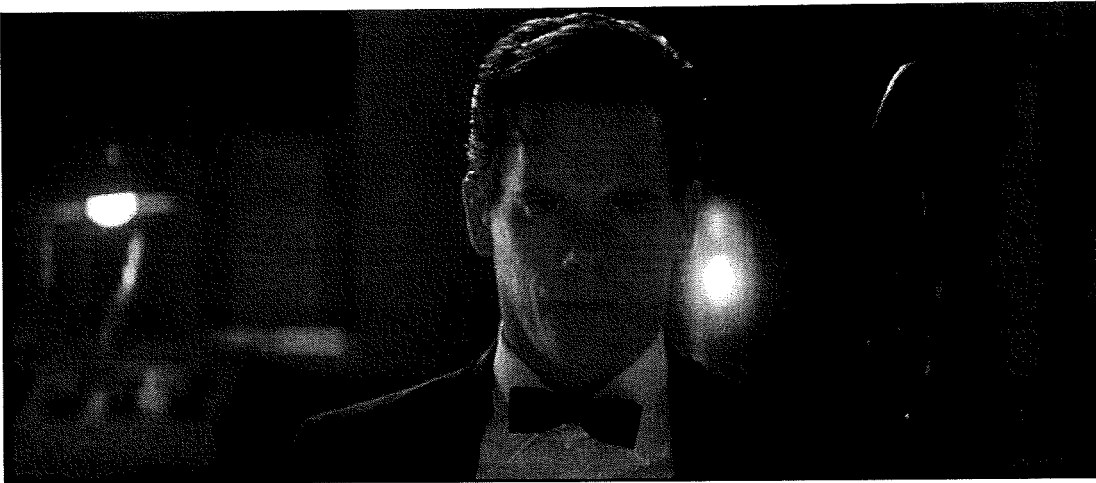


Fig. 1: Lanny Morris (Kevin Bacon)

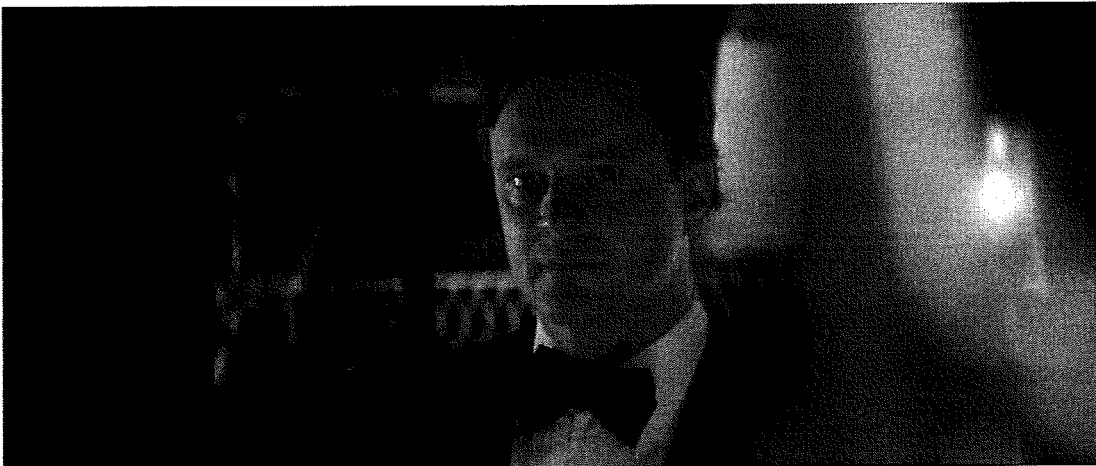


Fig 2: Vince Collins (Colin Firth)



Fig. 3: Maureen O'Flaherty (Rachel Blanchard)

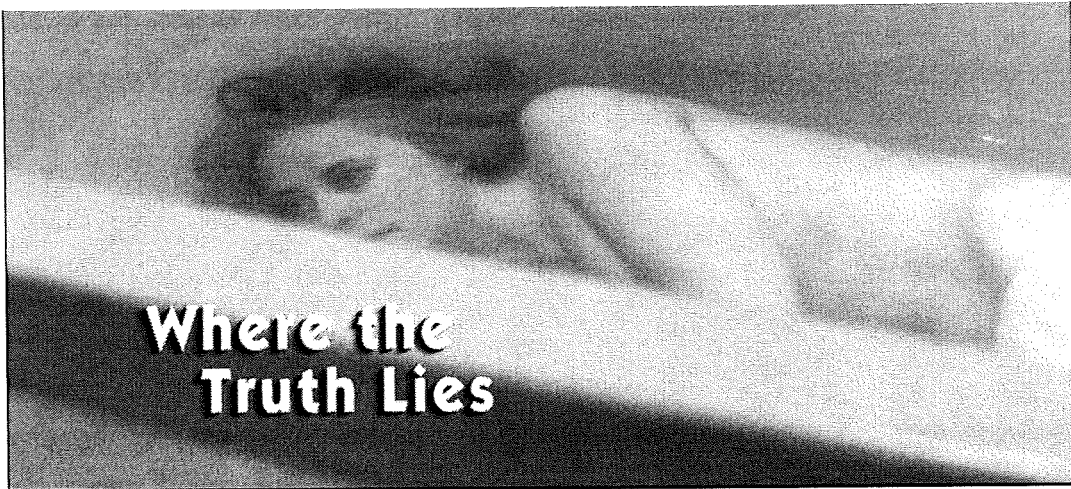


Fig. 4: Maureen's corpse



Fig. 5: Maureen's corpse



Fig. 6: Maureen's corpse



Fig. 7: The telethon begins



Fig. 8: The telethon transmission



Fig. 9: The telethon on television



Fig. 10: Lanny and Karen, the 'miracle girl'



Fig. 11: Lanny whispers to Karen at the telethon



Fig. 12: The framed photograph



Fig. 13: The newspaper above Karen's desk



Fig. 14: Karen at the telethon



Fig. 15: Karen thanks Lanny and Vince

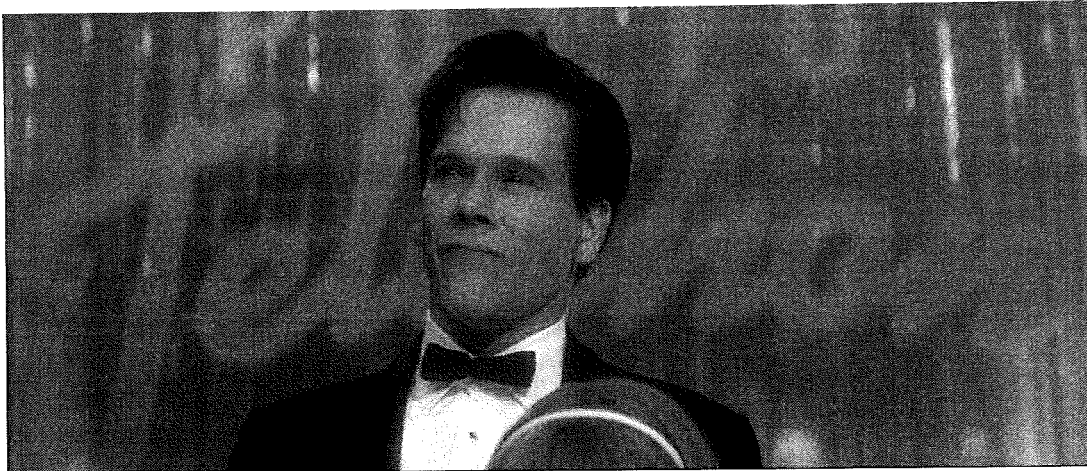


Fig. 16: Lanny's tears



Fig. 17: "Forgive me"



Fig. 18: Women swim behind Lanny and Vince (Lanny's memoir)



Fig. 18: Lanny Morris in 1972

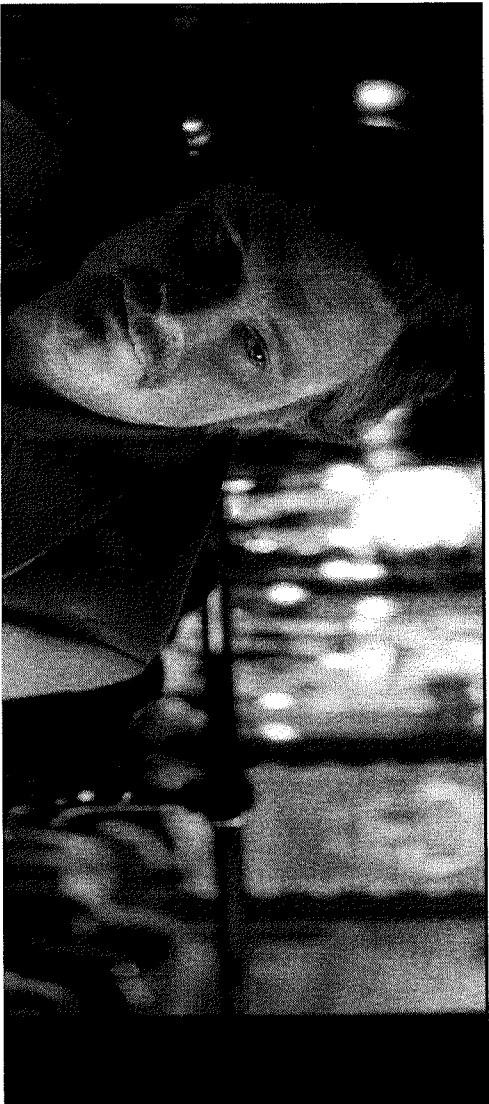


Fig. 19: Vince Collins in 1972

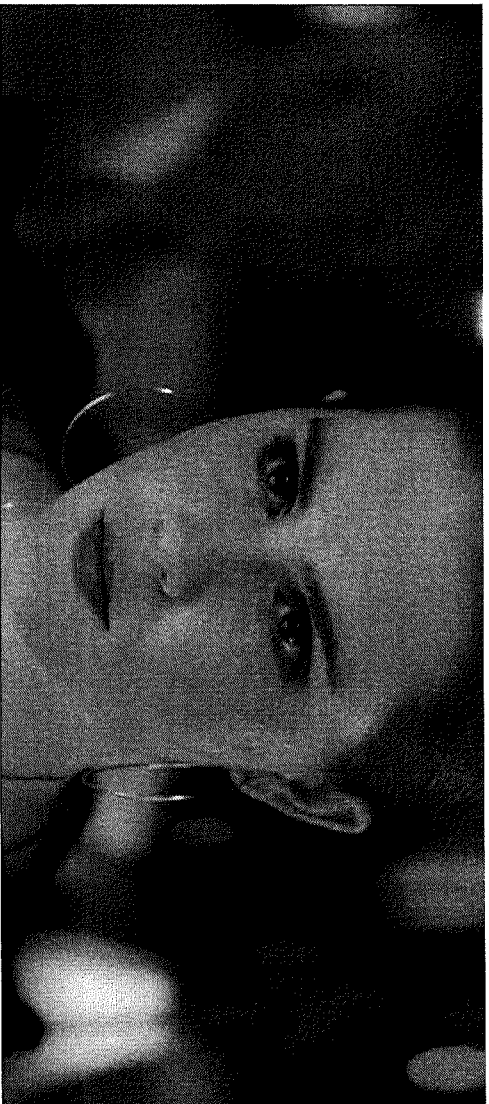


Fig. 20: Karen O'Connor (Alison Lohman)



Fig. 21: Karen reads the first chapter of Lanny's memoirs



Fig. 22: Bonnie (Sonja Bennett) reads Karen the second chapter of Lanny's memoirs



Fig. 23: Karen in the bath, on the telephone with Bonnie



Fig. 24: Karen enters the hotel suite (Karen's dream)



Fig. 25: The telethon plays in the hotel suite (Karen's dream)



Fig. 26: Lanny and Vince with Maureen and the hookers in the hotel suite (Lanny's memoir)

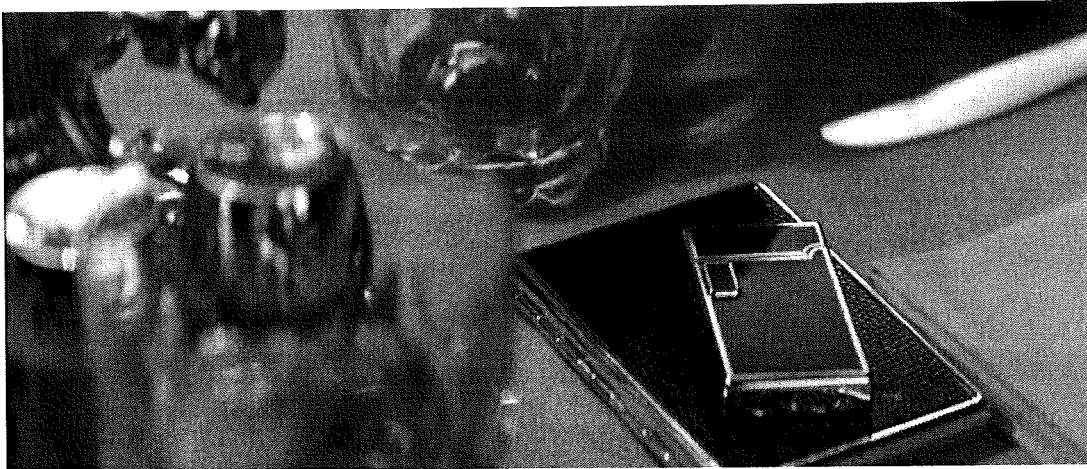


Fig. 27: Vince's cigarette case



Fig. 28: Lanny's lawyer Martin's cigarette case



Fig. 29: Lanny's valet Reuben's cigarette case

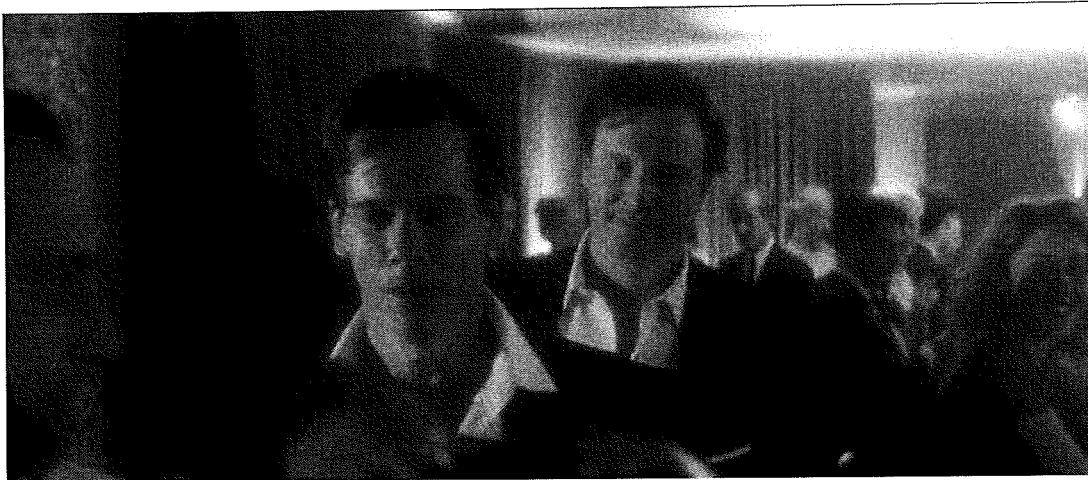


Fig. 30: Lanny grimaces as a waiter passes by with the lobster (Lanny's memoir)



Fig. 31: Karen watches lobster being served on the plane



Fig. 32: Karen remembers lobster being presented to Lanny at the restaurant



Fig. 33: Vince assaults the heckler backstage (Lanny's memoir)



Fig. 34: Lanny notices the heckler's blood on Vince's face (Lanny's memoir)



Fig. 35: Lanny kisses the heckler's blood from Vince's face (Lanny's memoir)



Fig. 36: The photograph of Maureen and her father planting the tree

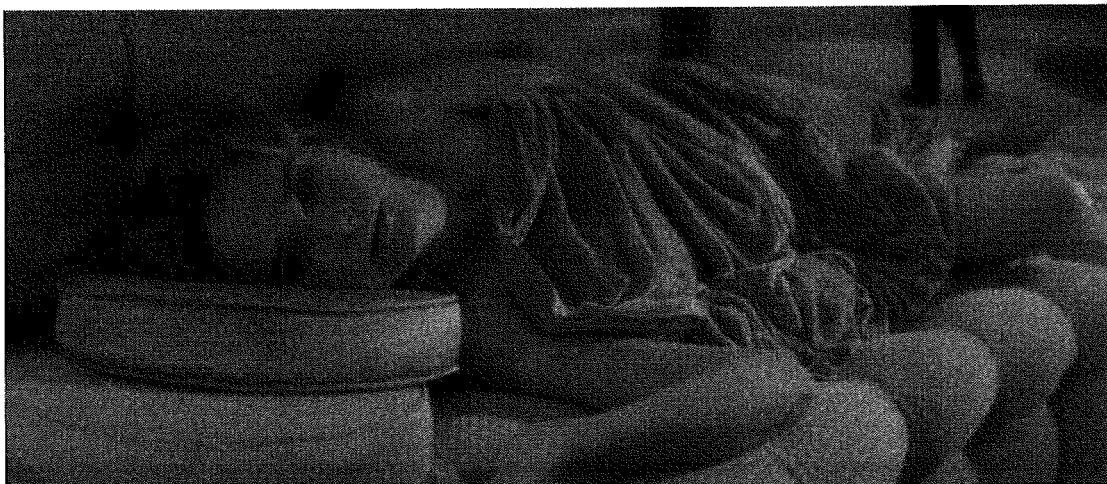


Fig. 37: Maureen's corpse on the sofa



Fig. 38: Maureen and her tape recorder

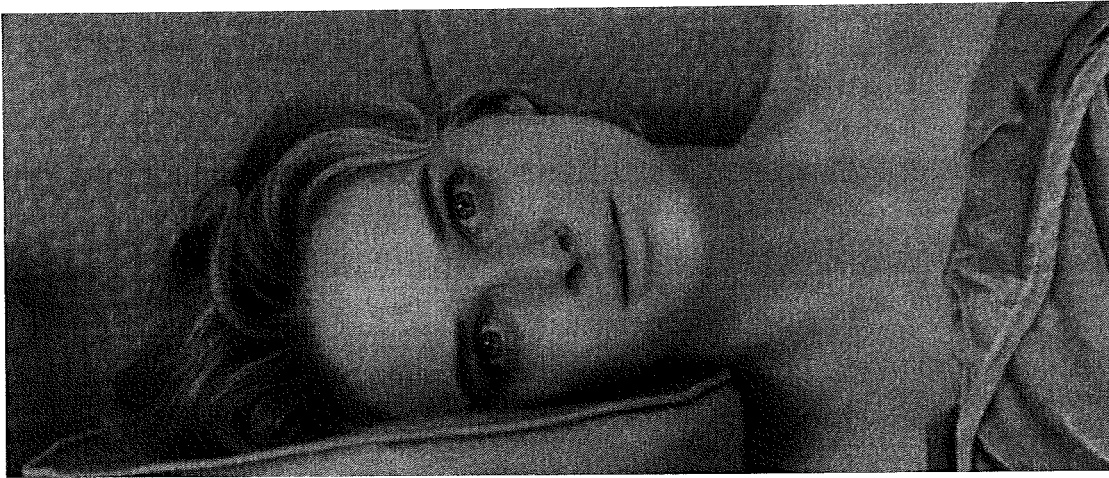


Fig. 39: Maureen

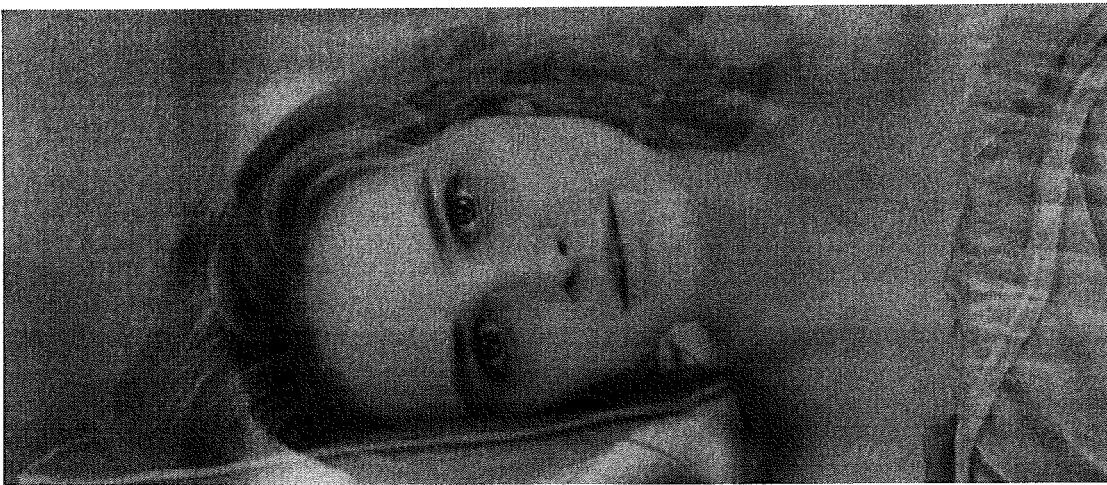


Fig. 40: Maureen and Karen's faces merge



Fig. 41: Karen

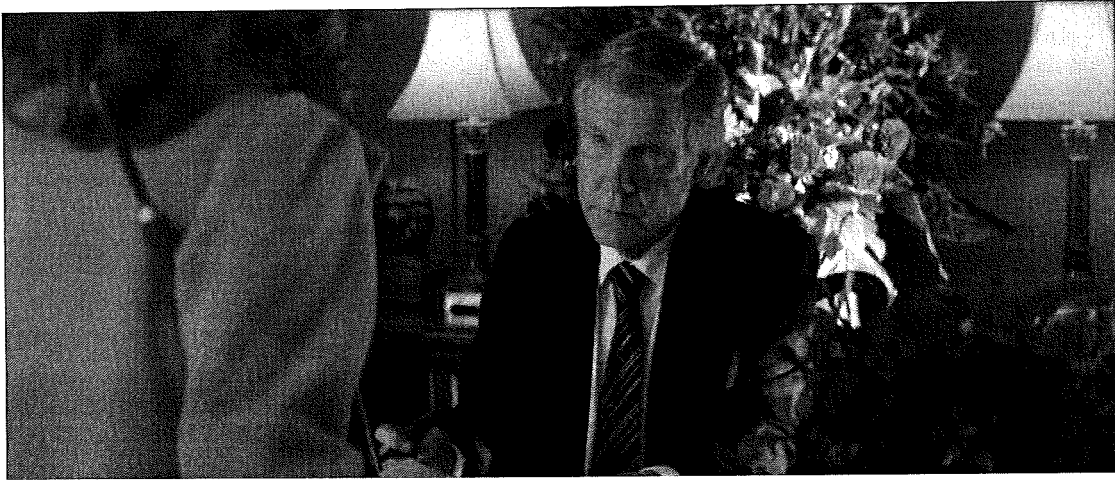


Fig. 42: The concierge (David Hemblen)

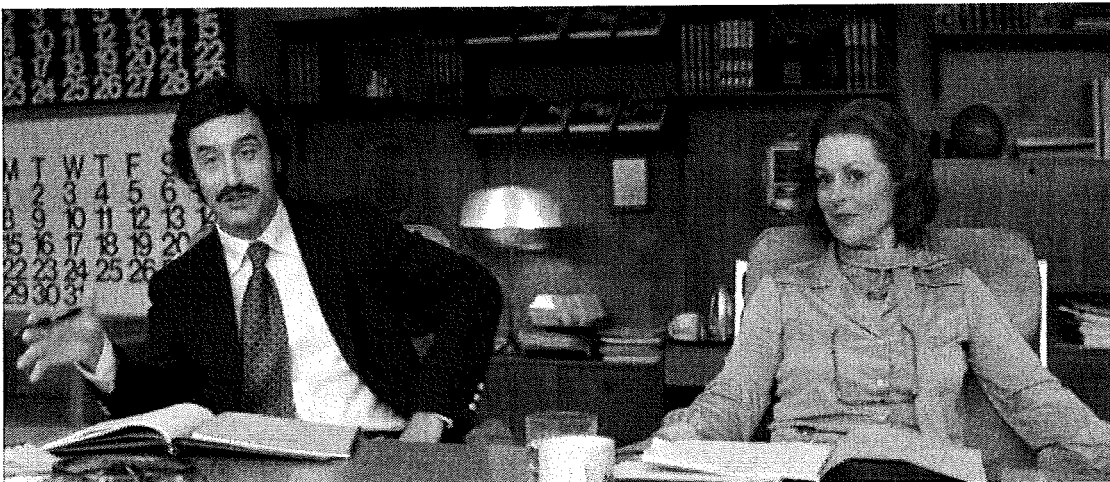


Fig. 43: Publishing executives (Don McKellar and Gabrielle Rose)



Fig. 44: Publishing executive (Arsinée Khanjian)



Fig. 45: Maureen's body in the crate with the lobsters



Fig. 46: Maureen's body in the crate with the lobsters



Fig. 47: Maureen's body in the crate of lobsters

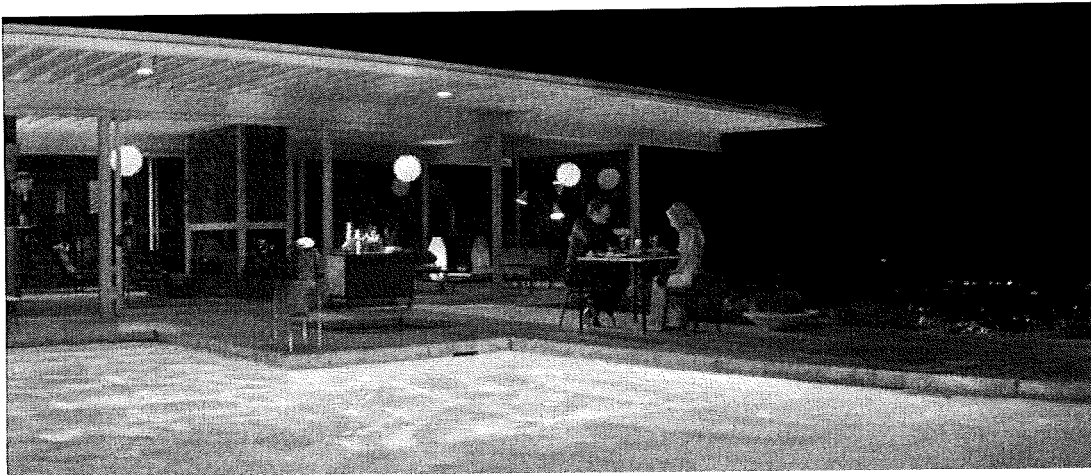


Fig. 48: Karen and Vince have dinner

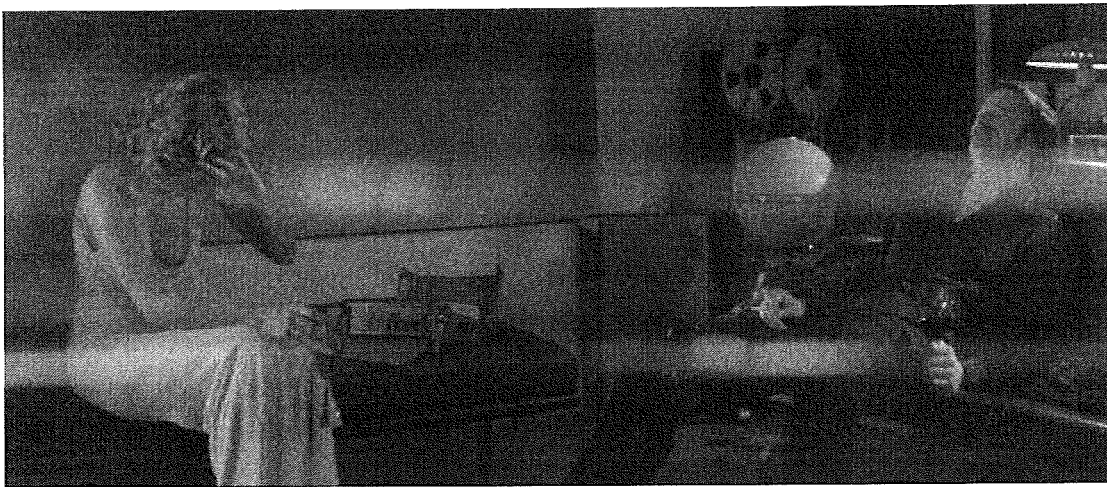


Fig. 49: Karen is dazzled by the moonlight

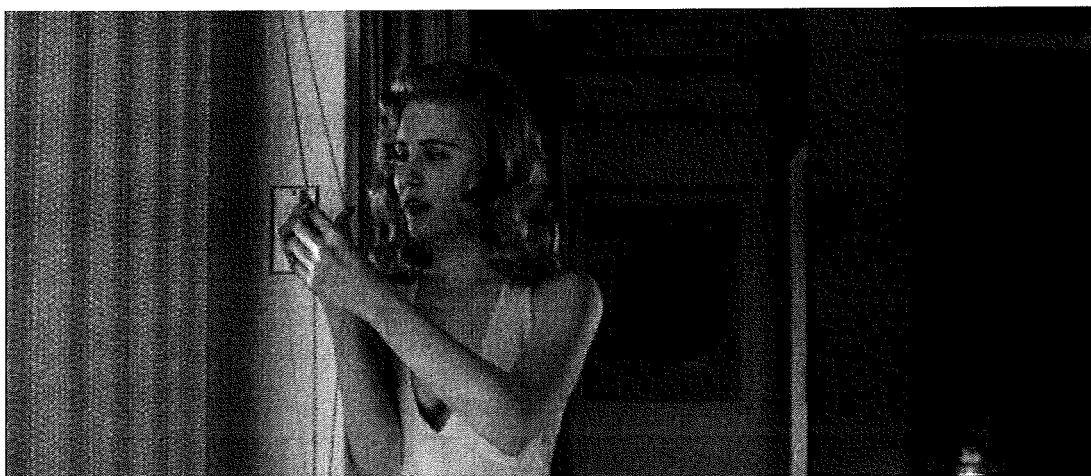


Fig. 50: Karen adjusts the blinds

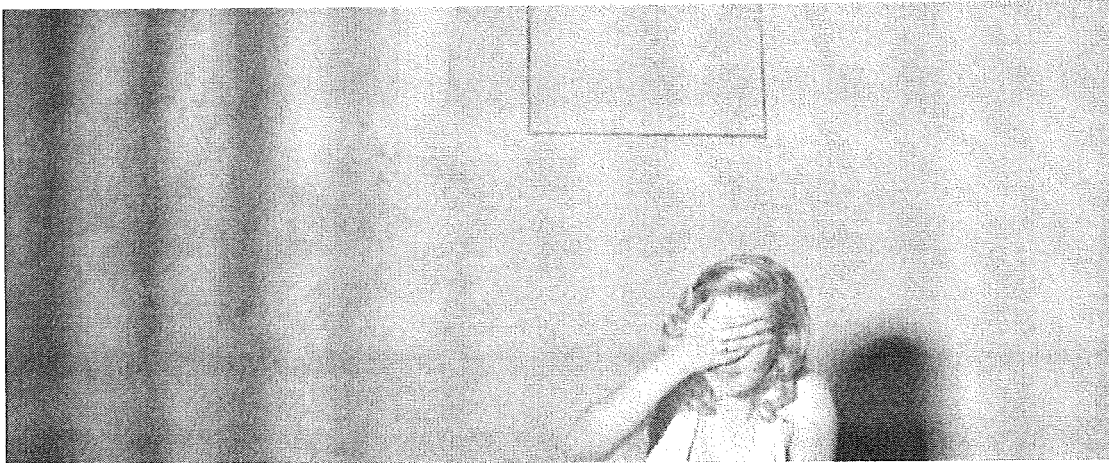


Fig. 51: Another Karen shields her eyes



Fig. 52: And another 'concealed' Karen watches on

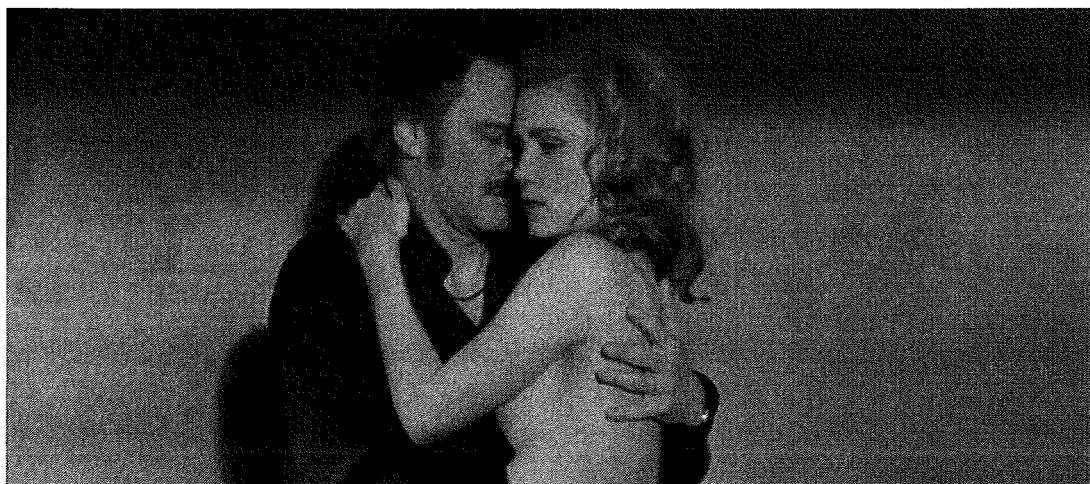


Fig. 53: Karen and Vince embrace



Fig. 54: Karen and 'Alice'



Fig. 55: Karen and 'Alice'



Fig. 56: Karen and 'Alice' illuminated by the flash of Lanny's Polaroid camera



Fig. 57: Karen

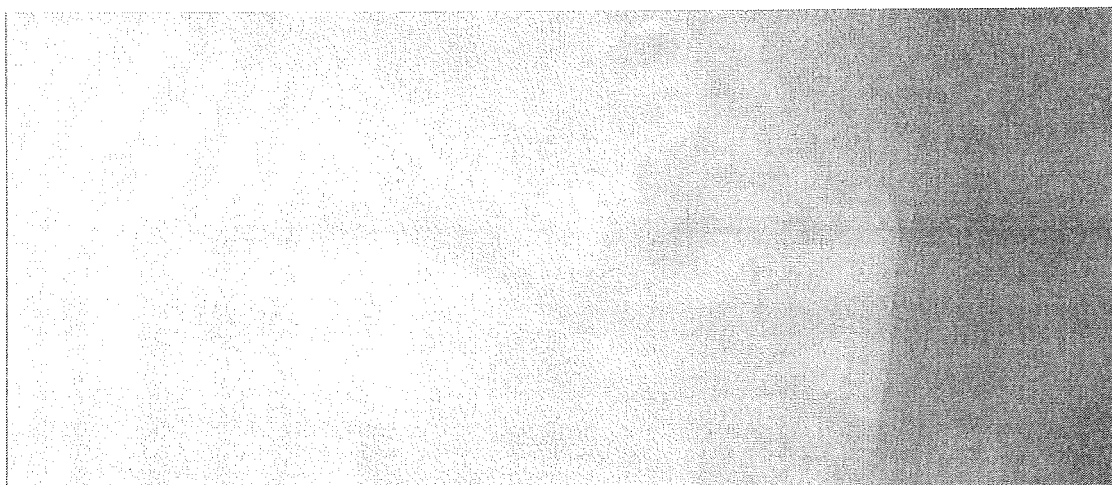


Fig. 58: Karen illuminated by the Polaroid flash

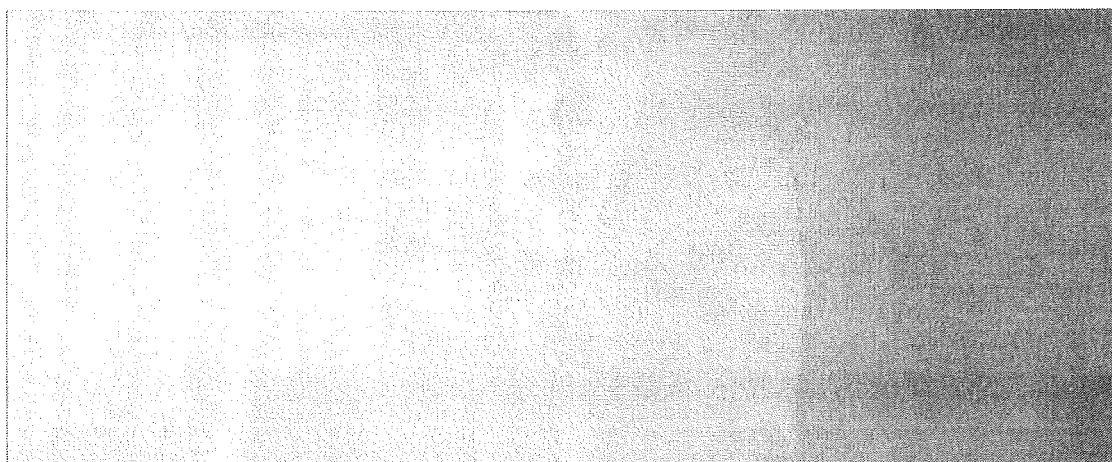


Fig. 59: Karen illuminated by the Polaroid flash



Fig. 60: Vince with the Polaroids



Fig. 61: Vince kills himself in the bathtub



Fig. 62: Lanny has sex with Maureen (Lanny's testimony)

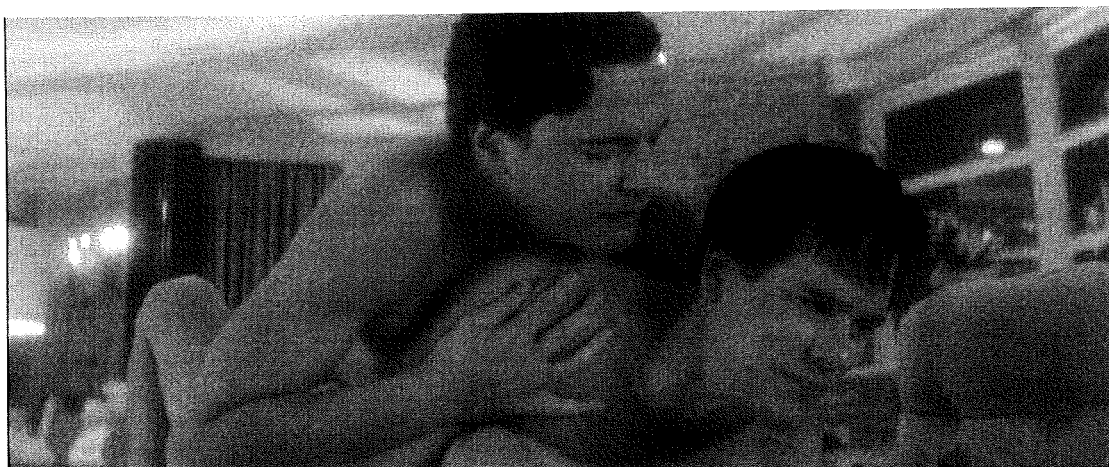


Fig. 63: Vince tries to have sex with Lanny (Lanny's testimony)



Fig. 64: Maureen conceals her tape recorder in the trolley



Fig. 65: Reuben (David Hayman) suffocates Maureen



Fig. 66: Karen watches Reuben walk away into the studio lot.



Fig. 67: Karen's final conversation with Mrs. O'Flaherty

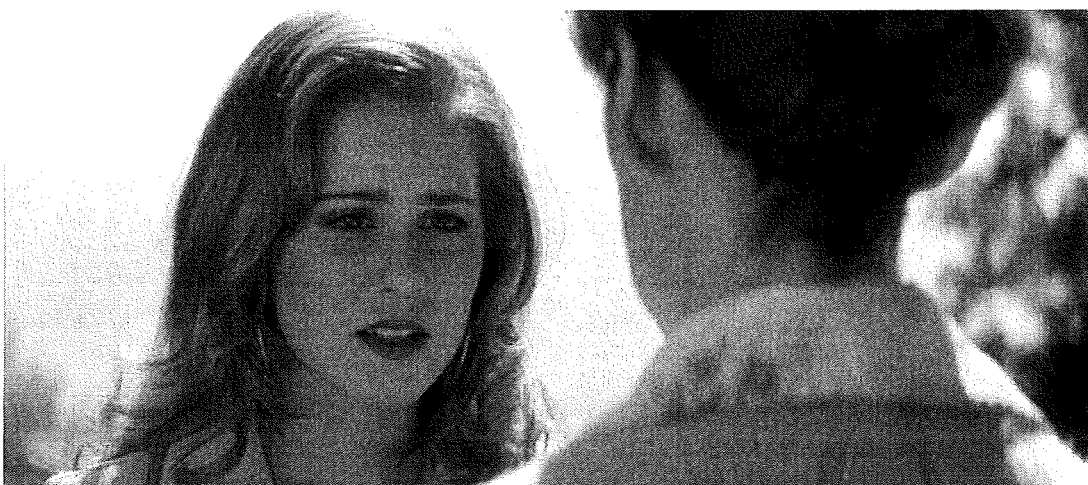


Fig. 68: Karen's final conversation with Mrs. O'Flaherty



Fig. 69: Karen reflects in Mrs. O'Flaherty's garden



Fig. 70: The publicist (Kathryn Winslow) greets the press at the airport (Lanny's memoir)

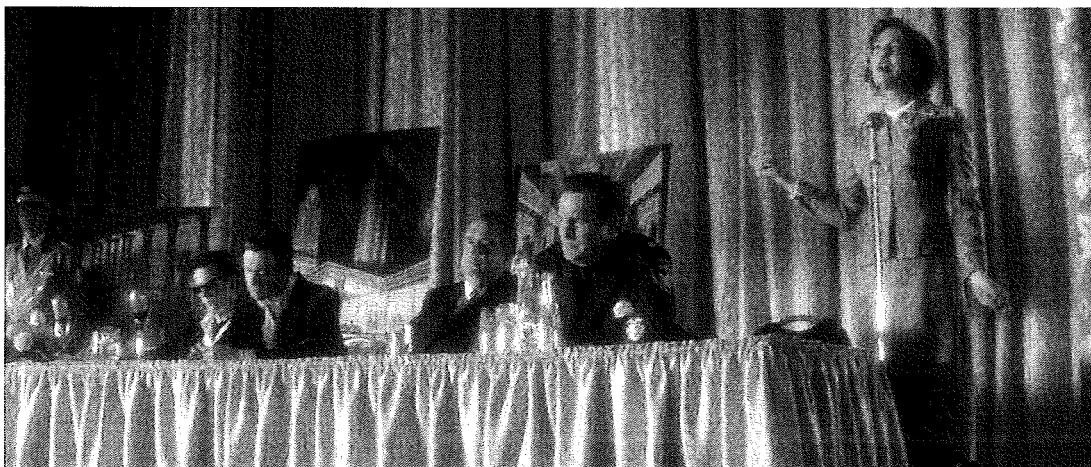


Fig. 71: The publicist at the press conference (Lanny's memoir)

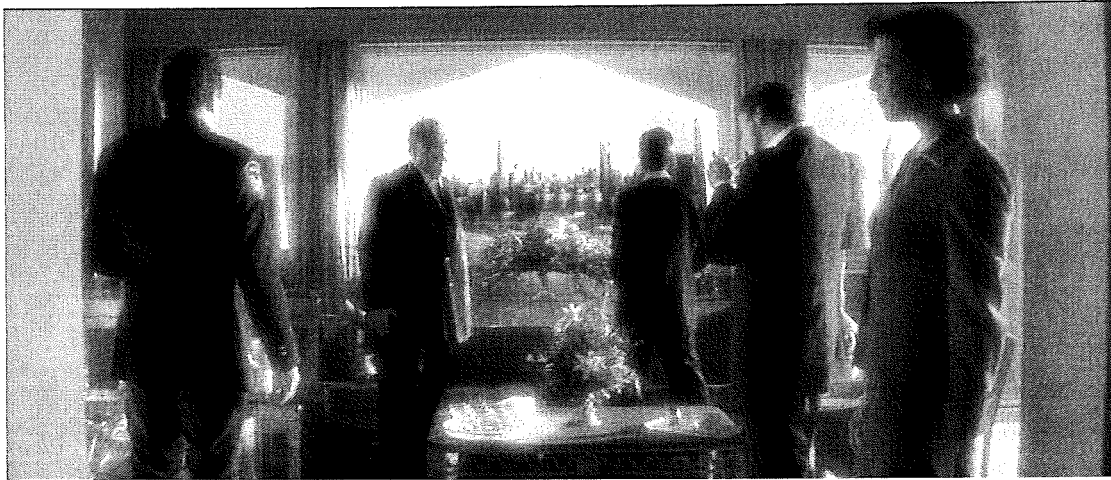


Fig. 72: The publicist about to discover Maureen's body (Lanny's memoir)



Fig. 73: The publicist discovers Maureen's body (Scaglia's account)

Conclusion

After *Felicia's Journey*, and before *Where the Truth Lies*, Atom Egoyan wrote and directed *Ararat* (2002), the film in which he deals more directly than in any previous film with the history of the Armenian genocide. While many of his films have dealt with issues relating to diasporan Armenian identity and memory, and have featured characters whose relationship to Armenian space and history is characterised by a sense of traumatic loss, mournful nostalgia, or more ambivalent feelings, in *Ararat* Egoyan explicitly focuses on historical events in Armenia at the beginning of the twentieth century, and contemporary perspectives on these events at the beginning of the twenty-first century. With *Ararat*, Egoyan continues to interrogate the conventions of mainstream, commercial genre cinema. His film reveals the differences between this cinema and his own practice, by presenting a narrative in which a (fictional) contemporary Armenian film director, Edward Saroyan (played by Charles Aznavour) makes a film about the Armenian genocide. While Egoyan suggests that Aznavour's intentions in making his film (also called *Ararat*) are sincere, his film carefully distances itself from Saroyan's film. Saroyan's *Ararat*, sequences from which repeatedly interrupt Egoyan's film, is presented as a somewhat kitsch and bombastic spectacle. Egoyan includes several sequences in which Saroyan and his screenwriter, Rouben (Eric Bogosian) are shown defending the inaccuracies of their epic reconstruction; when asked about their film's distortion of documented history, they describe their project as employing 'poetic licence' in order to dramatize the genocide more successfully. Egoyan's film subtly suggests the degree to which Saroyan's film fails as a responsible response to the genocide. The critical and commercial success of Saroyan's film seems doubtful. Egoyan's film, on the other hand, attempts to examine the history of the denial of the genocide (by Turkey, for example) and the effects this history has had on diasporan Armenian's sense of collective identity. With *Ararat*, Egoyan addresses the autobiographical origins of his career-long interest in mourning, memory and commemoration. At the same time, through Saroyan's *Ararat*, he presents a careful critique of commercial film-making. On the one hand, Egoyan's film provides an invitation to (re)-consider all his previous films' explorations of mourning and responsibility as singular responses to his

Armenian heritage. On the other hand, *Ararat* also provides an extended examination of the different modes of film-making that constitute the horizons of Egoyan's cinematic heritage and ongoing practice. While his films often explore Armenian characters in present-day Toronto, they also interrogate the relationship between art cinema and more commercial, popular genre cinema. In the same way that Saroyan's *Ararat*, it is suggested, *fails* (as a responsible response to the genocide) to the degree that it *succeeds* (as a spectacular historical blockbuster), Egoyan's cinema is vulnerably positioned *between* modes of film-making in such a way that the (critical and commercial) success or failure of these films is simultaneous: they *fail* (as commercial genre pieces) to the degree that they *succeed* as art cinema.

I have suggested that this situation is in certain respects dramatised in the individual films' representation of the work of mourning. Both films present ways of mourning, of remembering, which *fail* to the extent that they are constituted by idealisations and even idolisations of the other. At their conclusions, furthermore, both films present ways of mourning, of remembering, which *succeed* precisely because they are constituted by responses to the deaths of others in which the other cannot be reduced to an image, in which the other cannot be preserved simply to perpetuate a fantasy of the lost relation. In both films, significantly, a woman assumes responsibility for the memory of other women without ever having known her. This assumption is ultimately shown to fill the space left empty through the traumatic dispossession or relinquishment of earlier fantasies concerning lost objects (Felicia's memories of Johnny's promise, Karen's memories of Lanny and Vince as her saviours). Both films suggest that this assumption of responsibility displaces an earlier romantic fixation which was partly if not wholly constituted by a denial of the truth.

The most distressing scenes in Egoyan's *Ararat* are those that present sequences from Saroyan's *Ararat* in which a group of young Armenian women, brides, are doused in petrol and set alight. It is significant that in the film within Egoyan's film, violent historical catastrophe is embodied through the murder of these women. Egoyan's cinema, as I have suggested, is notable for its concern with female characters who in ambiguous ways encounter the deaths of other women. Their knowledge of these deaths remains tenuous, but their response to these deaths is transformative. As such, Egoyan's cinema proposes a form of ethical responsibility that is repeatedly embodied through female protagonists. *Felicia's Journey* and *Where the Truth Lies* on the one hand present their relation to popular genre through their

narrative focus on women who are murdered yet on the other hand present their critique of popular genre (and their allegiance with art cinema) through their *ultimate* narrative focus on the women who assume responsibility for their memories. The failure of these films to provide resolutions in which characters triumph in conventional ways (through successful romantic union, for example), or in which justice is achieved in conventional fashion (in which killers are apprehended by the law, for example), is inextricable from the success of these films to suggest a mysterious and traumatic responsibility to the other in which an ethical response to history can be discerned. In Egoyan's thrillers, the narrative privileging of the work of mourning and the trauma of responsibility demonstrates the possibility of using film to affectively stage a discussion of the ethics of memory (private and public, individual and collective) that admits both the inevitability of failure, and the necessity of the task.

Endnotes

Introduction

¹ Discussing his evocation of incest in *Exotica*, Egoyan explains that “the delicate thing was to talk about Christina’s abuse, and the household she was coming from, which was really damaging to her. But it’s so difficult these days to write that scene, because it’s become so cliché. So I just wanted to suggest it in a very suppressed way, in Francis’ response.” See Cynthia Fuchs, ‘*Exotica*,’ (n.d.), www.mith2.umd.edu/WomensStudies/FilmReviews/exotica-fuchs (accessed February 2007).

² Romney, Jonathan, *Atom Egoyan*, (London: BFI, 2003), p. 125, 110.

³ Egoyan quoted in John Tusa, ‘Atom Egoyan,’ *The Janus Aspect: Artists in the Twenty-First Century*, (London: Methuen, 2005), pp. 78-79.

⁴ Orr, John, *The Art and Politics of Film*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000), p. 157.

⁵ Romney, Jonathan, *Atom Egoyan*, p. 3.

⁶ Siraganian, Lisa, ‘Telling a Horror Story, Conscientiously,’ in Monique Tschofen and Jennifer Burwell, eds., *Image and Territory: Essays on Atom Egoyan*, (Ontario: Wilfrid University Press, 2007), p. 133, 139.

⁷ Tschofen, Monique, and Jennifer Burwell, ‘Introduction: *In Medias Res*: Atom Egoyan’s Utopian Praxis,’ *Image and Territory: Essays on Atom Egoyan*, p. 11.

⁸ Tschofen, Monique, ‘Repetition, Compulsion and Representation in Atom Egoyan’s Films,’ in William Beard and Jerry White, eds., *North of Everything: English-Canadian Cinema Since 1980*, (Alberta: University of Alberta Press, 2002), p. 171, 167.

⁹ Romney, Jonathan, *Atom Egoyan*, p. 2.

¹⁰ West, Patrick, *Conspicuous Compassion: Why Sometimes it Really is Cruel to be Kind*, (London: Civitas, 2004), p. 1, 2, 7.

¹¹ Mestotrovic, Stjepan, *Postemotional Society*, (London: Sage Publications, 1996).

¹² Holst-Warhaft, Gail, *The Cue for Passion: Grief and its Political Uses*, (Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Press, 2000), pp. 10-11.

¹³ McSorely, Tom, ‘How Do We Know What We Know? Atom Egoyan’s Truth Lies,’ *Take One*, Vol. 14, No. 51, (September-December 2005), p. 20.

¹⁴ For example, Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984); Hal Foster, ed., *Postmodern Culture*, (London: Pluto Press, 1983); Victor Burgin, *The End of Art Theory: Criticism and Postmodernity*, (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire and London: Macmillan, 1986); Linda Hutcheon, *The Politics of Postmodernism*, (London: Routledge, 1989); Steven Connor, *Postmodern Culture: An Introduction to Theories of the Contemporary*, (Oxford and Cambridge, Mass.: Basil Blackwell, 1989).

¹⁵ Friedberg, Anne, *Window Shopping: Cinema and the Postmodern*, (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1993), p. 2. For important discussions of the relationships among history, memory and image technologies, see Stephen Kern, *The Culture of Time and Space 1880-1918*, (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1983); David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change*, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989) and Scott McQuire, *Visions of Modernity: Representation, Memory, Time and Space in the Age of the Camera*, (London, Thousand Oaks and New Delhi: Sage, 1998).

¹⁶ For Egoyan and technology, see, for example, Elena Del Rio, 'The Body as Foundation of the Screen: Allegories of Technology in Atom Egoyan's *Speaking Parts*,' *Camera Obscura*, 37, (Summer 1996), pp. 94-115, and 'Fetish and Aura: Modes of Technological Engagement in *Family Viewing*,' *Image and Territory: Essays on Atom Egoyan*, pp. 29-52. For Egoyan and exilic identity, see, for example, Hamid Naficy, *An Accented Cinema: Exilic and Diasporic Filmmaking*, (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2001).

¹⁷ See, for example, Monique Tschofen, 'Repetition, Compulsion and Representation in Atom Egoyan's Films.'

¹⁸ Coates, Paul, 'Protecting the Exotic: Atom Egoyan and Fantasy,' *Canadian Journal of Film Studies*, Vol. 6, No. 2, (Fall 1997), p. 28.

¹⁹ Falsetto, Mario, 'Interview with Atom Egoyan,' in Mario Falsetto, ed., *Personal Visions: Conversations with Contemporary Film Directors*, (Los Angeles: Silman-James Press, 2000), p. 145.

²⁰ Watkin, William, *On Mourning: Theories of Loss in Modern Literature*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004), p. 199 (emphasis added).

²¹ Butler, Judith, *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence*, (London and New York: Verso, 2004), p. 22.

²² Butler, Judith, *Giving an Account of Oneself*, (New York: Fordham University Press, 2005), p. 136.

²³ 'Interview with Emmanuel Levinas,' in Raoul Mortley, *French Philosophers in Conversation: Levinas, Schneider, Serres, Irigaray, Le Doeuff, Derrida*, (London and New York: Routledge, 1991), p. 16; Emmanuel Levinas, 'Time and the Other,' Richard A. Cohen (trans.), in Seán Hand, ed., *The Levinas Reader*, (Oxford and Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell, 1989), p. 51.

²⁴ Spargo, R. Clifton, *The Ethics of Mourning: Grief and Responsibility in Elegiac Literature*, (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004), p. 9.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 24, 13.

²⁶ Fuery, Patrick, *New Developments in Film Theory*, (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire and London: Macmillan, 2000), p. 2.

²⁷ Harvey, Sylvia, 'What is Cinema? The Sensuous, the Abstract and the Political,' in Christopher Williams, ed., *Cinema: The Beginnings and the Future: Essays Marking the Centenary of the First Film Show Projected to a Paying Audience in Britain*, (London: University of Westminster Press, 1996), p. 250.

Chapter One: The Work of Mourning and the Trauma of Responsibility

¹ Freud, Sigmund, 'On Transience' (1915), James Strachey (trans.), *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, Vol. XIV, (London: The Hogarth Press, 1957), pp. 303-7. Freud also considered attitudes to death in 'Thoughts for the Time on War and Death' (1915), *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, Vol. XIV, pp. 273-302.

² Freud, Sigmund, 'Mourning and Melancholia' (1917), James Strachey (trans.), *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, Vol. XIV, (London: The Hogarth Press, 1957), pp. 243-58.

³ Laplanche, Jean, 'Time and the Other,' Luke Thurston (trans.), *Essays on Otherness* (London and New York: Routledge, 1999), p. 248.

⁴ For important discussions of Freud's article, see Eric L. Santner, *Stranded Objects: Mourning, Memory, and Film in Postwar Germany*, (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1990); Elizabeth Bronfen, 'The Lady Vanishes,' *Over Her Dead Body: Death, Femininity and the Aesthetic*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992), pp. 15-38, and 'Risky Resemblances: On Repetition, Mourning and

Representation,' in Sarah Webster Goodwin and Elizabeth Bronfen, eds., *Death and Representation*, (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), pp. 103-29; Giorgio Agamben, *Stanzas: Word and Phantom in Western Culture*, Ronald L. Martinez (trans.), (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), pp. 19-21, 22-28; Madelon Sprengnether, 'Mourning Freud,' in Anthony Elliott and Stephen Frosch, eds., *Psychoanalysis in Contexts: Paths Between Theory and Modern Culture*, (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), pp. 142-65; Jennifer Radden, 'Love and Loss in Freud's 'Mourning and Melancholia': A Rereading,' in Michael P. Levine, ed., *Analytic Freud: Philosophy and Psychoanalysis*, (London: Routledge, 2000), pp. 211-30; Diane Jonte-Pace, *Speaking the Unspeakable: Religion, Misogyny, and the Uncanny Mother in Freud's Cultural Texts*, (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 2001); Dominic LaCapra, *Writing History, Writing Trauma*, (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001); Harold K. Bush, Jr., 'Broken Idols': Mark Twain's Elegies for Susy and a Critique of Freudian Grief Theory,' *Nineteenth Century Literature*, Vol. 57, No. 2, (September 2002), pp. 237-68; and Greg Forter, 'Against Melancholia: Contemporary Mourning Theory, Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*, and the Politics of Unfinished Grief,' *differences*, Vol. 14, No. 2, (Summer 2003), pp. 134-70. For a historical overview of psychological work on grief, see John Archer, 'The Historical Background to Grief Research,' *The Nature of Grief: The Evolution and Psychology of Reactions to Loss*, (London and New York: Routledge, 1999), pp. 12-45. For the biographical context during which the essay was written, see Esther R. Shapiro, 'Grief in Freud's Life: Reconceptualizing Bereavement in Psychoanalytic Theory,' *Psychoanalytic Psychology*, Vol. 13, No. 4, (1996), pp. 547-66, David Aberbach, *Surviving Trauma: Loss, Literature and Psychoanalysis*, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1989), pp. 64-70, and Matthew von Unwerth, *Freud's Requiem: Mourning, Memory and the Invisible History of a Summer Walk*, (London and New York: Continuum, 2005). For recent clinical responses to Freud's essay, see Leticia Glover Fiorini, Thierry Bokanowski, and Sergio Lewkowicz, eds., *On Freud's 'Mourning and Melancholia'*, London: International Psychoanalytic Association, 2007).

⁵ Freud, Sigmund, 'Mourning and Melancholia,' p. 252.

⁶ Laplanche, Jean, 'Time and the Other,' pp. 241-2.

⁷ Ibid. p. 241.

⁸ Ricciardi, Alessia, *The Ends of Mourning: Psychoanalysis, Literature, Film*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), p. 22.

⁹ Freud, Sigmund, 'Mourning and Melancholia,' p. 253; see also pp. 264-5. One of Freud's first references to mourning and melancholia is in his discussion of the Rat Man in 'Notes Upon a Case of Obsessional Neurosis' (1909), in which Freud suggests that the intensity of his illness has as its chief source his sorrow at his father's death, and that his sorrow had found "a pathological expression" in his illness. Freud adds that a "normal period of mourning would last from one to two years, a pathological one like this would last indefinitely." *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, James Strachey (trans.), Vol. X, (London: The Hogarth Press, 1955), p. 186

¹⁰ Freud, Sigmund, 'Mourning and Melancholia,' p. 253.

¹¹ Freud, Sigmund, 'On Transience,' p. 305.

¹² Roth, Michael S., *The Ironist's Cage: Memory, Trauma and the Construction of History*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), p. 188, 187.

¹³ Ibid. p. 187.

¹⁴ Ibid. p. 197.

¹⁵ Freud, Ernst L., ed., *Letters of Sigmund Freud*, Tania and James Stern (trans.), (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1992), p. 386. As Ester R. Shapiro has noted, however, Freud "never revised his formal writing on grief. The idea of relinquishing object ties as the goal of normal grief became entrenched in the psychoanalytic literature, as did many of Freud's concepts that he later regarded in a more multidimensional way." 'Grief in Freud's Life: Reconceptualizing Bereavement in Psychoanalytic Theory,' *Psychoanalytic Psychology*, Vol. 13, No. 4, (1996), p. 560.

¹⁶ Peter Sacks has discussed the similarities between Oedipal resolution and the work of mourning: "Each procedure or resolution is essentially defensive, requiring a detachment of affection from a prior object followed by a reattachment of the affection elsewhere. At the core of each procedure is the renunciatory experience of loss and the acceptance, not just of a substitute, but of the very means and practice of substitution. In each case such an acceptance is the price of survival; and in each case a successful resolution is not merely deprivatory, but offers a form of compensatory reward." *The English Elegy: Studies in the Genre from Spenser to Yeats*, (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985), p. 8.

¹⁷ Woodward, Kathleen, 'Between Mourning and Melancholia: Roland Barthes's *Camera Lucida*,' *Aging and Its Discontents: Freud and Other Fictions*, (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1991), p. 115.

¹⁸ Freud, Sigmund, 'Mourning and Melancholia,' p. 253.

¹⁹ See, for example, George Hagman, 'Beyond Decathexis: Toward a New Psychoanalytic Understanding and Treatment of Mourning,' in Robert A. Neimeyer, ed., *Meaning Reconstruction and the Experience of Loss* (Washington: APA, 2001), pp. 13-32. Hagman notes the many problems with the Freudian paradigm: how, for example, the grief Freud describes has no relational function, and is "primarily a physical aspect of mourning, closer to a bodily function than to thought or language," and how normal mourning leads to a point of full resolution "rather than being open and evolving." Such a model of "isolated mourning" does not recognise the important role of others in mourning. "We must look beyond decahexis and relinquishment to the central goal of continuity in mourning. [...] A fundamental argument of the new psychoanalytic model of mourning is the need to preserve attachment to the lost person, and the importance of securing a sense of meaningful relationship, which transcends loss." Hagman proposes the following definition: "Mourning refers to a varied and diverse psychological response to the loss of an important other. Mourning involves the transformation of the meanings and affects associated with one's relationship to the lost person the goal of which is to permit one's survival without the other while at the same time ensuring a continuing experience of relationship with the deceased. The work of mourning is rarely done in isolation and may involve active engagement with fellow mourners and other survivors. An important aspect of mourning is the experience of disruption in self-organisation due to the loss of the function of the relationship with the other in sustaining self-experience. Thus, mourning involves a reorganization of the survivor's sense of self as a key function in the process."

²⁰ Woodward, Kathleen, 'Between Mourning and Melancholia: Roland Barthes's *Camera Lucida*,' p. 112.

²¹ Ibid. p. 112.

²² Ibid. p. 112, 116.

²³ Patricia Rae notes that in the 1990s "a profound and multifaceted challenge to Freud's model in 'Mourning and Melancholia' was gathering steam, a challenge that, though it appeared in many variations, in essence asked whether the completed "work

of mourning,” or the successful conclusion of the project of freeing oneself emotionally from the lost beloved, is possible and, beyond that, whether it is ethically and politically desirable.” ‘Introduction: Modernist Mourning,’ in Patricia Rae, ed., *Modernism and Mourning*, (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2007), p. 16.

²⁴ Edmundson, Mark, ‘The Work of Melancholia: ‘Mourning and Melancholia’ (1917),’ *Toward Reading Freud: Self-Creation in Milton, Wordsworth, Emerson and Sigmund Freud*, (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1990), p. 144.

²⁵ Ibid. p. 147.

²⁶ Ibid. p. 144.

²⁷ Clewell, Tammy, ‘A Mourning Beyond Melancholia: Freud's Psychoanalysis of Loss,’ *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association*, Vol. 52, No. 1, (2004), p. 47.

²⁸ Benjamin, Andrew, *Present Hope: Philosophy, Architecture, Judaism*, (London and New York: Routledge, 1997), pp. 20-21.

²⁹ Ricoeur, Paul, ‘Memory and Forgetting,’ in Richard Kearney and Mark Dooley, eds., *Questioning Ethics: Contemporary Debates in Philosophy*, (London and New York: Routledge, 1999), p. 5.

³⁰ Ibid. p. 6-7.

³¹ Ibid. p. 10-11.

³² Ricciardi, Alessia, *The Ends of Mourning: Psychoanalysis, Literature, Film*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), p. 1.

³³ Ibid. p. 1

³⁴ Ibid. p. 4. Ricciardi writes: “Of all the interpretive horizons abandoned by postmodernity, the outlook of mourning is one of the most crucial. Its demise perhaps carries the most far-ranging consequences, because such a failure implies the abandonment of any effort to provide a nuanced, ethical response to the claims of the past ...” (p. 2).

³⁵ Ibid., p. 4, 9.

³⁶ Laplanche, Jean, ‘Time and the Other,’ pp. 255-6. Laplanche here acknowledges that the title of his paper duplicates the 1948 work by Emmanuel Levinas. “What does the dead person want?” is a reference to the apocryphal statement attributed to Freud, “What does Woman want?”

³⁷ Derrida, Jacques, ‘Adieu,’ *Adieu to Emmanuel Levinas*, Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas (trans.), (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1999), p. 2;

Derrida, Jacques, 'The Deaths of Roland Barthes,' Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas (trans.), Pascale-Anne and Michael Naas, eds., *Jacques Derrida: The Work of Mourning*, (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2001), p. 50.

³⁸ Derrida, Jacques, 'Letter to Francie Loreau (15 July 1991),' Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas (trans.), *Jacques Derrida: The Work of Mourning*, p. 95.

³⁹ Derrida, Jacques, 'Adieu,' p. 2.

⁴⁰ Ibid. p. 35.

⁴¹ Ibid. p. 35.

⁴² Ibid. p. 35.

⁴³ Derrida, Jacques, 'Istrice 2: Ick bünn all hier,' Peggy Kamuf (trans.), in Elisabeth Weber, ed., *Points ... Interviews, 1974-1994*, (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1995), p. 321.

⁴⁴ Derrida, Jacques, 'Dialangages,' Peggy Kamuf (trans.), *Points ... Interviews, 1974-1994*, p. 152.

⁴⁵ Derrida, Jacques, 'Mnemosyne,' Cecile Lindsay (trans.), *Memoires: for Paul de Man*, Revised Edition (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989), pp. 32-3.

⁴⁶ Derrida, Jacques, 'By Force of Mourning,' Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas (trans.), *Jacques Derrida: The Work of Mourning*, p. 159.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 159-60.

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 160.

⁴⁹ Costello, Diarmuid, 'Aura, Face, Photography: Re-reading Benjamin Today,' in Andrew Benjamin, ed., *Walter Benjamin and Art*, (London and New York: Continuum, 2005), p. 184.

⁵⁰ Derrida, Jacques, *Aporias*, Thomas Dutoit (trans.), (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1994), p. 61. Cited in Joan Kirkby, 'Remembrance of the Future': Derrida on Mourning,' *Social Semiotics*, Vol. 16, No. 3, (September 2006), p. 463.

⁵¹ Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas, 'To Reckon with the Dead,' *Jacques Derrida: The Work of Mourning*, p. 11.

⁵² Derrida, Jacques, 'Mnemosyne,' p. 31.

⁵³ Ibid., p. 6.

⁵⁴ Dooley, Mark, and Liam Kavanagh, *The Philosophy of Derrida*, (Stocksfield: Acumen, 2007), p. 107. "In the final assessment, Derrida comprehends the question of the ethical and the political—as he comprehends all his work—in terms of the work of

mourning: he desires both to keep and preserve the past, while opening it up to the risks and promise of the future.” (p. 145.)

⁵⁵ Kirkby, Joan, ‘Remembrance of the Future’: Derrida on Mourning,’ p. 464. Kirkby summarizes thus: “The Derridean model offers a respect for the (dead) Other as Other; it allows agency to the mourning in the possibility of an ongoing creative encounter with the Other in an externalizing, productive, future-oriented memory; it emphasizes the importance of acting out the entrusted responsibility, which is their legacy to us; it upholds the idea of community and reminds us of our interconnectedness with our dead.” (pp. 469-70)

⁵⁶ For example, Howard Marchitello, ‘Introduction: Remembering Ethics,’ in Howard Marchitello, ed., *What Happens to History: The Renewal of Ethics in Contemporary Thought*, (London and New York: Routledge, 2001), p. 2; Lawrence Buell, ‘What We Talk About When We Talk About Ethics,’ in Marjorie Garber, Beatrice Hanssen, Rebecca L. Walkowitz, eds., *The Turn to Ethics*, (New York and London: Routledge, 2000), p. 2.

⁵⁷ Smart, Barry, *Facing Modernity: Ambivalence, Reflexivity and Morality*, (London: Sage Publications, 1999), p. 103.

⁵⁸ Spargo, R. Clifton, *The Ethics of Mourning: Grief and Responsibility in Elegiac Literature*, (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004), p. 7.

⁵⁹ Spargo, R. Clifton, *The Ethics of Mourning*, p. 7, 16, citing Emmanuel Levinas, *Otherwise than Being, or, Beyond Essence*, Alphonso Lingis (trans.), (Pittsburgh, Philadelphia: Duquesne University Press, 1999), p. 87.

⁶⁰ Levinas, Emmanuel, ‘Reality and its Shadow,’ Alfonso Lingis (trans.), in Seán Hand, ed., *The Levinas Reader*, (Oxford and Malden, Mass.: Blackwell, 1989), pp. 129-43.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 132, 130.

⁶² For further discussion of ‘Reality and its Shadow,’ see Robert Eaglestone, *Ethical Criticism: Reading After Levinas*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1997), pp. 104-11; Thomas Carl Wall, *Radical Passivity: Levinas, Blanchot, and Agamben*, (New York: State University of New York Press, 1999), pp. 13-30, and Colin Davis, ‘Levinas, *Nosferatu*, and the Love as Strong as Death,’ *Film-Philosophy*, Vol. 11, No. 2, (August 2007), pp. 37-48.

⁶³ Levinas, Emmanuel, *Totality and Infinity*, Alphonso Lingis (trans.), (Pittsburgh, Philadelphia: Duquesne University Press, 1969), p. 43.

⁶⁴ Levinas, Emmanuel, 'Ethics of the Infinite: An Interview with Richard Kearney,' in Richard Kearney, ed., *Dialogues with Contemporary Continental Thinkers: The Phenomenological Heritage*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984), p. 52.

⁶⁵ Levinas, Emmanuel, 'Responsibility for the Other,' *Ethics and Infinity: Conversations with Philippe Nemo*, Richard A. Cohen (trans.), (Pittsburgh, Philadelphia: Duquesne University Press, 1985), p. 95, 98.

⁶⁶ Smart, Barry, *Facing Modernity*, p. 103 (emphasis added).

⁶⁷ Critchley, Simon, 'Introduction,' in Simon Critchley and Robert Bernasconi, eds., *The Cambridge Companion to Levinas*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 21.

⁶⁸ Davis, Colin, 'The Cost of Being Ethical: Fiction, Violence, and Altericide,' *Common Knowledge*, Vol. 9, No. 2, (2003), p. 251, 252. See also Alphonso Lingis, who writes that the approach of the other "calls up an I out of the anonymity of sensuous and utilitarian existence, because his presence orders me." Being for the other, he suggests, is not possible if one gives only from one's surplus. See 'Face to Face,' *Deathbound Subjectivity*, (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1989), p. 137, 145, 146.

⁶⁹ Levinas, Emmanuel, 'Ethics as First Philosophy,' Seán Hand (trans.), in Seán Hand, ed., *The Levinas Reader*, (Oxford and Malden, Mass.: Blackwell, 1989), p. 83. Levinas's notion of responsibility and the death of the other underpins Adrian Kear's response to the murder of Stephen Lawrence. See 'Speak Whiteness: Staging 'Race', Performing Responsibility,' in Patrick Campbell and Adrian Kear, eds., *Psychoanalysis and Performance*, (London: Routledge, 2001), pp. 192-202.

⁷⁰ Levinas, Emmanuel, *La mort et le temps*, (Paris: l'Herne, 1991), p. 11, 14, 44. Translated citations in Tina Chantor, *Time, Death, and the Feminine: Levinas with Heidegger*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), p. 219. See also Judith Butler, 'Responsibility,' *Giving an Account of Oneself*, (New York: Fordham University Press, 2005), pp. 83-136.

⁷¹ Butler, Judith, *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence*, (London and New York: Verso, 2004), p. 28. Butler suggests grief "posits the "I" in the mode of unknowingness" (p. 30). Butler asks whether maintaining and "tarrying with" our grief, "remaining exposed to its unbearability," might furnish a framework within which to rethink international ties in a contemporary global situation, whereby we are "returned to a sense of human vulnerability, to our collective responsibility for the

physical lives of one another” (p. 30). She writes: “If I understand myself on the model of the human, and if the kinds of public grieving that are available to me make clear the norms by which the “human” is constituted for me, then it would seem that I am as much constituted by those I do grieve for as by those whose deaths I disavow, whose nameless and faceless deaths form the melancholic background for my social world” (p. 46). For a response to Butler, see R. Radhakrishnan, ‘Grievable Life, Accountable Theory,’ *Boundary 2*, Vol. 35, No. 1, (2008), pp. 67-84.

⁷² Levinas, Emmanuel, ‘Diachrony and Representation,’ *Entre nous*, Michael B. Smith and Barbara Harshav (trans.), (London and New York: Continuum, 2006), p. 147.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, pp. 147-8.

⁷⁴ Newman, Michael, ‘Sensibility, Trauma, and the Trace: Levinas from Phenomenology to the Immemorial,’ in Jeffrey Bloechl, ed., *The Face of the Other and the Trace of God: Essays on the Philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas*, (New York: Fordham University Press, 2000), p. 92, 90. Simon Critchley suggests that “[without] trauma, there would be no ethics in Levinas’s particular sense of the word,” since trauma here refers specifically to how a subject’s openness is the openness of a gaping wound that will not heal and which, as the openness or disposition to alterity, “is the condition of possibility for the ethical relation to the other.” ‘The Original Traumatism: Levinas and Psychoanalysis,’ in Richard Kearney and Mark Dooley, eds., *Questioning Ethics: Contemporary Debates in Philosophy*, (London and New York: Routledge, 1999), p. 204, 239.

⁷⁵ Cathy Caruth suggests that trauma, a wound-like “breach in the mind’s experience of time, self, and the world – is not, like the wound of the body, a simple and healable event, but rather an event that ... is experienced too soon, too unexpectedly, to be fully known and is therefore not available to consciousness until it imposes itself again, repeatedly, in the nightmares and repetitive actions of the survivor. [...] [Trauma] is not locatable in the simple violent or original event in an individual’s past, but rather in the way its very unassimilated nature—the way it was precisely *not known* in the first instance—returns to haunt the survivor later on. [...] [Trauma] is always the story of a wound that cries out, that addresses us in the attempt to tell us of a reality or truth that is not otherwise available. This truth, in its delayed appearance and its belated address, cannot be linked only to what is known, but also to what remains unknown in our very actions and our language.” See her ‘Introduction: The Wound and the Voice,’ *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History*, (Baltimore and

London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), p. 4. For a discussion of Lacan's analysis of the dream of the burning child in which she focuses on "the trauma of the necessity and impossibility of responding to another's death," and a "mode of existence determined by the impossible structure of the response," in which resonances with Levinas are (briefly) noted, see her 'Freud, Lacan, and the Ethics of Memory,' pp. 91-112, esp. 100-102.

⁷⁶ Levinas, Emmanuel, 'Proximity of the Other,' *Alterity and Transcendence*, Michael B. Smith (trans.), (London: The Athlone Press, 1999), p. 104. For trauma in Levinas more generally, see Rudi Visker, 'The Price of Being Dispossessed: Levinas's God and Freud's Trauma,' in Jeffrey Bloechl, ed., *The Face of the Other and the Trace of God: Essays on the Philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas*, (New York: Fordham University Press, 2000), pp. 243-75.

⁷⁷ Robbins, Jill, 'An Inscribed Responsibility: Levinas's *Difficult Freedom*,' *Modern Language Notes*, 106, (1991), p. 1060. See also her *Altered Reading: Levinas and Literature*, (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1999).

⁷⁸ Chantor, Tina, *Time, Death, and the Feminine: Levinas with Heidegger*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), p. 220.

⁷⁹ Spargo, R. Clifton, *Vigilant Memory: Emmanuel Levinas, the Holocaust, and the Unjust Death*, (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006), p. 195, 64.

⁸⁰ Spargo, R. Clifton, *The Ethics of Mourning*, p. 31.

⁸¹ *Ibid.* p. 10.

⁸² Andrew, Dudley, *Film in the Aura of Art*, (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1984), p. 11.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

⁸⁴ Keenan, Dennis King, *Death and Responsibility: The "Work" of Levinas*, (Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 1999), p. 1, 104-5.

⁸⁵ Keenan, Dennis King, *The Question of Sacrifice*, (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2005), p. 185, citing Jacques Derrida, 'Istrice 2: *Ick bunn all hier*,' p. 321, and 'Mnemosyne,' p. 34.

⁸⁶ Levinas, Emmanuel, 'The Philosopher and Death,' Bettina Bergo (trans.), in Jill Robbins, ed., *Is It Righteous To Be: Interviews with Emmanuel Levinas*, (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2001), p. 126. .

⁸⁷ Spargo, R. Clifton, *Vigilant Memory*, p. 61.

⁸⁸ Spargo, R. Clifton, *The Ethics of Mourning*, p. 35, 38.

⁸⁹ Ibid., p. 27.

⁹⁰ Levinas, Emmanuel, 'Responsibility and Substitution,' Maureen Gedney (trans.), *Is It Righteous To Be: Interviews with Emmanuel Levinas*, pp. 228-9.

⁹¹ Levinas, Emmanuel, 'Being-Toward-Death and 'Thou Shalt Not Kill,' Andrew Schmitz (trans.), *Is It Righteous To Be: Interviews with Emmanuel Levinas*, pp. 134-35.

⁹² Davis, Colin, 'The Cost of Being Ethical: Fiction, Violence, and Altericide,' *Common Knowledge*, Vol. 9, No. 2, (2003), p. 251, 252. See also Alphonso Lingis, who writes that the approach of the other "calls up an I out of the anonymity of sensuous and utilitarian existence, because his presence orders me." Being for the other, he suggests, is not possible if one gives only from one's surplus. See 'Face to Face,' *Deathbound Subjectivity*, (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1989), p. 137, 145, 146.

⁹³ 'Interview with Emmanuel Levinas,' in Raoul Mortley, *French Philosophers in Conversation: Levinas, Schneider, Serres, Irigaray, Le Doeuff, Derrida*, (London and New York: Routledge, 1991), p. 16; Emmanuel Levinas, 'Time and the Other,' Richard A. Cohen (trans.), *The Levinas Reader*, p. 51.

⁹⁴ Levinas, Emmanuel, 'Transcendence and Intelligibility' (1984), Simon Critchley and Tamra Wright (trans.), in Adriaan T. Perpezak, Simon Critchley and Robert Bernasconi, eds., *Emmanuel Levinas: Basic Philosophical Writings*, (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1996), p. 158. See also *Is It Righteous To Be*, pp. 31-2, and 'Violence of the Face,' *Alterity and Transcendence*, Michael B. Smith (trans.), (London: The Athlone Press, 1999), pp. 174-5. For a discussion of theatrical metaphors and the concept of the ethical intrigue in Levinas's work, see John Caruana, 'The Drama of Being: Levinas and the History of Philosophy,' *Continental Philosophy Review*, 40, (2007), pp. 251-73.

⁹⁵ Girgus, Sam B., 'Beyond Ontology: Levinas and the Ethical Frame in Film,' *Film-Philosophy*, Vol. 11, No. 2, (August 2007), pp. 88-107. Girgus addresses what he calls "a Cinema of Redemption that occurred in the United States from about the 1930s to about 1960" (p. 98). These films, such as *Mr Smith Goes to Washington* and *It's a Wonderful Life*, Girgus says, "centre on a moment of moral crisis and conversion of personal belief and action for a hero who adopts an ethical code that resonates with Levinasian ethics on the level of popular cultural expression" (p. 98). However, Girgus makes very little reference to *mise-en-scène*, (a reference to the

framing of a single shot from *Mr Smith Goes to Washington* (on p. 101) and a reference to another single shot in *It's a Wonderful Life* (on p. 103). "Levinas's language suggests that thinking philosophically and phenomenologically literally compares to thinking cinematically, that seeing and understanding an object clearly involves a process that relates to the cinematic terms of *mise-en-scène*. Thus, *mise-en-scène* seems to become an exchangeable term between Levinas's phenomenology of the clarity of the mind's consciousness of an object and the importance of the term for setting up and understanding film. This compatibility further indicates the potential for broadening ethical and moral discourse by relating it to aesthetic issues involved in film" (p. 91). Girgus does *not* refer to Levinas's analogy between the phenomenologist and the "director who passes from the text to the concrete event and who is obliged to add the plenitude of appearances in which this event will appear or in which it will become truly visible." See *Is It Righteous To Be*, pp. 31-2.

⁹⁶ Perniola, Mario, 'Toward a Philosophical Cinema,' *Art and its Shadow*, Massimo Verdicchio (trans.), Hugh J. Silverman (fwd), (New York and London: Continuum, 2004), pp. 34-5. For useful collections of philosophical film criticism, see Cynthia A. Freeland and Thomas E. Wartenberg, eds., *Philosophy and Film*, (New York and London: Routledge, 1995); Richard Allen and Murray Smith, eds., *Film Theory and Philosophy*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), and James Phillips, ed., *Cinematic Thinking: Philosophical Approaches to the New Cinema*, (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2008).

⁹⁷ For example, Michele Aaron has invoked Levinas in a recent discussion of spectatorship. She writes: "[Film] spectatorship—inherently contractual and hooked on the 'real' or imagined suffering of others—does not just appeal to ethical thought but in some ways *is* the ethical encounter. What I mean by this is that spectatorship depends upon our intersubjective alignment with the prospective suffering of others. Indeed, spectatorship, if it is nothing else, is intersubjective. The other's pain is both a commonplace of cinema but also something that we are always implicated in, not only as consumers but as consensual parties in the generation of characters' suffering for our entertainment. Spectatorship is not ethically interesting but intrinsically ethical." *Spectatorship: The Power of Looking On*, (London and New York: Wallflower, 2007), p. 112. One of the only references Levinas makes to cinema can be found in 'On the Usefulness of Insomnia,' Jill Robbins (trans.), *Is It Righteous To Be*, pp. 234-6. He is asked to comment on the relationship between 'the society of the spectacle'

and the subject's "awakening" to responsibility; Levinas suggests that the "audiovisual domain" is a "considerable distraction" and "a form of dreaming which plunges us into and maintains the sleep of which we were just talking" (p. 253). For Levinas, then, cinema tends to work against such an awakening.

⁹⁸ Cooper, Sarah, *Selfless Cinema? Ethics and French Documentary*, (Legenda: Modern Humanities Research Association and Maney Publishing, 2006), p. 16, 24. See also her 'Mortal Ethics: Reading Levinas with the Dardenne Brothers,' *Film-Philosophy*, Vol. 11, No. 2, (August 2007), pp. 66-87.

⁹⁹ Cooper, Sarah, *Selfless Cinema?*, p. 24.

¹⁰⁰ Bergen-Aurand, Brian K., 'Regarding Anna: Levinas, Antonioni and the Ethics of Film Absence,' *New Review of Film and Television Studies*, Vol. 4, No. 2, (August 2006), p. 126.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p. 127.

¹⁰² Downing, Lisa, 'Re-viewing the Sexual Relation: Levinas and Film,' *Film-Philosophy*, Vol. 11, No. 2, (August 2007), p. 58.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, pp. 49-50, 51, 63.

¹⁰⁴ Levinas, Emmanuel, 'Proust and the Other,' Seán Hand (trans.), *The Levinas Reader*, p. 153, 165.

¹⁰⁵ Wyschogrod, Edith, 'The Art in Ethics: Aesthetics, Objectivity, and Alterity in the Philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas,' in Adrian T. Peperzak, ed., *Ethics as First Philosophy: The Significance of Emmanuel Levinas for Philosophy, Literature and Religion*, (New York and London: Routledge, 1995), p. 139, 141.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 141.

¹⁰⁷ Spargo, R. Clifton, *The Ethics of Mourning*, p. 35.

¹⁰⁸ Curti, Lidia, 'The Empty Place of Melancholia: Female Characters in *Hamlet*,' *Female Stories, Female Bodies: Narrative, Identity and Representation*, (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire and London: Macmillan, 1998), p. 162.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 162, 163.

Chapter Two: Suspense Thrillers, Generic Identity and Strategic Infidelity

¹ Romney, Jonathan, *Atom Egoyan* (London: BFI, 2003), p. 13.

² *Ibid.* p. 9.

³ Schatz, Thomas, *Hollywood Genres* (Boston, Massachusetts: McGraw-Hill, Inc., 1981), p. 9.

⁴ Romney, Jonathan. *Atom Egoyan*, p. 14. Romney is referring to Laura Mulvey's 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema,' *Visual and Other Pleasures* (London: Macmillan, 1989), p. 26.

⁵ Pike, David L. 'Four Films in Search of an Author: Egoyan After *Exotica*,' *Bright Lights Film Journal*, 52, (May 2003): www.brightlightsfilm.com/52/egoyan.htm (accessed 7 February 2006). Pike is referring to the episodes of *The Twilight Zone* and *Alfred Hitchcock Presents* and the pilot for the series based on *Friday 13th* that Egoyan directed in the 1980s.

⁶ Ibid. Pike notes the "dearth of serious scholarly scrutiny" of Egoyan's more recent films.

⁷ Pike, David L., 'The Passing of Celluloid, the Endurance of the Image,' in Monique Tschofen and Jennifer Burwell, eds., *Image and Territory: Essays on Atom Egoyan* (Ontario: Wilfrid University Press, 2007), p. 111.

⁸ 'Atom Egoyan,' *The Canadian Film Encyclopedia* (updated April 2005): <http://www.filmreferencelibrary.ca/index.asp?layid=46&csid1=17&navid=46> (accessed 7 January 2008).

⁹ See Josh Wolk, 'Up and Atom,' *Entertainment Weekly*, (22 December 1999): <http://www.ew.com/ew/article/0,,84879,00.html> (accessed 8 January 2008). Egoyan signed to make a thriller called *Dead Sleep* for Warner Brothers after the success of *Exotica*, only to eventually abandon the project in order to make *The Sweet Hereafter*.

¹⁰ See Andrew Sarris, 'Notes on the Auteur Theory in 1962,' in Gerald Mast and Marshall Cohen, eds., *Film Theory and Criticism: Introductory Readings*, Third Edition, (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), pp. 527-40.

¹¹ Gibb, John. *Mise-en-Scène: Film Style and Interpretation* (London and New York: Wallflower, 2002), p. 5.

¹² Ibid. p. 9, p. 27.

¹³ Rutherford, Anne, 'Precarious Boundaries: Affect, mise-en-scène, and the senses,' Richard Cándida Smith, ed. *Art and the Performance of Memory: Sounds and Gesture of Recollection* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), p. 67.

¹⁴ Ibid. p. 65.

¹⁵ Bordwell, David, and Kristen Thompson, *Film Art: An Introduction*, Third Edition, (New York: McGraw Hill, Inc.:1990), p. 152.

¹⁶ See also David Bordwell, 'The Art Cinema as a Mode of Film Practice,' in Leo Braudy and Marshall Cohen, eds., *Film Theory and Criticism* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), pp. 774-82, and Steve Neale, 'Art Cinema as Institution,' *Screen*, Vol. 22, No. 1, (1981), pp. 11-39.

¹⁷ Hayward, Susan, *Cinema Studies: The Key Concepts*, Third Edition, (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), p. 28.

¹⁸ Lewis, Kevin, 'The Journeys of Atom Egoyan,' *MovieMaker Magazine*, (12 November 1999), http://www.moviemaker.com/issues/36/36_egoyan.html (accessed 28 April 2005).

¹⁹ For an analysis of Egoyan's approach to narrative closure in a film not considered here, see Katherine L. Weese, 'Family Stories: Gender and Discourse in Atom Egoyan's *The Sweet Hereafter*,' *Narrative*, Vol. 10, No. 1, (January 2002), pp. 69-90, esp. pp. 80-85.

²⁰ See, for example, Thomas Elsaesser, 'The Pathos of Failure: American Films of the 70s: Notes on the Unmotivated Hero,' *Monogram*, 6, (1975), pp. 12-19; Noel Carroll, 'The Future of Allusion: Hollywood in the Seventies (and Beyond),' *October*, 20, (Spring 1982), pp. 51-82; John G. Cawelti, 'Chinatown: Generic Transformation in Recent American Films,' in Gerald Mast and Marshall Cohen, eds., *Film Theory and Criticism: Introductory Readings*, pp. 503-20; Fredric Jameson, 'Postmodernism and Consumer Society,' in Hal Foster, ed., *Postmodern Culture*, (Cambridge: Pluto Press, 1985), pp. 111-35; Giuliana Bruno, 'Ramble City: Postmodernism and *Blade Runner*,' *October*, 41, (1987), pp. 61-74; Fred Pfeil, 'The Flâneur at *River's Edge*; or, A Cruise of the Strip,' *Politics and Narrative in Postmodern Culture*, (London and New York: Verso, 1990), pp. 192-226; Norman Denzin, *Images of Postmodern Society: Social Theory and Contemporary Cinema*, (London: Sage, 1991); and Vera Dika, *Recycled Culture in Contemporary Art and Film* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

²¹ Fred Pfeil, 'The Flâneur at *River's Edge*; or, A Cruise of the Strip,' p. 193.

²² See, for example, James Monaco, *The New Wave: Truffaut, Godard, Chabrol, Rohmer, Rivette*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976).

²³ Altman, Rick, *Film/Genre* (London: BFI, 1999), p. 191.

²⁴ Cawelti, John G., 'Chinatown: Generic Transformation in Recent American Films,' p. 511.

- ²⁵ Williams, Linda Ruth, *The Erotic Thriller in Contemporary Cinema*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005), p. 18.
- ²⁶ Tudor, Andrew, *Theories of Film*, (New York: Viking Press, 1973), pp. 131-50, reprinted in Barry Keith Grant, ed., *Film Genre Reader II*, (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1995), pp. 3-10; 8
- ²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 165
- ²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 167. See also Jim Collins, *Uncommon Cultures: Popular Culture and Post-Modernism* (New York and London: Routledge, 1989).
- ²⁹ Andrew, Dudley, *Film in the Aura of Art*, (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1984), p. 13, 11.
- ³⁰ *Ibid.* p. 11.
- ³¹ *Ibid.* p. 11, 12.
- ³² Barthes, Roland, *The Pleasure of the Text*, Richard Miller (trans.), (New York: Hill and Wang, 1975), p. 14.
- ³³ *Ibid.* p. 13.
- ³⁴ *Ibid.* p. 12.
- ³⁵ Neale, Steve, *Genre and Hollywood*, (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), p. 31.
- ³⁶ Jauss, Hans Robert, *Towards an Aesthetic of Reception*, (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1982), p. 79.
- ³⁷ Cavitch, Max, *American Elegy: The Poetry of Mourning from the Puritans to Whitman*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007).
- ³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 20, 21.
- ³⁹ *Ibid.* p. 20.
- ⁴⁰ *Ibid.* p. 22.
- ⁴¹ *Ibid.* p. 22.
- ⁴² Bordwell, David, 'Authorship and Narration in Art Cinema,' in Virginia Wright Wexman, ed., *Film and Authorship*, (New Brunswick, New Jersey and London: Rutgers University Press, 2006), p. 43.
- ⁴³ McGee, Patrick, *Cinema, Theory, and Political Responsibility in Contemporary Culture*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 82, 86.
- ⁴⁴ *Ibid.* p. 70.
- ⁴⁵ See Charles Derry's study of the genre, *Suspense Thrillers: Films in the Shadow of Alfred Hitchcock*, (Jefferson: McFarland, 1988).

- ⁴⁶ Neale, Steve, *Genre and Hollywood*, p. 82; Rick Altman *Film/Genre*, p. 223.
- ⁴⁷ Rubin, Martin, *Thrillers*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 113, p. 116. See also Lez Cooke, 'Hitchcock and the Mechanics of Cinematic Suspense,' in Clive Bloom, ed., *Twentieth-Century Suspense: The Thriller Comes of Age*, (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire and London: Macmillan Press, 1990), pp. 189-202, and Deborah Knight and George McKnight, 'Suspense and Its Master,' in Richard Allen and S. Ishii Gonzalès, eds., *Alfred Hitchcock: Centenary Essays*, (London: BFI, 1999), pp. 107-21.
- ⁴⁸ Davis, Brian, *The Thriller: The Suspense Film from 1946*, (London: Studio Vista/New York: Dutton, 1973), pp. 7-8.
- ⁴⁹ Orr, John, *Hitchcock and Twentieth-Century Cinema*, (London and New York: Wallflower Press, 2005), p. 6.
- ⁵⁰ Ibid. p. 8.
- ⁵¹ Ibid. pp. 8-9.
- ⁵² Ibid. pp. 6-7, 153
- ⁵³ Ibid. p. 7. In another context, Orr has suggested that *Exotica* should be seen in relation to Hitchcock, and to *Vertigo* in particular, due specifically to its exploration of the theme of mourning and repetition. See *Contemporary Cinema*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998), p. 116.
- ⁵⁴ Atom Egoyan, in Kevin Lewis, 'The Journeys of Atom Egoyan.'
- ⁵⁵ Atom Egoyan, in Richard Porton, 'The Politics of Denial: An Interview with Atom Egoyan,' *Cineaste*, Vol. 25, No. 1, (December 1999), p. 39.
- ⁵⁶ Michelson, Annette, 'Film and the Radical Aspiration,' in P. Adams Sitney, ed., *Film Culture: An Anthology*, (London: Secker and Warburg, 1971), p. 412.
- ⁵⁷ Ibid. p. 411, 412 (emphasis in original).
- ⁵⁸ Ibid. p. 410.
- ⁵⁹ Ibid. p. 412.
- ⁶⁰ Carringer, Robert L., 'Blow-Up,' *Journal of Aesthetic Education*, Vol. 9, No. 2, (April 1975), p. 111.
- ⁶¹ Ibid. p. 114.
- ⁶² Chabrol, Claude, 'Evolution of the Thriller,' Liz Heron (trans.), in Jim Hillier, ed., *Cahiers du Cinéma, Volume 1: The 1950s: Neo-Realism, Hollywood, New Wave*, (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1985), pp. 158-64. Originally published in *Cahiers du Cinéma* 54 (Christmas 1955).

- ⁶³ Ibid. p. 160.
- ⁶⁴ Ibid. p. 160.
- ⁶⁵ Ibid. pp. 161-62.
- ⁶⁶ Ibid. p. 161.
- ⁶⁷ Ibid. p. 162 (emphasis in original).
- ⁶⁸ Ibid. p. 162.
- ⁶⁹ Rubin, Martin, *Thrillers*, p. 3, 4, 13.
- ⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 5.
- ⁷¹ Hayward, Susan, *Cinema Studies: The Key Concepts*, p. 476. For a discussion of the thriller in popular fiction, see Jerry Palmer, *Thrillers: Genesis and Structure of a Popular Genre*, (London: Edward Arnold, 1978).
- ⁷² Altman, Rick, *Film/Genre*, p. 153.
- ⁷³ Newman, Kim, 'Psycho-Thriller, *quest-ce que c'est?*' in Steve Chibnall and Julian Petley, eds., *British Horror Cinema*, (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), pp. 71-81.
- ⁷⁴ Turim, Maureen, *Flashbacks in Film: Memory and History*, (New York and London: Routledge, 1989), p. 164.
- ⁷⁵ Ibid. p. 164, 169. Turim's examples are *Mildred Pierce* (Michael Curtiz, 1945), *The Locket* (John Brahm, 1946), *Possessed* (Curtis Bernhardt, 1946), and *Letter from an Unknown Woman* (Max Ophuls, 1948).
- ⁷⁶ Barton, Sabrina, 'Your Self Storage: Female Investigation and Male Performativity in the Woman's Psychothriller,' in Jon Lewis, ed., *The New American Cinema*, (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1998), pp.187-216.
- ⁷⁷ Williams, Linda Ruth, *The Erotic Thriller in Contemporary Cinema*. For more general overviews of the thriller, see, in addition to those works already cited, Bill Mesce, *Overkill: The Rise and Fall of Thriller Cinema*, (Jefferson: McFarland and Co., 2006), and William Indick, *Psycho Thrillers: Cinematic Explorations of the Mysteries of the Mind*, (Jefferson: McFarland and Co., 2006).
- ⁷⁸ Rubin, Martin, *Thrillers*, p. 4.
- ⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 5.
- ⁸⁰ Gow, Gordon, *Suspense in the Cinema*, (New York: Castle Books, 1968), p. 18.
- ⁸¹ Ibid. p. 102.
- ⁸² Unreferenced article from *Films and Filming* cited in Gordon Gow, *Suspense in the Cinema*, p. 20.

- ⁸³ Derry, Charles, *Suspense Thrillers: Films in the Shadow of Alfred Hitchcock*, (Jefferson: McFarland, 1988), p. 62.
- ⁸⁴ Black, Joel, *The Aesthetics of Murder: A Study in Romantic Literature and Contemporary Culture*, (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991), p. 64, 67.
- ⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 194. Derry's examples for these categories are Hitchcock's *Marnie* (1964) and *Strangers on a Train* (1951). Derry has also discussed many of these psychological thrillers as horror films, as films dealing with "the horror of personality," anticipated by *noir*'s preoccupation with madness and by Hitchcock's interest in psychopathology". See Charles Derry, *Dark Dreams: A Psychological History of the Modern Horror Film*, (South Brunswick and New York: A. S. Barnes and Co., 1977), pp. 17-47.
- ⁸⁶ Durgnat, Raymond, 'The Strange Case of Alfred Hitchcock, Part 8: Nasty Situations,' *Films and Filming*, Vol. 16, No. 12, (September 1970), pp. 84-88.
- ⁸⁷ Brooks, Peter, *Reading for the Plot: Design and Intention in Narrative*, (Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Press, 1984), p. 12.
- ⁸⁸ Genette, Gérard, *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method*, Jane E. Lewin (trans.), (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1980).
- ⁸⁹ Henderson, Brian, 'Tense, Mood, and Voice in Film (Notes After Genette),' in Brian Henderson and Ann Martin eds., *Film Quarterly: Forty Years—A Selection*, (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1999), p. 55.
- ⁹⁰ *Ibid.* p. 60 (emphasis in original).
- ⁹¹ For a useful introduction to Genette's terminology and its relevance for the analysis of film narrative, see David Bordwell, *Narration in the Fiction Film*, (London: Routledge, 1988), pp. 74-98. For a general approach to order and time, see Noël Burch, 'Spatial and Temporal Articulations,' *Theory of Film Practice*, Helen R. Lane (trans.), (Princeton, NJ.: Princeton University Press, 1981), pp. 3-16.
- ⁹² Turim, Maureen, *Flashbacks in Film: Memory and History*, (New York and London: Routledge, 1989), p. 1.
- ⁹³ *Ibid.* p. 1.
- ⁹⁴ *Ibid.* p. 12, 2. As Michael S. Roth has suggested: "From Freud's perspective, the past surges up in our memories as the stuff of both pathology and desire." See 'Freud's Uses and Abuses of the Past,' *The Ironist's Cage: Memory, Trauma and the Construction of History*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), p. 186.

- ⁹⁵ Kawin, Bruce, *Mindscreen: Bergman, Godard and First-Person Film*, (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1978), p. 86.
- ⁹⁶ *Ibid.* 77-79.
- ⁹⁷ Turim, Maureen, *Flashbacks in Film: Memory and History*, p. 16.
- ⁹⁸ *Ibid.* p. 2.
- ⁹⁹ *Ibid.* p. 143.
- ¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.* p. 164.
- ¹⁰¹ *Ibid.* p. 170.
- ¹⁰² *Ibid.* p. 11-12.
- ¹⁰³ Branigan, Edward, *Narrative Comprehension and Film*, (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), p. 173.
- ¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.* p. 176.
- ¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.* p. 177.
- ¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.* p. 49, 50.
- ¹⁰⁷ Henderson, Brian, 'Tense, Mood, and Voice in Film (Notes After Genette),' p. 57.
- ¹⁰⁸ Branigan, Edward, *Narrative Comprehension and Film*, p. 84.
- ¹⁰⁹ Walker, Janet, *Trauma Cinema: Documenting Incest and the Holocaust*, (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 2005), p. 19.
- ¹¹⁰ *Ibid.* p. 28-29.
- ¹¹¹ Deleuze, Gilles, *Cinema 2: The Time Image*, Hugh Tomlinson and Robert Galeta (trans.), (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), p. 131.
- ¹¹² *Ibid.* p. 7
- ¹¹³ O'Neill, Edward R., 'Traumatic Postmodern Histories: *Velvet Goldmine's* Phantasmatic Testimonies,' *Camera Obscura*, 57, (Spring 2004), p. 157, 166-67.
- ¹¹⁴ *Ibid.* p. 166.
- ¹¹⁵ Rubin, Martin, *Thrillers*, p. 30. See also Noël Carroll, 'Toward a Theory of Suspense,' *Theorizing the Moving Image*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 94-117.
- ¹¹⁶ Deleuze, Gilles, and Leopold von Sacher-Masoch, *Masochism: Coldness and Cruelty and Venus in Furs*, (New York: Zone Books, 1989), p. 25.
- ¹¹⁷ *Ibid.* p. 32-3.
- ¹¹⁸ *Ibid.* p. 70-1. Deleuze is drawing on Theodore Reik.

¹¹⁹ Barthes, Roland, 'Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narratives,' Richard Howard (trans.), *The Semiotic Challenge*, (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1994), p. 130.

¹²⁰ Hitchcock, Alfred, 'Why "Thrillers" Thrive,' in Sidney Gottlieb, ed., *Hitchcock on Hitchcock: Selected Writings and Interviews*, (London: Faber and Faber, 1995), p. 109. For Hitchcock's later thoughts about suspense (and surprise), see Francois Truffaut, *Hitchcock*, Revised Edition, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1984), pp. 72-3.

¹²¹ Derry, Charles, *Suspense Thrillers: Films in the Shadow of Alfred Hitchcock*, pp. 31-2.

¹²² Neale, Steve, *Genre and Hollywood*, p. 84.

¹²³ Cawelti, John G., *Adventure, Mystery and Romance: Formula Stories as Art and Popular Culture*, (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1976), p. 17. Cawelti argues that there are various degrees of sophistication, from the cliff-hanger (its "crudest form") to the more "complex intellectual suspense" in which suspense is protracted and complicated "until the final revelation," while remaining part of a believable structure.

¹²⁴ Porter, Dennis. 'Backward Construction and the Art of Suspense,' *The Pursuit of Crime: Art and Ideology in Detective Fiction*, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1981), pp. 29-30, 50.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.* p. 30.

¹²⁶ Scharff, Stefan, *The Elements of Cinema: Towards a Theory of Cinesthetic Impact*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), p. 119.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 122.

¹²⁹ Barthes, Roland, 'On Film,' *The Grain of the Voice: Interviews 1962-1980*, Linda Coverdale (trans.), (London: Jonathan Cape, 1985), p. 17, 19 (emphasis in original).

¹³⁰ *Ibid.* p. 21.

¹³¹ *Ibid.* p. 21.

¹³² *Ibid.* p. 21-2. Barthes's example is Buñuel's *The Exterminating Angel* (1962).

¹³³ Brooks, Peter, *Reading for the Plot: Design and Intention in Narrative*, p. 18. Brooks also refers to this as a "retarding structure" (p. 287).

¹³⁴ *Ibid.* p. 287 (emphasis added).

¹³⁵ *Ibid.* p. 287, 18.

¹³⁶ Doane, Mary Ann, 'Woman's Stake: Filming the Female Body,' in Constance Penley, ed., *Feminism and Film Theory*, (New York: Routledge and London: BFI, 1988), p. 217. Patricia Mellencamp notes how Potter's *Thriller* is informed both by feminist film theory and *film noir*, suggesting it re-inscribes the "women's voice and point of view" in a genre "dependent on women's death." See 'Taking a Cue from Ariadne,' *Indiscretions: Avant-Garde Film, Video, and Feminism*, (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1990), p. 152, 154. See also Anneke Smelik's discussion of Marleen Goris's feminist thrillers *A Question of Silence* and *Broken Mirrors* in "And the Mirror Cracked," *And the Mirror Cracked: Feminist Cinema and Film Theory*, (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire and London: Macmillan Press, 1998), pp. 90-122.

¹³⁷ McSorely, Tom, 'How Do We Know What We Know? Atom Egoyan's *Truth Lies*,' *Take 1*, Vol. 14, No. 51, (1 September 2005), p. 20.

¹³⁸ See Tammy Clewell, 'The Shades of Modern Mourning in *Three Colours* Trilogy,' *Literature/Film Quarterly*, Vol. 28, No. 3, (2000), pp. 203-9; Britt-Marie Schiller, 'A Memorial to Mourning: *Under the Sand*,' *Literature/Film Quarterly*, Vol. 33, No. 3, (2005), pp. 217-23; and Henry M. Taylor, 'Trauma and Violence: Different Sensibilities: Nanni Moretti's *The Son's Room* and Todd Field's *In the Bedroom*,' *Cineaction*, 68, (2006), pp. 36-44.

¹³⁹ Derrida, Jacques *Istrice 2: Ick bünn all hier*, Peggy Kamuf (trans.), in Elisabeth Weber, ed., *Points ... Interviews, 1974-1994* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1995), p. 321; Jacques Derrida, 'Mnemosyne,' Cecile Lindsay (trans.), *Memoires: for Paul de Man*, Revised Edition, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989), p. 35.

¹⁴⁰ Romney, Jonathan, *Atom Egoyan*, p. 187.

¹⁴¹ Derrida, Jacques, 'The Law of Genre,' in Derek Attridge, ed., *Acts of Literature*, (New York and London: Routledge, 1992), p. 227 (emphasis added).

¹⁴² Hammer, Stephanie Barbé, *The Sublime Crime: Fascination, Failure, and Form in Literature of the Enlightenment*, (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1994), p. 17.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.* p. 152, 19.

¹⁴⁴ See also Joel Black, who notes how often "the violence depicted in works of art ultimately seems directed against the idea of art itself, and should be seen as art's suicidal attempt to pass beyond its culturally conditioned self-image of falsity, and to

achieve some transcendent or nihilistic—but, in any case, pre-aesthetic—“reality.””

The Aesthetics of Murder: A Study in Romantic Literature and Contemporary Culture, p. 5.

¹⁴⁵ Lacan, Jacques, ‘Desire and the Interpretation of Desire in *Hamlet*,’ James Hulbert (trans.), in Shoshana Felman, ed., *Literature and Psychoanalysis: The Question of Reading: Otherwise*, (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982),

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 37.

Chapter Three: Felicia’s Journey (1999)

¹ Gruben, Patricia, ‘Look But Don’t Touch: Visual and Tactile Desire in *Exotica*, *The Sweet Hereafter*, and *Felicia’s Journey*,’ in Monique Tschofen and Jennifer Burwell, eds., *Image and Territory: Essays on Atom Egoyan*, (Ontario: Wilfred Laurier University Press, 2007), p. 264, 270.

² Of course, Atom Egoyan directed “Cupid’s Quiver,” the pilot for the television show based on *Friday the 13th* in 1987.

³ Peach, Linden, *The Contemporary Irish Novel: Critical Readings*, (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), p. 190.

⁴ Tobias, Scott, ‘Interview with Atom Egoyan,’ *The Onion A.V. Club*, Vol. 35. No. 42, (17 November 1999), <http://www.theavclub.com/feature/index.php?issue=3542&f=1> (accessed 25 April 2005).

⁵ Seltzer, Mark, *Serial Killers: Death and Life in America’s Wound Culture*, (New York and London: Routledge, 1998), p. 1.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 1.

⁷ Egoyan quoted in Scott Tobias, ‘Interview with Atom Egoyan.’

⁸ Freeland, Cynthia R., *The Naked and the Undead: Evil and the Appeal of Horror*, (Boulder: Westview Press, 1999), p. 161, 162.

⁹ Lewis, Kevin, ‘The Journeys of Atom Egoyan,’ *MovieMaker Magazine*, (12 November 1999), http://www.moviemaker.com/issues/36/36_egoyan.html (accessed 28 April 2005).

¹⁰ Taubin, Amy, ‘Killing Men,’ *Sight and Sound*, Vol. 1. No. 1, (May 1991), p. 16.

- ¹¹ Dyer, Richard, 'Kill and Kill Again,' *Sight and Sound*, Vol. 7. No. 9, (September 1997), p. 16
- ¹² Fuchs, Cynthia, 'Felicia's Journey: Atom Egoyan speaks about his latest film.' (19 November 1999), www.nitrateonline.com/1999/ffelicia.html (accessed 29 April 2005).
- ¹³ Totaro, Donato and Simon Galiero, 'Egoyan's Journey: An Interview with Atom Egoyan,' (8 February 2000), <http://www.horschamp.qc.ca/egoyan.html> (accessed 27 April 2005).
- ¹⁴ Romney, Jonathan, *Atom Egoyan*, (London: BFI, 2004), p. 154.
- ¹⁵ This quotation is reprinted on the front of the UK DVD of *Felicia's Journey*.
- ¹⁶ Blurb on the back of the UK DVD of *Felicia's Journey*.
- ¹⁷ Attributed to Kenneth M. Chanko, *Newark Star-Ledger*, reproduced on the US DVD of *Felicia's Journey*.
- ¹⁸ Totaro, Donato and Simon Galiero, 'Egoyan's Journey.'
- ¹⁹ Atom Egoyan, quoted in Jacinto Lageira and Stephen Wright, 'Relocating the Viewer: An Interview with Atom Egoyan,' *Parachute*, 103 (July-September 2001), p. 65.
- ²⁰ Tobias, Scott, 'Interview with Atom Egoyan'; Richard Porton, 'Review of *Felicia's Journey*,' *Cineaste*, Vol. 25. No. 1, (December 1999), pp. 42-43.
- ²¹ Romney, Jonathan, *Atom Egoyan*, pp. 153-54.
- ²² *Ibid.*, p. 157.
- ²³ Lewis, Kevin, 'The Journeys of Atom Egoyan.'
- ²⁴ Orr, John, *Hitchcock and Twentieth-Century Cinema*, (London and New York: Wallflower Press, 2005), pp. 6-7, p. 153.
- ²⁵ Porton, Richard, 'The Politics of Denial: An Interview with Atom Egoyan,' *Cineaste*, Vol. 25, No. 1, (December 1999), pp. 39-41.
- ²⁶ Sanjek, David, 'Same as it Ever Was: Innovation and Exhaustion in the Horror and Science Fiction Films of the 1990s,' in Wheeler Winston Dixon, ed., *Film Genre 2000: New Critical Essays*, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2000), pp. 113-4. Sanjek writes: "The *Scream* sequence in particular depends upon the characters', and the audience's, willingness to abide by the rules of the game. [...] At the same time, neither Williamson nor very many of his contemporaries appear to be interested in critiquing or subverting those parameters. Instead, they merely call attention to them in the most blunt and obvious fashion. [...] Admittedly, genre cinema, if not motion pictures altogether, rarely if ever incorporates an overt radical

or revolutionary agenda. More commonly, they reflect and respond to that body of common knowledge born of a lifetime of spectatorship possessed by their aficionados. [...] Increasingly, however, that knowledge resembles the experiential equivalent of *insider trading* in the financial markets, whereby audience members are more interested in observing the genre rearticulate itself rather than call attention to the social, cultural and ideological fissures and fault lines that the form represents.”

²⁷ Warner, Marina, *From the Beast to the Blonde: On Fairy Tales and their Tellers*, (London: Vintage, 1995) and Bram Dijkstra, *Idols of Perversity: Fantasies of Feminine Evil in the Fin-de-Siecle Culture*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), pp. 352-401.

²⁸ Atom Egoyan, quoted in Jacinto Lageira and Stephen Wright, ‘Relocating the Viewer: An Interview with Atom Egoyan,’ p. 65.

²⁹ McBride, Stephanie, *Ireland into Film: Felicia’s Journey*, (Cork: Cork University Press, in association with The Irish Film Institute, 2006), p. 13.

³⁰ Romney, Jonathan, *Atom Egoyan*, p. 146.

³¹ Atom Egoyan, quoted in Jacinto Lageira and Stephen Wright, ‘Relocating the Viewer: An Interview with Atom Egoyan,’ p. 103.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 103.

³³ Tobias, Scott. ‘Interview with Atom Egoyan.’

³⁴ As Stephanie McBride has noted, Jame Gumb, the serial killer in Thomas Harris’s *The Silence of the Lambs* (1988), repeatedly watches a video of his dead mother’s participation in a beauty contest. This ritual was not included in Demme’s film version of the novel. *Ireland into Film: Felicia’s Journey*, p. 52.

³⁵ Tschofen, Monique, ‘Repetition, Compulsion, and Representation in Atom Egoyan’s Films,’ in William Beard and Jerry White, eds., *North of Everything: English-Canadian Cinema since 1980*, (Alberta: University of Alberta Press, 2002), p. 167.

³⁶ Hilditch’s video tape archive is an invention of Egoyan’s. In Trevor’s novel, Hilditch’s memories of the ‘lost girls’ are described as a gallery of photographic images, or “floating snapshots.” William Trevor, *Felicia’s Journey*, (London: Viking, 1994), p. 51.

³⁷ Atom Egoyan, quoted in Paul Virilio and Atom Egoyan, ‘Video Letters,’ in Carole Desbarats, Daniele Riviere, Jacinto Lageira and Paul Virilio, *Atom Egoyan*, Brian Holmes (trans.), (Paris: Dis Voir, 1993), p. 105.

³⁸ Shary, Timothy, 'Video as Accessible Artefact and Artificial Access: The Early Films of Atom Egoyan,' *Film Criticism*, Vol. 19 No.3, (Spring 1995), p. 9.

³⁹ Marks, Laura U., *The Skin of the Film: Intercultural Cinema, Embodiment, and the Senses*, (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2000), p. 76, 162-3, 177. Marks writes: "[While] film approximates the degree of detail of human vision, video provides much less detail. When vision yields to the diminished capacity of video, it must give up some degree of mastery; our vision dissolves in the unfulfilling or unsatisfactory space of video" (p. 176). For Marks, "[Haptic] visuality inspires an acute awareness that the thing seen evades vision and must be approached through other senses—which are not literally available in cinema. Haptic visuality implies a fundamental mourning of the absent object or the absent body, where optical visuality attempts to resuscitate it and make it whole ..." (p. 191)

⁴⁰ Derrida, Jacques, 'Mnemosyne,' Cecile Lindsay (trans.), *Memoires: for Paul de Man*, Revised Edition (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989), pp. 32-33.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 6; Derrida, Jacques, 'By Force of Mourning,' Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas (trans.), in Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas, eds., *Jacques Derrida: The Work of Mourning*, (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2001), p. 159.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 159.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 159.

⁴⁴ Lageira, Jacinto, 'The Recollection of Scattered Parts,' in Carole Desbarats, Jacinto Lageira, Daniele Riviere and Paul Virilio, *Atom Egoyan*, pp. 33-34.

⁴⁵ Totaro, Donato and Simon Galiero, 'Atom's Journey: An Interview with Atom Egoyan.'

⁴⁶ Fuchs, Cynthia, '*Felicia's Journey*: Atom Egoyan speaks about his latest film.'

⁴⁷ See the discussion of baroque structures in Egoyan's films in Monique Tschofen, 'Repetition, Compulsion, and Representation in Atom Egoyan's Films,' pp. 168-71.

⁴⁸ Wilson, Emma, *Atom Egoyan*, (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2009), p. 104.

⁴⁹ For an extended discussion of the relationship between the Gothic tradition and serial killer narratives, see Philip L. Simpson, 'The Gothic Legacy and Serial Murder,' *Psycho Paths: Tracking the Serial Killer through Contemporary American Film and Fiction*, (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 2000), pp. 26-69.

⁵⁰ Egoyan directed a production of Strauss's *Salome* for the Canadian Opera Company in 1996.

⁵¹ Romney, Jonathan, 'This Green Unpleasant Land,' *Sight and Sound*, Vol. 9, No. 10, (October 1999), p. 34.

⁵² Egoyan has noted that this sequence "is suspenseful in a classic way," but that Hilditch's stare into the camera is troubling and unsettling precisely because "we realize at that point that we have no idea who this person actually is, and he has no idea who he actually is." Totaro, Donato and Simon Galiero, 'Atom's Journey: An Interview with Atom Egoyan.'

⁵³ Porton, Richard, 'The Politics of Denial,' p. 39.

⁵⁴ McGee, Patrick, *Cinema, Theory, and Political Responsibility*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 82, p. 86.

⁵⁵ Clover, Carol J., *Men, Women and Chainsaws: Gender in the Modern Horror*, (London: BFI, 1992), pp. 39-40, p. 51.

⁵⁶ Wilson, Emma, *Atom Egoyan*, p. 110.

⁵⁷ Lewis, Kevin, 'The Journeys of Atom Egoyan'; Liam Lacey, 'Review of *Where the Truth Lies*,' *Globe and Mail* (7 October 2005), R9. Linden Peach calls Trevor's novel "a version of the 'Red Riding Hood' story." *The Contemporary Irish Novel: Critical Readings*, p. 196.

⁵⁸ Mazierska, Ewa, and Laura Rascaroli, *Crossing New Europe: Postmodern Travel and the European Road Movie*, (London and New York: Wallflower Press, 2006), p. 188, p. 189.

⁵⁹ Dika, Vera, 'The Stalker Film, 1978-81,' in Gregory Albert Waller, ed., *American Horrors; Essays on the Modern American Horror Film*, (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1987), p. 94, p. 95.

⁶⁰ Mise, Raymond W., *The Gothic Heroine and the Nature of the Gothic Novel*, (New York: Arno Press, 1980), p. 222.

⁶¹ Teresa de Lauretis, *Alice Doesn't: Feminism, Semiotics, Cinema*, (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1984), p. 133.

⁶² *Ibid.*, pp. 139-40.

⁶³ Atom Egoyan, quoted in Tony Tracy, 'Atom Egoyan's Journey,' *Film West*, 38 (October 1999), p. 17.

⁶⁴ Atom Egoyan, email correspondence with the author, (6 May 2006).

⁶⁵ Fuchs, Cynthia, 'Felicia's Journey: Atom Egoyan speaks about his latest film.'

- ⁶⁶ Wilson, Emma, *Atom Egoyan*, p. 106.
- ⁶⁷ Totaro, Donato and Simon Galiero, 'Egoyan's Journey: An Interview with Atom Egoyan.'
- ⁶⁸ Atom Egoyan, quoted in Jacinto Lageira and Stephen Wright, "Relocating the Viewer,' p. 65.
- ⁶⁹ Clover, Carol J., *Men, Women and Chainsaws: Gender in the Modern Horror*, p. 23.
- ⁷⁰ MacAndrew, Elizabeth, *The Gothic Tradition in Fiction*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979), p. 13.
- ⁷¹ Fuchs, Cynthia, 'Felicia's Journey Atom Egoyan speaks about his latest film.'
- ⁷² Ibid.
- ⁷³ Atom Egoyan, quoted in Monika Maurer, 'A Quick Chat with Atom Egoyan,' (November 1998), <http://www.kamera.co.uk/interviews/egoyan.html> (accessed 1 May 2009).
- ⁷⁴ Holland, Norman N., and Leona F. Sherman, 'Gothic Possibilities,' *New Literary History*, 8 (Winter 1977), p. 279.
- ⁷⁵ Howells, Carol Ann, *Love, Mystery and Misery: Feeling in Gothic Fiction*, (London: The Athlone Press, 1978), p. 5.
- ⁷⁶ Altman, Rick, *Film/Genre*, (London: BFI, 1999), p. 153; Martin Rubin, *Thrillers*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 5.
- ⁷⁷ Massé, Michelle A., *In the Name of Love: Women, Masochism and the Gothic*, (Ithica and London: Cornell University Press, 1992), p. 10.
- ⁷⁸ Howells, Carol Ann, *Love, Mystery and Misery*, pp. 11-12.
- ⁷⁹ Newman, Kim, 'Psycho-Thriller, *quest-ce que c'est?*' in Steve Chibnall and Julian Petley, eds., *British Horror Cinema*, (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), p. 71. For a discussion of Hitchcock's *Psycho* and Powell's *Peeping Tom* that focuses on their self-reflexive relation to Gothic traditions, see David Punter, 'Gothic in the Horror Film,' *The Literature of Terror: A History of Gothic Fictions from 1765 to the Present Day*, (London and New York: Longman, 1980), pp. 346-72.
- ⁸⁰ Clover, Carol J., *Men, Women and Chainsaws: Gender in the Modern Horror*, pp. 39-40, p. 35.
- ⁸¹ Williams, Tony, 'Trying To Survive On The Darker Side,' in Barry Keith Grant, ed., *The Dread of Difference* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1996), 169-170.
- ⁸² Dika, Vera, 'The Stalker Film, 1978-81,' p. 99.

- ⁸³ Shary, Timothy, 'Video as Accessible Artefact and Artificial Access: The Early Films of Atom Egoyan,' p. 27.
- ⁸⁴ Waldman, Diane, "'At last I can tell it to someone!': Feminine Point of View and Subjectivity in the Gothic Romance Film of the 1940s,' *Cinema Journal*, Vol. 23, No.2, (Winter 1983), p. 31.
- ⁸⁵ Dika, Vera, 'The Stalker Film, 1978-81,' p. 87, p. 88.
- ⁸⁶ Freeland, Cynthia A., *The Naked and the Undead: Evil and the Appeal of Horror*, p. 161.
- ⁸⁷ Linden Peach, discussing Trevor's novel, suggests that "Hilditch, who presents himself throughout as a father figure and as a benevolent being who watches over children who stray from the straight and narrow, is all the time drawing them to their deaths. Presenting himself as the 'good father,' he is secretly the evil father of the Gothic horror tale," *The Contemporary Irish Novel: Critical Readings*, p. 189.
- ⁸⁸ Indick, William, *Psycho Thrillers: Cinematic Explorations of the Mysteries of the Mind*, (Jefferson, North Carolina and London: McFarland and Company, Inc., 2006), p. 34.
- ⁸⁹ Totaro, Donato and Simon Galiero, 'Egoyan's Journey: An Interview with Atom Egoyan.'
- ⁹⁰ Fuchs, Cynthia, '*Felicia's Journey*: Atom Egoyan speaks about his latest film.'
- ⁹¹ Freeland, Cynthia A., *The Naked and the Undead: Evil and the Appeal of Horror*, p. 162.
- ⁹² Dyer, Richard, 'Kill and Kill Again,' pp. 16-7.
- ⁹³ Seltzer, Mark, *Serial Killers: Death and Life in America's Wound Culture*, pp. 4-5.
- ⁹⁴ Fuchs, Cynthia, '*Felicia's Journey*: Atom Egoyan speaks about his latest film.'
- ⁹⁵ Ibid.
- ⁹⁶ Lewis, Kevin, 'The Journeys of Atom Egoyan.'
- ⁹⁷ Porton, Richard, 'The Politics of Denial: An Interview with Atom Egoyan,' p. 40.
- ⁹⁸ Ricoeur, Paul, 'Memory and Forgetting,' in Richard Kearney and Mark Dooley, eds., *Questioning Ethics: Contemporary Debates in Philosophy*, (London and New York: Routledge, 1999), pp. 10-11.
- ⁹⁹ Derrida, Jacques, *Memoires*, p. 46. For a discussion of naming and mourning in Derrida, see Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas, 'To Reckon with the Dead: Jacques Derrida's Politics of Mourning,' in Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas,

eds., *Jacques Derrida: The Work of Mourning*, (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2001), pp. 1-30.

¹⁰⁰ Tobias, Scott, 'Interview with Atom Egoyan.'

¹⁰¹ Levinas, Emmanuel, 'Diachrony and Representation,' *Entre nous*, Michael B. Smith and Barbara Harshav (trans.) (London and New York: Continuum, 2006), p. 147.

¹⁰² Levinas, Emmanuel, 'Proximity of the Other,' *Alterity and Transcendence*, Michael B. Smith (trans.) (London: The Athlone Press, 2000), p. 104, p. 109.

¹⁰³ Eight actresses are listed in the credits: Nicki Murphy, Poly York, Kelly Brailsford, Gem Durham, Kerry Stacey, Laura Chambers, Bianca McKenzie, Ladene Hall.

¹⁰⁴ See Brougher, Kerry, Michael Tarantino and Astrid Bowron, eds., *Notorious: Alfred Hitchcock and Contemporary Art*, (Oxford: Museum of Contemporary Art, 1999).

¹⁰⁵ Bersani, Leo, and Ulysse Dutoit, 'Merde Alors,' *October*, 13 (Summer 1980), p. 28.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.* p. 28.

Chapter Four: *Where the Truth Lies* (2005)

¹ Hoberman, J., 'Hollywood or Bust,' *Village Voice*, (7 October 2005), http://www.villagevoice.com/film/0541_hoberman1.68706,20.html (accessed 4 April 2006).

Hoberman is referring to Akira Kurosawa's 1950 film.

² Egoyan, email correspondence with the author, 6 May 2007.

³ Durgnat, Raymond, 'The Strange Case of Alfred Hitchcock, Part 8: Nasty Situations,' *Films and Filming*, Vol. 16, No.12, (September 1970), 84-88.

⁴ Wilson, Emma, *Atom Egoyan*, (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2009), p. 129.

⁵ Lacey, Liam, 'Where the Truth Lies,' *Globe and Mail*, (7 October 2005), R9.

⁶ For a discussion of Haynes's film that includes a discussion of Egoyan's *Ararat*, see Edward O'Neill's 'Traumatic Postmodern Histories: *Velvet Goldmine*'s Phantasmatic Testimonies,' *Camera Obscura*, 57, (Spring 2004), pp. 157-85.

⁷ This phrase was famously used at a press briefing given by former US Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld on February February, 2002.

⁸ Director's Commentary on the Italian DVD of *Where the Truth Lies*.

⁹ McSorely, Tom, 'How Do We Know What We Know? Atom Egoyan's *Truth Lies*,' *Take 1*, Vol. 14, No. 51, (September-December 2005), p. 20.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Egoyan quoted in Brad Balfour, 'Finding the Truth in Directing,' (22 October 2005), <http://www.popenentertainment.com/egoyan.htm> (accessed 1 February 2009).

¹² Egoyan quoted in Jenny Halper, 'Interview with Atom Egoyan,' *Cinema Confidential*, (17 October 2005), www.cinecon.news.php?id=0510171 (accessed 11 April 2006).

¹³ Baronian, Marie-Aude, 'History and Memory, Repetition and Epistolarity,' in Monique Tschofen and Jennifer Burwell, eds. *Image and Territory: Essays on Atom Egoyan*, (Ontario: Wilfrid University Press, 2007), p. 158.

¹⁴ Egoyan, quoted in John Tusa, 'Atom Egoyan,' *The Janus Aspect: Artists in Conversation*, (London: Methuen, 2005), p. 82.

¹⁵ Panek, Elliot, 'The Poet and the Detective: Defining the Psychological Puzzle Film,' *Film Criticism*, Vol. 31, Nos.1-2, (Fall-Winter 2006), p. 65. Panek suggests: "[Many] psychological puzzle films have protagonists that are in search of information about a violent event that has occurred in the past and thus may cue viewers to employ detective-story readings of the plots ... In psychological puzzle narratives, the narration is responsible for the deception ..." (p. 76, 86).

¹⁶ Benjamin, Andrew, *Present Hope: Philosophy, Architecture, Judaism*, (London and New York: Routledge, 1997), pp. 20-21.

¹⁷ Mortley, Raoul, 'Interview with Emmanuel Levinas,' in Raoul Mortley, *French Philosophers in Conversation: Levinas, Schneider, Serres, Irigaray, Le Doeuff, Derrida*, (London and New York: Routledge, 1991), p. 16; Levinas, Emmanuel, 'Time and the Other,' Richard A. Cohen (trans.), in Seán Hand, ed., *The Levinas Reader*, (Oxford and Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell, 1989), p. 51.

¹⁸ Derrida, Jacques, 'By Force of Mourning,' Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas (trans.), in Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas, eds., *Jacques Derrida: The Work of Mourning*, (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2001), p. 159; Derrida, Jacques, 'Mnemosyne,' Cecile Lindsay (trans.), *Memoires: for Paul de Man*, Revised Edition, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989), p. 6.

¹⁹ Deleuze, Gilles, *Cinema 2: The Time Image*, Hugh Tomlinson and Robert Galeta (trans.) (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), p. 7.

²⁰ Chantor, Tina, *Time, Death, and the Feminine: Levinas with Heidegger*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), p. 220.

²¹ Interview with Atom Egoyan on the Italian DVD of *Where the Truth Lies*.

²² Cohen, William A., *Sex Scandal: The Private Parts of Victorian Fiction*, (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1996), p. 8, 9.

²³ McLean, Adrienne L., 'Introduction,' in David A. Cook and Adrienne McLean, eds., *Headline Hollywood: A Century of Film Scandal*, (New Brunswick, New Jersey and London: Rutgers University Press, 2001), p. 10.

²⁴ Egoyan quoted in Brad Balfour, 'Finding the Truth in Directing.'

²⁵ Interview with Atom Egoyan on the Italian DVD of *Where the Truth Lies*.

²⁶ Egoyan quoted in Brian D. Johnson, 'Bombed-Out Atom,' *Maclean's*, Vol. 118, No. 42, (17 October 2005), p. 52. At the time of the film's release, Egoyan described these "obsessions" thus: "complexity; conflicting agendas; different people trying to present a version of reality; a hidden history; how people cope with trauma; the need to create and construct personas." See Jenelle Riley, 'All Ego Aside: Filmmaker Atom Egoyan goes in search of *Where the Truth Lies*,' *Backstage*, (24 October 2005), http://www.backstage.com/bso/news_reviews/other_news/article_display.jsp?vnu_content_id=1001350800&inp=true (accessed 1 February 2009).

²⁷ Reaves, Jessica, 'Review of *Where the Truth Lies*,' *Chicago Tribune*, (24 August 2007), <http://chicago.metromix.com/movies/review/movie-review-where-the/160368/content> (accessed 1 February 2009). However, in this respect, Egoyan's adaptation adheres more closely to Nino Frank's description of the film *noir* as "a gloomy story, well constructed and presented in an original way." See 'The Crime Adventure Story: A New Kind of Detective Film,' in R. Barton Palmer, ed., *Perspectives on Film Noir*, (New York: G. K. Hall & Co., 1996), p. 21. See also Raymond Durnat's discussion of "gloomy" expressionist thrillers in 'The Strange Case of Alfred Hitchcock, Part 8: Nasty Situations.'

²⁸ Lacey, Liam, 'Review of *Where the Truth Lies*.'

²⁹ Johnson, Brian D., 'Bombed-Out Atom,' p. 50. Adding that Egoyan "seems addicted to artistic risk," Johnson concludes: "It's enough to make you wonder if, unconsciously, he might have sabotaged the commercial appeal of *Where the Truth Lies*—this outside view of Hollywood deceit—so he wouldn't have to play the game from the inside."

- ³⁰ Egoyan quoted in Douglas Edward, 'Interview with Atom Egoyan,' *ComingSoon*, (13 October 2005), www.comingsoon.net/news/topnews.php?id=11521 (accessed 1 February 2009).
- ³¹ Egoyan quoted in Jenelle Riley, 'All Ego Aside'.
- ³² Egoyan quoted in Jenny Halper, 'Interview with Atom Egoyan'.
- ³³ McLean, Adrienne L., 'Introduction,' p. 10.
- ³⁴ Egoyan quoted in Brad Balfour, 'Finding the Truth in Directing'.
- ³⁵ Egoyan quoted in Brian D. Johnson, 'Bombed-Out Atom,' p. 51.
- ³⁶ Egoyan quoted in Brad Balfour, 'Finding the Truth in Directing'.
- ³⁷ Ebert, Roger, 'Review of *Where the Truth Lies*,' *Sunday Times*, (28 October 2005), <http://rogerebert.suntimes.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20051027/REVIEWS/50928007/1023> (accessed 1 February 2009). Liam Lacey suggests that Maureen is Karen's "doppelganger," "a part of herself that was buried when she overcame her physical illness," and argues that Karen is "emotionally arrested at the age of 12," the point at which she appeared on her idols' telethon. See 'Review of *Where the Truth Lies*.' Raymond Durnat, in his discussion of *film noir*, identified the "strange, diffuse play on facial and bodily resemblances" in certain "grim romantic thrillers." See 'Paint It Black: The Family Tree of Film Noir,' in R. Barton Palmer, ed., *Perspectives on Film Noir*, pp. 93-4. Linda Ruth Williams has also discussed thrillers featuring either twins or doppelgangers in which one woman "fetishistically [shadows] her mirror image" or in which "a woman finds herself sexually vulnerable because she is foreshadowed by her (now dead) look-alike." *The Erotic Thriller in Contemporary Cinema*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005), p. 32.
- ³⁸ Desbarats, Carole. 'Conquering What They Tell Us is 'Natural,'" in Carole Desbarats, Jacinto Lageira, Daniele Riviere and Paul Virilio, *Atom Egoyan*, Brian Holmes (trans.), (Paris: Dis Voir, 1993), pp. 18-18.
- ³⁹ Interview with Atom Egoyan on the Italian DVD of *Where the Truth Lies*.
- ⁴⁰ Interview with Atom Egoyan on the Italian DVD of *Where the Truth Lies*.
- ⁴¹ Neale, Steve, *Genre and Hollywood*, (London: Routledge, 2000), p. 164.
- ⁴² Krutnik, Frank, *In a Lonely Street: Film Noir, Genre, Masculinity*, (London and New York: Routledge, 1991), p. 194.
- ⁴³ Atom Egoyan, quoted in Tom McSorely, 'How Do We Know What We Know? Atom Egoyan's Truth Lies.'
- ⁴⁴ James, Nick, 'The Right Stuff,' *Sight and Sound*, 15.6 (July 2005), p. 14.

- ⁴⁵ Sarris, Andrew, 'Review of *Where the Truth Lies*,' *The New York Observer*, (5 February 2006), <http://www.observer.com/node/38325> (accessed 1 May 2009).
- ⁴⁶ Neupert, Richard, *The End: Narration and Closure in the Cinema*, (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1995), p. 173.
- ⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 180.
- ⁴⁸ Interview with Atom Egoyan on the Italian DVD of *Where the Truth Lies*.
- ⁴⁹ *Ibid.*
- ⁵⁰ *Ibid.*
- ⁵¹ McCarthy, Todd, 'Where the Truth Lies,' *Variety*, (14 May 2005), www.variety.com/review/VE1117927091?categoryid=1929&cs=1&s=h&p=0 (accessed 3 June 2005).
- ⁵² Macnab, Geoffrey, 'Review of *Where the Truth Lies*,' *Sight and Sound*, 15.12 (December 2005), p. 84.
- ⁵³ Williams, Linda Ruth, 'Songs for Swinging Lovers,' *Sight and Sound*, 15.12 (December 2005), p. 32.
- ⁵⁴ Kirkland, Bruce, 'Review of *Where the Truth Lies*,' *Toronto Sun*, (5 October 2005), http://jam.canoe.ca/Movies/Reviews/W/Where_The_Truth_Lies/2005/10/07/1252096.html (accessed 1 May 2009); Brunette, Peter, 'Where the Truth Lies,' *Screendaily*, (16 May 2005), <http://www.screendaily.com/ScreenDailyArticle.aspx?intStoryID=23145> (accessed 1 February 2009).
- ⁵⁵ Clarke, Donald, 'Review of *Where the Truth Lies*,' *Irish Times*, (2 December 2005), <http://www.irishtimes.com/theticket/articles/2005/1202/2253864958TK0212WHERE TRUTH.html> (accessed 1 February 2009).
- ⁵⁶ Lemire, Christy, 'Review of *Where the Truth Lies*,' *Associated Press*, (13 October 2005), <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/9686225> (accessed 1 May 2009).
- ⁵⁷ We might recall one of Hitchcock's more celebrated 'McGuffins,' Guy's cigarette lighter in *Strangers on a Train* (1951).
- ⁵⁸ Egoyan quoted in Brad Balfour, 'Finding the Truth in Directing.'
- ⁵⁹ French, Philip, 'Review of *Where the Truth Lies*,' *Observer*, (4 December 2005), <http://www.guardian.co.uk/culture/2005/dec/04/features.review3> (accessed 1 February 2009); Bradshaw, Peter, 'Review of *Where the Truth Lies*,' *Guardian*, (2 December 2005), <http://www.guardian.co.uk/culture/2005/dec/02/1> (accessed 1 February 2009); Gleiberman, Owen, 'Review of *Where the Truth Lies*,' *Entertainment Weekly*, (12

October 2005), <http://www.ew.com/ew/article/0,,1116756,00.html> (accessed 1 February 2009); Macnab, Geoffrey, 'Review of *Where the Truth Lies*,' p. 83.

⁶⁰ Orr, John, *Hitchcock and Twentieth-Century Cinema*, (London and New York: Wallflower Press, 2005), p. 152.

⁶¹ Ibid. p. 162, 156, 155.

⁶² Ibid. p. 166.

⁶³ Frank, Nino, 'The Crime Adventure Story: A New Kind of Detective Film,' p. 21. Frank's article concerns a handful of films shown in France in 1946: John Huston's *The Maltese Falcon* (1941), Otto Preminger's *Laura* (1944), Billy Wilder's *Double Indemnity* (1944), Fritz Lang's *The Woman in the Window* (1944), Edward Dymtryk's *Murder, My Sweet* (1944), Charles Vidor's *Gilda* (1946), and Howard Hawks's *The Big Sleep* (1946)

⁶⁴ Ibid. p. 21.

⁶⁵ Ibid. p. 21.

⁶⁶ Hirsch, Foster, *The Dark Side of the Screen: Film Noir*, (New York: Da Capo Press, Inc., 1981), pp. 74-75.

⁶⁷ Telotte, J. P., *Voices in the Dark: The Narrative Patterns of Film Noir*, (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1989), p. 3. Telotte's approach is informed by Siegfried Kracauer's analysis of postwar cinema, and suggests that noir be seen "as emblems of a failure not just in our culture but in its conventional genres, in its narrative techniques—by which we try to make imaginary sense of our world—in effect, in the very voice with which it spoke. Seen in this context, the *film noir* seems most remarkable for the various ways in which it copes with and casts into relief these different failings." (p. 5)

⁶⁸ Conley, Tom, 'Noir in the Red and the Nineties in the Black,' in Wheeler Winston Dixon, ed., *Film Genre 2000*, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2000), p. 201.

⁶⁹ Gross, Larry, 'Film *Après Noir*,' in R. Barton Palmer, ed., *Perspectives on Film Noir*, p. 110.

⁷⁰ Jameson, Fredric, 'Postmodernism and Consumer Society,' in Hal Foster, ed., *Postmodern Culture*, (Cambridge: Pluto Press, 1985), pp. 111-35.

⁷¹ Naremore, James, *More Than Night: Film Noir in its Contexts*, (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1998), p. 10-11

⁷² Film Noir is often seen as beginning in 1941, with John Huston's *The Maltese Falcon*, and "ending" in 1958, with Orson Welles's *Touch of Evil*. Borde and Chaumeton's study *A Panorama of American Film Noir 1941-53* appeared in France in 1955. Attention turned again to *noir* in the early 1970s, with the publication of essays by Raymond Durnat and Paul Schrader and films such as Robert Altman's *The Long Goodbye* (1973) and Roman Polanski's *Chinatown* (1974).

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 39.

⁷⁵ Cowie, Elizabeth, 'Film Noir and Women,' in Joan Copjec, ed., *Shades of Noir: A Reader*, (London and New York: Verso, 1993), p. 126.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 137

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 138

⁷⁸ Neale, Steve, *Genre and Hollywood*, (London: Routledge, 2000), p. 164.

⁷⁹ Holmes's novel purports to be a confession written by Karen many years later, and includes three examples of Lanny's own narrative account of the past punctuating the text as Karen reads them.

⁸⁰ Doane, Mary Ann, *The Desire to Desire: The Woman's Film of the 1940s*, (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1987), pp. 54-55.

⁸¹ Gledhill, Christine, 'Klute 1: A Contemporary Film Noir and Feminist Criticism,' in E. Ann Kaplan, ed., *Women in Film Noir*, (London: BFI, 1999), p. 16.

⁸² Turner, Matthew, 'Review of *Where the Truth Lies*,' *View London*, (3 November 2005), <https://www.viewlondon.co.uk/films/where-the-truth-lies-film-review-13724.html> (accessed 1 May 2009).

⁸³ Loder, Kurt, 'Review of *Where the Truth Lies*,' (21 October 2005), <http://www.mtv.com/movies/news/articles/1512023/story.jhtml?newsSection=loder> (accessed 1 May 2009).

⁸⁴ Schrader, Paul, 'Notes on *Film Noir*,' in Alain Silver and James Ursini, eds., *Film Noir Reader*, (New York: Limelight, 1996), p. 63.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 56.

⁸⁶ Christopher, Nicholas, *Somewhere in the Night: Film Noir and the American City*, (New York and London: The Free Press, 1997), pp. 223-30.

⁸⁷ Hoberman, J., "A Bright Guilty World': Daylight Ghosts and Sunshine Noir,' *Art Forum*, Vol. XLV, No.6, (February 2007), p.

⁸⁸ Loder, Kurt, 'Review of *Where the Truth Lies*'.

- ⁸⁹ Lemire, Christy, 'Review of *Where the Truth Lies*'.
- ⁹⁰ Wilson, Emma, *Atom Egoyan*, (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2009), p. 132
- ⁹¹ Katz, Anita, 'Review of *Where the Truth Lies*,' *San Francisco Examiner* (20 October 2005), available at http://www.firth.com/truth_rev.html (accessed 1 May 2009).
- ⁹² Clarke, Donald. 'Review of *Where the Truth Lies*'.
- ⁹³ Robey, Tim, 'Review of *Where the Truth Lies*,' *Telegraph*, (2 December 2005), <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/film/3648440/Energetic-murder-mystery-with-sizzling-Bacon.html> (accessed 1 May 2009).
- ⁹⁴ Egoyan quoted in Rachel Scott, 'Interview with Atom Egoyan,' (4 May 2006), www.rainbownetwork.com/Film/detail.asp?iData=25631&iChannel=14&nChannel=Film (accessed 1 May 2009).
- ⁹⁵ Egoyan quoted in Douglas Edward, 'Interview with Atom Egoyan'.
- ⁹⁶ See Scott Tobias, 'Interview with Atom Egoyan,' *The Onion A.V. Club*, Vol. 35, No. 42, (17 Nov 1999), www.theavclub.com/feature/index.php?issue=3542&f=1 (accessed 25 April 2005).
- ⁹⁷ Brannigan, Edward, *Narrative Comprehension and Film*, (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), p. 177.
- ⁹⁸ Ibid., p. 84; Turim, Maureen, *Flashbacks in Film: Memory and History*, (New York and London: Routledge, 1989), p. 16.
- ⁹⁹ Egoyan, email correspondence with the author (6 May 2007).
- ¹⁰⁰ Interview with Atom Egoyan on the Italian DVD of *Where the Truth Lies*.
- ¹⁰¹ Egoyan, quoted in Richard Porton, 'The Politics of Denial: An Interview with Atom Egoyan,' *Cineaste* Vol. 25, No. 1, (December 1999), pp. 39-41.
- ¹⁰² Interview with Atom Egoyan on the Italian DVD of *Where the Truth Lies*.
- ¹⁰³ Price, Brian, 'Colour, the Formless, and Cinematic Eros,' in Angela Dalle Vacche and Brian Price, eds., *Colour: The Film Reader*, (New York and London: Routledge, 2006), p. 81.
- ¹⁰⁴ Ibid. Price notes that in classical cinema "[any] stylistic element that does not contribute to perceptual efficiency is relegated to the category of excess" and that such expressive excess is then associated with the other or the feminine." (p. 81)
- ¹⁰⁵ Burnett, Ron, *Cultures of Vision: Images, Media and the Imaginary*, (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1995), p. 35. For a discussion of the

Polaroid, see Peter Buse, 'Photography Degree Zero: Cultural History of the Polaroid Image,' *New Formations*, 62 (Autumn 2007), pp. 29-44. The Polaroid became available as a consumer product in 1948. By the mid 1970s, Buse contends, the Polaroid had become the widest-selling camera in history (peaking in late 70s/early 80s) For most people, it is the SX-70 of 1972-3, the 'second generation' Polaroid, which determines most people's idea of a Polaroid camera – it was this camera that mechanically ejected the print. For Buse, the Polaroid may constitute the pre-history of our own accelerated imaging era. Since Polaroid photographs do not have negatives, the Polaroid, according to Buse, "goes against the very logic of the photographic" (p. 38). More significantly, Buse argues that the Polaroid has always been linked to producing images of private intimacy (p. 42). Buse also refers to Jean Baudrillard's discussion of "the ecstasy of the Polaroid" in *America*, Chris Turner (trans.), (London: Verso, 1988), p. 37.

¹⁰⁶ Atom Egoyan, email correspondence with the author (6 May 2007).

¹⁰⁷ Levinas, Emmanuel, 'Diachrony and Representation,' *Entre Nous*, Michael B. Smith and Barbara Harshav (trans.) (London and New York: Continuum, 2006), p. 147.

¹⁰⁸ Spargo, R. Clifton, *The Ethics of Mourning: Grief and Responsibility in Elegiac Literature*, (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004), p. 24.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 35.

¹¹⁰ Badt, Karin, 'Festival Report: Cannes 2005,' *Film Criticism*, Vol. 21, No.3, (Spring 2005), p. 62.

¹¹¹ Atom Egoyan, speaking at the press conference for *Where the Truth Lies* on 13 May 2005, http://www.festival-cannes.fr/films/fiche_film.php?langue=6002&id_film=4282797 (accessed 6 April 2006).

¹¹² Williams, Linda Ruth, 'Songs for Swinging Lovers,' p. 35.

¹¹³ *Ibid.* Williams briefly compares Egoyan's approach to Maureen's murder to his earlier depiction of "young murder victims" in *Felicia's Journey*, "those who, like *The Sweet Hereafter's* tiny coach passengers or *Exotica's* dead girl, will never have the chance to grow up" (p. 35).

¹¹⁴ Spargo, R. Clifton, *The Ethics of Mourning*, p. 9.

¹¹⁵ Egoyan quoted in Rachael Scott, 'Interview with Atom Egoyan'.

¹¹⁶ Ebert, Roger, 'Review of *Where the Truth Lies*'.

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