

Border Crossings: (Re)presenting Gender in Surrealist Film

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Not Applicable

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Abstract

This thesis is in two parts: a theoretical section (60%), which provides an analysis of gender identity in Surrealist film through consideration of a range of Surrealist films; and a practical section (40%), consisting of a body of original creative work (collage, film and assemblage), which builds on and is in dialogue with the theoretical insights of the research.

Transformation is seen as central to a mapping and remapping of the spaces, (supposed) limits and frontiers of Surrealist notions of gender identity.

In particular this thesis examines how Surrealist film makers engage with representations of men and women: problematising any single or unitary (fixed) reading but rather blurring boundaries between masculine / feminine (as process / flux) in order to deconstruct them, with the ultimate aim of criticising a society that encourages the positioning of men and women according to (binarised) patriarchal discourses.

I examine the implications of these 'gender crossings' for the spectator by developing the concept of 'bisexual switching' – which posits a mobile spectator who actively negotiates the various (gender) positions / identities in a kind of dialogue with the text and film maker.

Practice, is understood here as a dynamic, integral part of the production of meaning, providing new ways of reflecting upon texts and the processes (such as spectatorship) by which we engage with them. It is argued that this approach is in keeping with the notion of Surrealism as a form of research conducted by artist-researchers, wherein the artworks created are not to be viewed in aesthetic terms but rather as research tools or documents of the research.

Following the discussion of the case study films I engage with my own practice in relation to the former, as a series of interlocking dialogues, confirming and challenging the findings of the written thesis (and practice), offering new perspectives on gender identity in Surrealist film.

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Appendix.....Inner Back Flap

In this chapter I list the various materials that make up my practice. The practice materials were created between 2007 and 2012, consisting of the following:

Film

The Dream Key Cycle, consisting of:

The Dream Key 1 (becomings) (HD Video, 2010, 23 minutes).

The Dream Key 2(crossings) (HD Video, 2011, 23 minutes).

The Dream Key 3 (eclipse) (HD Video, 2012, 23 minutes).

Collage

The Transformation Series, consisting of:

Immaculate Conception, Mixed media on cardboard, 20 x 15

Beyond the Veil, Mixed media on cardboard, 17 x 15

The Birth of Venus, Mixed media on cardboard, 17 x 14

Smile, Mixed media on cardboard, 17 x 14

The Meeting, Mixed media on cardboard, 14 x 14

The Ceremony, Mixed media on cardboard, 17 x 14

The Friends, Mixed media on cardboard, 15 x 17

Present Trauma, Mixed media on cardboard, 19 x 14

At the Birth of the Androgyne, Mixed media on cardboard, 15 x 17

Dream, Mixed media on cardboard, 15 x 14

Ascent, Mixed media on cardboard, 15 x 14

Evolution, Mixed media on cardboard, 17 x 16

Forbidden Games, Mixed media on cardboard, 14 x 14

Butterfly Masque, Mixed media on cardboard, 15 x 13

The Cathedral Doors - Unmasked, Mixed media on cardboard, 15 x 14

Convulsive Cinema, Mixed media on cardboard, 9 x 7

Alchemy Board Mixed media on cardboard, 24 x 20

Assemblage

i) *Transformation Cabinet 1*, Mixed media in a cabinet, 33 x 15

ii) *Transformation Cabinet 2*, Mixed media in a cabinet, 32 x 14

I also created DVD commentaries for each film (with the input of myself, as writer/director/actor and Paul Cousins, as cinematographer/editor/composer/actor) and there are interviews with the main cast members: Louise Tyrell, Trefor Jones, and Megan Jones.

Introduction: Real dreams beyond the border: towards a Surrealist film practice

To exorcise the dualist curse has always been a first priority of surrealists [...] such a confrontation with the binary medusa subverts petrified notions of gender (Rosemont 1998: 462).

And even if there are only two terms, there is an AND between the two, which is neither the one nor the other, nor the one which becomes the other, but which constitutes the multiplicity. This is why it is always possible to undo dualisms from the inside (Deleuze and Parnet 2006: 26).

1. Objectives

The main aim of this research is to provide an analysis of the representation of gender identity in Surrealist film, that both recognises and builds on current developments in this area but also takes the radical step of utilising a practice-based approach, which, it is argued, is seen as a more authentic methodology and in line with the notion of Surrealism as a form of research conducted by artist-researchers. It is contended that the notion of 'transformation' is central to a mapping and remapping of the spaces, (supposed) limits and frontiers of Surrealist notions of gender identity. Through textual analysis of three films - that will both broaden and challenge the notion of a (fixed) Surrealist film canon - my research considers in particular how Surrealist cinema has actively engaged with representations of men and women: problematising any single or unitary (fixed) construction of gender by blurring boundaries between masculine and feminine and considering these categories in terms of process or flux, with the ultimate aim of criticising a society that encourages the positioning of men and women according to (binarised) patriarchal discourses.

I also examine the implications of these gender crossings for the spectator through my own theory of 'bisexual switching', which posits a mobile spectator who actively negotiates the various (gender) positions and identities in a dialogue with the text / film maker.

A body of original practical work (film, collage and assemblage) builds on the theoretical insights of the research, exploring in practical terms the notion of gender crossings as well as providing a dialogical parallel, intersecting with the arguments and findings of the thesis.

Practice is understood here as a dynamic, integral part of the production of meaning, providing new ways of reflecting upon texts and the processes (such as spectatorship) by which we engage with them.

Through the creation of film, collage and assemblage it is my intention to show in a practical sense how it is possible to re-map the limits and boundaries of gendered space and identity, problematising and challenging any simple binarised definition of what it is to be or read as a woman / man. Both collage and film are particularly suited to articulating this remapping. As Elza Adamowicz (2005: 129-30) writes:

In dada / surrealist practice, the filmic medium is a privileged medium for staging such ambivalent identities, in its shifting signifiers, dissolves, diegetic disruptions or optical tricks that make bodies merge or explode, multiply or disintegrate, reify or resuscitate, denying the stability of the body as a distinct(ive) unity.

Assemblage offers particularly rich possibilities as a medium for transformation and contributing to the enlargement of our conception of reality (surreality) because, as Johanna Malt (2004: 87), for example, observes, the Surrealist object 'uses pre-existing real objects with their own form, and reconfigures them [...] it also contributes to the uncanny power [...] which often estranges the already familiar'. Crucially, my approach seeks to extend the notion of Surrealism as (a form of) research and knowledge and to view the Surrealists as a research community, akin to scientists involved in experiments, investigations and enquiries, whose

various artworks are recognised as both research methods and as the outcomes or products of their researches. It should also be noted that practice-as-research is wedded to a political and revolutionary programme. Taken together these elements of research and revolutionary activity are seen as complementary and in fact dove-tail to such an extent that they become synonymous with each other so that the term 'Surrealist research' embodies both. Indeed, both elements / activities are dedicated to the-imagining and transformation of the self and everyday life through involvement in or by exposure to such research. Although I am not the first to note this connection (see Harris 2004, Adamson 2007 and Kadri 2011, for example), as far as I am aware, it is the first PhD to explore this association through a practice-based research model.

To this end the various elements that make up the practice are to be understood as both products and research methods (process) of this thesis, engaging with the research questions in an experiential, sensuous and aesthetic sense as well as confirming, challenging or problematising the research findings in the written thesis. This approach recognises that theory and practice are equal partners in a dialogue, mirroring the notion of transformation and border-crossing that is at the heart of this thesis, so that theory and practice constantly cross over, switch between and dissolve into one another. In chapter 4 I consider this approach in some detail.

2 Key Concepts: Transformation, Bisexuality, Fantasy

a) Transformation and Surrealist Film

Transformation, then, can be seen as a key point of intersection in this research and deeply imbricated in Surrealist praxis: figured both externally - as the transformation of social reality, and internally - as the transformation of subjective reality (dreams and the imaginary). But it is only in the dynamic interplay (dialectically) between the two that Surrealism properly functions, combining Marx's 'the transformation of the world' and Freud's 'royal road

to the unconscious', to which we should also add Rimbaud's demand to 'change life'. Indeed, transformation is linked with a 'total liberation of the mind' as well as revolution:

'Revolution... Revolution... Realism is the pruning of trees, surrealism is the pruning of life' (*La Révolution surréaliste*, No1, December 1924).¹ Surrealism sought to transform life by forging an alternative conception of reality, not only through the dialectical model already mentioned but in transforming one's vision, and therefore to be able to see the world and reality anew with the 'savage' eye' that Breton (2002: 1) speaks of in the opening line of *Surrealism and Painting* (1928).

Various methods were needed to elicit the longed-for transformation and liberation. Breton's (1990a:20) championing of Pierre Reverdy's aesthetic in the first manifesto (1924) which outlined the disorienting effects (*dépaysement*) involved in the creation of an image, born from the 'juxtaposition of two more or less distant realities', became a cornerstone of Surrealism. In terms of cinema, as I demonstrate in the following chapters, in order to experience *dépaysement*, leading to transformation and liberation, the spectator requires a certain film syntax to connect the disparate images together and in particular, what Robert Short (2003: 29) usefully refers to as 'a narrative scaffolding', as well as miscellaneous other 'semanticising' structures' which work together to draw the spectator into the film. At the same time, though, the spectator must be able to question and reflect on the experience - if transformation is to occur - switching between the fantasy world of the film and their own position in everyday reality in a dynamic, fluid interplay.

Breton's 'capillary thread' analogy in *Communicating Vessels* (1932), gives substance to this sense of transformation-as-fluidity: the role of this thread is in linking the external world of social reality with the interior world of the mind and to guarantee the constant dialectical exchange in thought that exists between these worlds. What is emphasised here more than

¹ Cited in Waldberg (1978:48).

ever, is the importance of action, thought and imagination, and an active engagement with everyday reality in the constant exchange between dream and reality.

Much has been written about film being the ideal vehicle for the analysis and dissemination of Surrealist ideas, including by the Surrealists themselves and Surrealism's critics (discussed below). In particular the turn towards a visual poetics of the image coincides with and is nourished by the Surrealists' experiences with photography and cinema, which were still relatively new art forms, in the years leading up to the inception of the Surrealist movement in the 1920s. Breton (1989: 7) for example, as early as 1921, refers to photography as contributing significantly to the death of 'the old modes of expression' (associated with literature and painting), as well as to cinema's 'power to disorient', but also its parallels with the dream state, visualising unconscious desire and bridging dream and reality.²

The importance of 'the internal model' expounded by Breton (2002: 4) in *Surrealism and Painting* (1928) is taken up again in his 'Surrealist Situation of the Object' (1935) where he discusses photography and film, suggesting that they are best utilised when they are 'liberated from the need to reproduce forms essentially taken from the outside world' in favour of 'inner representation, *the image present to the mind*' (1990: 261). This relation is referred to as '*the necessity of expressing inner perception visually*' (1990a: 272).³ What is crucial to grasp here is that photography and above all film are able to record and capture reality in such a convincing way (and in a superior manner to painting and earlier forms) that they give the impression of something authentic but are in fact actually *representations*, whereas what is needed is to dialectically reconcile 'the two terms - perception and representation' and seek to throw 'a bridge over the abyss that separated them' (Breton 1990a: 278). In fact this confusing

² Philippe Soupault, for example, points out that 'the cinema was for us an immense discovery at the moment when we were elaborating Surrealism' (Mabire 1965: 29).

³ Artaud (1930), for example, expresses this in similar terms, in relation to cinema, which 'is made primarily to express matters of the mind, the inner consciousness' (1999: 66).

relationship between the two is to be welcomed as it offers greater potential for shock and transformation. As Linda Williams (1981: 42) aptly puts it:

The Surrealist's delight in the paradox of a medium that could provide so convincing an illusion of reality – the projected illusion of a presence that is radically absent - is thus based upon the potential rupture of these illusions. Surrealist film dramatises the human subject's relation to the image by working against the lure of the imaginary, revealing the misrecognition of identification rather than, as in fiction film, reproducing its effect in the spectator.

b) Bisexuality

Central to my research then is the notion of the *transformative* effect of the film in terms of gender transformation. It will be argued that a key element in understanding how gender identity is fabricated relates to the notion of 'bisexual switching'. Briefly, it is suggested that the spectator - regardless of 'her' / 'his' sex, gender or sexuality - is encouraged to 'switch' between shifting subject positions and multiple points of identifications and this thesis considers this to be a defining factor in not only understanding but in challenging and undoing binarised notions of gender identity. The idea of a unitary, fixed and stable gender identity is replaced by a multiple, nomadic, fluid and serial identity that is in a perpetual state of becoming and transformation.

This notion of fluidity can be pictured as a triangular or circular model of production and reception, between producer(s), text and reader, in a kind of dialogue. Utilising this dialogical approach means considering the various relationships between text and characters, text and producer, and text and spectator as identified above. Firstly, I examine the relationship between the producer of the text and their representations (the character/s), examining how these representations are linked to the producer's own gender identity, or rather to what extent the producer explores his or her own gender identity through these representations, switching

between different levels of fantasy and reality and in so doing, indulging and critiquing, transforming and liberating him / herself in the process. As we shall see with Joseph Cornell, for example, in the discussion of *Rose Hobart*, his gender identity switches dramatically back and forth between a desire *for* the actress of the title and a desire *to be* her. Secondly, we must also consider the relationship between the characters in the text and how their interaction with each other produces gender identity. This entails paying close attention to the ways in which this is figured through such textual factors as *mise-en-scène*, cinematography, sound and editing. For example the characters in Buñuel and Dalí's *Un Chien andalou* constantly switch between and blur the borders of gender identity and even characterisation, subverting any unitary or unique sense of individuation. Thirdly, we must consider the relationship between the characters and the spectator, which I consider to be the most important of the three. In this case we must be clear that spectatorship of the films is dependent on the contextual factors unique to each spectator, including, for example, age, sex, race, when and where the film was seen and other factors which may affect our readings. This research considers a range of critical responses to the films and the complex issue of how we measure the effects of a Surrealist film (or any film for that matter) on spectators.⁴ I focus rather on the *potential* for transformation and liberation, in all three films under discussion, and more precisely, I examine their exploration of *gender transformation*.

The theory of bisexual spectatorship draws on Freud's (2001a: 141) theory of the subject's 'original bisexual disposition' and his notion of the pre-Oedipal child, whose gender identity and sexuality / object choice, regardless of anatomical differences, is not fixed but fluid and

⁴ For example, in the case of *Un Chien andalou* Buñuel's expectation that the audience would be so upset or moved by what they had seen that they would launch a series of attacks on the oppressive and repressive forces in society (the state, the army and religion) which have created and maintained this state of affairs never comes to fruition in his eyes. This was not the case for his second film *L'Age d'or* (1930). Not only was there actual violence within the first month of it being shown at Studio 28, in Paris, there was also a prolonged press campaign against the film's subversive tendencies (mainly its blasphemous imagery) and even some small-scale riots in the streets, resulting in the eventual banning of the film for 50 years! See Aranda (1976: 70-74) or Baxter (1994: 117-21).

able to switch between, in D. N. Rodowick's words, a 'variety of fluctuating configurations in the ratios between masculine and feminine identifications within every individual' (1991: 47).

It is only with the demands of the Oedipus complex and castration (read patriarchy) that the heteronormative binaries attempt to delimit and fix the subject's gender and sexual object choice.⁵ Freud's difficulties in explaining what happens to our 'original bisexual predisposition' are complex and contradictory and are certainly related to his own heterosexist bias and the historical and cultural contexts in which he was writing. However, Freud's 'gender trouble' has left us with much that is useful for a bisexual reading, most notably the case studies, and in particular 'A Child is Being Beaten' (2001b [1919]).

Although the Oedipus complex is seen as the defining moment for the subject's gender identity, bisexuality is not dissipated or dissolved but, via repression, is banished to the unconscious. In Freud's (and later Laplanche and Pontalis') theories of phantasy we see how bisexuality 'returns' to disrupt and subvert the prohibitions of patriarchy, offering us a way out of the binary prison-house. As I will argue, such a project has enormous potential for film theory, and bisexual spectatorship in particular. The importance of other writings on bisexual spectatorship / bisexual epistemologies has helped shape my understanding of a theory of bisexual reading.⁶ In many ways more recent formulations of bisexuality - especially those associated with queer theory - see bisexuality as what Marjorie Garber (1999 : 138) refers to as 'a category that defeats categorisation', because of its 'ambiguous position between identities' (Daumer 1999: 159-60), and can produce what Maria Pramaggiore (1996: 3) calls 'radical discontinuities between an individual's sex acts and affectional choices, on the one

⁵ I am referring here to Freud's notion that the Oedipus Complex is a universal norm, which relates to patriarchal privilege that has developed from the incest prohibition but also the idea that the survival of the species is based on a division of the sexes into two. Indeed this view is essentially normative, influenced by Freud's own heterosexist bias and in fact contradicts much of the field work he conducted, including, for example, 'A child is being beaten' (2001b), which is seen as crucial to my own theory of bisexual switching. See Rodowick (1991) for a useful discussion of this contradiction.

⁶ See for example Bergstrom (1979), Modleski (1988), Studlar (1988), Rodowick (1991), Berenstein (1995), Garber (1995), Pramaggiore (1996).

hand, and her and his affirmed political identity on the other'. Indeed, Pramaggiore's comments on bisexual epistemologies reflect my own concern with a more fluid understanding of gender identity:

Bisexual epistemologies - ways of apprehending, organising, and intervening in the world that refuse one-to-one correspondences between sex acts and identity, between erotic objects and sexualities, between identification and desire – acknowledge fluid desires and their continual construction and deconstruction of the desiring subject (Pramaggiore 1996: 3).

My reading of Victor Turner's (1967) notion of liminality has also been influential in relation to this sense of fluidity and the 'in-between'; and has certainly helped shape my theory of bisexual switching. Turner speaks of transitional spaces or beings that are seen as 'betwixt and between all the recognised fixed points in space-time of structural classification' and 'are neither one thing nor another; or may be both; or neither here nor there; or may even be nowhere' (1967: 97). This transition is regarded as 'a process, a becoming [...] even a transformation' (1967: 94). Borders have no place here and all is process and flux.

As Judith Butler (2006) has convincingly argued, the borders that attempt to demarcate and fix sex, gender and sexuality for the desiring subject are ultimately illusory. However, failure to acknowledge or attend to their ideological underpinnings can lead to all kinds of 'gender trouble'. A key problem that she identifies is the sex / gender, nature / culture distinction, and suggests that 'this construct called 'sex' is as culturally constructed as gender; indeed [...] was already gender' (Butler 2006: 136). The idea that gender identity is unstable and constructed is at the heart of what I am proposing: Surrealist film exploits this potential both in the gender representations themselves (within the text) and for the spectator who is offered an array of conflicting positions. Butler offers us a way of thinking beyond the binary straitjacket that has dogged many Feminist theories of gender, using the notions of 'drag' and 'performativity' to highlight the constructed nature of gender representations, which are so many roles or

'copies'.

David Hopkins (2007) applies Butlerian notions to his study of Duchamp and those artists which Hopkins regards as continuing Duchamp's legacy of 'bi-gendering' and 'gender switching'. Hopkins associates Duchamp's use of drag, the signing of his works in the form of various identities and other strategies as a form of 'camp' irony and a deliberate subversion or challenge to conventional notions of male gendered identity. Hopkins attempts to bring out the humour and sense of play (with a nod to Butlerian performativity), which he sees at the heart of Duchamp's enterprise, explaining it as a kind of 'gender troubling'. He steers clear from simply adopting an either (feminine) / or (masculine) position on the one hand, or an androgynous blurring or synthesis, on the other, in his attempt to preserve the notion that Duchamp never loses sight of his masculinity in favour of its opposite or the pursuit of some new (better?) position. However, Duchamp's strategies end up becoming one-dimensional because of Hopkins' desire to read them through the lens of a subversive male poetics.

Switching from one gender position to another is never so clear-cut. What Hopkins' approach denies is any dynamic sense of dialectical, or dialogical change as well as any other combination of positions or potentiality suggested by a borderland position of liminality *between* both positions, allowing for a more subversive approach to gender and agency. In terms of bisexual switching I suggest that it applies mainly to the relationship between text and spectator and the ability of the subject to switch between various aspects of their gender identity (incorporating masculine and feminine aspects) in their encounter with filmic texts. Moreover, Surrealist films encourage a fantasy of identification with the protagonists but also challenge and subvert these relations, releasing the spectator from the fantasy to inhabit a critical position of reflection, interpretation and potential transformation. It is to the crucial role of fantasy I now turn.

c) *Fantasy, Film and Surrealism*

Central to these notions and uniting all of them is Freud's notion of phantasy (or fantasy), which is reinterpreted by Laplanche and Pontalis (1986 and 2006).⁷ In James Donald's (1986: 136) words, it is seen as an 'organising force both within psychic life and within a variety of cultural forms [...] as well as films'. A key point of reference here is Freud's 'A child is being beaten' (2001b) which is seen as evidence of such an approach, making it clear that both the sex of the person doing the beating, and the child who is beaten, oscillate or switch in the different stages of the fantasy.⁸ This scene contains a lack of 'fixity', or rather a 'mobility' of identification in a 'desubjectivised form'.

Phantasy encapsulates three main primal fantasies, which Freud saw as fundamental to us all because of their bearing on our origins: the fantasy of seduction concerns the origin of sexuality; the 'primal scene' relates to the origin of the individual; and the fantasy of castration is the origin of sexual difference. Bound up with these various fantasies is an ambivalent combination of trauma and wish-fulfilment that is complex because of the myriad ways in which the subject is caught up in the sequence of signs associated with the particular fantasy. This latter aspect is important because the subject is seen as not simply pursuing the desired object or its sign and may not even be present as a 'protagonist' nor identify with one of the actors in the scene. It must be added that Freud posited an overlap between conscious and unconscious fantasies, relating them analogously to each other as well as seeing the transitions between them.

⁷ The German term *phantasy* as opposed to *fantasy* has the added connotations of the world of the imagination. For a more detailed account see Laplanche and Pontalis (2006: 314-315).

⁸ For a superlative discussion of this important essay see Rodowick (1991: 70-84) but also see Berenstein (1997: 264, note 23).

It is essential to realise that the spectator and the producer switch between positions of passivity and activity, at times as actors inscribed within the fantasy and at other times as observers 'looking on'. This relationship is obviously more complex than my outline relates as it is constantly shifting between these realms and is dependent on the conflicting mechanisms of desires and identifications, linked to structures and figures of narcissism, voyeurism, sadism, masochism, fetishism and so on which are different for each individual. Of key importance is the idea that these scenes have all the characteristics of real events but are in fact fantasies, hence their ability to be traumatic or pleasurable for the subject. This paradoxical play of fantasy and reality and the specifically visual dimension of these scenes render them particularly useful in relation to films. The film (as-fantasy) is seen as staging a *mise-en-scène* of desire for the spectator through its narrative operations and other filmic structures (point of view, editing and so on). The spectator, like the subject of the fantasies, is not only caught between an internal, textual psychological realm of the film, but also social and cultural factors, external to the film (which s/he brings to them).

As I have argued, much has been made of the analogy between Surrealist film and dreams but it is perhaps more useful to focus on the role of the film text as fantasy –which, of, course is related to dreams (the reverie or waking dream, especially) – but accentuates the subject's *conscious* awareness of his / her relations with and positions within the fantasy, and hence, his / her *active* engagement in this process.⁹ It is as a result of this negotiation (based on disavowal: 'I know it's not real but...') between the (internal) world of the text (diegesis) and the (external) world of the subject(-in-process) that the subject emerges. Goudal's (1978) essay 'Surrealism and cinema' (1925) is particularly relevant here as he speaks of cinema as a 'conscious hallucination': it is the ideal vehicle for 'uniting the conscious and the unconscious on the same plane' (1978: 51). Goudal makes the point that surreality is attained through

⁹ From now on I refer to this relationship between the film text and fantasy, simply as *film-fantasy*.

those mechanisms specific to cinema, 'by its very technique'. Cinema, for Goudal, has the ability to evoke 'the illusion of reality by means of a simulacrum of a uniquely visual kind. An actual hallucination is needed here which the other conditions of cinema tend to reinforce' (1978: 52). Antonin Artaud (1999: 66), too, advocates a cinema which 'must come closer and closer to fantasy, to a fantasy which appears ever more real, or else it does not exist'.

What must be emphasised - a point developed by Breton (1978) in his essay 'As in a wood' - is the crucial role played by the spectator, who takes an active role in the film-fantasy, and who appears to cross the bridge (to the fantasy) so to speak, but retains a conscious awareness of the crossing and must not lose sight of the world outside the film-fantasy. Breton (1978: 44-45) suggests that this might take the form of reading against the grain of 'the 'lesson' that the film teaches' but also accords with the practice of cinema-going adopted by Breton and the Paris Surrealists which parallels the process of fantasy, in the way in which the subject actively engages in the fantasy. What is more 'new' fantasies can be created after the screening, from memory and reverie, linking the various fragments from the different films seen, rather like a moving collage.

3. Critical Review

a) Writings on Surrealist Film

I wish now to return to the important question of what constitutes a Surrealist film and consider some of the key writings relevant to this research as well as exploring the rationale behind my own choice of corpus. Surrealist writings on film can be categorised as those writing from 'inside' Surrealism i.e. those who belong to or are closely affiliated with Surrealists (past and present) or actively engaging with Surrealist ideas through their work. These include the early Surrealist writings of the 1920s and 1930s by Aragon, Desnos,

Artaud, Soupault, Dalí, Peret, and others; as well as later writings, most notably in the 1950s and 1960s, by Breton (1951), Benayoun (1951) Marien (1951), Kyrou (1953), Brunius (1954), and others.¹⁰

There is a widespread belief that being 'inside' leads to a form of partisan or subjective writing, which is not truly critical or distanced, but is celebratory or poetic in the sense that almost any film can be considered Surrealist; and conversely, being 'outside' is often seen as being detached or misunderstanding Surrealism's revolutionary political and philosophical aspects and viewing it historically as a movement that is one among the many (modern) 'isms', which was largely bound by time (the 1920s and 1930s) and place (Paris). The 'natural' next step is to then consider the texts produced by the card-carrying members of the Surrealist movement and attempt to define a Surrealist film practice that conforms to certain theoretical, formal and stylistic properties in line with Surrealist principles and ideas. Whilst it is important to construct a valid and useful methodology for analysing those films classed as 'Surrealist', the dangers inherent in being too narrow as well as too broad in the criteria employed in making such a judgement have been well documented. Matthews (1971), Gould (1976), Richardson (2006) and many of the authors featured in Harper and Stone's book (2007) for instance, adopt a broader approach, more in keeping with those from 'inside' Surrealism.

It is important to consider the advantages and disadvantages of both approaches as it will enable us to come closer to a better understanding of and forge a critical methodology for considering what is a Surrealist film. The title of Michael Richardson's *Surrealism and Cinema* is instructive, evoking Breton's own approach in *Surrealism and Painting*: a deliberate attempt to avoid a strict pigeon-holing of what a Surrealist painting or film is

¹⁰ These writings are collected in Hammond (1978 and 2000); see also Abel (1993).

according to when or where it was made and who made it. In fact Richardson (2006: 6) goes as far as to declare:

If a film could be viewed as surrealist under certain conditions, this did not make this or that film a 'surrealist' one. In fact there is no such thing as a 'surrealist film'. There are only films made by surrealists and films that have an affinity or correspondence with surrealism, as well as those that have no affinity with surrealism.

Richardson (2006: 3) is keen to avoid defining a Surrealist film aesthetically or generically, via formal properties, style or themes, which 'goes against the very essence of surrealism, which refuses to be *here* but is always *elsewhere*'. His overall strategy is, by his own admission, broad, eschewing the historical approach, exemplified by J. H. Matthews (1971) for example, in favour of a broader perspective and more dynamic system (2006: 7). This is reflected in the selection of filmmakers and films from different eras, connected by their individual engagement with Surrealism and not linked to its linear, diachronic history. Thus directors such as Walerian Borowczyk, Alejandro Jodorowsky and Raul Ruiz appear alongside Buñuel or Jan Švankmajer, despite the former film makers not being directly involved in the Surrealist movement. However, their films are shown to have engaged with Surrealism in various ways. As Richardson (2006:10) explains: 'This [involvement] may be direct (through involvement in collective surrealist activity), indirect (through an active involvement, at a distance, with surrealist ideas) or involuntary (a surrealist intention may be discerned in the film unbeknownst to the film maker)'. Richardson's approach echoes the writings on film by Surrealists or the 'See' / 'Don't See' list of film makers suggested by the French Surrealist Group (1951).

Indeed, the original Surrealist group discerned an engagement with Surrealist ideas in the unlikeliest of places: Hollywood silent comedies, thrillers and horror films, as well as pulp serials like Victorin Jasset's *Nick Carter* (1908-1909) and Feuillade's *Fantomas* (1913-14).

Robert Desnos (1978: 37), for instance, talks of 'the real revolutionary films' being: Eisenstein's *Battleship Potemkin* (1925-26), Chaplin's *The Gold Rush* (1925), Stroheim's *The Wedding March* (1925) and (again) Buñuel and Dalí's *Un Chien andalou* (1929). Almost ten years later there were more concerted attempts to draw up a list of 'the main surrealist films' such as those that appeared in *Dictionnaire abrégé du Surréalisme*, edited by Breton and Eluard (1938), which included Man Ray's *Emak Bakia* and *L'Etoile de Mer* (1928), Duchamp's *Anemic cinema* (1925), Hugnet's *La Perle* (1929), and Buñuel and Dalí's *Un Chien andalou* (1929) and *L'Age d'or* (1930). In many ways this notion of a 'canon' of Surrealist cinema, drawn from those film makers directly involved in the movement does not reflect Surrealist practice, which engaged with Surrealism in a much wider range of films including those by non-Surrealists. My own selection of films reflects this broader approach.¹¹

The focus on film's ability to mimic the dream was an important area of debate in the earliest Surrealist writings and certainly influenced later critics in their attempts to define Surrealist film. Indeed, as Fotiade (1998: 111) remarks, it was 'the insistence on the ability offered by the new medium to "visualise dreams", to bridge reality and imagination,' that is crucial to the formulation of a Surrealist film practice, and which we witness in the various scripts and writings on film by the Surrealists themselves, in their search for a new cinematographic equivalent to dream.

Phil Powrie (1998) has provided a remarkably useful overview of the criticism on Surrealist film, tracing its various currents and suggesting that it is only with the

¹¹ As I argue later, Man Ray's *Emak Bakia* and even Duchamp's *Anemic Cinema*, could actually be seen as non-Surrealist films because of their abstract and non-narrative qualities which aligns them more with avant garde or experimental cinema rather than Surrealism. Various critics suggest fluctuations in the listings of Surrealist films based on bolstering a perceived lack of 'truly representative Surrealist productions' by including films originally regarded as non-Surrealist (Fotiade 2007: 15) but also because of 'personal disputes and conjunctural strategies' (Adamowicz 2001: 19). See also my conclusion.

advent of critics such as Linda Williams (1976 and 1981) and Philip Drummond (1977) and the appearance of various film theories (semiotics, Lacanian psychoanalysis, deconstruction, feminism and spectatorship theories, inspired by Christian Metz) as well as the growth of film studies as a discipline, that a more objective, critical and rigorous approach appears. However, this means that the earlier broader, poetic approach of those 'inside' or sympathetic to Surrealism narrows to include only those films made by Surrealists. Therefore, although the analysis of these films is perhaps more rigorous, Surrealist film becomes synonymous with the Surrealist movement and in most cases this is largely focused around the first Surrealist group and bound by time, usually ending with Breton's death.

Throughout the 1980s and up to the present this conception of a historical Surrealism threatens to close off any notion of Surrealism as ongoing and dynamic. The *Surrealism and Cinema* issue of *Screen* (1998) continues this trend, although Fotiade (1998: 122) remarks that 'post-modern cinema has recycled prominent surrealist motifs' and cites Beineix's *Betty Blue* (1986) as an example of 'the possible re-evaluation of surrealist themes and motifs'. Wendy Everett (1998: 141) also picks up this idea of 'influence' with regard to 'very few European directors who have not at some point acknowledged their personal debt to the movement', as well as American directors like David Lynch. More recently Short (2003: 177) makes a case for the continuing legacy of Surrealism in the films of Borowczyk, Švankmajer and, Resnais, seeing 'surrealist ideas [...] filtered' into their films; as well as American independents such as Deren and Anger, whose work display a 'surrealist spirit' but also those in American mainstream cinema, such as Lynch, Gilliam and Burton.

In my view Surrealism is dynamic, reflecting an ongoing dialogue with the past and continuing into the present and thereby challenges the notion of 'legacy', which implies a discontinuity or a break with the 'original' Surrealist group or (authentic) Surrealism. Perhaps 'contemporary Surrealism' maintains a sense of this dialogue but it would be more accurate to

simply use the term 'Surrealist'. My own understanding of how we define a Surrealist film is informed by my engagement with Surrealism: as a Surrealist film-maker, affiliated with the London Surrealist Group and also as an academic. It is my contention that the two critical positions outlined above, far from being contradictory or incompatible, are in fact duplicating the dialogical model, utilised by Surrealists past and present, as artist-researchers; creating, reading and discussing the texts they make and those of others. A Surrealist film is thus recognised to the degree in which the film engages with Surrealist ideas - regardless of whether the maker/s of the film either consciously or unconsciously intended this - or whether the maker/s are affiliated with a Surrealist group.

b) Gender in Surrealism

To date there has been scant explicit discussion of gender identity in surrealist cinema. Although there has been related work in this area via the discussion of male and female desire - Williams (1981), Paul Sandro (1987) and Peter Evans (1995) - this is focused exclusively on Buñuel and does not really examine the ideological implications of these films for the spectator. Linda Williams's (1981), study is particularly illuminating, with her detailed analyses of *Un Chien andalou*, *L'Age d'or* (1930), *The Phantom of liberty* (1974) and *That Obscure Object of Desire* (1977). Her adherence to a Lacanian model of desire provides some remarkably rich observations on male and female desire.¹²

Ramona Fotiade (1998) has noted the paucity of material on gender representation, putting forward J. H. Matthews (his commentaries on Buñuel's films after the 1930s) and Williams as two valuable exceptions. Fotiade (1998: 121) also remarks on the collection of essays edited

¹² However, in a later article Williams (1987: 205) argues against the wholesale adoption of a specific approach (Lacanian or otherwise), which 'posits an ultimately static statement of meaning that it has been the work of the Buñuelian cinema to perpetually evade. It tries to pin down –or sew up – that meaning in a critical statement that only sees its own theoretical reflection in images that may be most remarkable for their moments of genuine undecidability'.

by Mary Ann Caws, Rudolf Kuenzli and Gwen Raaberg (1991) which she describes as an 'original contribution' to debates on gender and especially the work of female Surrealist artists, but 'completely eludes equally relevant aspects of Surrealist and Dadaist films that illuminate the complex interaction between male and female representations and desires'. An important contribution to gender studies and Surrealist cinema, 'Bodies Cut and Dissolved: Dada and Surrealist film' (2005) by Adamowicz is significant in extending the debate beyond the films of Buñuel to take in a wider corpus of work, but this still only covers those films from the 1920s and 1930s. However, this valuable chapter does point the way for a discussion of gender identity which, crucially, moves away from the commonly held view, by Gauthier (1971), Chadwick (1991), Caws (1993) and Kuenzli (1993), for instance (discussed below), which maintains a binarised view of representations of sexual difference, positing an active, aggressive, frequently misogynistic masculinity against a passive, often victimised, submissive femininity. Adamowicz (2005: 29) refuses to adopt such a polarised and simplified subject position, noting that Dada and Surrealist films, by their very nature, problematise any one such unified reading:

The fluid remappings of identity and the body in the shifting, often perverse images of the body incorporated in dada/surrealist film. Such unstable images problematise our reading of the surrealist film text. On the one hand, the couple composed of the male magical-cineaste and the female victim appears to invite complicitous projections of the masculine gaze and combative protests of the female spectator. On the other, the disruptive strategies encoded in surrealist film disorient perception, and elicit a reading grounded in a disruption of the symbolic order produced through the exploration of the transgressive body.

The key point is that we do not simply focus on the representations of women and men in the various Dada and Surrealist texts as if they 'contained' some (single) meaning; but rather to be aware that all texts and Surrealist film texts in particular often support antithetical readings. Such texts constantly oscillate between male and female positions in conflicting ways,

offering a multiplicity of subject positions for the spectator, that contradictorily 'both deny and exacerbate difference' (2005: 29). In this way, rather than replicating a patriarchal view of sexual difference these films force us to question such positions and our own relation to them. Adamowicz's (2010) analysis of *Un Chien andalou* and particularly the section 'Destabilising Gender Roles', build on her earlier approach, with Buñuel and Dalí's film providing an exemplary model of shifting and conflicting gender identities and progressive and regressive readings. Importantly, the film is considered in terms of its initial production and reception contexts (the 1920s and 1930s), as well as examining how subsequent audiences have received the film.

Writings on Surrealism and gender have tended almost exclusively, following Gauthier (1971), to focus on the representation of women in male surrealist art as frequently misogynistic. As Caws (1991: 15), paraphrasing Gauthier, states: 'In surrealist poetry, she says, women are loved, but in surrealist art, they are hated'. This view takes in the contradictory impulses to celebrate and venerate women as virgin, child, goddess, celestial creature, muse etc on the one hand, and as sorceress, erotic object, and femme fatale on the other. The often fragmented, dismembered, tortured and sexualised images of women in these texts function contradictorily as objects for male pleasure, hatred or fear, as Kuenzli (1993: 24) remarks:

Faced with the female figure, the male surrealist fears castration, fears the dissolution of his ego. In order to overcome his fears, he fetishises the female figure, he deforms, disfigures, manipulates her; he literally manhandles her in order to re-establish his own ego...

Robert Belton (1995: xxvi), echoing Kuenzli's argument, suggests that Rosalind Krauss (mistakenly) saw that the Surrealists' manipulations of photographs 'could be construed as proto-feminist tactics: by making linguistic play of the female form through doubling,

superimposition, and other darkroom techniques [...] they simply pointed out the fictitious nature of the construction of gender'.¹³ He goes on to say that we must learn to speak with 'forked tongues', conscious of and able to negotiate a position between our own methodologies and ideological discourses and those of the historical conditions of the works of the Surrealists. If we fail to do this, 'we may be giving our own horizon of expectations priority over the historical and material conditions which inflected the work to begin with' (1991: 60). However, it is clear in his writings that his own ideological position constantly intrudes – although in the guise of 'historical scholarship'. His conclusion makes this abundantly clear: 'Despite the centrality of *Woman* to the surrealist project, *women's* concerns were only given voice in a post-Surrealist phase' (1991: 273). It seems to me that the critics who posit such an exclusive view of the male Surrealists as misogynistic provide us with a limited and distorted view of Surrealism'.

Susan Suleiman (1990: 32) is ambivalent about what surrealism brought to its female adherents: on the one hand it provided 'both a nourishing environment in the form of group exhibitions and publications, and a genuine source of inspiration [...] It is also true, however, that since they were not present during the founding years of the movement, it is easier to relegate them to the status of 'minor elements'.⁵ According to Suleiman (1990: 26) a key strategy invoked by the female Surrealists was to create a very different imagery from the male Surrealists, portraying women as subjects rather than as objects, moving away from representations of the exposed female body. However, in a later essay, Suleiman (1998) puts a more positive gloss on the relationship between female and male surrealists, adopting the Bakhtinian notion of 'dialogue', seeing the relationship between the two as a dynamic engagement which has benefited both male and female surrealists. As regards the issue of the Surrealist use or misuse of the exposed female body, a number of female Surrealists utilised

¹³ The target of Belton and Kuenzli's criticism is Krauss (1986b).

this trope, among them Dorothea Tanning, Leonora Carrington, Toyen and Leonor Fini. I examine this trope in chapter 1 in my discussion of *Un Chien andalou* as well as in chapter 4 in relation to my first film *The Dream Key* (1). Krauss (1999: 18) addresses some of the concerns mentioned so far, replying to the accusations made by Caws, Kuenzli, Belton and Suleiman:

The idea of the gender specificity of the authorial subject, or rather the certainty that gender necessarily divides the population of authors such that the only way female artists could share a vision with male ones would be either through collusion with a male gaze or by means of an ironising, distancing resort to 'mimicry' – in which imitation is self-consciously performed as apotropaic gesture – is something I wish to contest [...] For in the matter of surrealism, and more specifically in the case of its photographic practice, I think that some of the most emblematic work of the movement – most emblematic in the sense of both of both most representative and most powerful – was done by women.

The point Krauss makes about gender specificity is crucial: this binarised thinking, supposedly dividing the author and reader alike, is very much a product of the methodologies brought to bear by critics and academics who, ironically, whilst attacking such gender divisions in their polemic, re-instate them through their wish to 'rescue' the female Surrealists for a one-dimensional feminism under the rubric of 'Women's Art'. In the same text, Krauss considers Surrealist gender as something fluid, multiple and often ambiguous. She illustrates this by way of discussing Claude Cahun. As Krauss points out, Cahun's photographs and statements blur the conventional lines of gender identity. In fact Cahun 'has come to stand for an engagement with the construction of both identity and gender, as well as an exploration of the labile condition of subjectivity, which many feminist writers find exemplary' (1999: 29). However, rather than seeing this as specifically feminist, Krauss (1999: 37) argues that Cahun is employing the same visual tropes and props to produce the same 'effects of disarticulation and rearticulation, or of fantasising and projection, as were employed by her

male colleagues'. Krauss debunks the idea that because these images are self-portraits and it is a woman projecting and returning the gaze, the central thesis of these images 'comes down to reclaiming agency for the female subject'. Ultimately, Krauss argues against the essentialism of those feminist supporters who claim figures like Cahun for their own, assigning meanings on the basis of sex and gender - and presumed authorial intentions.

Sidra Stich (1990: 137), like Krauss, adopts Bataillean notions (especially the 'informe') in order to bring out the complex and contradictory trajectories of gender identity, centred on Surrealist figures, especially those which focus on doubled, fragmented, decentred images of the body:

Surrealist figurations that emphasize transformation heighten the idea of change in terms of shifts, mergers, eruptions, reorientations, and disorientations in the shaping and identity of the body. But in many surrealist compositions the transformed, deformed, and unformed or formless also bear the prospect of the formative. In fact all are inseparable and simultaneous, albeit contradictory, possibilities.

Stich (1998: 51) suggests that to see these transformed bodies solely in relation to feminism is to deny their complexity. Moreover, Stich maintains that the focus on isolated gendered bodies is meant to raise questions about gender distinctions and the process of gender construction itself. Surrealist representations are seen as 'call[ing] attention to the issue of difference, rejecting a vision of unity that reduces everything to homogeneity and obliterates the realities and exoticism of otherness' (1998: 51).

Dawn Ades (2001: 171) also provides a much more thoughtful and balanced analysis of gender and Surrealism than Caws et al, seeing the 'tendency to reduce surrealism to a single voice and forget its complex and extra artistic character' as damaging. She notes that it should not be forgotten that 'questions of female creativity and the representation of women in surrealism are inseparable from its wider concerns about gender, and that male anxieties as

well as same sex desire are integral to them'. Further, she argues that Surrealism, through its various practices - its 'troubling of gender identity' – has opened up 'the possibility of a different view of human relations and the potential of radically new forms of expression'.

Alyce Mahon (2005: 19) suggests that Surrealist representations of women are not romantic or misogynistic, but rather 'celebrate the erotic power of the female body and the uncanny power of the feminine in us all'. They are not to be understood in 'essentialist terms, as a characteristic assigned to biological identity, but as the opposite of traditional, masculine characteristics and ideals (patriotism, rationalism, order etc)'. She cites Breton's comments in *Arcane 17* (1944) 'It rests with the artist to make visible everything that is part of the feminine, as opposed to the masculine, system of the world' (2005: 18).

Over the past few years publications dealing with gender identity have flourished, reflecting a move away from the earlier essentialist positions, in favour of a more fluid remapping of gender, by way of various post-modernist / post-feminist approaches; and, especially Judith Butler and Eve Sedgwick's hugely influential 'queer' theories. Crucially, this has focused on a dynamic interplay *between* text and reader rather than at the level of the representations within the text. At the same time there has also been a return to a closer scrutiny of the writings of Breton and others, adopting a more historicist approach, situating the representations contextually; as well as hybrids of both approaches. Amy Lyford (2007), is a good example of the first of these approaches. She constructs a convincing argument to suggest that Surrealist artists in France were both products of their time (influenced by the aftermath of the Great War', contemporary science, advertising, sexology and so on), but also appropriated its discourses in order to critique and undermine society. According to Lyford, the charge that the violent, disturbing and ambiguous representations of women they produced are simply misogynist or portray a passivity misses the fact that many often reveal

an anxious, ambivalent and perverse masculinity which problematises or deconstructs male mastery.

Natalya Lusty (2007) is an example of the second type of approach mentioned above, reflecting a dialogue between Surrealist ideas or theories, psychoanalysis and the various 'Feminisms' – particularly those of Riviere, Butler and Sedgwick. Lusty sees in Surrealism 'the radical other of Modernism', the seeds of a post-modern concern with performativity and gender identity. This is largely through the radical questioning of gender identity and self-representation via the works of Cahun, Carrington and Cindy Sherman, and a more ironic, post-modern questioning mode of inquiry. Lusty (2007: 2) however, is keen to point out the dangers of reading such figures ahistorically, particularly in her linking of Cahun with queer theory. This means that the ambiguity of Surrealism's appropriation of 'the feminine' (as both inspiration / liberation and threatening 'other') is pitted against Surrealist women's own experience of working 'inside' and 'outside' Surrealism in a relationship of active participation and detached observation, 'establishing a structural dynamic of complicity and resistance, homage and critique [...] to many of the central tenets of Bretonian Surrealism', which counters the notion proposed by Chadwick and others of Surrealist women as politically naive or dependent on their male counterparts. The exploration of female identity and female agency, in particular, is what unites the various representations of women in the various texts considered by Lusty and are examined via a number of 'psychoanalytical surrealist' themes, such as narcissism, fantasy and the masquerade.

4. Film Corpus

The three films in my corpus, *Un Chien andalou* (1929) by Luis Buñuel and Salvador Dalí, *Rose Hobart* (1936) by Joseph Cornell, and Georges Franju's *Les Yeux sans visage* (1960), were chosen for a number of reasons. Above all I chose each film because of the ways in

which it engages with the ongoing Surrealist concern with the problematising of gender identity in pursuit of a transformation in the spectator. I demonstrate this engagement utilising the notion of bisexual switching with a different focus for each film. In *Un Chien andalou* I explore gender transformation within the text, examining how the characters constantly switch between, subvert, confirm and blur the borders between masculine and feminine. In *Rose Hobart* gender transformation hinges on the troubled relationship between text and author and is figured as a complex switching between Cornell's desire for and desire to be Rose Hobart. In *Les Yeux sans visage* I am interested in gender transformation at the level of text and spectator and how Christiane's gender crossings might influence the spectator's possible transformation or otherwise.

All three films engage with Surrealist ideas with varying degrees of consciousness. Although Buñuel and Dalí did not become members of the first Surrealist group until after *Un Chien andalou* was made, they were clearly already familiar with and consciously engaging with Surrealist ideas. *Un Chien andalou* is quite unique in the ways in which the characters constantly contest and subvert conventional notions of gender identity and I was interested in exploring this as a conscious attempt by its creators to challenge the social order. Cornell never became a member of any Surrealist group but was familiar with and was certainly influenced by his exposure to Surrealism via his reading, friendships with several of the Surrealists and participation in Surrealist exhibitions. It is not clear-cut whether his engagement with Surrealist notions of gender identity in *Rose Hobart* is conscious or otherwise but this gave me the opportunity to explore the relationship between gender identity and Surrealism differently. I was also interested in exploring the relationship between Cornell and Rose because it gave me the chance to examine transformation between author and text from another angle. The unique formal properties of the film - its collage aesthetic that recycles elements from melodrama, documentary and newsreels - also attracted me,

because they allowed me to explore how gender transformation might be possible in a non-narrative film, thus challenging the idea that without a semblance of narrative (suggesting a coherent reality) the spectator would not be drawn into the film-fantasy.

Franju was not a member of a Surrealist group either but was well-versed in Surrealist ideas and knew a number of the Surrealists. Like Cornell it is difficult to assess to what extent Franju consciously engages with Surrealist notions of gender identity in *Les Yeux sans visage*, but again I am in little doubt that the film deliberately challenges patriarchal social order for its part in controlling and manipulating a binarised notion of gender, leading to murder and hypocrisy. I was particularly interested in exploring how and in what ways this affects the spectator and also wished to examine the role of a predominantly realist narrative form in this process.

Taken together my choice of films reveals that Surrealist film practice - like Surrealist painting, photography and its other forms - is broad, fluid and diverse. At the same time I also invoke chronology in writing about the films in order of their creation, because *Un Chien andalou* represents a kind of *Ur-text* that each of the other films (as well as my own practice) is in dialogue with, particularly through the notion of cutting and transformation. This notion of a dialogue becomes more explicit in chapter 4, where I consider the ways in which the films engage with each other and with and through my practice.

5. Methodology

a) General

Drawing on a variety of theories, from Surrealism, psychoanalysis, feminism, gender studies, film studies and theories of spectatorship, I develop a methodology which provides a number of perspectives for understanding gender identity in Surrealist film. As already stated this

research combines two main approaches: research-led practice and practice-led research, that work in dialogue, as part of what Smith and Dean (2011: 19) refer to as the iterative cyclic web that is both process-driven and goal-oriented. This means that at various stages targets or goals emerge, ideas and hypotheses are generated, leading to analysis and evaluation of the various materials and their relation to the thesis.

More specifically these materials are understood as: 1) The theoretical and methodological framework of the research, 2) the three case-study films, 3) my film trilogy *The Dream Key* (including: DVD commentaries on each film and interviews with cast and crew), 4) collages and 5) assemblages. I consider these in more detail below:

1. **The theoretical and methodological framework** establishes the contexts, background and research methods for tackling the research questions, as outlined in this introduction and developed in each of the chapters.

2. The analyses and evaluations of the **case-study films** enable me to explore my hypotheses and gather data in relation to the research problems.

3. The creation of **films, commentaries** on each film (myself and my cinematographer / editor) and **interviews** with cast and crew, **collages** and **assemblages** serve two main functions: as research outcomes - products of the research - but also as research tools, engaging with the research problems from an array of different perspectives that allow one to experience knowledge differently (see appendix).

It is argued that this dialogical approach (combining theory and practice) is also a form of bricolage that includes: reflective practice, action research, grounded theory and participant observation, and each stage can be determined by or articulated through theory or practice and often both. This ability to move between theory and practice so that each becomes a partner in a dialogue allows a kind of *emergent research*, where elements of the written

research might lead to experimentation and the creation of a practice element or vice versa. This can lead to the analysis, testing, comparison and evaluation of data, arguments, and theories, potentially feeding in to further research. New insights, knowledge and understanding are associated with this multi-method approach. Importantly, this model is in keeping with the Surrealist model adopted by artist-researchers and also complements the idea of border-crossing and transformation at the heart of this research, with its crossing of methodological borders and propensity for experiment. Evaluation of the results of my research occurs at regular intervals – the introduction, the three case studies, the dialogues section of chapter 4, the commentaries, interviews and conclusion – which act as staging points for further reflection and the possibility of fresh research.

Utilising the iterative cyclic web paradigm has meant that my creation of the practice elements has occurred alongside or rather in dialogue with the written elements and each has influenced the other so that when I have been working on one of my films, for example, it has led to new insights or understanding, which I have been able to incorporate into the written element, and which can then lead to further insights, which are incorporated into the practice elements and so on. I consider various examples in detail in chapter four.¹⁴

b) Gender Theory / Feminist writings

In *The Kristeva Reader* (1986), Toril Moi provides a useful compendium of Julia Kristeva's work from different phases of her career with thoughtful introductions by Moi. Above all, her rigorous re-reading of Freud and Lacan and her positing of the notion of a subject-in-process has influenced my own understanding of subjectivity. The idea of trying to theorise the untheorisable 'chora' (and deconstruct subjectivity in the process) which has so much power to unsettle and escape the symbolic order, initially seemed attractive but there was always a danger that by escaping one form of (patriarchal) essentialism it would be replaced with

¹⁴ For an explanation of the iterative cyclic web paradigm see Smith and Dean (2011:19-25).

another (matriarchal essentialism).

However, Kristeva is aware of these contradictions and later, in *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* (1982), would find a more workable concept to unsettle subjectivity and difference. The most influential aspect of this fascinating book is in its ability to theorise subjectivity as incomplete, discontinuous, a process rather than a fixed structure. She challenges the Freudian and Lacanian notions of subjectivity, arguing that subjectivity never really stabilises and there is never any absolute distinction between subject and object. The subject remains always in process, forever trying to establish itself, pushing at its limits. The section 'clean and proper bodies' builds on this idea and our notions of subjectivity demarcated by 'inside' and 'outside' the body, are forever broken by the physical flows of sweat, tears, shit, vomit and so on that cross them, threatening to contaminate any stable idea of individual identity. The resulting loss of borders ushers in ambiguity, uncertainty and contradiction. My understanding of fluid identity and becoming owes something to this idea as well as the various analogies of 'crossing borders' in relation to gender identity and in particular Surrealist notions of gender identity.

Hélène Cixous has been extremely important to me in understanding how (patriarchal) ideology positions us through language and the binarisation of gender that associates women in (a negative) relation to man (phallogocentrism).¹⁵ Cixous's (1987: 85) notion of the 'other bisexuality' defined as 'the location within oneself of the presence of both sexes, evident and insistent in different ways according to the individual' has certainly influenced my theory of bisexual switching. Importantly, it is not a merging of genders or denying difference but playful, multiple, contradictory and fluid. Again, it acts as a challenge to dualistic thought and phallogocentrism.

¹⁵ I am thinking in particular of Cixous and Clement's *The Newly Born Woman* (1987).

Judith Butler's (2006) foregrounding of gender as culturally constructed and her strategies (performativity and drag, for example) for problematising the binarised treatment of gender, as we have seen, are important for my own 'troubling' of gender identity in Surrealist film. In *Bodies That Matter* (2010) Butler builds on her earlier work, focusing more on the materiality of the sexed body. She investigates how the regulatory norms of sex 'work in a performative fashion to constitute the materiality of bodies, and, more specifically, to materialise the body's sex' (2010: 20). In other words there is a shift from gender as a corporeal style to the (materialised) matter of the body through which gender is enacted. What is particularly interesting is Butler's focus on those bodies viewed as 'abject' or producing non-normative gender performances, allowing us to understand patriarchy's heterosexualising function, whereby 'abjected or deligitimated bodies fail to count as "bodies", and produces a domain of abject [gendered] beings, those who are not subjects, but who form the constitutive outside to the domain of the subject' (2010: 3). Just as these bodies fail to find their place or enact the role which patriarchy assigns them, the unstable gender representations of Surrealist film similarly cross the borders of gender, problematising and transforming our understanding of gender identity in the process.

Queer theory came as a revelation and helped me to refine my own attempts to rethink gender identity and the idea of crossing the boundaries of gender difference. It helped me to negotiate my own subversions of binarised thinking through the notions of masquerade and performativity. Certain aspects of queer theory, especially work on bisexuality, have been useful in further developing my own theory. Benshoff and Griffin's introduction to *Queer Cinema: The Film Reader* (2005: 1) demonstrates some valuable points of intersection: 'queer theory rejects essentialist or biological notions of gender and sexuality, and sees them instead as fluid and socially constructed positionalities'. Caroline Evans and Lorraine Gammans

(2005: 217) support this view in their excellent essay: 'Reviewing Queer Viewing' in the same volume:

Although we would argue against the idea of an essentially gay or lesbian gaze, we do not want to make the case for the "queer gaze" either. Rather, we want to make the case for identifications which are multiple, contradictory, shifting, oscillating, inconsistent, and fluid.

Despite the intersections between queer theory and Surrealism they remain distinct from each other and this was never more clear than in the controversy caused by the various events organised by The Centre for the Study of Surrealism and its Legacies in 2009 / 2010, that sought to bring these terms closer together, beginning with the *Seventh Annual PhD Symposium: Surrealism and Dissident Sexualities* (UEA 2009), *Querying Surrealism/Queering Surrealism* (West Dean 2010) and *Invocations and Evocations: Queer and Surreal* (Tate Modern 2010), a programme of films chosen to highlight affinities between Surrealism and queer theory. Each of these events, in different ways, served to create an artificially close link between Surrealism and queer theory that ended up misrepresenting both. I was particularly disturbed by the programme details for the films that ended up collapsing the distinctions between 'queer experimental cinema' and 'surrealist project' into 'queer surrealist films'. Although I gave a paper on Cornell at the first of the symposiums and fielded questions about the possible connections between Surrealism and queer theory, my impression was that these links were being established for a re-envisioning of Surrealism that centred upon what Švankmajer (2010) later referred to as 'a spurious distinction between "Bretonian orthodoxy" and "Surrealism itself"'.¹⁶ As Richardson and Fijalkowski (2001: 2) argue, Surrealism is not to be understood as a group of individuals coming together under Breton's (or any other individual for that matter) tutelage but rather should be seen as a

¹⁶ See Annie Le Brun (2008) for a spirited Surrealist response to the relationship between Surrealism and queer theory.

collective adventure, defined as 'a concentration of collective energy taking form through individual endeavour'. This is a subtle distinction and summed up in Masson's assertion that Surrealism is 'the collective experience of individualism'.

c) Spectatorship

Bisexual switching is considered a key theoretical tool in the analysis of gender identity and transformation in Surrealist film. It builds on previous research carried out in my MA in relation to *The X Files*, and has developed over the past six years as a result of extensive further research, notably in the field of spectatorship. Laura Mulvey's (1989) highly influential essay 'Visual pleasure and narrative cinema', which first appeared in 1976, has been crucial in not only focusing attention on issues not adequately addressed before (how men and women read and are positioned by their gender), but also providing a theoretical framework which has been adopted across a range of visual media. Despite some of its limitations - which have since been acknowledged by Mulvey, in her later essay *Visual and Other Pleasures* (1989) - the essay has opened up many possibilities for exploring how audiences read texts and providing a powerful set of tools to deconstruct and dismantle the ideological discourses of Master Discourse. Initially, one of the biggest issues was the limited range of subject positions offered to the 'actual' female spectator in the audience, namely identifying with the passive female characters on-screen or resisting her allotted role and forced to become masculinised and identify with the male protagonist. Mulvey's theory also paid little attention to the sexuality of the audience - particularly homosexuality and bisexuality - and also one's gender identity, and both of these could affect both object choices within the text and subject positions and issues of identification with the protagonists. It seemed to me that to focus primarily on a male or female gaze was too narrow and did not actually represent the complexities of spectatorship and the viewing subject which are far

more dynamic, switching between both (extreme) positions but also combining elements of each, suggesting a third (bisexual) position.

As Rodowick (1991) shows, many of those following Mulvey often misread Freud's highly complex and often contradictory binary distinctions between male and female, activity and passivity and so on, distorting a crucial aspect of Freud's theories. Above all it becomes clear that Freud's notion of the gendered subject (whether male or female) is ambivalent (to say the least!): activity, passivity, masculinity, femininity, exhibitionism, voyeurism, masochism and sadism are characterised by a mobility which is not fixed to a specific gender but is constantly in flux, blurring boundaries, confusing (binarised) gender identities. However, his deeply conservative attachment to a heterosexual conception of sexuality led him to constantly ignore or remodel (and certainly rethink and rewrite) his theories on sexuality and gender.

As we have seen a good deal of the writing on Surrealism which deals with gender identity often falls back too readily on the 'active male / passive female' position. This, as I will show, leads to a series of repetitive, reductive and damaging conclusions and tells us little about the individual reception or appreciation of the text or its creator. Those who have adopted Laura Mulvey's approach have often done so without taking into account some of the specific contexts of Mulvey's essay: the historical focus on classical Hollywood narrative cinema in the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s which, clearly, was an advanced practice of phallogentrism; or the various contexts which helped shape the writing of Mulvey's argument.

That said, several theorists have each reinterpreted aspects of Mulvey's theory in ways that have proved extremely useful for work on spectatorship. Stuart Hall's (1980) theories of reading: dominant / preferred reading, oppositional reading and negotiated reading, build on Mulvey's ideas and allow for a much more active spectator who may adopt the preferred meaning of the text but also might oppose this with an oppositional reading, reading against

the grain or may negotiate both of these positions and may agree with aspects of the preferred reading but be in opposition to some aspects. In many ways the spectator who negotiates texts is close to the mobile spectator I associate with bisexual switching in Surrealist texts because what is needed is the ability to immerse oneself in the world of the film-fantasy but also be able to extricate oneself in an active, critical mode.

Carol J Clover's (1993) work on slasher films provides compelling evidence of a mobile spectator who negotiates gender positions via 'cross gender identification', of males identifying with 'the final girl' as well as the predominantly male victims and killer. Again, this parallels the subject in Freud's 'A child is being beaten' where pleasure can be associated both with sadism and masochism depending upon who one identifies with in the beating scenario (read horror film). Christine Gledhill (1988) and Judith Mayne (1993) also discuss the merits of the mobile spectator who is able to negotiate different subject positions and identities, which they see as a way out of the early apparatus theory associated with Metz and Mulvey. However, this is not to suggest that each spectator has complete agency and is able to resist or oppose the ideological underpinnings of every text. It is a complex and difficult area but it certainly offers more flexibility than earlier theories.

Williams' *Figures of desire* (1981), like Mulvey's *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema*, also utilises Metz, Freud and Lacan in her examination of Surrealist film and the spectator, but in a far more satisfying way. She provides us with a more rigorous methodology and a clearer understanding of the films (predominantly those of Buñuel), and certain aspects of Surrealist cinema, especially the fascination of the early Surrealists with the film / dream analogy.

6 Summary of Chapters

Chapter 1 'Transforming gender and gender transformations in *Un Chien andalou*', Focusing on the 'dance of genders' sequence, where the protagonists appear to exchange gender attributes, I use this as a starting point to explore the fabrication and transformation of gender identity in Surrealist film in general and *Un Chien andalou* in particular. What interests me in this sequence is its playful and at the same time, potentially unsettling and upsetting deconstruction / blurring of gender identities. The notion of bisexual switching is utilised to demonstrate how this exchange or transformation operates as both a *crossing* and a kind of *becoming*. I also introduce the various notions of 'cutting' (literally, figuratively and via editing) which inform gender relations at many levels in this film as well as the other films discussed, relating as they do to fantasy, especially that of castration and seduction (and, to an extent primal fantasy). The various tropes (metaphor, metonymy, symbol, synecdoche and so on) associated with the cutting, slicing, mutilation and reconfiguration of the body in the texts are present throughout the film. Its formal aspects (cinematography, editing, sound and *mise-en-scène* and the narrative structure) are also considered in terms of how they contribute to gender transformation and particularly how fragmentation works as a figure of gender fabrication and as *dépaysement*. I also explore the playful use made of narrative, genre and other intertexts, combining fantastic and more conventional elements. Black humour is seen as a crucial element in Buñuel and Dalí's use of *dépaysement*. Gender transformation and the notion of bisexual switching are mainly explored at the level of the text between character and character although there is some discussion of bisexual switching between character and filmmaker and character and spectator.

In chapter 2, 'Rose c'est la vie' or a Rose by another name: desire and becoming (in) Joseph Cornell's *Rose Hobart*', I explore the implications of Cornell's appropriation / transfiguration

of found footage in *Rose Hobart* in relation to gender identity. Cornell's re-editing of this footage involves a kind of mutilation or re-cutting of the source material - Melford's *East of Borneo* (1931) - in favour of a 'film portrait' of the actress within the film (the Rose Hobart of the title). I explore how her cutting free from the patriarchal discourses of the Melford film (where she is clearly figured as an object of desire) raises a number of issues relating to her new status. Chiefly, I examine how her switching between subject and object opens up the film as an ambiguous site of contested ideological gender representations. Her androgynous appearance and unconventional performance, allied with Cornell's ambiguous motives (regarding his reconstruction of her) produce an ambivalent gender identity that both troubles Master Discourse - in its fluid switching between masculine and feminine - and is also an idealised, fetishised film-portrait. I examine how Rose conforms to Surrealist notions of Woman as muse and object of desire as well as a conduit of unbounded desire, unsettling and questioning conventional notions of gender identity and moving away from object to *subject* of desire. I consider how this transforming quality offers both Cornell and the spectator the fantasy of identification with Rose, switching from a desire for Rose to a desire to be her. Again, the formal properties, and especially its collage aesthetic, are seen as crucial in creating and disrupting the film-fantasy in relation to gender transformation.

In 'Beauty killed the beast: uncanny transformations of the monstrous and the marvellous, in *Les Yeux sans visage* (Chapter 3), as with the other two films already considered, I examine gender transformation through the notion of cutting: female bodies are controlled, manipulated and re-configured (both physically through surgery and mentally through ideological domination) by patriarchy. Science and the Law are seen to work hand in hand to control gender identity. I consider how the victim-protagonist Christiane becomes the focus of these operations through the key figures of masking / unmasking, relating to her transformation from monstrous uncanny other to Surrealist monster. I examine bisexual

switching predominantly between Christiane and the spectator and the revolutionary potential of the text as a Surrealist film.

In chapter 4, 'Transforming Practice-as-Research / Practice-as-Surrealism: Dialogues', the various elements of my own practice (film, collage and assemblage) are considered as a series of dialogues with the research findings in the written thesis: confirming, challenging, expanding or problematising these. I also suggest that the practice element is another form of knowledge - thinking through art - which parallels and seeks to extend Surrealist practice-as-research as well as a product of the research. I make a case for the Surrealists as artist-researchers, utilising art as both a methodology or tool and a research outcome or document of the research.

Chapter 1: Transforming gender and gender transformations in *Un Chien andalou*

In my view, what is essential to surrealism is a sort of rage [...] against the existing state of things. A rage against life as it is... (Georges Bataille 2006: 24)

There are two sexes; but gender is multiple. (Nancy Joyce Peters 1998: 462)

Introduction

The origins of *Un Chien andalou* are famously presented as the story of a dialogue between two friends - Luis Buñuel and Salvador Dalí - incorporating both men's dreams, but with two differing accounts of proceedings, and which established a blue-print and working method for

the nascent film, forged from further dream material and linked by chance, the irrational and free association, which already (despite their not being 'official' members of a Surrealist group), evidenced their 'impeccably surrealist' credentials (Short 2003: 64).¹ It will become clear that despite the automatic procedures and recourse to dreams, chance and other recognisably Surrealist aspects, Buñuel's and Dalí's film is anything but random or 'thrown together' and, in fact multiple viewings reveal a carefully constructed film that also draws on a range of intertexts, genres and other elements, designed to achieve very precise effects for the spectator.² In fact the figure of the dialogue could easily refer to the collage aesthetic that underpins this remarkable film, its various fragments of narrative and irrational imagery resembling a conversation in patchwork. Yet often the joins threaten to sabotage its overall coherence, instead foregrounding the constructedness of the text and production process, with the effect of such juxtapositions creating surprise, shock, humour, irritation, confusion, and other contradictory emotions, ultimately forcing the spectator to adopt a new form of spectatorship.³ This dialogue between film and spectator is examined here in relation to gender transformation and via bisexual switching, which hinges on a mobile spectator (part actor, immersed in the film-fantasy and critically detached spectator). The dialogue between its protagonists as well as the dialogue between the protagonists and the spectator transforms into a *dance* of genders.

Gender identity, its construction, deconstruction and reconstruction (transformation) will be considered in this chapter, through a detailed analysis of a key sequence from *Un Chien andalou* that, following Dawn Ades (1995: 78), I refer to as 'the dance of genders' sequence.

This will lead to a more general discussion of how gender transformation is figured in the text

¹ See Buñuel (1985: 103-104) and Dalí (1976: 205-206) for their accounts of the film's inception. See Adamowicz (2010) for an insightful discussion of Buñuel's and Dalí's collaboration on the film.

² For discussion of Buñuel's intentions see: Buñuel (1929, Preface to the screen play in *La Revolution Surréaliste* 12: 34) and his 'Notes on the Making of *Un Chien andalou*' (1978: 151-153) but also see Aranda (1975: 64-67), for example.

³ Buñuel suggests as much when he speaks of inducing a cathartic state in the spectator which would allow him / her to permit the 'the free association of ideas' and 'accept the subsequent events of the film' (Aranda 1975: 67).

as a whole, exploring how at the level of the diegesis (story, plot and character) and formally (cinematography, editing, sound and *mise-en-scène*), any simple, unitary sense of gender identity is questioned and problematised. Central to this discussion will be the role of bisexual switching in accounting for the contradictory and ambivalent relations between the male and female protagonists. The implications of these gender crossings will also be assessed in relation to the spectator's possible transformation and liberation, which in turn will necessitate a re-evaluation of the revolutionary potential of *Un Chien andalou* as a Surrealist film, committed to challenging and changing the social order.

1. 'The Dance of genders': Introduction

The sequence I wish to consider in *Un Chien andalou*⁴ occurs towards the end of the film and despite its relatively short running time (just over a minute) contains a good deal of action.

According to Buñuel's script:

The young woman appears. She closes the door behind her and carefully examines the wall against which the murderer was just standing. The man is no longer there. The wall is blank; there is no furniture nor decoration on it. The young woman makes a gesture of annoyance and impatience. Shot of the wall again. There is a small black spot in the middle of it. This little spot, seen closer, is a death's head moth. Close up of the moth, large close-up of the death's head on its back. The death's head covers the whole screen. Medium close-up of the man who was wearing the frills. He suddenly claps his hand to his mouth as though his teeth were falling out. The young woman looks at him disdainfully. When the man takes his hand away, we see his mouth has disappeared. The young woman seems to say to him, 'well, and afterwards?' Then she redoes her lips with her lipstick. On the man's face, hairs are growing in the place where his mouth used to be. When the young woman notices, she stifles a cry and quickly looks at her armpit, which is completely hairless. She scornfully thrusts out her tongue at the man, throws a shawl over her shoulders and opens the door. (Philip Drummond 1994: 10).

What interests me in this sequence is its 'dance of genders' or what Adamowicz (2001: 27) refers to as its 'disturbing migration of attributes' between the protagonists, and its playful but

⁴ I am using the BFI (2004) DVD edition of the film.

at the same time potentially unsettling and upsetting deconstruction and blurring of gender identities. Briefly, the arrival of the death's head moth in many ways pre-figures and foreshadows the gender ambiguity of what transpires between the two protagonists; and is also a kind of summation of what has gone before.

Much of the critical literature that covers this sequence picks up on the notion of gender ambiguity: Raymond Durgnat's account is a strictly Freudian reading of the film, and remarks that 'this episode evokes the rejection of Oedipal wishes, and the latency period (7-12) in which boys turn from "sissy" mother to masculine father. But the process is here so grotesque, so sexually confused, as to be very ominous' (1967: 37); Linda Williams comments on the 'displacement of body parts [which] contradicts all previous instances of the assertion of masculine and / or feminine sexual traits' (1981: 97). This last point is significant: for the first time in the film, it is the woman who is active, in contrast to the man's loss or lack of masculinity, virility and power; Jenaro Talens follows Williams in seeing the woman as the active force in this sequence and connects the image of the death's head moth with birth and transformation (for her) but the man is seen as having failed in his aborted relationship with her, and so he is associated with the more conventional aspects of the death's head moth symbol - as an ill omen, death (1993: 55). Drummond, too, notes that the film problematises gender identity and the sequence in question 'subsides into fantastic physical competition' between the male and female (1994: xvii). Short picks up on this notion of competition or game-playing in comparing it to 'a tennis-match rally [...] It's your everyday melodramatic bust-up but represented in terms of unconscious impulses' (2003: 86). Adamowicz refers to the sequence in terms of 'hybrid bodies and shifting identities [which] occupy a paradoxical space of play and anguish [...] in which gender roles are most radically subverted' (2010: 86). This last position echoes that of Ades, who refers to it as 'a comic-horror sequence', that is at once 'hilarious' and disturbing because of its gender ambiguity

(1995: 76-79). Like these critics I recognise that this gender ambiguity - switching between male and female and masculine and feminine - is central to this sequence but, as I will argue is part of a concerted strategy that operates throughout the film, that depends very much on the repetition of such tropes. The effect of the repetition is to foreground gender identity as something constructed but also fluid and open to transformation, which I would contend is a hallmark of a Surrealist re-envisioning of gender identity.

2. Gender shifting

I now wish to consider the sequence in more detail and focus on the ways in which the various figures relate to transformation, as well as looking at the contribution of other elements, such as *mise-en-scène*, cinematography, sound and editing. The sequence begins with the female protagonist's entry into a room, already identified as her bedroom. The opening and closing of the door can be seen as a multi-faceted symbol of transformation: it is instructive to consider its symbolism of life and death and rebirth, which can be seen as a marker or barrier which literally cuts in two (separates) yet connects (synthesises) the various binary oppositions. It is both entry and exit (beginning and end).⁵ The door can be seen as yet another example of what Williams refers to as two alternating sets of figures throughout the film – concave and convex – which stand in for the female and male genitals through their metaphoric and metonymic associations, characterised by displacement and condensation, but it is my contention that it combines aspects of both - switching back and forth *between*

⁵ The opening and closing of the door also relates to the idea of the various crossings between the real and the surreal, the conscious and the unconscious, the self and the other/s and indeed many similar oppositions. We are reminded of Buñuel's description in his autobiography of his and Dalí's working method on the script: 'We had to open all doors to the irrational and keep only those images that surprised us, without trying to explain why' (1985: 103). It is no accident that Buñuel uses a symbol whose Freudian significance would be quite clear to Buñuel and Dalí (well-versed as they were with Freud's writings), relating as it does to the female sex organ – and by association with desire and the Id.

masculine and feminine and male and female.⁶ To be more precise, when the door is ajar it is quite clearly convex, in that it protrudes and stands apart from the concave door-frame, penetrating space. Yet, its opening also reveals a hole in space, drawing attention to its concave character. However, when the door is closed there is a temporary merging with the door frame, the gap is closed, filled. In this sense then, concave and convex figures, associated with femininity and masculinity, are closely connected, to the point that their individuality and their difference from one another is unclear, blurred. This liminality - either / or / neither / both - I would argue, is not just a defining feature of this scene, but a recurrent textual strategy throughout the film that relates to shifting gender identities (which I consider later in the chapter). It should be noted that my own reading of these figures departs from that of Williams, who, adopting a Lacanian approach, argues that the convex and concave figures relate to castration anxieties and fetishisation. In her view 'the fetish is an object that, in its denial of what is most feared, cannot but assert that very fear' (1981: 84). Williams continues to note the presence / absence structure of similar concave and convex figures throughout the text, which become fetishised reminders of the 'lost object', based on a misrecognition which seems to promise satisfaction but ultimately, ironically, only serves to re-emphasise lack. Whilst I do not disagree with such a reading I wish to argue that these figures can also be seen in a more positive, playful and subversive light and to make the point that utilising one specific approach can be limiting. Williams (2001: 205), herself, looking back on her analysis, concurs with this last point, stating quite clearly that her use of Lacan is 'ultimately static' and repetitive. Although Buñuel suggests that psychoanalysis might offer the most fruitful approach to reading the film, we must also recognise that his and Dali's knowing and ironic use of Freud undermines its critical capacity. As Short (2003: 98) explains, *Un Chien*

⁶ The concave figures are: the moon, eye, shaved armpit, striped box, puckered mouth / mouth with pubic hair, shaved armpits, sea urchins, the bleeding eyes of the donkeys, anus and the hollowed-out eyes of the protagonists. These are characterised by absence: the concave 'wound' of the vagina. The convex figures are: the tapering cloud, the razor, the tie, tennis racket, the androgyne figure's stick, revolvers, and tongue, diagonal stripes, the spines of the sea urchin. These are characterised by presence: the convex protrusion of the penis.

andalou is 'a play not only of the Freudian paradigm but with it [and] just one more categorical discourse due for subjection to Buñuel and Dalí's caustic and hyper-self-conscious scrutiny'. This is also in keeping with Surrealism's approach in general and my own, which is selective, adopting some of psychoanalysis' methods but not its morality (the 'cure').⁷

It is useful to compare the door with the ubiquitous striped box that appears earlier in the film as well as in the scene that proceeds the sequence under discussion, with which it shares certain similarities. Like the opening of the door, the opening of the box reveals the convex lid and the concave hollow of the inside of the box; but also, in the scene following the prologue, it reveals the convex tie and collar of the cyclist; and, in the scene with the androgyne, the convex severed hand is placed in the box. More specifically in each case just mentioned, the meanings and associations of the convex and concave figures are reversed: constantly switching between masculine and feminine and male / female so that they become confused and in flux. For example, in the case of the door it is important to remind ourselves that prior to the 'dance of genders' sequence, the female protagonist has opened the door four times before – twice, in admitting the cyclist into her home and once, to let in the man (credited as 'the newcomer') – and she is also seen to open and then close the door on the male protagonist's arm, just after the seduction. Therefore, it is possible to read the opening of the door at the beginning of the 'dance of genders' sequence (as well as the opening and closing of the door as she exits onto the beach at the end of the sequence) as part of a recurrent pattern associated with gender reversals. In terms of the severed hand the androgyne's prodding of the lifeless hand with a phallic stick suggests an aggressive sexuality initiated by a woman (reversing gender stereotypes) but then this reversal is 'righted' by the policeman (acting as a representative of the Superego) who places the hand in the box, thereby censoring and repressing overt sexual activity but also reinstating heteronormative

⁷ For further examples of the psychoanalytical approach see Mondragon (1949), Piazza (1949), Renaud (1963), Durgnat (1967) and Drouzy (1978).

relations in the sense that he places the phallic hand in the box (vagina); and this is seen as anticipating the reversal that we have already noted, whereby the previously feminised (impotent, homosexual) male protagonist is now able to take the (hetero)sexual initiative. The death of the androgyne could therefore represent the erasure of an indeterminate and confused gender identity (and a dissolution of the Oedipus complex) in favour of a more clear cut (straight) gender identity and object choice.

These reversals are intimately linked to *dépaysement*: the various pairings of feminine figures associated with male characters and vice versa, creates a vertiginous sense of shock and liberation, suggesting that conventional signifiers of gender identity are not fixed but open to transformation. The feminine frills and hole in hand, associated with the male protagonist, for example feminise and undermine his masculinity through obvious connotations of cross-dressing but also through the less obvious penetration of his hand by ants. It should be made clear, though, that it is through repetition and familiarity that such an effect of *dépaysement* is fully achieved (which I discuss in more detail shortly). So it is crucial, then, to read the opening of the door by the female protagonist as part of a pattern of similar occurrences in relation to the door but also as part of a much wider system of reversals in the film. The ownership of the box is another example of this pattern: both male and female characters (as well as the androgyne figure) possess the box but it is originally introduced into the film by the male figures of the cyclist and policeman. There is of course a further implication of these reversals and the males' abdication and loss of the box to the female character: female agency. The act of exchange involved in this process is empowering, transforming. In the 'dance of genders' sequence the opening of the door by the female protagonist lends weight to such a reading because once again we are shown another example of the female protagonist taking control of a convex figure but also confidently revealing the concave frame in the process.

The opening of the door creates a further dimension, leading us to a liminal passage between these zones – not only inside and outside but also in between, and in so doing dissolves the clearly demarcated borders separating this either / or position; and in the process, opening up the possibility of transformation.⁸ The opening and closing of the door (and the box), then, work both as tropes of transformation (at the level of the text), but also (through editing, montage and cutting, especially with its shot – reverse shot structure) creates a parallel sense of transformation as a formal strategy. In this sense transformation is achieved through the repetition of chains of signifiers associated at the level of spectatorship with cutting and gender as well as barriers, linked with protrusion / intrusion (cutting up and penetrating space). This structuring is rhythmical and, like the notion of reversal, works through repetition and familiarity, interpellating the spectator to make connections between these tropes. In fact, throughout the film we have become accustomed to these threshold spaces which carve up space and time, and are more often linked with gender: the door has already separated the man from the woman, with the trapped hand attempting to claw its way back to the woman; and the hands which penetrate another door, earlier in the film, shaking a cocktail shaker - in another variation of the earlier concave / convex pattern - are both free and yet contained by the cut-out holes of the wall. Other threshold spaces include the apartment window, through which the woman first views the cyclist and through which both view the androgyne figure - physically separate from her but linked through their shared gaze; the hurling of the man's frills out of the window - suggesting a rejection of the male protagonist's feminine aspects; and the man's fall from inside the apartment, ending in a park, fleetingly grasping and stroking a woman's bare shoulders as she disappears (in a dissolve) before our eyes - suggesting the temporary union of male and female. What connects these chains of

⁸ I am drawing on Victor Turner's notion of liminality. See introduction.

signifiers is their ability to cross and transcend borders and to switch between spaces and time zones.

The appearance of the death's head moth, at the beginning of the sequence (Shot 258; and the accompanying shots of the moth: 259, 261, 262, 263 and 265)⁹ is not fortuitous, as traditionally in folklore and myth the death's head moth is not only a symbol of death and ill omen, but is also associated with the night, the moon, the feminine and, significantly, rebirth and transformation. Talens is one of the only commentators to focus on the moth in relation to transformation: 'the moth dies to be reborn as a caterpillar: the death it symbolises therefore refers back to the possibility for a new beginning rather than to an end'.¹⁰

What Talens says - in oblique fashion - is that with the entry of the moth the woman moves from being a passive object in the film's events to being an active subject. However, it should be noted that there is earlier evidence of her activity in previous scenes, including her rescue and cradling of the male protagonist, as well as her reconstitution of him from the various elements of clothing. Talens argues that with the arrival of the moth she moves one more step forward toward her own active opening. She does not limit herself to the opening of a door in order for someone to come in and decide on her behalf in an enclosed space; rather, she underscores her will to transform by opening the door. The appearance of the moth and return of the man continues the idea of transformation (as already mentioned) and in relation to the woman this is a further example of the *continuation* of her agency as once again she wills the man's return via her gaze at the moth. The man appears in the same place as the moth, and due to the connotations of the moth as a symbol of transformation and rebirth, she brings into being his existence. We are also reminded of the structural link between the androgyne figure's death and the appearance of the moth / man: the disappearance or death of androgyne

⁹ I am using the shot-breakdown created by Drummond (1994).

¹⁰ Talens (1993: 55). Most critics focus on the death's head symbol as a sign of death or ill omen. See Durgnat (1967), Thiher (1979) Williams (1981), Edwards (1997) and Short (2003) for example.

figure is linked with the birth of his desire for the woman (and her unconscious desire for the man), just as the re-appearance of the man is linked to the appearance and disappearance of the moth. With the death of the moth comes the rebirth of the man, just as earlier in the film the discarding of an image of *The Lacemaker* by Vermeer instigated his birth.

It has also been suggested that the appearance of the man, who inhabits the same space as the moth, can be read as the moth's double 'expressing animal sexuality', but equally true is the connection between the female and moth 'as avatar of the vampire' (Adamowicz 2007: 27).

The use of the shot-reverse shot structure is cited as a key element in encouraging such identification. Perhaps a more instructive way of viewing of the death head's moth is as a figure of transformation, which incorporates *both* of these readings (male and female). We should also note that the moth combines both convex (body and wings) and concave (death's head) features as well as those of the insect and human, its hybridity will be seen to herald the final transformations of the man and woman, whose mouth will sprout hair (which appears to have come from the woman), combining body parts of both sexes. Again, there is a link here to the androgyne figure, who incorporates elements of both sexes (a form of condensation), as well as the former image of the man bedecked in the effeminate frills. These earlier examples of gender indifferentiation point to the instability and fluidity of gender identity, preparing us to some extent for what is to come, but which here, perhaps, could be seen as more subversive because the transformation occurs before our eyes – as a *process* of becoming or transformation.

The extraordinary finale to the sequence with its 'migration' of body parts can be read as yet another example of the preceding tropes associated with castration and fetishism (the slit eye, severed hand, and so on). Following this schema, the man's actions in this sequence might be seen as a renewed assault on the desired object ('the return of the repressed'), but one which, once again, demonstrates the impossibility of the wished-for satisfaction. The cutting or

erasure and 'sealing' of the mouth can be read, in this respect, as a kind of 'mise en abyme', relating to the exaggerated opening of the mouth in the earlier seduction or rape scene in which the man fondles the woman's buttocks (and here we should note Buñuel's script: 'his mouth, which was wide open, now puckers up like an anus',¹¹ as well as, of course, the earlier 'slicing' of the moon and eye in the prologue, which set in train these metaphorical substitutions in the first place. Significantly, then, in this reading, the exchange of gender attributes - as with the earlier scenes with the frills of the cyclist - associates the male with feminine attributes, demasculinising him in the process and putting an end once and for all to his predatory ambitions. Rather than embracing the transformation - from masculine to feminine - it returns (as I have noted) as something disruptive and disturbing (the repressed). The earlier attempts to disavow the desire to cross gender boundaries, led to him projecting fetishised substitutions for the female but have now culminated in a kind of foreclosure, whereby the man both projects and incorporates female signifiers: externally, through his adoption or projection of facial hair (which is associated with the loss of the woman's underarm hair) – an extreme form of identification with the woman; and, internally, through the loss of his mouth, which could be read as a form of incorporation or perhaps, in this case introjections - associated as it is with the oral drive (Laplanche and Pontalis 2006: 230). To confuse matters further the mouth and hair are also associated with male / masculine signifiers – it is *his* mouth, after all; and the hair could also signify male pubic hair.

The complex interplay between these 'impossible' moments (sprouting hair and erased mouth) is typical of many Surrealist texts and images, especially those that displace elements of the face with elements from elsewhere. Perhaps Magritte's *Le Viol* is the most obvious pictorial

¹¹ Drummond (1994: 5).

equivalent.¹² The spectator is offered a position akin to a fantasy, one which problematises conventional readings of gender identity, and instead we are encouraged to switch between gender identities: we are both (male) violator and (female) violated. On the other hand we might actively oppose such a position. This mobility (bisexual switching) offers the spectator a paradoxical position, which is of course deeply troubling and problematic but also offers the possibility of transformation, as it encourages the spectator to switch or reject these roles and question the text (fantasy) and his or her relation to it. Gender ambivalence as well as gender indifferentiation is seen by many commentators as simply a negative process: as castration, for example.¹³ However, as I have argued, this need not be the case, because it is possible to view this situation as a continuous process of becoming (crossing gender borders) and refusing easy categorisation. It is in this attempt to 'fix' and demarcate strict gender boundaries that a purely psychoanalytical approach becomes undone, especially in the light of Freud's own researches, which undermine his heterosexist need to reinvent conventional binarised notions of gender. As Rodowick (1994) convincingly argues, Freud's own clinical observations - which Freud noted in a number of the case histories - detail the ambivalence relating to gender relations and especially object choice (characterised by polymorphous perversity), and these provide ample evidence of the subject's ability to oscillate between different positions.¹⁴

¹² Mention should also be made of Duchamp's *L.H.O.O.Q.* (1919), which, also combines male and female signifiers, transforming one of the most iconic female portraits ever painted by the addition of male facial hair in a gesture seen as both playful and shocking.

¹³ The analogy with the castration complex has been observed by most commentators who have written on this sequence: namely, that the female protagonist wields possession of the tongue/mouth as a phallic symbol in contrast to the man's 'lost' (castrated) phallus (his absent mouth). Paradoxically, the tongue is both a fetishised reminder or symptom of lack and an (illusory) metaphor meant to allay the anguish felt by the (castrated) subject.

¹⁴ Freud is torn between a notion of a mobile spectator, which we see clearly in his paper 'A Child is Being Beaten', and his own deeply held patriarchal beliefs, utilising a phylogenetic argument to preserve a binarised and heteronormative position of sex and gender, that could be easily conceived as sexist and racist. See my introduction but also see Rodowick (1994: 47-60) for a stimulating account of this division.

Not only gender but also sex and sexuality are confused in the switching of body parts and resultant blurring of boundaries, so that the 'man' is seen as a sort of abject cipher of male / female, masculine / feminine, and heterosexual / homosexual – *sometimes one, sometimes the other*. Yet, dialectically, the various (temporary or fleeting) syntheses that might result from such a transformation, in those moments where *one is combined with the other* in the figure of the androgyne or hermaphrodite, presents transformation as a form of hybridity. On the other hand, this passage *between* these positions represents a kind of liminal borderland, *neither one nor the other*. It could be seen to suggest a state of perpetual becoming. These conflicting definitions capture something of the ambiguity associated with such a position because they deny fixity. As already noted, prior to this sequence in the film the attendant confusion this causes in terms of (hetero/homo/bi) sexuality has been a possible source of anxiety for the characters rather than one of pleasure. It could be argued, however, there is a sense here of game-playing with a perverse pleasure taken by each of the players. The phallic tongue of the female protagonist, which (according to Buñuel and Dalí's script) 'she scornfully thrusts out' (1994: 10) at the man, could be seen as an act of rebellion, reminiscent of the playground - as clearly hinted at in the script, with the 'Fine. So what?' response of the woman, or a mocking gesture connoting an assertive masculinity, with the tongue standing in for the male erection. The idea here is that she could be seen to be aggressively (sadistically) countering his own infantile rebellion (the erasing of the mouth) in a very obvious and potentially alarming sense, emphasising her possession of her own mouth (and the dis-possession and loss of the man's mouth). As Williams (1981: 97) observes, this moment, like the rouging of the female protagonist's lips earlier, 'asserts her possession of orifices, (and thus of gender) and the man's pathetic lack (of gender, virility). Her tongue is a phallic protrusion that he can no longer emulate'. Apart from emphasising his lack it points up the

fact that she owns the phallus (masculinity) and with it agency, for soon after she will initiate her own seduction, of the man on the beach, for whom she leaves the male protagonist.

However, to simply read this (as most commentators do) in relation to the castration complex is to ignore the obvious *pleasure* of both players. Clearly, the complex interplay signalled by the various exchanges of body parts and subsequent role reversals and actions - whereby the female protagonist both asserts her femininity and masculinity just as the male protagonist switches between masculine and feminine - is part of a more general strategy discerned in the text, relating to our perception of the protagonists as sharing, exchanging and switching between aspects of each other (male and female), no longer separate or distinct but interchangeable).

3. Humour

Short (2003: 99) is one of the few critics who acknowledge the importance of the black humour in the film and its 'tonic effect upon audiences'.¹⁵ For Short, black humour converts the pain that necessity inflicts on the self into pleasure and thus brings about a kind of liberation. He goes on to say that 'the film is indeed about frustration and defeat – confronted head on – but in such an exhilarating way that defeat is turned into a kind of victory'. This victory is predicated on the Surrealist notion of transformation, prepared for by the liberating effects of black humour and ultimately in its ability to encourage us to switch between different gender identities and question our own in the process.

¹⁵ Allen Thiher (1979: 27-28) also recognises the importance of black humour as an integral part of Buñuel's method, and provides a useful account of the important relationship between black humour and surrealism. It should also be noted that, as Breton so clearly shows in the introductory essay he wrote for his *Anthology of Black Humour* (1940), black humour could make it possible for the pleasure principle to triumph over the reality principle, and in the process the ego is liberated and elevated above that of the superego. In particular, its ability to question, condemn and undermine all forms of authority and to transform the world made it an important weapon in the Surrealist arsenal.

The black humour provoked by gender transformation and the accompanying sense of liberation is central to the film and is most pronounced in the 'dance of genders' sequence. This sequence never fails to provoke laughter with audiences who delight in the disruption / indifferentiation of conventional gender attributes and its ludic sense of game playing. The sense of switching (moving between both genders) is alarming but it is offset with the type of 'tit for tat' humour associated with silent comedies and cartoons, where one-upmanship - constantly seeking to outdo each other through the proliferation of gags and punishments - in a perverse form of game-playing are shown to obey different laws to realist film narrative, which means that a character can be mutilated and even 'killed' but it transpires that they are unharmed and brought back to life. Once again, these laws or conventions need to be established and it is through repetition that audiences learn to recognise how to respond. The serial nature of these gags / punishments - and the attempts to 'top' them constantly - only increases their comic and absurd status through excessive accumulation.

4. Realist narrative

This deconstruction of the logic of characterisation has been prepared for from the very first scene with the death and life of the female protagonist and the various deaths and doublings of the male protagonist. As with the already noted chains of transformation relating to cutting, gender, transformation and liberation, the spectator is once again presented with yet another example of gender ambiguity, which conflicts with our usual understanding of characterisation and encourages us to respond to the characters differently, not simply as individuals with recognisable attributes and psychological underpinnings, acting according to a cause-and-effect logic, pursuing clearly established goals, but as something *other*, de-centred and in flux. What is, of course, confusing is that to a large extent they appear to share some of these attributes (those of characters in classical narratives) and unlike, say, the

characters in Man Ray's films or the Artaud-scripted *The Seashell and the Clergyman* (and many other films associated with Dada, Surrealism and the avant garde), they do not become mere types or completely abstract figures, divorced from classical, psychological models of characterisation. In fact, Buñuel, quite deliberately, does not fully depart from the recognisable trappings of classical models because of his awareness that to do so would be to clearly demarcate his film as 'avant garde', with its attendant conventions of subversion and 'artiness' which serve to protect the audience from engaging with the film in the way Buñuel and Dalí intend. By utilising the trappings of classical narrative - especially the erection of a narrative frame - as well as those codes and conventions immediately recognisable to the spectator – such as shot-reverse shot alternation, cuts on action, eyeline matches - and then undermining these elements from within, the resulting shock and liberation would be greater because the spectator would be unprepared for and open to new ways of seeing.

At the same time, Buñuel and Dali had no intention of a wholesale adoption of its rules:

No idea or image that might lend itself to a rational explanation of any kind would be accepted. We had to open all doors to the irrational and keep only those images that surprised us, without trying to explain why. (Buñuel 1985: 104)

In addition, as Buñuel also notes: 'Mystery, the essential element of every work of art, is in general lacking in films', with most films focusing instead on a continuation of the same everyday dramas of daily life; but at the same time pure fantasy films that have no apparent connection with everyday reality 'would plunge us into the unconscious world of the dream,' retreating from and 'scorning [...] daily reality' (Buñuel 1978: 68-69).

Therefore, in order to combine the conflicting elements of dream and reality without alienating the spectator to extent of losing them, these elements must be incorporated in such a way that they appear to relate to each other or even appear to be part of the same universe.

As Breton says in the first manifesto (1924): 'What is admirable about the fantastic is that there is no longer anything fantastic: there is only the real' (1989: 125).

As is well established, Dalí's own method in his painting and other media was a 'pure photography of the mind', involving a meticulous realism or 'concrete irrationality', which is not a retreat from the real into 'some Never-neverland of the imagination but is just the reverse, it is about an intensification of the real' (Short 2003: 58). It was, as Dalí puts it, an attempt to transpose in as naturalistic a manner as possible 'that unlimited fantasy which is born of things in themselves' (Dalí 1998: 56). This is made more explicit in Dalí's article on *Un Chien andalou* which attacks avant-garde cinema, seen as a retreat from reality into abstraction, in favour of his (and Buñuel's) method, which is concerned with an emphasis on the documenting and recording the 'little things', of facts and '*these facts*, instead of being conventional, fabricated, arbitrary, gratuitous, are real facts, or *appear to be real enough*, and as such they are enigmatic, incoherent, irrational, absurd, *inexplicable*' (Dalí 1998: 134).

The importance of this emphasis on the creation of recognisable and believable elements of reality - at the level of *mise-en-scène*, characters and actions - is crucial in establishing an experience which is propitious to transformation, whereby fantasy is perceived as real and believable. Bisexual switching, too, relies on this ability of the spectator to enter into this fantasy in terms of being able to switch between male and female, masculine and feminine. Gender transformation is predicated on being able to adopt the simultaneous positions of actor and spectator, involved in as well as distant from the fantasy, open to desire for and identification with either of the characters. As outlined in the introduction, the importance of fantasy is central to involving the spectator and drawing her or him into the film (into the fantasy). The greatest challenge, however, is to present this in a convincing manner, whereby the spectator is, on the one hand (passively) immersed in the experience and the diegesis - and on the other, is also able to (actively) reflect upon, interpret and engage with the text in a

conscious way. Without this conscious element transformation cannot occur. In fact, the sequence under discussion - as well as *Un Chien andalou* as a whole - maintains this adherence to the laws of the classical realist text but at the same time both subtly and not so subtly makes play with them. For example, the impossible anatomical transformations of the protagonists, the migrating body parts in the 'dance of genders' sequence, the hole in the hand, the slit eye, doublings and resurrections are shot and edited in such a matter of fact way that the formal aspects serve to render these bizarre moments as real and not out of the ordinary. This juxtaposition of mysterious, unexplained phenomena, filmed in such a seemingly realistic and conventional manner forces the spectator to both accept and question what they have seen. This resulting disorientation (*dépaysement*) in this sequence - but also throughout the film - is centred upon deconstructing and exploding gender boundaries - so that we are encouraged to switch between genders, both desiring and identifying with the protagonists and questioning the whole machinery of gender construction.

5. The parody of traditional gender roles

It is interesting to note that the casting of Simone Mareuil and Pierre Batcheff in the main roles gives further evidence of a playful deconstruction of gender roles and gender identity. Phil Powrie and Eric Rebillard (2009) present a convincing argument for seeing Mareuil - a star of various comedies - and Batcheff' - more renowned for his role as a heroic lover - as playing against type in a 'parodic-comic' mode and at odds with their usual roles and star personas. Powrie and Rebillard argue that contemporary audiences of Buñuel and Dalí's film would have had a clear sense of such a parodic practice because both actors (Batcheff in

particular) had established their star images in several films before and contemporaneous with *Un Chien andalou*.¹⁶

A recurrent trope in the earlier films involves Batcheff playing a passive, effeminate figure, often sickly or unwell, tended by a woman (a lover or mother) who invariably leaves him for another man, and exhibiting excessive displays of emotion in the process. What is particularly fascinating is the idea that Batcheff sought to distance himself from the kind of romantic lead or hero he was famous for and so *Un Chien andalou* was an opportunity to make play with and to resist such roles, transforming these through parody and evoking 'a transitional form of masculinity [...] crossing over from the effeminate *Catalein* type with whom he had been associated until 1928, to what became the more dominant *jeune premier* by the turn of the 1930s, the athletic type' (2009: 34). As already discussed, both types appear in *Un Chien andalou*: he is effeminate and passive in his role as the cyclist with the 'frills', tended by the female protagonist after the fall from the bicycle; he is inert, masochistically rooted to the spot, as he loses his mouth, which is replaced by the (female) pubic hair, connoting the triumph of the feminine or even emasculation, in the 'dance of genders' sequence; and he is athletic in the scenes of seduction and pursuit of the woman, involving his 'heroic' attempts to circumvent various obstacles in his path. However, the two types constantly cross over, so that masculine and feminine are blurred with darkly comic affect. As has been argued, part of this effect is constituted by the idea that Batcheff himself consciously parodies his former roles and star persona through overdetermined and excessive desires and emotions. As Powrie and Rebillard suggest, 'it is as if his persona has been split into two radically opposing poles' (2009:149) and that in *Un Chien andalou*, he is able to embody the deconstruction of these roles, as a kind of undoing or unstitching - parading his

¹⁶ Powrie and Rebillard point out that when *Un Chien andalou* was first shown, in November 1929, audiences would have been able to see four films featuring Batcheff: *Un Chien andalou*, two historical epics and a comedy (2009:13).

desire to escape these stereotypical roles and their attendant identities through performance. In this sense each of his actions remains in quotes, as if he is acting-that-he-is-acting, quoting himself and his roles endlessly, and echoed in the various doubles (the three roles he plays in the film) and his exchange of body parts and role-playing with the female protagonist. Again, we see the idea of transformation as a fabrication of gender identity but in this case it is constructed from the various fragments of his previous roles. These new configurations of gender identity echo the notion of the transitional form of masculinity mentioned earlier and resembles closely bisexual switching, in the way that Batcheff negotiates and explores the various roles which he has played, as a form of masquerade, switching between masculine and feminine in an endless becoming.

Batcheff made a prominent contribution to the film, a fact which has only recently become better known.¹⁷ His contribution as co-screenwriter, as well as his input in relation to costume and performance, complement the parodic and transformative strategies employed by Buñuel and Dalí in relation to their intertextual reworking of melodrama, silent comedy, avant-garde film, Freudian psychoanalysis and so on. As a number of commentators have pointed out (Drummond 1977, Thiher 1979, Adamowicz 2010, for example) these parodic intertexts are so many collaged fragments that form another series of doubles and displacements, echoing the fragmented bodies and shifting identities of the protagonists.

Mareuil's parodic reworking of her earlier gentle and light-hearted comic roles in *Un Chien andalou* - playing against type, reversing and subverting the overtly stereotypical sweet and wholesome girl-next-door personality - complements and throws into relief Batcheff's own playful reversals. Her girliness is replaced by the role of a maternal woman in the scenes with the cyclist, but returns, tinged with a playful but domineering Sadeian quality, as she faces up to Batcheff-the-seducer, with tennis racket aloft, threatening to hit him or jamming

¹⁷ See Powrie and Rebillard (2009: 11-13) and Denise Tual (1987: 100).

his hand in the door; or poking out her tongue at him and running off with another man at the end of the 'dance of genders' sequence. In these scenes she is very much a subject of desire - active, in control, independent, qualities that are normally and normatively associated with masculinity - rather than the stereotypical object of desire in previous film roles or in the moments in *Un Chien andalou* where she apparently allows herself to be seduced by Batcheff (although even this, at a push, might be argued as willed on her part) or submitting to Buñuel's razor in the prologue.¹⁸ Her switching between the playful, girlish roles associated with her previous films and the more dominant and knowing roles in Buñuel and Dalí's film parallels those of Batcheff, once again, using performance and masquerade to explore gender identity.

In effect the roles and (gender) identities that both Mareuil and Batcheff adopt in *Un Chien andalou* are in an ever-changing process of transformation and becoming, both familiar and strange, static and dynamic: not so much shifting identities but *convulsive* identities, very much in line with Breton's own description of convulsive beauty in *Mad Love*.¹⁹ In this case, the fragments of familiar roles from previous films combined with parodic or unfamiliar roles creates such a tension. At the same time this transforms the expectations of the audiences of the time, based on the more typical roles and star persona already established. It is suggested that the switching involved in this process is another form of *dépaysement*, momentarily fusing familiar and unfamiliar elements in order to challenge, question and transform the perception of the subject. This is seen as one more element (casting and performance) amongst others - a collage aesthetic, combining different styles and genres or realistic material paired with bizarre or illogical juxtapositions, fragments of narrative and non-

¹⁸ However, this last example is even more complex as this scene is accompanied by her direct gaze at the camera / spectator which is confrontational, questioning, deconstructing and subverting the various gazes that intersect. I take up this point again in Chapter 4.

¹⁹ Breton explains that "The word "convulsive," which I use to describe the only beauty which should concern us, would lose any meaning in my eyes were it to be conceived in motion and not at the exact expiration of this motion. There can be no beauty at all, as far as I am concerned - convulsive beauty - except at the cost of affirming the reciprocal relations linking the object seen in its motion and in its repose". (1987: 10).

narrative, the semblance of a specific time and place that is constantly undermined and fractured.

6. Music

The dance analogy employed by Ades to describe the various gender transformations in the 'dance of genders' sequence is illustrative of the characters' complicity (the sense of being willing partners) and the notion of being part of a performance (attempting to complement each other but also to outdo the other) and a kind of dizzying movement, back and forth where gender itself is seen as a convulsive figure, constantly shifting between (rather than combining) masculine and feminine elements. The use of the tango, of course, reinforces this movement because of its rhythmic character and its status as what Christine Denniston refers to as 'the first couple dance ever seen in Europe that involved improvisation. Before the arrival of Tango, couple dance was sequence-based, with every couple on the floor dancing the same steps at the same time'.²⁰

Throughout the 'dance of genders' sequence we hear the main tango encountered earlier in the film and it begins just as the female protagonist enters the room.²¹ It is important to recognise that the choice of music in the film as whole is emblematic of the balancing act Buñuel and Dalí are attempting to pull off: throughout the film, we shift constantly between the tangos (with their seductive and playful connotations) and Wagner's love-death theme from *Tristan and Isolde* (with its moving, tragic, romantic connotations).²² The music is the aural

²⁰ See <http://www.history-of-tango.com/couple-dance.html>

²¹ In fact there are two tangos played in the film. At this point it is the first of the two tangos that we hear. This tango occurs three times: the prologue, the seduction / rape sequence; and the 'dance of genders' sequence, continuing through the final scene and end credits. The second tango is played only once, in the rotting donkeys / priests sequence and continuing into the sequence where the bed-ridden cyclist is confronted by the man.

²² Both the tangos and the Wagner theme reference a pair of lovers: the former is an aggressive and erotic struggle and the latter is a tragic love scene. Both are clearly gendered and are therefore immediately recognisable to audiences - so that these connotations are carried over into *Un Chien andalou* whenever they are

equivalent of the visual juxtaposition of comic and serious (lowbrow and highbrow) and is an important cue to how we are supposed to respond. Again, through repetition we learn how to anticipate and read this but as with Kubrick's use of music in *A Clockwork Orange* (1971), the music is often used unconventionally so that the tango accompanies the slicing of the eye, for instance, rather than the expected dramatic or serious music we have come to expect. The often abrupt switching between these two poles often produces unexpected humour.

In the sequence we have been considering the disturbing appearance of the death's head moth, the loss and sprouting of hair, and the erasure of the mouth are all accompanied by the main tango, which - as it has been utilised earlier - distances us from the on-screen violence and disturbing events and encourages us to view them playfully and comically. This has been prepared for throughout the film as the tango has become a rhythmic figure we now associate with the couple. Its meaning can be understood metonymically, reminding us of the earlier scenes of mutilation, seduction or rape (contrapuntally); and metaphorically, in its more conventional use as an accompaniment to a romantic or seductive dance between a couple. In this latter use the music is usually diegetic – the couple are dancing to a tango played by musicians (who are seen) or played on a visible or suggested music source, such as a record player. Buñuel's non-diegetic use of the music is complex: on the one hand we cannot ignore the conventional associations of the tango (as romance / seduction) but we are forced to acknowledge what was always already latent or heavily coded in its more conventional usage: that the tango was a metaphor for unbridled passion and sex.

Although in the opening of the film death is linked with sex (through the mutilation of the eye), the woman 'miraculously' reappears in the next scene, unscathed! When we hear the tango again, in the scene where the man pursues the woman, the comic chase around the bed

played, positioning the audience to respond to the couple in the film according to the lovers associated with both pieces of music.

soon gives way to the more darkly violent overtones we associate with the prologue. As with the prologue, sex and death are linked once more: the death of the androgyne, which the couple observe from the window, appears to cause the seductive advances of the man. It is used for a third and final time in the sequence we have been discussing; and again, the disappearance (death) of the moth is associated with the re-appearance of the man. This time, however, rather than renewing his pursuit of the woman he is inert, as though rooted to the spot, and his desire can only be turned inwards. His lack of power is reinforced through the shot-reverse shot structure, which isolates him in his own space – he is spatially and temporally divided from her by the cut. The tango therefore takes on an important role in the film as another figure associated with gender and cutting. Paradoxically and ironically it disguises the cuts through its rhythmical structure as a piece of conventional music placed over the visual track, creating a sense of continuity, whilst at the same time (through counterpoint) its conventional associations are stripped away (cut) to create and reveal more primal connotations of sex and death. In the sequence we have been discussing the playful aspects are once again underscored by the relation to the death's head moth and the appearance and disappearance of body parts, but like the re-appearance of the woman after the presumed fatal loss of her eye in the prologue, loss leads to exchange and transformation. This becomes even clearer in the final scene with its image of rebirth in the form of the lovers half buried in the sand. The tango continues until the end of the film, confirming its status as a figure of transformation and liberation. In many ways the tango is the aural counterpart of Freud's pleasure principle (associated as it is with the Id), ceaselessly pursuing life in the face of death, a force of unbound desire, without censure in all its unbridled passion and violence.²³

²³ Although the use of Wagner's *Liebtestod* is also related to love-death it has a quite different emotional effect because of its swelling repeated musical motifs of romantic hope and tragic despair as well as its connotations with a quite different musical tradition of classical music and high art.

7. Re-reading the 'dance of genders' sequence

One might wonder what the effect might have been if we began the film with the erasure of the man's mouth instead of the slicing of the woman's eye? These two moments are linked by an opening (the eye) and a closing (the mouth). However, at the same time the opening of the eye seems also to be a closing (blinding) but it soon transpires that it is neither - as the woman is unharmed. The man's fate is less secure as it is unclear whether the man in the final scene is the male protagonist, but either way he does not return. It is clear, though, that the female protagonist is the other half of the couple, decaying in the sand. As regards the prologue the woman willingly submits to the razor-man's slitting of the eye whereas the male protagonist inflicts the sealing of the mouth on himself. Cutting, as we have said, works throughout the text as a metaphor closely linked with transformation, both on the bodies of the protagonists as well as the body of the text, where both are in a constant process of opening up, stitching together, coming undone... Comparing the eye-slitting and mouth erasure allows us to illustrate the complexities of gender transformation as something willed, relating to agency and making conscious choices to change; as imposed on one by another subject and as a transformation which occurs unconsciously or by chance. The establishing of a pattern of assertion and denial - related to gender transformation - has demonstrated that the results of the various transformations are temporary, forever switching back and forth - except perhaps the ending (but I will return to this in due course) which moves between the twin poles of horror and comedy. However, because the eye-slitting occurs before the spectator is aware of such a pattern the shock is greater. It could also be argued that our horror is related to the eye's vulnerability or its relation to vision but particularly important here is its symbolic (Freudian) reading as rape, linking cutting and penetration with the convex razor (penis) and concave eye (vagina), anticipating the sexual violence of the

seduction scene / rape; and ultimately, evokes a common stereotype of patriarchy: male domination and misogyny.²⁴

8. Female Agency

Adamowicz (2010: 86) is certainly correct in her assertion that the 'dance of genders' sequence is the 'sequence in which gender roles are most radically subverted'. As we have seen, the female protagonist is far more assertive, active and independent at this point in the film, than at any other time, whereas the male protagonist is more passive, and clearly the 'loser' of the bizarre game, wherein his anatomical transformations are far more intrusive and binding (loss of mouth, face invaded by hair), concluding with her leaving him for another man and his disappearance from the film.²⁵ In fact, it is possible to read this sequence as the culmination of her ongoing transformation from object to subject.

Examples from early in the film, demonstrating this metamorphosis and her agency include the woman's rescue of the cyclist, who appears suddenly cut down by some inexplicable force; or her re-creation and reconstitution of him from the various objects that she takes from the cyclist's box, on the bed, which can clearly be seen as examples of her will or power to transform. It is *she* who actively creates him. Similarly, in the 'dance of genders' sequence the moth and the male protagonist also appear to have been conjured up by the female

²⁴ I suggest that the presence of antithetical readings is productive because it encourages further reflection on approaching gender identity as something constructed, fluid and contested. I reconsider the contradictory ideological discourses, relating to gender, present in the film, in chapter 4 via discussion of my own practice.

²⁵ Although it is not clear from the blurred image and poor quality of the film or from Buñuel's script whether the main male protagonist returns in the final frame, buried up to his neck in the sand, along with the female protagonist. This confusion is reflected in the conflicting commentaries on this scene. For example, both Talens (1993) and Drummond (1994) suggest the male figure is the main male protagonist whilst Williams (1981) and Edwards (1997) refer to the man she has met on the beach.

protagonist, through the power of her gaze, as if she has some superior power. It is interesting to consider the illustration of *The Lacemaker* in the book she is engrossed in just before the cyclist's arrival, and her impassioned gaze towards him prior to his fall, which occurs earlier in the film, with regard to this idea. *The Lace Maker* can be seen as a further trope associated with the transformation of gender and her active agency: the needle in the picture is another tool that pierces and cuts into the material in order to connect the various fibres into a whole just as the female protagonist's gaze creates the figure of the male protagonist. Once again cutting and transformation are clearly linked as a kind of suture.²⁶ Her discarding of the book mimes the process of switching and transformation in the move from the feminine to the masculine and, quite clearly, it is *her* action which instigates this process. Even in the 'seduction sequence' it could be argued that the sexualised violence is undercut by her apparent submission, blurring any obvious gendered object or subject position, but later it is more obvious, when she puts up a fight (and wins). This dominance on her part, is also obvious in her taking the initiative with the tennis racket with which she threatens him and in his return to the victim role, with his having to bear the load of the pianos, priest and donkeys, as he tries to pursue her, falling over and having his hand jammed in the door and invaded by ants. Despite the female protagonist not having the opportunity to punish the 'razor man', in the prologue, it could be asserted that she survives whilst he does not and it is also possible to argue that the appalling violence of the eye-slitting is diluted by the fact that she is seen to be completely unharmed, moments later.

This returns us to the point we have been making throughout, about the various aspects of content and form that feature reversals or switching, fitting into a pattern of assertion and denial, which can be seen to infuse every aspect of the film. Examples include the assertion that the female protagonist's eye is slit and presumably blinded and then shown to be

²⁶ See Williams (1981: 208).

untouched and she is able to see; or, the geographical assertion of a particular space, such as the room in the 'dance of genders' sequence being established as an upstairs room, overlooking a busy street, suddenly appearing to be on the ground floor, opening onto the beach. There are many further examples of this type, based on a switching back and forth between contradictory states or positions, and, as I have argued, they depend for their effect on repetition and reinforcement of this system. So, obviously, it takes time to establish this pattern, which means that in the eye-slitting sequence, for example, much of its shock depends on our lack of foreknowledge on how to respond to this moment and its immediate aftermath because to all intents and purposes it appears to conform to the codes and conventions of classical cinema in its apparent realism. This is important because as the film progresses or upon subsequent viewings this pattern reveals itself more clearly, so that the spectator can respond accordingly, aware that the violence is only temporary.

9. Masculinity in crisis

The reversal and switching of gender roles and gender identities are also open to and influenced by this same structure. As already discussed, the female protagonist moves from submissive 'conjurer's assistant' or victim in the prologue, to dominant seductress, pursuing the cyclist in the street in the next sequence, then takes on the role of mother, cradling and looking after him, following his fall, and magician, conjuring up his appearance from the clothes in the box. Throughout this sequence the male protagonist is feminised and passive, an object of desire as well as victim. It could be argued that like the later gesture of erasing his mouth, this identity is self-willed and therefore demonstrates *his* agency, but this seems to me more symptomatic of what Peter Evans (1995: 131-132) - referring to Buñuel's *That Obscure Object of Desire* (1977), but equally applicable to *Un Chien andalou* - suggests is 'the dramatisation of a masochistic fantasy forcing men to address questions of femininity, to

submit to certain processes of feminisation'. In this sense, then, the sudden appearance of the female hair where the male protagonist's mouth once was in the 'dance of genders' sequence is evidence of such a fantasy, made corporeal. The dissolve mimics such a transformation, where male signifiers are transformed by and into female signifiers. This is perhaps even more marked in the earlier 'seduction scene', where the male protagonist's desire is figured through another series of dissolves: moving from the fondling of her breasts (clothed and unclothed) to the fondling of her buttocks. As a number of commentators have suggested, these dissolves between breasts and buttocks, along with the anguished look of the male protagonist, connote homosexual desire or 'the perversion of a normal male desire' as Williams, (1981: 89) puts it. Ian Gibson (1997: 196) argues that Federico Garcia Lorca (a close friend of Buñuel and Dalí since their student days, and whose homosexuality disgusted Buñuel) is the model for the male protagonist, whose apparent 'loathing of bosoms' explains the traumatic expression on the male protagonist's face as he caresses the woman's breasts - whereas he experiences lust as he manipulates her buttocks; which 'must surely be intended as a further allusion to the homosexuality suggested by the sphincter-tight mouth indicated in the script'.

The wearing of the feminine attire and submissive behaviour in his cyclist role contribute further to his gender ambiguity. This ambiguity is seen differently by the different characters: in the two scenes that feature the female protagonist, this ambiguity is figured as a form of instability, where the cyclist is literally unstable, falling from his bicycle, needing to be rescued by the female protagonist; and also unstable in the scene on the bed, where he is reduced to a series of items (collar and tie), from which he needs to be re-constituted by the woman. In each case the woman is nurturing and he is able to exhibit his feminine traits without prejudice. Compare this with the scene where he is visited by his double, who forces him out of bed, mocks his wearing of the feminine attire, compelling him to remove it and

stand in the corner. The subsequent killing of his double is both an assertion of his masculine identity (or rather a hyper-masculinity / show of male strength) but at the same time is a restitution of the repressed feminine. Gender transformation for the male protagonist is therefore experienced as disturbing, literally threatening to 'un-man' him and part of what Powrie (1998: 162), refers to as a 'masculinity in crisis'. Each time he attempts to assert his masculinity he is denied: in the 'seduction scene' he is thwarted by the great load he carries and the female protagonist's efforts to stop his advances (tennis racket-as-weapon, jamming his hand in the door) and even in the meadow, he is denied the woman as she dissolves before his eyes. In fact, the male protagonist's trajectory is one that continually shifts between assertion and denial: independence and dependence, activity and passivity, strength and weakness, domination and submission, sadism and masochism, masculinity and femininity and male and female. This gender ambivalence is caught between his various characterisations of the feminine cyclist and masculine seducer but also further confused by the presence of the double. Doubling displaces and decentres his identity further and with his killing of his double the already unstable fragments of self and other are perpetually torn asunder. The male protagonist's gender ambiguity is further called into doubt in relation to the androgyne figure.²⁷

10. Ending / End-game

The final scene, with the intertitle 'In spring', returns us to the theme of transformation, with its connotations of growth, birth and new beginnings. Some critics have viewed this ironically, for it appears to be death and not life which we are shown, in the image of the two seemingly lifeless figures. For example, Williams calls it 'an ironic mockery of rebirth' (1981: 99); Sandro refers to 'a landscape connoting death instead of the rebirth of life' (1987: 48) and

²⁷ See chapter 4.

Adamowicz suggests that the final intertitle 'promises renewal but introduces a freeze frame of disintegration and death' (2010: 34). However, this image of spring and the protagonists' relationship to the sand – as if they are growing out of it, grafted on to it or being born from it – and the connotations of the maternal body and Mother Earth combine to form a powerful image of (gender) transformation. Adding weight to this reading, of course, is the fact that it continues the chain of associations with birth and death, and those relating to cutting and gender explored earlier. Here, cutting is presented in the form of a man and woman bisected by the sand, which could be seen as representing the penetration of the surface or border (as with the sliced eye) to the maternal body (the earth) inhabiting a liminal space: neither here nor there, both present and absent. This liminality is compounded by the fact that they are also in the process of decay – neither alive nor dead (contributing further to the convulsive qualities already noted) - and it is the focus on *process* that is important here. Furthermore, it is an image of abjection that recalls Bataille's notion of the *informe*, which respects no borders and is in flux; and therefore, like liminality, it hints at a quite different conclusion, offering the promise of transformation and liberation and an end to 'the old antinomies' and calling to mind Paul Eluard's (2007:15) words: 'all transformations are possible'.

It might be argued that the final scene may return us once again to a binarised version of gender, with male and female figures buried in the sand 'blinded' and 'devoured' by the rays of the sun and by a swarm of insects, in a seemingly pessimistic re-instatement of patriarchy, but could be argued that it is necessary as the real transformation can only be enacted outside the cinema, by the audience. In this sense Buñuel's 'passionate call to murder' is a call to arms to transform a society which has created such a system in the first place.²⁸ This may be so but

²⁸Buñuel made this declaration in *La Revolution Surréaliste* in December, 1929, which also included the film script, because of his shock and disappointment at those who found the film 'poetic' or 'beautiful'. There is a kind of *mise en abyme* here, where the initial opening up and blinding of the eye with the razor is rhymed with the blinding of the eyes by the sun and insects. The play on blindness and sight and the idea of vision or insight has been explored earlier. It should be noted that the script refers to the insects but the image is so murky at this point that they are hard to discern.

it is my contention that this transformation had already begun the moment we allowed ourselves to engage with the film in terms of identification and desire; and to reflect on the ways in which gender identity is constructed, suggesting new possibilities of re-construction.

In many ways, the 'dance of genders' sequence provides a neat summary of the concerns and strategies of the whole film, with its emphasis on a ludic dismantling of gender identity. The shifting and destabilised gender identities in this sequence explode the notion that gender identity is fixed, unitary, tied to biological identity. Buñuel and Dalí achieve this through their use of shifting or convulsive identities, wherein the protagonists are constantly seen as fabricated bodies and identities that are ultimately signs or representations shaped by the changing discourses of the film's audiences. Through the shifting permutations of male and female, masculine and feminine, they reveal the fundamental arbitrariness of the supposed link between signifier and signified and its constructedness, which means that gender identity is not fixed, can be *other-wise*. It is only when normative discursive practices are 'troubled' that it becomes clear that what is perceived as normal is actually negotiated from a set of choices or constructs of gendered reality. As Butler (1993: 308) argues 'identity categories tend to be instruments of regulatory regimes, whether as the normalising categories of oppressive structures or as the rallying points for a liberatory contestation of that very oppression'. So, there is no 'original', 'true' or pre-existing gender identity but these are rather 'revealed as a regulatory fiction' (Butler 2006: 33).

In *Un Chien andalou* this 'troubling' is achieved largely by adopting the codes and conventions of classical Hollywood cinema: appearing to offer the semblance of a realistic milieu but one in which the usual rules are constantly first asserted and then denied: subverted. In terms of characterisation, the nameless, male and female protagonist switch roles, moving between active and passive, masculine and feminine, as well as physically

exchanging gender attributes, suggesting indifferentiation, fragmentation, and hybrid identities; and this echoes the gender ambiguity of the androgyne figure, who appears to represent elements of the male and female protagonists. Doubling, through Batcheff's playing of three roles, along with his (and Mareuil's) parodic reworking of their former roles, and the proliferation of certain elements of *mise-en-scène* (the concave and convex figures) all contribute to shifting and ambivalent gender identities. Black humour further distances us, temporarily uncoupling our identification with the protagonists and our immersion in the diegesis, problematising and encouraging us to question the disturbing bodily invasions and anatomical migrations in relation to gender identity and its transformation. In the 'dance of genders' sequence the sense of game-playing and 'tit for tat' punishments provides a foil to the unpleasant aspects of this sequence and is liberating because it provokes laughter without any sense that the characters are victims or that we (in our identification with them) will experience what they are going through. The fast pace of the action and fast cutting also prevent the spectator from dwelling for too long on these moments; and the use of alternating tangos and the *Liebestod*, reinforces these other aspects.

In conclusion, the extreme shifts between these conflicting positions, parallel the assertion and denials present at all levels of the text: the emphasis on cutting, fragmentation, the constant reversals, exchanges and switching back and forth - are fundamental to Buñuel and Dalí's troubling of gender: both enforcing, questioning, contradicting, crossing, and blurring distinctions between male and female, masculine and feminine. The ambivalent effects generated by such strategies - particularly in those extremes of laughter and horror or attraction and repulsion – are seen as related to the use of *dépaysement* and are, of course, propitious for a Surrealist re-envisioning of gender identity, that is shown to be multiple and fluid. This ability to cross gender borders is seen as a way of disturbing and transforming the

old antinomies, and, in so doing, creating agency for the subject (and the spectator), who is able to activate (via bisexual switching) a more personal, liberated, convulsive position.

I began discussing *Un Chien andalou* in terms of a dialogue or dance relating to gender, between the protagonists, and we have seen how this notion is figured as an ongoing transformation, associated with exchange and switching. We also saw that the dialogue between text and spectator calls for a mobile spectator, who must be able to switch between passive actor - participating in the film-fantasy - and active agent, critiquing and reflecting upon the film and how it relates to self and the world. In the next chapter we explore how Joseph Cornell transforms each of these aspects in radical ways, not just for the spectator but particularly in the relationship between text and author.

Chapter 2

'Rose c'est la vie' or a Rose by another name: desire and becoming (in) Joseph Cornell's Rose Hobart

Minimal, incoherent fragments
The opposite of History, creator of ruins
Out of your ruins you have made creations.
Octavio Paz (1984: 98)

The miracles found in trash [...] Everything has a use
other than the one generally attributed to it.
André Breton (1981: 10)

Collage = reality
Joseph Cornell (1993: 49)

Introduction

As we saw in the previous chapter, *Un Chien andalou* explores gender identity as a collage text, constantly threatening to alienate the spectator through incomprehension or repulsion, and because of the demands placed on the spectator to switch between passivity and activity in relation to participating in the film-fantasy as well as remaining distant from it and critical. Undoubtedly, Buñuel and Dalí's film offered Joseph Cornell a number of possibilities for exploring his own ideas in film, and with *Rose Hobart* (1936)¹ this sense of dialogue with *Un Chien andalou* is most evident in Cornell's adoption and adaptation of its examination and subversion of hetero-normative notions of gender identity, as well as its collage aesthetic but, as we shall see Cornell's approach is also quite different.

¹I will be referring to The DVD version of *Rose Hobart*, restored and copied by Anthology Film Archives, that is part of the *Treasures From American Film Archives: 50 Preserved Films* DVD box set (2005).

With *Rose Hobart* Cornell was to 'transfigure the ordinary into the extraordinary', as Dawn Ades aptly puts it.² He took the 16mm reels of film he discovered in a bargain basement warehouse in New Jersey, which made up George Melford's forgettable 'jungle melodrama' *East of Borneo* (1931), and re-cut and spliced them together in a completely different order. He added some unidentified footage of a crowd staring upwards, shots of the sun, clouds passing in front of the sun culminating in a solar eclipse, as well as other material. Cornell reduced the original film's running time from 75 minutes to 19 minutes. From such unpromising material he fashioned a film that stood somewhere between the trash aesthetics of Walter Benjamin and the Surrealists' explorations and transformations of the everyday. The idea of creating a text from found fragments was, of course, nothing new, especially in the realm of collage and assemblage. However, what was new was his decision to adapt this idea to film, what Cornell referred to as a 'tapestry in action',³ inaugurating 'collage film' or 'found-footage film', and influencing many future avant-garde filmmakers such as Stan Brakhage, Ken Jacobs, Jonas Mekas, Chris Marker and Bill Morrison.⁴ Indeed, it was Cornell's first film and something of an experiment that drew on his background in collage and the boxes that he is more well known for; and, as I will show, both of these have a decisive influence on his first film, inducing Ratcliff (1990: 43), for example, to refer to Cornell as a 'virtuoso of fragments'. She is referring to Cornell's collage aesthetic utilised in *Rose Hobart*, which proves to be particularly productive in articulating the notion of gender identity as fabrication, shifting and multiple.

There is little doubt that Cornell's exposure to Surrealism, particularly through Max Ernst's collages, but also other Surrealist works encountered in galleries in his native New York, and

² Dawn Ades, quoted in an interview in the CD Rom accompanying Neff (2003).

³ Cited in Hauptman (1999: 87).

⁴ See Eli Horwatt's (2008) thoughtful essay on Cornell, in which he argues that early Soviet film practice, and notably the newsreel, frequently involved the re-editing of films from the West, in order to transform their former (unacceptable) ideological meanings.

especially at Julien Levy's gallery (including screenings of Surrealist films such as *Un Chien andalou* and *L'Age d'or*), along with his friendships and correspondence with a number of 'exiled' Surrealists (in particular Duchamp), as well as his own earliest experiences in making collages, would influence his various artworks.⁵ Moreover, he shares certain affinities with Surrealism, particularly in relation to the notion of gender identity as something that is not fixed, and challenges binarised notions of gender and sexuality in favour of a more fluid approach. However, at the same time Cornell's adherence to Christian Science, as well as his own complex relationship with his 'portraits' of young women and androgynous boys and girls – one that veers between an old world paternalism (in the role of a kindly, pure, spiritual guardian) and a more obviously sexualised attraction - makes for a deeply ambivalent gender politics.

This chapter explores the implications of Cornell's appropriation and transfiguration of found footage in *Rose Hobart* in relation to gender identity. I will be concerned with establishing a bisexual reading of the film, positing it as an ambiguous site and fantasy of contested ideological gender representations, identities and meanings, revolving around the Rose Hobart of the title. Briefly, Cornell's cutting free or rescue of Rose from the patriarchal discourses of the Melford film (where she is clearly figured as an object of desire) raises a number of issues relating to her new status: firstly, the view that the manipulations and reconstruction of her by Cornell are a renewed form of a patriarchal will-to-mastery as fantasy or fetish; secondly, as a kind of fan's idealised homage or film-portrait, celebrating and preserving her star-image and performance; and thirdly, as a figure of identification, a

⁵ For accounts of Cornell's links with Surrealism see Ades (1990), Hartigan (1990) and Levy (2003). The key influence was Max Ernst's collage novels as well as his friendships with Duchamp, but he was also close to Dorothea Tanning, Lee Miller and Leonor Fini and was familiar with Surrealist writings and the exhibitions of Surrealist artworks at Levy's gallery and elsewhere. He was included in the landmark exhibition *Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism* (1936) at the Museum of Modern Art, but famously wrote to curator Alfred H Barr to indicate in the exhibition catalogue that he did not see himself as 'an official Surrealist', nor did he 'share in the subconscious and dream theories of the surrealists'. He did describe himself as a fervent admirer of their work, but believed that 'surrealism has healthier possibilities than have been developed'. Letter (13 November 1936), Archives of The Museum of Modern Art, New York, cited in Ades (1990: 19).

desire *to be* her. I also consider the implications of Cornell's film practice in relation to Surrealism and particularly the demands it places on the spectator.

Underpinning each of these points is the relationship between Cornell and the actress Rose Hobart. What I argue is that Cornell's film 'portrait' of Rose Hobart is by extension a self-portrait, switching between a desire *for* her to a desire *to be* her. Already, the change in the film's title (from *East of Borneo* to *Rose Hobart*) introduces the notion of switching and transformation, announcing the actress as the main focus and centre of the film's (and spectator's) universe: a film-portrait. It is useful, perhaps, to consider the relationship between Rose-as-object and Rose as Cornell's gender double or mask in connection with Breton's twin notion of 'Who am I?' (self) and 'whom do I haunt?' (other) (Breton 1960: 11). As Adamowicz has convincingly argued in relation to collage and other intertextual practices which juxtapose found elements, the search for the self is constantly displaced by the search for the other. She utilises the image of the hermit crab to describe how the 'self appropriates the texts of others, constructing an identity through the process of cannibalisation' (Adamowicz 2005: 129). In this sense, then, *Rose Hobart* is a cannibalised text⁶ and it is in Cornell's collage technique that we can best understand this idea of what David Lomas (2000) refers to as 'the haunted self'.

1. Source material: East of Borneo

In order to examine Cornell's transformation of Rose it is first necessary to consider the principal source material, Melford's *East of Borneo*, which makes up most of *Rose Hobart*. In the original film, Linda (played by Hobart) voyages through the jungles of Borneo to track

⁶ In fact recent scholarship on the production history of *East of Borneo* reveals that Melford's film was itself a cannibalised text, recycled from footage originally shot for another Universal film (never completed) called *Ourang* (sic) (1930), a love story-thriller between a white man and a native girl, set in the Borneo jungle, featuring killer orang-utans. See K. A. Westphal, <http://motionwithmotion.blogspot.com/search/label/Rose%20Hobart>

down her estranged husband (Dr Allan Clark), who is now court physician to the tribal Prince Hashim. She apologises for leaving him for another man and begs him to take her back. For most of the film her husband is represented as uncaring, rude and constantly drunk, seemingly uninterested in her proposed reunion or in the fact that the prince is obviously pursuing her. His sudden change of heart towards the end of the film, when he leaves with her, after Linda has killed the prince, is almost comic in its absurd pandering to patriarchy's demands for the reuniting of the married couple. It is interesting that Linda is initially seen as literally wearing the trousers in the male clothes she sports for the first quarter of the film, and is shown as resourceful and brave in her voyage through the dangerous jungles. As soon as she is ensconced in the Prince's palace she becomes feminised both in her appearance (wearing various dresses and gowns) and in her submissive behaviour to both husband and prince. In relation to her husband this takes the form of constant apologies, where she accepts responsibility for the breakdown of their marriage even though it becomes obvious through their arguments that her husband has driven her away because he is always working and has little time for her. In relation to the prince she treads a fine line between acceding to his wishes and avoiding his advances. However, it could be argued that Linda could be seen to be *performing* a role for the prince, her husband and the other men she encounters, because she is able to achieve more this way than in direct confrontation with male authority. She disavows her possession of the phallus by adopting the mask of (feminine) submission rather like the example of the highly successful woman professional who flirted with her male colleagues after giving a successful presentation to a public forum, as analysed by Joan Riviere in 'Womanliness as a masquerade' (1929). As Riviere writes:

Womanliness therefore could be assumed and worn as a mask, both to hide possession of masculinity and to avert the reprisals expected if she was found to possess it [...] The reader may now ask how I define womanliness or where I draw the line between genuine womanliness and the 'masquerade'. My suggestion is not, however, that there is any such difference; whether radical or superficial, they are the same thing (1986: 38)

This, of course, is deeply problematic in relation to female agency for it is never fully clear whether this *performativity* partakes of an active agent behind the deed, indeed, it suggests quite the opposite.⁷ In these terms, then, Linda's actions are anything but free. However, it seems to me that Riviere's denial of agency is reductive and goes against the textual evidence that we are presented with. The reality is that Linda achieves everything she (consciously) aspires to: she tracks down and eventually wins back her man, surmounting all obstacles in her way, including an arduous six thousand mile voyage through treacherous jungle terrain, rescuing her husband and killing the prince when he tries to seduce her.

However, the film founders on a paradox: on the one hand it represents the tale of a feisty, independent woman who is successful in her quest, but on the other hand she must be seen to be subordinate to patriarchal, heteronormative discourses, where her initial active masculinity is signified as a perversion, and she therefore needs to be punished and made to pay for *her* breaking up the marriage in the first place. Even though we learn that her husband spent very little time with her, this is reconfigured as his *devotion* to his research as a doctor. Crucially her quest must be seen as a sort of penance, a recognition of her failures as a less-than-devoted wife, wronging her husband through her lack of support and understanding; and especially in her extramarital relations with another man (despite her claims that she remained faithful). It also connotes her inability to be truly happy without him. In this scenario independence and agency are viewed negatively, leading inexorably to the breakup of her marriage and the subsequent loneliness and loss that it 'inevitably' brings. This is

⁷ Judith Butler (1993) develops this idea, pessimistically suggesting that performing womanliness or any gender or sexual identity is not a conscious choice and more akin to a learned response or performance, a culturally discursive reflex. In fact both Riviere and Butler appear to deny any notion of consciousness or agency on the part of the subject.

basically the heterosexist belief that a woman needs a man to be happy and once found she should stick by him come what may.

Despite the apparent closure offered by the final scene, in which the husband rescues Linda, carrying her onto the boat and locked with her in a passionate embrace (as two of the prince's men row them to safety), the scene does not ring true. The spectator is placed in a tricky position, where s/he is encouraged to accept this final union as a happy ending, the metaphorical implications of the voyage suggesting a return to a hetero-normative plenitude as well as embarking on a new journey (a second honeymoon?). In many ways this final voyage works as a *mise-en-abyme*, rhyming with but countering Linda's solo voyage (signifying dependence or loneliness) with the figure of the couple's voyage (signifying harmony and happiness). It is significant that Linda's androgynous appearance on her initial voyage gives way to something more conventionally feminine in her final voyage with Allan. More specifically Rose's independent actions and her androgynous appearance (cropped hair, the mannish safari suit, pith helmet, riding boots, shirt and tie) are signifiers of masculinity and independence, clearly at odds with patriarchy's demands.

It is not difficult to see in *East of Borneo*, as Michael Richardson (2006: 69) suggests, 'a very strange film, with a strangeness that is quite independent of, and is not exhausted by, Cornell's transformation of it'. I would argue that a large part of this relates to the strangeness created by its ambivalent treatment of gender identity, with its clash between patriarchal and feminist discourses. According to Richardson (2006: 70) Cornell's film 'enlarges the original without annulling it, giving us another way of looking at it'. The patriarchal discourses may have been jettisoned, but for those who have seen Melford's film they remain in a dialogical relation to the newer version, allowing us to compare them and, in the process, examine and critique how gender identity is fabricated. In many ways Cornell's practice chimes with Louis Aragon's synthetic criticism, whereby the spectator reconstructs elements from a film

'bringing to the surface of a film's second, secret life, its latent content'. In this way 'a poetic charge [...] was intensified', due to their liberation from the logic of the narrative 'that held them prisoner' (Hammond 1978: 5).

Some passages of the original film are retained in their entirety, obeying the laws of continuity and, in P. Adams Sitney's words, 'remind us of the obligatory fluidity of Hollywood editing [...] which makes Cornell's reconstruction all the cruder' (Sitney 2002: 75). Examples of shots retained in their original continuous order occur towards the middle and end of the film: Rose observing her husband fighting (Shots 70-75); Rose and the monkey (shots 77-91); Rose arriving in Marudu (Shots 92-97). As already noted the shots of Rose emerging from behind the mosquito nets at the beginning (Shots 3-6) have been carefully edited to remove the snake that threatens Rose and kills one of the hired hands. However, Cornell completely transforms Melford's film by removing all the layers of the original narrative and instead focuses on shots of Hobart which do not seem to follow any kind of logical narrative pattern, with the effect that continuity of action, time and place are constantly confounded in the celebration of Rose Hobart as star or fantasy.

2. Cornell, collage and Rose Hobart

Cornell's collage technique serves to highlight the constructedness and fragility of gender identity in the Melford film, unravelling, cutting and laying bare the invisible strings of patriarchal logic that attempt to hold in place the ideological discourses and conventions of heteronormativity. This is largely achieved through his reordering and re-cutting of the film, focusing mainly on shots of Rose and completely revising shot order so that the continuity of the original film is abandoned for a more poetic and personal vision.⁸ In fact Rose is allotted

⁸ Continuity of time, place and other features of the *mise-en-scène* - most notably, setting costume and lighting - are sabotaged so that often it appears that a shot bears little relation to the previous shot.

forty-nine solo shots in comparison to thirteen for the prince and six for the husband. Many of the shots of the men are very brief and cut or skip in the middle of a shot, or are in the process of fading out. Six out of the thirteen shots of the prince do this as opposed to two out of the six shots for the husband. Rose and the prince share seventeen shots, two of which are cut short when the prince enters the frame, whilst Rose and her husband share eight shots with two of these cut off when the husband enters the frame.

At the same time, we can see that Cornell's re-editing is also an attempt to reshape and transform Melford's vision of Rose in the guise of a 'custodian', editing out and changing what Cornell regards as a 'false' representation of the star and regaining her 'true' essence. In many ways this transformation is a form of idealisation, so that Rose is purified to fit Cornell's own image of her as an innocent. Doss (2007: 134-5) argues that Cornell's idealisation of stars like Marilyn Monroe is prompted by his Christian Science leanings, which sought to rescue or reimagine the star as purified, in touch with a hidden spiritual reality, where death is seen as 'an escape from the worldly realm of matter; the triumph of divine spirit.' Allied with this is his sense of shared identification with their plight. This sense of kinship could in effect be a way of transcending and transforming those aspects of his own life that disturbed him, such as his repeated dissatisfaction with his work, which rarely materialised the 'unfoldments' of his spiritual vision.⁹

Cornell's collage technique, which can seem amateurish and random in the ordering and construction of shots, is in fact a complex process. In *Rose Hobart*, as in his collages, boxes and later films, there is a discernible thread that links the heterogeneous elements. As Ades (1996:16) observes, these links work by *association* rather than the classic Surrealist

⁹ Cornell's diaries are filled with such disappointments, even when he experiences some success. In his diary entry in October, 1950 he wrote: 'The box *Moutarde Dijon* finally in a satisfactory state of completion after countless discarding, rearrangements, etc. Even so in this setting an indecisive feeling'. (14th October 1950, recorded 16th, AAA microfilm roll 1059, frame 0275). See also his entry for 20th August 1951 (AAA microfilm roll 1059, frame 0338). See Archives of American Art for further information: <http://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/joseph-cornell-papers-5790/more>

technique of *dissociation*: 'What he comes to seek is not incongruity so much as a mysterious congruity, a thread of affinities, however intangible, rather than an illuminating spark struck from disparateness'.¹⁰ Anna Dezeuze (2007: 229) develops this notion of a thread: 'Cornell was very much concerned with weaving what he once called a "tenuous thread" that would hold together images, objects and evocations'. Dezeuze refers us to a diary entry of Cornell, in which he discusses the difficulty of maintaining this linking thread, which he found 'so hard at times to keep hold of (or perhaps to communicate to others is what I mean)' (2007: 29). The chains of associations could extend over many years and across a mass of seemingly unrelated materials: clippings, photographs, objects, diary entries, conversations, memories and so on, as well as their relation to his other works. Cornell's solution was to think of the various elements of his works as forming 'constellations' - an idea he borrowed from Stéphane Mallarmé - which Cornell describes as an ongoing attempt to connect the many clusters of experiences and associations into some kind of meaningful order or pattern.¹¹

Commenting on Cornell's collage technique in his films, Marjorie Keller (1986: 105) makes the point that 'Cornell used systems of collage that are non-rational and ludic. The breakdown of narrative flow and realistic space, and the use of repetition are characteristic of the collages, boxes, and films, and of children's speech and play'. This is in complete contrast to classical cinema, where a clear logic links each shot and where ideological discourses are validated through cause and effect mechanisms (particularly narrative trajectories and recognisable goals), psychological motivation of character and the rules of continuity editing, which create a fluid sense of events occurring logically or established by the conventions of the film's diegesis. In this way ideology is hidden or more commonly naturalised so that the spectator is positioned to share the points of view being propounded. Keller considers the

¹⁰ See also my discussion of Cornell's collages and boxes in chapter 4.

¹¹ See Cornell's diary entry on Mallarmé in Caws (2000: 184).

notion of childhood to be a crucial element in understanding Cornell's technique and the key to understanding his found-footage films. Following Piaget, she argues that the logical order of events in a sequence are of no consequence to a child and it is the child's egocentrism that is responsible for this downplaying of logic's importance, giving the narrator a much more influential role than the listener of a tale. As we shall see, despite Cornell's rupturing of the original film's narrative, by focusing mainly on shots of the actress Rose Hobart, narrative is not totally jettisoned as the transformed film contains a new structure that can be read as a narrative of sorts, centred around Rose and her relationship with the eclipse. Cornell's playful reconfiguration of *East of Borneo*, however, certainly conforms to the idea Keller proposes because Cornell is ultimately only interested in using the footage from Melford's film to create his own film, adding further footage from other film sources to help in this process.

3. Concealment

Cornell, like the Surrealists, thus wished to apprehend the world around him with 'the wonder and spontaneity of the child' (Blair 1996: 105).¹² This ability to see with the eyes of a child is necessarily allied with the sensibility of the adult artist and craftsman. Cornell's method is therefore complex and paradoxical, combining both childlike playfulness and openness and an adult's awareness of logic, morality, taste and so on. It is essentially the conflict between Id and Superego, leading us to raise the issue of censorship in relation to Cornell's inclusion and exclusion of the elements that form the constellations of meanings in his artworks. On the one hand the collage elements combine extremely personal material, reflecting Cornell's deepest desires and proclivities and a wish to communicate; but on the other hand - and this is true of his diaries, too - there seems to be a wilful attempt to edit out anything that might present Cornell negatively. Indeed, I would agree with Blair's comment that he was 'a master

¹² See also Ades (1996:11) and Leppanen-Guerra (2011) on Cornell and childhood.

of concealment'; Blair cites Robert Motherwell's anecdote about Cornell's reasons for his abstinence from alcohol, as evidence: 'He never wished to risk revealing something about himself [...] self-revelation of an unedited nature would have been unthinkable to Cornell' (Blair 1998: 204). However, it is my view that everywhere in his work are signs of such concealment, particularly in relation to those works featuring androgynous figures and women. As Keller (1986: 101) argues, Cornell allies himself with French and German Romantic poets, such as Nerval and Goethe, whose works often featured a sensitive male protagonist 'in love with a young woman who is sometimes elusive, sometimes unapproachable. The desired woman is an actress. She is boyish. Sometimes she is dressed as a man'. Although there is not the space here to show how this notion operates across Cornell's practice in any detail, Cornell's relationship with Rose conforms in a number of ways to Cornell's other female and androgynous portraits, as for example in his early collage *Untitled (Woman and Sewing-Machine)* (1931), in the various Medici slot machines and boxes created between 1940 and 1960 featuring androgynous boys and girls¹³ or the boxes of Hollywood actresses, dancers and those young women Cornell discovered on his many trips to the city or through friends and acquaintances.¹⁴ Such portraits reveal Cornell's (repressed) desire for and identification with the female and androgynous figures, in a state of constant switching. However, Cornell often attempts to conceal this relationship because of his fears of revealing too much about himself through a series of often obscure and personal associations and connections.

Moreover, whereas the above examples demonstrate a variety of ways in which Cornell attempts to conceal his role as creator or desiring subject (his mastery) or gender-doubling

¹³ The most significant are: *Medici Slot Machine (Object)*, 1942, *Medici Slot Machine*, 1943, *Untitled (Medici Princess)*, C.1948, *Untitled (Caravaggio Boy; Compartmented Box)*, C. 1950, *Medici Princess*, C. 1952, and *Untitled (Medici Prince)*, C. 1952.

¹⁴ I will consider some examples of these in the next section.

and bisexual switching in *Rose Hobart* presents us with a very different collage aesthetic. The many fragments that make up the film are clearly visible, drawing attention to the film's status as (re)construction and representation. The roughness of the 'scarred' raw (film) material has an almost tactile quality to it and the crude splices, as well as its disjunctive editing, with the shots cut short by strange ellipses, foreground their status as cut-out fragments. At the same time the spectator transfigures and transforms these fragments into something resembling a recognisable whole. Indeed the spectator has a crucial role to play in such collage texts, where an active engagement is generated by a desire to re-assemble and make sense of the seemingly disparate fragments and or semantic gaps in understanding. As Adamowicz (2005: 194) makes clear, collage texts retain a paradoxical reality and are experienced as both 'presence and sign', making them a perfect vehicle for exposing the notion that characters are representations of (real) women and men and that, on the contrary, their gender identities are (ideologically) constructed and can therefore be reconstructed. Therefore the maintenance of the imperfect fit between sign and referent, through foregrounding the process of its construction, where the relationship between the individual parts or fragments is clearly alluded to, is highly productive for a Surrealist re-envisioning of gender identity and its transformation.

Although it may be the case that in *Rose Hobart* Cornell's deconstructive approach elicits such a re-envisioning of gender identity, it seems to me that, examined within the context of Cornell's other work, his first cinematic endeavour betrays a contradictory impulse to master Rose's appearance and disappearance and the ways in which Cornell (and the spectator) have access to her image, demonstrating *his* quasi-magical powers over her (and us). To be more precise, *Rose Hobart* stands out from the other portraits and works by Cornell that feature female or androgynous figures, as a unique experiment.

4. Doubling

The various collaged threads or fragments in Cornell's work can be read in the same way that Freud refers to the condensed and displaced fragments or elements of a dream, which are ultimately related to the dreamer's repressed desires. In addition to this the repetition of familiar imagery - women and androgynous figures, and the various elements that are combined with these - reveal much about Cornell's gender identity in the form of a *repetition compulsion*.¹⁵ This is further demonstrated by Cornell's irresistible attraction to doubling as a textual strategy, whereby recurrent motifs, themes and formal characteristics are repeated. The presence of various doubles leads to a kind of over-determination or *mise-en-abyme* of switching between masculine and feminine and desire and identification. It is as if he were constantly torn between disguising and revealing aspects of himself. Reading through Cornell's letters and diaries it is clear that he was very much aware of and responsible for these (disguised) connections. Indeed, *Rose Hobart* is one in a long line of Cornell's gender doubles. The obsessive recurrence of this trope provides the most convincing evidence of a repetition compulsion that hovers around Cornell's paradoxical relationship of identification and desire with these figures, constantly threatening to reveal his part in it.

Doubling occurs in a number of ways in Cornell's work: most commonly, through the repetition of different images or material associated with the same person - such as in the Medici-inspired work (see earlier) or the portraits of film stars or dossiers on ballerinas. For example, *Untitled (Portrait of Lee Miller, 1948-49)*, presents two photographs of Miller in

¹⁵ There is not the space here to develop this notion in any detail but see Blair (1998: 140-173), for an illuminating account of Cornell's obsessive attachment to figures who betray an almost serial uniformity (through sharing a common set of characteristics), who are stripped of their individuality, and serving as so many doubles for Cornell to switch between and haunt. Both Hauptman (1999) and Tashjian (1991) suggest evidence of Cornell's repetition compulsion without using the terms I am advocating.

profile, wearing a masculine jacket and short boyish hair.¹⁶ In *The Uncertainty Principle*, 1966, Cornell utilises a vintage print of an obscure Russian Diva called Henrietta Sontag and photocopied to produce two identical images and connected with writer Susan Sontag, whom Cornell befriended.¹⁷ For the collage that accompanies the *Enchanted Wanderer* article in *View* Cornell transforms the image of Hedy Lamarr by merging the image of her with that of a young Renaissance boy.¹⁸ Apparently Cornell's obsession with his identification and transformation of Lamarr caused him some anxiety, as evidenced by the following diary entry: 'Yesterday I was trying to fit Hedy Lamarr into Dante Gabriel Rossetti's pre-Raphaelite garden, without success'.¹⁹ There are many more examples of androgynous representations such as the box portrait of Garbo, with a photograph of her face superimposed over a male torso, entitled *The Crystal Mask* (1939-40), or the box *Untitled* (Penny Arcade portrait of Lauren Bacall), 1945-46, which juxtaposes a single image of the glamorous Hollywood star with androgynous images of Bacall as a young (boyish) girl, demonstrating Cornell's attraction to the 'two' Bacalls (the siren and the innocent), as well as Cornell's portrait of Breton, which feminises Man Ray's photograph of Breton, that Cornell adorns with outrageous woman's curls.

Although many of Cornell's portraits were drawn from his imagination and transformed via fantasy, other portraits, like that of Sontag (discussed earlier), and especially the one of Linda Hadley (*Untitled*) c. 1964), involve a degree of close personal involvement with each of the women, that more obviously crosses over into identification. For example, Hadley explains

¹⁶ There is also a photograph of Cornell by Lee Miller, which shows a profile image of Cornell next to a model schooner with a streamer attached to the mast, giving the appearance of a woman's long hair, again suggesting Cornell's identification with such androgynous images.

¹⁷ As Solomon 1997: 317, relates this collage is cryptically linked to Cornell's special relationship with the writer Susan Sontag, through their shared surname (although no relation) but he saw them as 'a pair - the Sontag sisters, imaginary twins whose doubleness captured the dreamy feeling of identification that made him their double as well'.

¹⁸ See *View* 1.9-10 (December 1941-January 1942), p3 (reprinted in Hammond 1978: 129-30).

¹⁹ Quoted in Solomon (2004: 124) Interestingly Cornell sent Parker Tyler a letter where he recounts a cross-dressing fantasy in which Cornell imagines Lamarr on an antique bicycle, at the turn of the century dressed as a dandy in men's clothes.

that their relationship involved constant 'stream of consciousness' wordplay in their spoken and written conversations, but especially the latter, 'where we'd just be off making associations [...] it was like a universal unconscious that you could plug into with Joseph'.²⁰ Most tellingly Hadley speaks of their shared sensibility as 'a partial merging. He would merge with you and you would merge with him' (cited in Blair 1998: 166). This is also evident in his relationship with painter Yayoi Kusama, who was a model for Cornell but then became his lover, and one of the many notes Cornell sent to the Japanese artist reads 'Waiting for you-you-I' - a clever pun on her name that suggests that the doubled 'you' (Kusama) becomes 'I' (Cornell). Doubling also occurs through the proliferation of young girls and women that feature in his films²¹ as well as those young girls and women he worshipped (and identified with) from a distance, recording his fantasies in his diaries and notes and making gifts (often boxes) for them.²² These Portraits of famous as well as obscure performers from movies, opera, dance, ballet and theatre, then, become so many masks or displaced selves that are always as much self-portraits of their creators as portraits of the stars. Identity, then, is both sought and submerged, displayed and displaced in the creation of these portraits, and the haunted self is the place where the I and the other converge and conflict like ghostly palimpsests. Claude Cahun's remark 'Under this mask, another mask, I will never be finished lifting all these faces' (2007: 27), seems an appropriate expression of such a quest.

In *Rose Hobart* doubling is manifested in the repeated images of Rose in both feminine and masculine attire. The film's first major sequence features the androgynous Rose. Following the shot of the crowd, looking up, the first glimpse of Rose is a mere two and a half seconds, dressed in a feminine bath robe (accompanied by the prince) in a state of fading out. We then

²⁰ Interview with Leila Hadley. Cited in Blair 1998: 165.

²¹ See for example the androgynous female leads of *Legend For Fountains* (Fragments) (1957) and the various androgynous children and performers in *The Children's Party* (1968) and *Midnight Party* (1968).

²² His relationship with Joyce Hunter, who Cornell was infatuated with, is perhaps the most infamous due to her theft of some of his boxes, her involvement with criminals and subsequent murder. For an account of Cornell's relationship with Joyce see Solomon (1997: 285-299).

cut to a much longer series of shots of Rose behind a mosquito net, and as we get closer we see she is now wearing a man's jacket, tie, jodhpurs and riding boots and has short cropped hair, all conspiring to transform her into an androgyne. Masking of the figure is achieved filmically via the fade that, like the eclipse we see later, bathes her in darkness, concealing her from view, and is also figured through the mosquito net, which veils her, climaxing with the masking of her true identity as a woman, through her adoption of men's clothing and boyish hairstyle.²³ The masking is associated with Cornell, who utilises the film footage to accentuate the notion of masking as a voyeuristic spectacle, teasing the spectator (and himself) in their desire to gaze upon Rose as well as in his attempts to mask his voyeuristic desire but also in his identification with Rose as gender double. Tellingly, Cornell removes the footage of the snake that appeared in Melford's original film, which menaces Rose, and suggests Cornell's suppression of its sexual symbolism, as well as providing further evidence of his editing out of material which he found distasteful or which threatened to come between himself and Rose, the object of his affections and identification. Similarly, Cornell also excises the footage of the leopard that startles Rose and attacks one of the men who accompanies her on the voyage, as well as the death of the monkey freed by Rose, and indeed, the death of the prince at Rose's hand after he tries to seduce her, all distressing scenes that disturb Cornell's (and our) portrait of Rose, which is far removed from such dark and violent excesses.

5. Stargazing

Rose Hobart, then, in the terms I have been describing, becomes as much about Cornell and his gender identity as that of its star and the ways in which she is represented. The opening

²³ Even her hair is styled differently than the previous shot. Now it is combed down and straighter in comparison with the combed-out style of earlier, which adds feminine waves and curls.

sequence acts as a kind of frame for the subsequent portrait of the actress Rose Hobart, which will be completed in the closing moments of the film. To begin with we see a crowd in an unidentified exterior location, gazing up at the sky, reminding us of Richard Oelze's painting *Expectation*, also painted in 1936, as well as Eugène Atget's photograph, *The Eclipse*, of a crowd looking up at an eclipse, reproduced on the cover of *La Révolution surréaliste* in June 1926. There are also other precursors such as the photographs by the nineteenth century French astronomer Camille Flammarion which feature eclipses as well as other astronomical phenomena.²⁴ Perhaps he drew inspiration from Max Ernst's appropriation of Flammarion in his works, and most certainly acknowledged Ernst's technique of using such source material for his collages.

The first shot of the film poses an enigma, relating to what the crowd is gazing at. However, rather than showing us the expected shot (sky, sun, stars etc) which reveals this (as in classical cinema), we are introduced to another form of star in the shape of Rose Hobart, in footage from *East of Borneo*. It is only a few shots later (shot 7)²⁵ that this association is made clearer, when we cut to a medium close-up of the sun in partial eclipse. Although the expected stars are not present it should be noted that the sun is also a star – one that burns brighter than any other star in the universe (from the perspective of Earth) – and so the idea of stargazing or the notion of gazing at something extraordinary is certainly present. As has been well documented, Cornell had a keen interest in astronomy, star lore, myths related to the constellations and contemporary scientific and astronomical research on the cosmos; he amassed many books, articles and newspaper clippings and recording regular diary entries about famous astronomers past and present, much of which found its way into his works.²⁶

²⁴ See for example Kirsten Hoving (2009: 16). See also Cornell's 1932 collages *Tycho's Star* and *Untitled (Landscape With Solar Eclipse)*.

²⁵ All shot references are my own.

²⁶ For a study of Cornell and astronomy see Hoving (2009: 59-64), Blair (1998: 184) and Hauptman (1999: 105).

His interest in movies and worship of (female) movie stars is also well documented: he accumulated a wealth of related material and attended movies, corresponded with stars and collected 16mm prints of movies.²⁷ Cornell also bought a movie projector and then set about collecting films for showing to family and friends as well as helping scholars and film buffs to document and preserve them. His collection of films amounted to around two hundred reels, according to Jodi Hauptman (1990: 45) and included many examples of early cinema (including cartoons, travelogues, newsreels, educational documentaries and silent films). These were purchased from other collectors or in the various stores in New York which he frequently visited (as with his discovery of the reels of *East of Borneo*). In addition Cornell accumulated a vast archive of movie paraphernalia in print form: reviews, clippings, film stills and letters - to and from - movie stars with whom he corresponded. Working for Universal and Columbia studios between 1935 and 1937, making publicity photomontages not only gave Cornell access to further materials for artworks but, according to Lynda Hartigan (2007: 70), 'honed his editing skills and knowledge of photomechanical reproduction processes, all of which enhanced his sensibility of manipulating snippets and creating variants.' As well as being a regular movie goer and fan of commercial cinema he was, as mentioned in the introduction, a habitual attendee at Julien Levy's screenings of avant-garde films (including those by Leger, Duchamp, Buñuel and Dalí and others, and where he would also show *Rose Hobart*).²⁸

Another key influence on Cornell's association of women and stars came from his love of the films of Georges Méliès, some of which he owned and showed regularly in the Cornell house. A large number of these films feature women costumed as celestial bodies, with cut-out star shapes and other star paraphernalia. They were represented as other-worldly,

²⁷ See Deborah Solomon (2004: 72), for instance, for a thorough account of Cornell's cinema-going and love of movies.

²⁸ For further details see Julien Levy (2003: 148-152).

possessed, magical or ethereal. As Elizabeth Ezra (2000: 90) notes, at the turn of the century there was a rage for 'flying women'. A great many of these women appear as winged creatures such as fairies, butterfly-women, celestial bodies in the form of stars or moon goddesses and the lifeless bodies that float in the air in magic tricks. Indeed, another crucial influence could be seen as the figure of the magician (played by Méliès himself) who often conjured up beautiful women, only to make them disappear when he tired of them. As Ezra (2000: 92) has pointed out: 'the magician is almost always synonymous with the filmmaker'. Through the illusions and tricks offered by the cinematic medium, the filmmaker is able to duplicate the art of the magician via editing, multiple exposure etc. However, in several films an actual magician is shown doing the conjuring; and in *An Up-to-Date Conjuror* (1899) and *Extraordinary Illusions* (1903) Méliès brings a doll to life, which he then 'becomes'. As Ezra (2000: 95) writes: 'he is turning into the very woman he has created, thus becoming both subject and object of procreation. The magician, in other words, gives birth to himself'. It is relatively easy to imagine Cornell in the same terms: the opening is very much staged as a performance with the crowd looking up as the audience, awaiting Cornell's conjuring up of the celestial body and movie star Rose Hobart, who is also Cornell's double.

Méliès' film *The Eclipse (The Marriage of Sun and Moon)* (1907) provides us with another important link to Cornell's concern with stars and gender in alchemical terms, alluding to the idea of the chemical wedding and the hermaphrodite child of the sun and moon, in which the child represents the union and the reconciliation of opposites, a crucial operation in the creation of the philosopher's stone. The film also features more 'flying women' dressed as stars which would, no doubt, have appealed to Cornell.

The solar eclipse, in these terms, is easily read as a condensed figure or cipher for Rose Hobart, but it also serves as a narrative thread, linking the seemingly random juxtaposition of images that follow. At the beginning of the film we see the eclipse in shot 7 and towards the

end there are three more shots of the eclipse material. In shot 10 and shot 131 (the penultimate shot of the film) we see a spherical object falling into a pool of water, creating ripples. The implication is that somehow the eclipse has resulted in the dislodging of the sun from the sky. The final shot of the film reprises the shot of Rose looking down, except that this time, instead of her look preceding the falling sun, it follows straight after it. I would argue that Cornell intended us to link these archetypal symbols of (male) sun and (female) moon, which certainly serve to strengthen the idea of the chemical wedding, but here denies that union by only allowing the moon (and by implication the bride) to survive. Here is one bride who is not stripped bare by her bachelors! Quite the reverse, even. In fact, of course, this is *Rose* by another name. I would contend that Cornell wilfully encourages a playful fantasy of reversed expectations, particularly traditional gender roles.

A further reference to early cinema is provided by Cornell's use of a blue or purple piece of glass placed in front of the projector lens which, when projected, bathes the already dark film (much of the action is at night-time and the film-stock itself is grainy and damaged) in an unreal nocturnal glow.²⁹ This is a further attempt to return us to the mysterious beauty of the silent era, transforming the black and white footage in a process akin to early experiments with colour, via the use of red and green filters. Cornell's choice of blue relates also to his attraction to the notion of voyaging (both real and imagined) on the sea and especially in the sky, extending to celestial voyages and time travel but also associated with night-time and especially dreaming. Voyaging and navigation are related not only to Rose's actual voyage to the jungle and navigation of the various obstacles she confronts, but more crucially to the voyage and navigation of different gender identities, as well as acting as a cipher for Cornell's own transformed gender identity, explored as a form of navigation or voyage.

²⁹ See for example Melinda Barlow's (2007: 253-4) illuminating analysis of Cornell's use of blue across his other works. Interestingly, Cornell used a deep night-blue interior in his box *Untitled (Greta Garbo)*, c. 1939, which creates an almost identical effect to that achieved in *Rose Hobart*.

Another transformation of the original footage is through Cornell's instructions for the film to be projected at 'silent' speed (16-18fps as opposed to 24fps), which further adds to the evocation of the silent era, but also creates a subliminal dreamy quality through a subtly slowed movement (evoking slow-motion, sleepwalking and the world of dreams), which complements the nocturnal lyricism of the look created by the filter. These two elements help to create a sense of fluidity and a dreamlike atmosphere. They also help to balance the fragmentation of Cornell's collage approach by masking some of the physical imperfections of the footage, but also countering the 'jumpiness' associated with the disjunctive editing. Both of these interventions are further evidence of Cornell's resistance to and transformation of the original intentions of the film-maker, as well as drastically reinventing the portrait of Rose (and by extension) Cornell's self portrait, that is re-presented in *Rose Hobart*. We also recognise in such a move Cornell's desire to return to the world and values he associates with silent cinema, again evoking a kind of idealised, fetishised past of timeless, pure and innocent values, in a pre-fall Edenic paradise, which is at odds with the more decadent, darker and questionable (sinful) values of the contemporary world, signified metaphorically by the transformations associated with film technology: the coming of sound and colour. It is almost as if Cornell's masking of Rose through his interventions is a an attempt to cover up and conceal the sins of the latter, evoking once more Cornell, the (godlike) custodian.

What is more, the removal of plot and dialogue, along with Cornell's re-focussing on Rose's facial expressions and gestures, further demonstrates his love of the silent era, with its focus on these visual tropes. More subtly, as Michelson (1973: 49) has remarked, despite substituting the dialogue and score of the original film for a new soundtrack, 'silence is thus reinforced, enveloped in another way by the substitution of an assertively rhythmical musical accompaniment'. In other words the new audio sits uneasily with Melford's visuals because it is so often at odds with what we see, particularly for those who have heard the original

soundtrack, which continues to haunt the new version. Therefore, Cornell's strategy to fill the silence created by the excised original sound only exacerbates the silence or, as Francis Summers (2008: 11), echoing Michelson, puts it: 'Cornell cocoons the footage, highlighting its silence in the midst of his own attached sound'. However, Cornell's strategy is anything but inept, as it is part of a much wider scheme to transfigure the original, fragmenting and undermining the conventional relationship between visuals and sound. Conventionally, of course, the relationship between sound and visuals is complementary - creating a unity - but Cornell draws attention to (unmasks and reveals) the artifice of such a relationship and its fabrication. As we have seen, both fragmentation and fabrication function on many levels throughout the film, relating to the construction, deconstruction and reconstruction of gender identity, and especially that of Rose's gender identity. It is, of course, also related to Cornell's ambivalent quest and exploration of his own gender identity (through his portraits), figured through frequent tropes of masking (concealment) and unmasking (revelation) so that his removal of Melford's soundtrack and his addition of (predominantly) contrapuntal music becomes a further example of this strategy.

6. Soundtrack

The evocation of an idealised, purified past linked to the silent cinema also extends to Cornell's removal of the original soundtrack, replacing both dialogue and music with samba music (taken from Nestor Amaral's *Holiday in Brazil* album) that, like the footage itself, he also found in a bargain bin, its scratchy quality paralleling the damaged film footage. He uses two of the tracks a number of times and the first track (*Corrupcao*), that opens the film, is heard only once. The second track, a mysterious, melancholic piece (*Porto Alegre*), appears three times and the other track, the more upbeat *Holiday in Brazil*, is heard twice. The music creates odd juxtapositions, due to the fact that we clearly see conversations without words or

inter-titles. Very often the upbeat music (tracks 1 and 3) is at odds with the serious, dramatic or tragic visuals; or conversely the more melancholic track 2 is at times associated with scenes that display qualities quite opposite to the audio, such as Rose's joyful cuddling and playing with the monkey. As in *Un Chien andalou*, the alternation of the tracks is used to create a sense of continuity through repetition, but also as in Buñuel and Dali's film, the music is often contrapuntal, not always reflecting the mood or tenor of the visuals. The use of track 2 is most consistently connected with the eclipse, the rippling pool and volcano but the other tracks also cross over and it is common for Cornell to use two tracks (as one ends another begins) over this material, such as the pool or volcano. Cornell's method here is double-edged, for on the one hand it reflects his dismay at what he refers to in *View* (1942) as 'the barren wastes of the talking films' and 'the empty roar of the soundtrack', in favour of the 'profound and suggestive power of the silent film to evoke an ideal world of beauty' (Cornell 1978: 1942; and on the other hand the music he adds often creates a distancing effect, which constantly prevents immersion in the diegesis (Cornell 1978: 129-30).

This critical faculty, of course, is crucial for bisexual switching, wherein the spectator remains alert and engaged, rather than simply immersed in the film-fantasy. There are occasions, however, when the film serves to add a sense of continuity, allowing brief passages of immersion, such as the sequence that begins with the first shot of the rippling water, moving through various shots of Rose in a variety of locations, wearing different costumes, accompanied by the first rendition of track two. The various juxtapositions create a convulsive effect, centred around the proliferation of multiple Roses, once again switching between androgyne and female; and in her association with images of untamed nature (the jungle, crocodiles, the volcano, the pool and the eclipse) and tamed nature (the pet monkey and parrot, the sheik's palace, the candle and torches). The driving rhythms of the music, especially tracks 1 and 3, often contrast dramatically with static shots of Rose, encouraging a

sense of activity, fluidity, almost like a veiled command for Rose to dance. There is a sense here of Cornell playing with his 'doll' (Rose), exhibiting her in different costumes in a range of settings, with the repetition of the music tracks 2 and 3 adding to the notion of a kind of erotic (reverse) strip-tease.

Reinforcing this idea are the words of track 3, *Playtime in Brazil*: 'you have never lived' until you have flown to Rio 'the land of the samba', and 'come on and say to all of your troubles - Caramba!' The second time we hear the song Rose is shown arriving on the island at night, in masculine garb, surrounded by half-naked tribesmen, wearing (feminine) skirts, headbands and necklaces, holding torches and led away by one of the Sheikh's men. In this example we encounter switching via the feminine costumes of the natives and masculine costume of Rose, but also through the idea of leaving behind 'your troubles' in *exchange* for 'playtime' and 'caramba' (which is not only an expression of surprise or dismay but is also a euphemism for *carajo* (penis) from the Latin word *caraculum* or 'little arrow'). In this sense the song suggests that one's troubles can be resolved via the penis and sex, and that pleasure results from the male utilising his penis but also the female gains pleasure from her receiving the penis. However, more interestingly, there is also the implication that pleasure may also be gained from switching from female to male and vice versa in the sense that one may acquire or exchange the penis. This reversal is another form of bisexual switching and relates to the idea of *playing* with one's gender identity, inhabiting a gender double but also veiling Cornell's erotic desires for both sexes - a desire for both but also *to be* both. In addition there is a clear divide between the tense and dangerous scene confronting Rose and the playful distanciation contained in the music, asking us (and Rose) to leave our troubles behind, have some fun and to imagine ourselves in Brazil rather than Borneo - a further switch and another

example of Cornell's contrapuntal method.³⁰ It is the accumulation of these layers (androgynous appearance, musical innuendo and contrapuntal sound, allied with the disjunctive editing) relating to masking and unmasking, desire and identification, that becomes clearer as the film progresses.

7. Convulsive identity

Cornell also draws on the static figures of his two-dimensional portraits and this helps to create an impression that the film is more like a 'moving box'. This is achieved through the frequent shots (mainly close-ups, in a further homage to silent cinema, with its focus on facial expressions and gestures) of the predominantly immobile, doll-like Rose, seemingly frozen, punctuated by a limited range of expressions (as well as some shots that are repeated several times), the odd glance, a slight gesture, and juxtaposed with the briefest of movements, but intermittently interrupted and cut short by Cornell's editing, that replaces the original narrative with a series of portraits of Rose in different costumes, with no obvious logic or any sense of cause and effect. This paradoxical coupling of stasis and movement (achieved by disjunctive editing and the projected slowed movement of 'silent speed'), as well as shots of Rose speaking but without a voice track, are combined with further couplings: Cornell's contrapuntal use of music ('enveloped' sound and silence), the dark filter that evokes night-time even when it is clearly day-time, Rose's individuality and prominence (as indicated by her different costumes, varied emotions and actions and the fact she has more screen-time than anyone else), and juxtaposed with Rose's seriality, the proliferation of her multiple, fleeting and fragmentary images. The overall effect of these strategies is to render Rose convulsive. This notion is mentioned by Hauptman (1999: 96), who suggests (following Hal

³⁰ Brazil is identified in the popular imagination as what Krzysztof Fijalkowski (in a correspondence with me) has termed 'the home of an exotic and pleurably sexualised carnivalesque' and might also be related to the notion of South America as North America's other.

Foster's (2000: 50) discussion of Surrealism and hysteria) that Rose is a 'subject seized by desire', and later uses the word 'hysterical' to describe her, explaining that with the removal of the sound track (and with it her voice) Rose's body is forced to 'speak' by Cornell, in place of her voice, almost like a silent 'diva'.³¹ Hauptman suggests, without developing the idea, that Rose is able to resist Cornell's mastery through remaining 'enigmatic', and in her description of Rose as 'a force that lets loose catastrophe' (1999: 100) Hauptman appears to suggest that, in a further example of agency, Rose possesses supernatural powers. The erupting volcano and sun dislodged from the sky could be seen as 'convulsed images of the actress' (1999: 98), but in accounting for her effect on the cataclysmic events, Hauptman writes: 'She is not responsible for the havoc around her, but her mere presence makes catastrophe inevitable' (1999:100). This curious sentence is not explained any further, but a letter that Cornell (cited in Sitney (1990: 76) sent to the film historian Claude Serbanne in 1946, may provide some clues to its meaning and help to elucidate the nature of Rose's convulsive identity and its significance further. A passage in the letter discusses Jennifer Jones in the film *Love Letters* (1945) in language which recalls the Hedy Lamarr article discussed earlier, and crucially Cornell describes the film as possessing the ability 'to produce an effect such as seizes one with disturbing emotions'. Sitney (2000: 76) applies this notion to *Rose Hobart*, where Cornell's film is seen as generating such emotion 'by reversing the dramatic coincidence of psychological resolution and natural disaster in the original film', so that Rose's killing of the prince, which is seen to cause the erupting volcano and destruction of the village (and leading to her reunion with her husband and their escape) in the original film, is largely absent and replaced by the addition of the eclipse material, that leads, instead, to Rose anxiously observing the sun falling from the sky, implying the end of life. Sitney (1990: 77) explains that this calamitous event gives meaning to 'the otherwise unfocused fears, anxieties, and

³¹ For further discussions on the links between hysteria and Surrealism see Lomas (2000 and 2001).

intimations silently mimed by the heroine throughout the film', and also that this disturbing effect is above all channelled through montage and 'the junctures of collage association'.

Both Hauptman and Sitney focus on convulsive identity as a kind of seizure, in keeping with a Surrealist reading (influenced by Freud's views on hysteria) of being taken over by disturbing emotions that speak through the body. Hauptman links this with desire but does not fully develop its connections with the power of Eros. However, she eventually returns to Foster, who explicitly states that hysteria, like convulsive beauty, is a 'continuation of sexual ecstasy', which is (crucially) 'reciprocal: it produces its effects in others - in doctor, or analyst, in artist or viewer' (Foster 2000: 50). Hysteria, which Aragon and Breton (*La Revolution surréaliste*, no 11: 22), referred to as 'the greatest poetic discovery of the nineteenth century', was seen, along with poetry and the dream, as forms of expression articulating a dialectic of desire and repression, wherein the convulsive paroxysms that seized the body could be read as both symptoms of the repression and a form of release.

Importantly, as Breton and Aragon (*La Revolution surréaliste*, no 11: 22) contend: 'Hysteria is by no means a pathological symptom and can in every way be considered a supreme form of expression'. It is also seen by Surrealists as subversive and an unconscious protest, aimed at breaking down morality and repressive laws. Fer's (1993:212) suggestion that this protest (for men and women) is 'a protest against patriarchal law' is in keeping with a Surrealist notion of subversion.

Thinking about hysteria in the way Fer suggests provides us with a fruitful way of dealing with the central issue that underlies both Hauptman's and Sitney's notions of Rose's convulsive seizure, which is characterised by reciprocity: whether this seizure is induced or created by Cornell, in the role of conjuror or creator, or as a form of protest and seduction,

instigated by Rose?³² In terms of the latter it raises the issue of Rose's agency and brings us back again to the idea of the male artist and female or androgynous portrait as caught up in a process of merging and exchange. In fact the ambiguity of the term 'seduction', as John Forrester (1989: 85) makes clear, hinges on the double meaning of being *actively* seducing or *passively* seduced; and these terms activity and passivity are conventionally signified as masculine and feminine. Through doubling they become reversed, and therefore masculine and feminine become interchangeable, in a state of constant shifting and switching. In fact what is fundamentally at stake here - and neither Hauptman nor Sitney spell this out - is that Rose's gender identity is convulsive and, ultimately, as Cornell's double, switches back and forth between both positions, rendering his own gender identity convulsive. As we have seen, Cornell's collage aesthetic, with its emphasis on fragmentation and fabrication, contributes to this sense of convulsive identity that we associate with Rose. Again, as with *Un Chien andalou*, each of the formal strategies that Cornell uses are further examples of the *dépaysement* that in different ways disorient and destabilise the spectator, drawing attention to the fabricated and artificial nature of film as a series of fragments which, centred around the proliferating versions of Rose, parallels the fictive and constructed nature of gender identity.

8. Eclipse

Despite Rose's centrality to the film any conventional sense of characterisation is fractured and only the ghost of the original female character from *East of Borneo* haunts Cornell's version. This is even more noticeable in relation to the male characters who, in Cornell's film, are constantly shown in a state of fading out or abruptly interrupted if they dare to share the same frame as Rose, undermining any semblance of (masculine) authority. This pattern is

³² Seduction is here related to the idea of the spectator and Cornell, as Rose's creator, being overcome by feelings and emotions inspired by her: desire, worship, awe, sadness, empathy and so on.

instigated from the film's inception, in shot 2, where both Hobart and the prince fade to black. Although Rose also fades out it is the only time this occurs and seems to suggest the fading out of the heteronormative couple rather than Rose herself; she returns in shot 3, veiled by mosquito nets. After a brief close-up of a burning candle she emerges as if by magic, transformed into an androgyne, dressed in men's clothes. As already explained Cornell removes the footage of the giant snake, in an act of censorship, but also so that that we concentrate on Rose's metamorphosis. Her transformation from a woman to an androgyne follows on quite naturally from the earlier transformations: from *East of Borneo* to *Rose Hobart* and the conflation of star and movie star.

It is a curious introduction, however, after the anticipation created by the shot of the crowd looking up and the briefest of glimpses of the 'star', and one shared with another character, suggesting equal status. In comparison the next sequence devotes an almost languorous amount of attention to Rose, the androgyne, who is both veiled and unveiled in the manner, as already mentioned, of Méliès the magician, making the androgynous Rose appear from behind the veil, doubling as the magician's cloak. The extreme close-up of the candle that interrupts the voyeuristic track-in to the sleeping figure hidden behind the mosquito net, can be related to the chemical wedding, and is chiefly associated with transformation. We should also note that each of these elements, in alchemical terms, is combined to create all living things and has the ability to transform into the other elements. The (masculine) sun falling into the (feminine) water, as well as the sun and moon in eclipse, are the supreme examples of this alchemical transformation and related also, as we have seen, to the chemical wedding.³³ Fire and water are the most significant elements because they are linked with the chemical wedding and Rose is associated with both. In this way she is associated with *mercurious*, the central symbol of alchemy, the very spirit of life (*prima materia*) that must

³³ For useful accounts of these terms see, for example: Abraham (1998) and Marshall (2002). For an analysis of Surrealism and alchemy see Choucha (1992), Warlick (2001) and Rabinovich (2002).

be released in order that the philosopher's stone can be made, and is described as both fire and water and for this reason is associated with the hermaphrodite, containing male and female seeds. However, *mercurious* is a liminal figure and a mediating substance in the chemical wedding, uniting (male) sun and (female) moon. The mercurial water provides supreme nourishment for the growing philosopher's stone, born from the union of sun and moon, but also purifies the (male) sun in the (female) water. This connection will become clearer when I discuss the eclipse shortly.

Cornell's use of alchemical symbols provides a further layer - or rather fragments - of meaning that clearly relate to gender identity and transformation. They also add further to the notion of Rose's convulsive identity. The eclipse is crucial to such a reading and is foreshadowed in the scene discussed earlier. Following the shot of the candle and Rose's transformation into the androgyne there is a cut to the sun or eclipse (it is difficult to tell which), and we see Rose with a conventionally feminine hairstyle, now returned to female form, accompanied by the prince, looking out of a window, apparently gazing up at the sky. This shot is very quickly followed by Rose, in a different costume, now alone, who appears to notice something out of frame, and as she looks down we see an object hitting the water, creating ripples and we cut back - in a rare example of continuity editing - for her reaction shot, in which she smiles at first but then appears anxious as she looks up. Again Rose's transformation is heralded by fire (the solar eclipse) and followed soon after by the shot of the spherical object falling into the pool which, judging from Rose's point of view, is the sun from the previous shot. Conventional narrative progression is replaced by alchemical images of transformation, but this is short-lived as we have to wait until the film's final few minutes for this pattern to recur, and although Cornell punctuates the film with other alchemical symbols, they do not amount to any obvious system or pattern, and instead parallel the

fragmentation we have already encountered elsewhere, once again contributing to Rose's convulsive identity.

The shot of the 'drowned' sun at the film's opening is given short shrift by Rose who shrugs it off and smiles. Cornell depicts her as the central star of the constellation around which the other stars in the film (as well as Cornell and the spectator) revolve; or perhaps Rose herself is the constellation, made up of all the other stars? In this respect Cornell's use of the eclipse material and his decision to structure the film around it takes on an added significance: Rose (like the moon in the solar eclipse) could be seen as 'in between' the (male) sun and (female) earth, presenting a blurring of male and female in the moment of total eclipse, switching between both. She becomes the sum of all these parts or stars: the eclipse in toto, and in effect eclipses all the other stars. The notion of Rose as constellation or eclipse means that she is a fluid force that unites, disrupts and crosses borders, particularly in relation to gender identity. She mirrors Cornell's collage aesthetic, which is based on opposition, disruption and juxtaposition and communicated through doubling and masking / unmasking. Thus, on the one hand the proliferating Roses becomes associated with fragmentation, seriality and non-narrative in their multiplicity: cause and effect and continuity are absent and replaced by ludic and irrational juxtapositions; and on the other hand Cornell's linking of Rose with the eclipse material which begins and ends the film suggests an almost supernatural, alchemical narrative, fitting in with the idea of Rose as seer or 'enchanted wanderer'. Her paradoxical association with narrative transitivity (the eclipse causes the sun to fall from the sky and Rose is somehow connected with this in either foreseeing this or causing it) and narrative intransitivity (the multiple shots of Rose and the other characters stripped of any causal chain or coherence, evoking ellipsis and disjuncture) encourages us to think of Rose as the locus of meaning and non-meaning, order and chaos, and logic and illogic, yet she is tied to neither, switching between both sets of binaries, navigating and dissolving such (illusory) borders.

Again, this indeterminacy (neither one nor the other) and ability to switch between both contributes further to Rose's convulsive identity and agency.

It could also be argued, of course, that such an effect is ultimately the result of Cornell's mastery (via editing and his collage aesthetic), in that it is further evidence of *his* manipulation of the film and Rose. In this sense we must acknowledge that it is *Cornell's* selection and arrangement of the material - and especially *his* stage-managing of Rose's appearance - that is paramount. As we have already seen throughout the film, we focus voyeuristically on recurrent images of Rose gesturing in different ways: frowning, smiling, clasping her hands, looking up and down and so on, usually at the beginning or end of a shot. Frequently we never see what she is looking at or reacting to, and because the dialogue has been suppressed we can only guess at what she is saying, which creates a sense of mystery, dreaminess and eroticism, further emphasised by the nocturnal blue of the filter, the slowed-down images and samba rhythms. Rose, in these terms, becomes fetishised, akin to the Surrealist muse, an object of desire and worship. She is like the woman celebrated by the Surrealists in the quotation taken from Baudelaire that accompanied the photographs of the surrealist group, together with Freud and the anarchist Germaine Berton, adorning the cover of the first issue of *La Révolution surréaliste* in 1924: 'It is woman who casts the biggest shadow or projects the greatest light in our dreams'. But she is also Cornell's gender-double and mask. It is in these (liminal) gaps between shots and sequences that the spectator is encouraged to wander (and wonder) in paths of desire and conscious hallucination. What is called for on such a voyage is Rimbaud's wilful 'derangement of the senses' (often quoted by Breton) allied with a Surrealist (critical) awareness of such a journey.

This is a fantasy where no one else can share Rose. Rose is Cornell's alone and he is Rose. This notion of Rose as simply one in a long line of stars that Cornell idolises and attempts to ensnare and control through *his* re-editing (cannibalisation) of the original film as well as his

haunting of and identification with Rose, can be deconstructed through the eclipse material he inserts, which can be read, as already argued, in several ways. The final image of Rose, alone, in conjunction with the earlier reading of the (male) sun as extinguished in the (female) water, could be read as a denial and subversion of patriarchal control and an image of female empowerment. However, above all it is in his collage practice that haunts the film at every stage, that Cornell loses control, becomes unfixed. His desire for Rose is offset by his desire to be Rose, and as his double and mask, she is both other and self, or more accurately the other in the self, which shatters the notion of a unique, individual identity in favour of conflicting, multiple shifting identities. Even the notion of Rose as 'hysteric', seduced by Cornell, via his editing and removal of the dialogue (and with it the loss of her voice), her body forced to speak, in the spotlight of the bisexual gaze, is undermined by the notion that Rose exceeds / accedes to this gaze, as one who seduces. It is in this productive confusion that subversion follows in its wake, switching between masculine activity and female passivity.

In many ways Rose is represented throughout as having aspects of both masculine and feminine identities without the ideological baggage of the original film. Rose is read as both an oneiric figure, idealised, fetishised, haunting (as are Nadja and the other women associated with *amour fou*) the 'dreaming' author and spectator with her poetic, 'magical' powers, and as a disruptive agent of latent desire, unsettling rigid, conventional moral norms and values. She is seen as a locus of unbounded Surrealist desire: she inhabits and yet seemingly escapes the markers or threshold spaces separating and defining male, female and bisexual gazes into a kind of uncharted liminal realm. She invites a bisexual reading that allows the spectator to identify with her as a liminal or convulsive figure, one predicated on multiple, shifting permutations of masculine / feminine desires and fantasies of the spectator – as object, subject, both or neither: transformed and transforming. Cornell's convulsive

identity as Joseph / Rose thus stands alongside other androgynous, Surrealist (self-) portraits such as Hans Bellmer's doll or Duchamp's 'Rose c'est la vie', but can also be linked to those other Surrealist (self-) portraits that share a common desire to dissolve all forms of identity - gender or otherwise - such as Breton's nomadic self in *Nadja* or Ernst's alter ego Loplop.

At the same time, however, we should be careful in suggesting too close an affiliation between Cornell and the Surrealists' wishes in this regard, because as already argued Cornell does not set out to challenge identity in such a conscious or subversively political way. He was rather more guarded about disclosing too much of himself and his desires in his (self-) portraits, but the flickering presence of Rose, by turns siren or muse as well as double or other, is never far away, fulfilling the notion of 'reciprocal seduction' mentioned by Aragon and Breton in *La Revolution surréaliste* (no 11: 22), whereby Cornell is seized by an ambivalent and convulsive desire both for Rose and to be Rose. His irresistible attraction to such androgynous and female figures betrays a repetition compulsion that undermines his attempts to mask, repress or edit out those aspects of his (self-) portraits that might reveal his haunted self, and instead suggesting the multiplication of a serial (bisexual) self image, displaced and displayed that surfaces as a return of the repressed. Articulated through a collage aesthetic Cornell's (gender) identity is fragmented, underscoring its fabricated nature, and allied with his child-like imagination and ludic method reveal further evidence of Cornell's compulsive attraction to an ambivalent gender identity.

His attempts to impose a logic upon Rose through her association with the eclipse narrative is indicative of his method to conceal his repressed desire, with the eclipse condensing a whole gamut of associations and meanings centred around binarised notions of gender identity via alchemical symbolism. As always, however, Cornell's desire to both conceal and reveal these associations and the notion of the eclipse as a further figure for doubling, merging, and bisexual switching, as well as for his convulsive identity, end up eclipsing Cornell: the

darkness, signifying veiling, concealment and repression of his ambivalent desire and bisexuality comes apart in the eclipse's uncoupling, revealing that the eclipse is composed of two figures: masculine sun and feminine moon. With the sun's descent into the water Cornell provides a further parallel with the eclipse in that the masculine sun (Cornell) is submerged in (desires and seduces) and concealed by (identifies with and is seduced by) the feminine water (Rose). Gender identity in this configuration is identified as process, transgressing borders, in a perpetual state of becoming. Ultimately, then, the terms manufactured by the binary machine have no place here, and perhaps with the figure of Rose Hobart we have managed, in Breton's words (1989: 8), 'to escape [...] the principle of identity'?

Although Cornell's first film is certainly in dialogue with *Un Chien andalou* - most notably, through the convulsive identities of its characters and collage aesthetic - I am in agreement with Solomon (1997: 89) that 'in some ways it is a more radical work'. Its fragmentation is more pronounced than in Buñuel and Dalí's film, with a barely discernible narrative that is undermined at every turn by a seemingly random linking of shots, disjunctive editing, repetition, jump cuts, ellipses and other 'mistakes'. The damaged film stock contributes to this fragmentation and reminds us of its status as a cannibalised (transformed) text, a film made from the found footage of other films and it is this idea of using the 'found object / film' in particular, that Solomon (1997: 89), suggests is what so upset Dalí about *Rose Hobart*: 'forcing the idea of the "found object" into film and thus bringing a key Surrealist concept to its logical conclusion'. In fact Dalí was so outraged when he first saw *Rose Hobart* at Levy's gallery in 1936, whilst a number of the Surrealists were in attendance for the *Fantastic Art, Dada and Surrealism* exhibition at MOMA, that he verbally attacked Cornell, who was overseeing the projection of a programme of avant garde and Surrealist films, and had to be restrained, claiming that he had had exactly the same idea and it was as if Cornell had stolen

it.³⁴ As we have seen, Cornell's influence has been significant on future film makers working with 'found footage' films but it could be argued that in terms of Surrealism his ludic approach, the suppression of narrative in favour of poetic and deeply personal associations (between Cornell and his material) mitigate against bisexual switching because there are so many barriers to immersion in the film-fantasy for the general spectator. In fact this aspect - considering the advantages and disadvantages of how gender identity might be transformed in relation to classic film narrative - is taken up again in the next chapter.

³⁴ See Levy (2003: 229-31) for a firsthand account of this event and Cornell's reactions to it. Indeed, if one considers the links between Cornell's film and Dalí's research on photography, film, the object and his paranoia-critical method it becomes more clear why he might have reacted so strongly. More specifically, Dalí, influenced by photography and film, had been experimenting throughout the 20's and 30's with utilising everyday objects to evoke movement and to somehow inhabit and yet escape the confines of the visual plane. In a letter to Breton (1933), advocating the 'turn' to the Surrealist object, Dalí dramatises how the painting has had its day and each of the objects within the painting will 'physically drop[s] from the picture and begin[s] its prenatal life out of it' (Dalí, quoted in Finkelstein 1998: 251). At the same time the back-story to how *Rose Hobart* came into being - as a recycled (cannibalised) object, would certainly appeal to Dalí, in that the Melford footage as outmoded commodity, is found by chance (like Breton's dream-object) transformed and reborn through an oneiric, obsessive desire. The status of the film-as-object (as a tangible set of reels in film canisters) conforms to the idea of film as dream but in its status as a container of (moving images of) objects it conforms to the idea of film as reality, creating a convulsive tension that ultimately draws attention to this relationship and ultimately discrediting reality. Also see, for example: Finkelstein (1979) and (1996), Ades (1982), Malt (2004) and Gale (2007).

Chapter 3: 'Beauty killed the beast': uncanny transformations of the monstrous and the marvellous in *Les Yeux sans visage*

The sleep of reason produces monsters.
Francisco Goya

Did I request thee, Maker from my clay
To mould Me man? Did I solicit thee
From darkness to promote me?
John Milton (*Paradise Lost*)

I is another – and always multiple.
Claude Cahun (*Disavowals*)

Introduction

Georges Franju's first film *Le Sang des bêtes* (1949) a documentary on Paris slaughterhouses, is seen by many as deeply influenced by Surrealism and particularly *Un Chien andalou*, in its mixture of shocking and poetic images, but unlike Buñuel and Dali's film, it is very much grounded in the everyday, generating a gritty, ethnographic realism.¹ Franju juxtaposes brutal documentary footage of animal slaughter with scenes of people going about their daily business: people shopping, children playing and lovers kissing - which creates a disturbing effect (*dépaysement*) of a different order to *Un Chien andalou* because of its connection with real events. Though never a member of the Surrealist group, throughout Franju's subsequent career his engagement with Surrealism is ever present in his films as well as through contact with Surrealists, including Buñuel and Breton, and programming Surrealist films (in his role

¹Franju has said that 'I have always been in full agreement with the Surrealists. I have learned a great deal from them' (cited in Durgnat, 1967: 18). He also declared his admiration for Surrealism, and the films of Buñuel in particular, on numerous occasions. See for example: Durgnat (1967), Ince (2005) and Lowenstein (2005). Franju's links with Bataille are taken up by Durgnat (1967: 28) who notes that both men's work shares an aggressive poetic beauty that centred on 'the breaking of tabu [sic]'. The journal *Documents* (1929-1930) could be seen to parallel Franju's use of juxtaposition, with its images of the glamorous dancers from Fox Follies, on one hand and Eli Lotar's photographs of slaughterhouses or Jean Painlevé's enlarged microscopic stills of crustaceans on the other. It should also be noted that the latter, a Surrealist documentary filmmaker, contributed the commentary to *Le Sang des bêtes*.

as curator at the Cinémathèque Française). Franju's films depict reality objectively, in a world that is recognisable to all, but at which 'our eyes unseeingly stare', according to Raymond Durgnat (1967: 19), who makes the point that: 'far from cutting out the real world [Franju] lets it in'. Reality is revealed for what it is.

In this sense then, Franju departs from Buñuel and Dalí's film, which may utilise a seemingly realist technique but ultimately depicts 'impossible' situations and absurdities, fracturing belief in the events depicted and further hampered by fragments of plot and various formal strategies that serve to interrupt and further undermine narrative transitivity and audience identification.² This becomes more problematic in Cornell's *Rose Hobart*, as we have seen, amplifying the fragmentation present in *Un Chien andalou*, extending to the damaged nature of the film stock itself as well as the use of formal strategies that tend to alienate the spectator and draw attention to the constructed nature of the text. In fact Franju suggests that '[d]ream, poetry, and the "insolite" must emerge from reality itself. All cinema is documentary, especially the most poetic' (in an interview (1960), with Marc Chevrie (1986), cited in Kate Ince (2005: 118)). Franju's aim, according to Lowenstein (2005: 20) 'in restoring the strange or other as primary perception' is to be able to see the world in a new way, as it really is. This is not to deny the power of Buñuel and Dalí's first film but it is clear from their second film (*L'Age d'or*) and Buñuel's later films that other strategies were needed to engender a new way of seeing that arises from reality.³ Cornell eventually moved away from the found-footage film and began to work with original material but in collaboration with others, with more defined narratives, in a documentary style. *Le Sang des bêtes* offered one solution in its juxtaposition of documentary images of animal slaughter and everyday life but again its

² See introduction and my discussion of the Surrealist cinematic canon as well as my discussion of *Un Chien andalou* in chapter 1 in relation to realism.

³ It is therefore no surprise that Buñuel's third film *Las Hurdes* (1932) was a documentary.

status as a documentary and the disturbing images of mutilated animals tended to keep the audience at a distance.

In many ways *Le Sang des bêtes* provides a kind of template for Franju's later film *Les Yeux sans visage* (1959): the people depicted in the slaughter-house documentary, indulging in everyday pleasures and juxtaposed with the reality of the barbaric horrors perpetrated on the unfortunate animals (documented in an unflinchingly gory detail), on the Paris outskirts, parallels the fictional horrors of the latter film, but this time the setting is a suburban medical practice and the brutality is meted out in the form of surgical experiments by an eminent plastic surgeon, Doctor Genessier on his female patients.⁴ Louise, the doctor's assistant and possible mistress, aids Genessier, stalking and providing the 'donors' for the operations, as well as murdering and disposing of the victims' bodies to prevent them informing to the police. The doctor's repeated attempts to reconstruct his daughter Christiane's horribly disfigured face (as the result of a car accident) is achieved through literally grafting the stolen facial skin of several female victims with similar features onto her face, but the operations are constantly unsuccessful and prove fatal for the young women.

In this chapter I will explore how in *Les Yeux sans visage* Franju's turn to classical film narrative and the possibilities offered by psychologically-motivated characters (encouraging a belief in the diegesis and the audience's identification with the characters), as well as a longer running time, offer a possible solution to the distancing engendered by the documentary mode, and thereby potentially addressing the issues raised by the radical models proposed by *Un Chien andalou* and *Rose Hobart*. Clearly this is crucial in relation to gender transformation for, as we have seen, a careful balance between immersion in the film-fantasy and critical distance from it must be maintained so that bisexual switching can occur.

⁴ I am using the Criterion Collection (2004) DVD edition of the film.

As with the other two films already considered, I will examine how gender transformation occurs both at the literal and figurative levels of the text, involving female bodies being controlled, manipulated and re-configured (the operations on Genessier's daughter and the female victims) by cutting tools (scalpel, scissors and other surgical implements), as well as mentally and ideologically (enshrined in and dominated by the laws of patriarchy); and, significantly, through a questioning and eventual revolt against the institutionalised mechanisms (Science and the Law) that attempt to control, (de)limit and fix gender identity. Above all this revolt is associated with Christiane's growing consciousness and understanding of female subjugation (her own and that of the other victims), and is articulated firstly through the figure of masking and unmasking (concealing and revealing identity); and secondly through competing definitions of monstrosity: the 'classical' or conventional monster, as well as what I term the *monstrous / uncanny other* and (following Adamowicz: 1990) the *Surrealist monster*. These issues will be discussed in this chapter through the consideration of a number of scenes from *Les Yeux sans visage*, which highlight the key stages of Christiane's development.

1. The Clinical Gaze

In many ways the collective ability of the male character to create and transform gender identity partakes of what Foucault (1973: 196) terms 'the clinical gaze'. The knowledge and power that underpins this gaze constantly seeks to penetrate the surface or border of the body in order to discover the hidden truth (of what is causing the illness). In *Les Yeux sans visage*, this takes the form of the male characters' manipulations and transformations of gender identity, either through surgery, investigation or coercion of female bodies and minds. They represent the twin institutional bodies of Science and the Law, headed by its representatives in the figures of Doctor Genessier, who runs his own private clinic, assisted by Jacques,

another doctor, who is also Christiane's fiancé; and the police inspectors, who handle the investigation into the missing girls; as well as the morgue attendants, who prepare the bodies for post-mortems. The female roles are stereotypically passive or secondary, such as support staff, nurses, secretaries and so on (working *for* the doctor); or as Genessier's secretary and mistress (Louise); or the various female victims, including Christiane. Genessier is aligned with the Frankensteinian mad scientist and creator who (mis)uses Science in his pursuit of fashioning a perfect creation, which results in its opposite: the making of monsters (the female victims and himself). He finds his corollary in the figures of Professor Spalanzani and Coppelius, who create the beautiful automaton Olympia in Hoffman's tale *The Sandman*.

I would like to argue that throughout the film there are attempts to undo this control through various structures of unmasking and masking that centre on woman as the uncanny other, both familiar and strange, monstrous and marvellous. Above all, it is the female victims who pose the greatest threat as liminal entities. This threat is most forcefully figured through Christiane, whose ambiguous status haunts the text at many levels: presumed missing at the beginning, assumed dead after Genessier deliberately misrecognises the body of Simone Tessot (whose actual body is the one disposed of in the first scene by Louise) in place of his missing daughter, Christiane's body, which is assumed to be buried in the family crypt (Simone is actually buried there instead); her face was disfigured by the car accident and is constantly re-scarred by Genessier's botched surgical operations; she is forced to wear a mask most of the time except when she literally wears the faces of the abducted women. The masking / unmasking binary, as we shall see, works at many levels in the text as a kind of *mise en abyme*, endlessly circulating around (haunting) the construction, destruction, re-construction of the face and identity of Christiane, presenting us with a potent symbol for the construction and manipulation of gender identity by patriarchy.

2. Monsters and masking

This sense of Christiane as ghostly, both haunting and haunted, animate and inanimate, as well as in some liminal borderland *between*, renders her a monster, an abject and uncanny other. Like Louise, who also owes her face to Genessier, she can be seen as one of his creatures or 'brides' of the Frankensteinian creator. As Kevin Alexander Boon (2007: 33) argues, 'the etymological roots of the monstrous imply a boundary space between human and non-human (originally, human and animal) - the imaginary space that lies between being and non-being, presence and absence'.

Christiane's wearing of the mask, which is an attempt to hide her monstrosity, only draws further attention to it, with her (voyeuristic) desire to reveal what is beneath; and yet, paradoxically, this is accompanied by a desire to avoid - along with a deep-seated fear associated with - looking upon the imagined monstrosity. It is interesting that both the terms 'monstrous' and 'monster' also involve a sense of horror or dread. According to Freud (2001c: 241) each of these elements coheres around and relates directly to the uncanny in the sense that 'something which ought to have remained hidden [...] has come to light'. It is no accident that in the horror film the monster is often veiled, hidden or glimpsed, but not fully revealed until late into the narrative in order to generate and sustain an uncanny feeling in the audience. Christiane's masked face hides her disfigured form for most of the film, until eventually about two thirds of the way through we are confronted with a blurred image of Christiane from the point of view of one of the abducted girls (Edna Gruber), whose face will provide Christiane with her *new* face; and which, although brief and out of focus, leaves no doubt as to the hideous nature of her own ruined face, that resembles an open wound. However, the masked face itself also implies monstrosity and otherness, whether the face

beneath is disfigured or otherwise, drawing on a long cultural history. Famous cinematic examples range from *The Phantom of the Opera* (1925) to *Onibaba* (1964) and more recently to the *Halloween* and *Scream* series.⁵ Clearly, the films that feature characters who use the mask to disguise their appearance due to disfigurement wear a 'double mask', whereby the *outer* mask hides an *inner* mask, either mutilated and / or constructed from facial tissue or artificial skin. Consequently, this double mask creates a greater propensity for monstrosity, otherness and also subversion.

However, in mainstream horror texts this subversion is controlled and sanctioned by a careful relay and negotiation of these borders, allowing (briefly) a relaxation of strict definitions, only to be ruthlessly contained or reconstructed by the conclusion of the film. The progressive possibilities and subversive potential suggested by the figure of the monster are, according to Robin Wood's (2004) seminal essay on the American horror film, undermined by an array of strategies designed to trap and make safe the threat of this monstrous being, to reconfigure the threat represented by the repressed through further repression and oppression associated with patriarchy's demands. This other is typically associated with Woman-as-difference or what Barbara Creed (1993), in a reworking of Freud's notions of fetishism and castration, refers to as *the monstrous feminine*. In those horror films featuring a female monster she inhabits an ambivalent position of desire and dread for the male spectator.

3. Christiane as the monstrous / uncanny other

It is twenty-one minutes into the film before we are finally introduced to Christiane, in the scene between Christiane and Genessier. Up until this point we have been led to believe that

⁵ It should be noted that *Les Yeux sans visage* is commonly seen by film critics as related to the subgenres of scientific horror, whereby a doctor, scientist or surgeon operates on his - and it is always a male's - victims. See for example : *Frankenstein* (1931), *The Island of Lost Souls* (1932), *The Invisible Man* (1933) and their sequels, as well as the 'plastic surgery thriller' or 'medical horror' associated with *The Stolen Face* (1930), *Dark Passage* (1947), *I Vampiri* (1957), to more recent films such as *Faceless* (1988) and *The Skin I Live in* (2011).

she is dead: her body is identified earlier by her father at the morgue as belonging to his missing daughter and then buried in the Genessier family vault, in the scene just before this one. I will be contending that central to this scene is the notion that Christiane (Woman) is represented as the monstrous uncanny other.

As Genessier enters Christiane's room he passes some doves in a cage on a table before approaching his daughter who is lying face down on a couch, listening to music. He turns off the music and discovers the order-of-service for Christiane's funeral on a table next to the couch, chiding his daughter for 'snooping', adding that he has no time to explain what it means, asking her: 'What can you possibly be imagining?' She replies: 'I don't have to imagine a thing. I see horrible things. I am living them'. He reveals that he led the police to believe that the dead girl in the morgue was Christiane, remarking: 'Names were simply substituted... Everyone thinks you're dead. They won't look any further'. Throughout the scene Christiane is inert but raises her head a little when he tells her this news. At the point where he explains that he has done it so that everyone will think she is dead, she appears to jump up, raising her head, so that she is facing her father. He is horrified, as he notices she is not wearing her mask and tells her she must 'get into the habit of wearing it'. He takes her head in his hands, pushing her head down so that her face is once more hidden from view. He asks her where she has hidden the mask, as she repeats the word 'habit' accusingly. The camera is placed so that we do not see her face: the first part of the scene is shot in long shot, midway between the two characters, with Christiane's back to us and Genessier in profile. When she does look up at him the camera is behind her, with only the back of her head and body visible, and the focus on Genessier. He tries to reassure her that she will only have to go on wearing the mask until he is successful. She raises her head to face him, as before, confronting his authority and his gaze (again, we do not see her face), telling him that she does not believe it anymore, and her head slumps once more into the same position as before,

her face buried in the sheets. This action is a reprise of the earlier action above and functions as a sign throughout the film of Christiane's revolt against her father and patriarchy but also evidence of bisexual switching, moving between an assertive masculinity (associated with her father) and passive femininity (the dutiful daughter). In our identification with Christiane we are also encouraged to share her position but in doing so we encounter a similar situation whereby we are positioned along gender lines to conform to normative discourses. Therefore, immersion in the film-fantasy is potentially disrupted. However, rather like the subject in Freud's 'A Child is Being Beaten' we are able to extricate ourselves from the film-fantasy. At the same time this relationship can also be related to *dépaysement*, shifting between immersion (in the film-fantasy) and reflecting upon the various issues relating to this complex situation.

This scene, like those preceding it, can be understood as based on a series of oppositions related to masking (concealment) and unmasking (revelation). These revelations 'that come to light' (Freud 2001c: 225) create an uncanny effect as we try to piece together the truth, to come to terms with and make sense of what is revealed, but, to quote Macbeth: 'Nothing is, but what is not'. The relationship between reality and imagination is in a constant state of slippage. As Freud (2001c: 244) observes, an uncanny effect often occurs 'when the distinction between imagination and reality is effaced'. James Strachey translates Freud's 'verwischt' as *effaced* rather than *erased* or *blurred*, which etymologically includes the meaning of literally wiping away or removing the face, which links punningly to the title of the film and to the film's *raison d'être*, revolving around the literal removal of faces. Clearly in the context of this scene it relates to the double masking / unmasking of Christiane: face hidden and face revealed. However, a further doubling of masking and unmasking occurs when it is discovered that the revealed face has been erased (unmasked) due to the accident and constant surgery but also plays host to the faces of the abducted women (masked). The

dissolution of these faces through the failure of the operations leads once again to their removal and the wearing of the actual mask, to hide the ruined face. Above all, this perpetual process of masking and unmasking, and of assertion and denial calls into question and threatens any stable notion of identity and the self. The feeling of anxiety and dread created by the blurring of borders between life and death, the real and the imaginary, *heimlich* and *unheimlich*, poses, according to Julia Kristeva (1991: 170), a threat akin to the abject and monstrous 'as the anxiety-provoking double that haunts the margins of self-presence'. In fact this boundary confusion provokes a sense of foreignness, wherein we become, in Kristeva's words, 'strangers to ourselves'. Christiane's attempts to maintain the boundaries between self and other - enacted through the process of masking and unmasking - are constantly met with failure because her monstrosity ultimately 'disturbs identity, system and order. What does not respect boundaries, positions, rules. The in-between, the ambiguous, the composite' (Kristeva 1982: 4). In this sense Christiane's otherness is a form of abjection and continues to haunt and cross the borders of self and other when what she really seeks at this stage is unity.

The ambiguity associated with this process of masking and unmasking is akin to Butler's (2006) notion of *performing* gender identity. Christiane spends a good deal of the film attempting to stage a self which can only fail because of the impossible role she sets herself, or rather that is thrust upon her: to be the dutiful daughter and at the same time to 'play dead' for her fiancé Jacques and the world outside. The moments in which we see her inert or hiding her face mimic the latter role but are repeatedly interrupted by the demands of her father and Louise, who constantly attempt to revive her, to continue to rehearse the role of human phoenix. The mask she wears only adds to the artificiality of the schizophrenic role, the persona she is forced to play. In fact the Latin roots of the word *persona* carry this double meaning, as both person and mask. As Adamowicz (2005: 155) makes clear, 'the mask in surrealism is essentially an ambivalent object: as the other face which supplements the absent

face, it is located between a fixed and a mobile form, a substitute for the head and an acephalic monster, between veiling and unveiling, a simulacrum revealing a profound identity'. This identity and selfhood / subjectivity becomes mobile and convulsive. According to Adamowicz (2005: 157):

The mask expresses the search among surrealists for the dispossession and dissolving of the self in a space where the limits of self and other are abolished, creating a form of *convulsive* identity [...] the unconscious surfaces directly on the face of the mask. The absence of the face as a system of recognisable features, replaced the mask as a *dérive* of free associations, testifies to the often violent irruption of the other within the framework of a familiar space.

We are also reminded that the word *mask* is etymologically linked to the medieval Latin *masca*, meaning spectre and nightmare, which uncannily returns us to the figure of the ghost and Christiane's ghostly (re)appearance. As Freud (2001c: 244) has stated, the uncanny is evoked when there is a degree of uncertainty provoked by the sudden appearance of 'something that we have hitherto regarded as imaginary [which] appears before us in reality'. In this scene it is the shock revelation and (re)appearance of Christiane, who we presume is dead, that create the uncanny effect, haunting the present with her ghostly presence that also evokes the past. At the same time this ambivalence calls into question the authenticity of both terms, inhabiting and crossing between the liminal borderland of both states. This 'doubling, dividing or interchanging of the self' (Freud 2001c: 234) is a further example of the uncanny phantom-like appearance of the two versions of Christiane. The impossible task of playing or haunting both roles creates a genuine shock or uncanny charge for the audience itself. It can also be related to Freud's attendant theory of 'the return of the repressed', which is closely linked to the idea of something which hovers between the animate and inanimate as both familiar and strange, as well as the figure of Christiane as life's *double* (death) returning in the familiar form it once inhabited, contributing to her status as uncanny other. This otherness is exacerbated, of course, by the fact that her face is hidden throughout. The face - like skin -

is a key signifier of identity in our culture so that when it is hidden, masked or covered up it arouses our curiosity to see that which cannot be seen or shown as well as our desire to know the reasons for this withholding. The spectator is already anxious because of the ghostly (re)appearance of Christiane, but this is further increased by her actions and by the camera's viewpoint, which deny our gaze. This *denial* (like masking) is a trope for repression. What is repressed returns to haunt us in a disguised form as a phantasmatic double or uncanny other. As Freud implies, it is not just the fear of the already dead returning to haunt us, but also the difficulty we have in accepting that death *already* haunts us as an inevitable future event in the form of the death drive.

All of this could explain why Christiane's ghostly (re)appearance is so troubling but must not be seen as isolated from other elements in this scene that also hinge on an ambivalent sense of assertion and denial. These include her hidden face; the false funeral and forged order-of-service; the revelation that everyone believes she is dead; the discussion about her mask; and the substitution of names. However, we must also note that this accumulation of uncanny elements builds on prior events, such as the inert body in the car that we assume is asleep (but is actually a corpse), and which appears to change sex from male to female (the female body is actually dressed in male attire) and the corpse is dumped and hidden in the river (covering up the reality of the crime). The importance of the caged doves, too, appearing at the beginning of the scene under discussion, cannot be overestimated either, as they not only act as a conventional signifier of unfreedom and freedom (and peace) relating to Christiane's loss of freedom and imprisonment in the house, but also foreshadow her eventual revolt, transformation and escape at the end of the film, when she releases the doves as she wanders into the forest. Just as the cage is both the birds' house and their prison, this double meaning, where the trace of the opposite meaning haunts the other, is another instance of the uncanny that operates in this scene. Clearly the doves are also associated with the (superficial) notion

of beauty but they are in actuality slaves, caged, controlled. Their status as *pets*, of course, normalises (masks) this subjection. Ironically, Christiane controls them just as she is controlled by Genessier and Louise. It is a symbol of her willingness at this stage to be defined by and obey patriarchal law, mirroring her own imprisonment.

The repeated entreaties to wear the mask are actually demands or duties based on a westernised, patriarchal will-to-beauty, where the beauty of the surface must be maintained at all costs.⁶ Duty is an enemy of freedom. Christiane's compliance in wearing the mask mimics the earlier action of her inert or slumped body, associated with the assertion of a passive femininity (as demanded by patriarchy) and a denial of an active masculinity. Although she is able to switch between these two modes it is clear that for most of the film her adoption of a masculine mode (the removal of the mask) is figured as a revolt against patriarchy and must be ruthlessly suppressed (the wearing of the mask). The fact that she is only able to take the mask off in secret, when she is alone, emblematises her submission to the patriarchal regime. For the spectator these moments of unmasking provide a sense of liberation in both being able to escape patriarchal domination and breaking the taboo of gender conformity. That is not to say, though that the demand to conform disappears. Like the uncanny, masking relates to both freedom and unfreedom: the trace of its opposite haunts it and threatens to undo it. The status of the mask that Christiane wears is also relational, as it constantly blurs the borders of inside and outside, artificial and real, hidden and exposed and so on. This is especially true of Christiane in the scene we are considering at present. The focus is on the missing face, the mask that stands in for the face and the desire - and fear - of discovering what is hidden. Skin, as Judith Halberstam (1995: 7), asserts,

houses the body and it is figured [...] as the ultimate boundary, the material that divides inside from outside [...] slowly but surely the outside becomes the inside and

⁶ Interestingly, in the scene following this, when Louise picks up Edna at the theatre it is no accident that Ionesco's *Victims of Duty* is playing because each of the characters encountered so far can be seen as victims or slaves of duty, acting very much according to patriarchal notions of duty.

the hide no longer conceals or contains, it offers itself up as text, as body, as monster [...] play[ing] out an elaborate skin show.

Joan Hawkins (2000: 80) also discusses this dis-location, arguing that in the film, 'female identity is a medical construction, as essential and fragile as the surgical "skin job" that creates it. Traditional binary oppositions between interior and exterior, self and other, literally break down as the skin of various women is peeled away, resutured, rejected, peeled away again.' Our first encounter with Christiane with her face hidden reduces her, in Anna Powell's (2010: 146) words, to 'a non-person filled with self-loathing and despair, deliberately hiding her face in the pillows in a gesture of self-obliteration', a gesture repeated at the end of the discussion with her father about his actions relating to the cover-up of the truth relating to her fake death.

Both words and actions constantly mask and efface the truth figured as surface. For example, the mirrors in Christiane's immediate environment are covered up by Genessier, implying that Christiane cannot view her 'real' face. We are also reminded that the heavily bandaged Edna is covered up. Even Genessier and Louise, who assists him, wear surgical masks, so that their eyes appear as slits above the masks. The dogs, who for most of the film are unseen (but provide a constant presence through their barking), fit into this pattern of masking, which also extends to the glossy surface of the monochrome film and the sordid truths that lie hidden (fetishised) beneath the surface. There is also a sense of veiling and unveiling in the notion of the exterior reality of the film, associated with the everyday world of scientific facts and operations, police procedure and the day-to-day lives of the protagonists, juxtaposed with the bizarre, poetic and uncanny elements of the film (the strange masked figure of the doll-like Christiane, the monstrous crimes and absurdity of the pulp horror or science-fiction plot elements) that constantly threaten to disrupt the surface through the ambivalent co-presence of figures of assertion and denial.

4. Mask as fetish

Clearly, in relation to Christiane, the mask is emblematic of her monstrous uncanny other; but it is also signified in other ways. As Powell (2010: 146) remarks, 'our first sight of Christiane's 'face' conceals it, or, rather, reveals it as a blank white mask she is compelled to wear most of the time. She resembles a fashion mannequin with archetypally perfect, frozen features rather than an expressive and individuated human face'. What I wish to argue is the mask becomes a fetish which, like the uncanny other, troubles through its ambivalent status as that which both conceals and reveals, drawing attention to its self. Mulvey (1996: 5) argues that the fetish, as a symptom or substitute for some past trauma, 'functions as a mask, covering over and disavowing the traumatic sight of absence, especially if the "absence" sets off associations with the wounded, bleeding body. The psyche constructs a phantasmatic topography, a surface, or carapace, which hides ugliness and anxiety with beauty and desire'. Christiane's bleeding wound is both real, in the literal sense that her injured face is indeed an open wound, but also a sign that functions semiotically as castration, and in this latter sense she could be said to hover between a sort of pre-oedipal plenitude, where she does not wear the mask (perhaps signifying her acceptance of the wounded self), and the patriarchal demands of the symbolic order as defined by her father and Louise, with strict notions of beauty. The wearing of the mask is predicated on her colluding with her father and Louise's wishes for the heteronormative maintenance of the feminine body-beautiful. As Mulvey (1996: xiv) contends, fetishism

does not want its forms to be overlooked but gloried in. This is, of course, a ruse to distract the eye and the mind from something that needs to be covered up. And this is also its weakness. The more the fetish exhibits itself, the more the presence of a traumatic past event is signified. The 'presence' can only be understood through a process of decoding because the 'covered' material has necessarily been distorted into

the symptom. The fetish is on the cusp of consciousness, acknowledging its own processes of concealment and signalling the presence of it, if not the ultimate meaning of a historical event.

Thus Christiane's wearing of the mask enacts and fetishises both the symptom of her oppression (the mask of the other) and the effacing of that other mask, which is her self.

However, that is not to argue that the face that she has *lost* is somehow the original, true or *real* face. Like the figure of the Russian doll, identity is constantly deferred, displaced and decentred. However, Christiane, at this stage in the film, is unable to imagine her masks as anything other than corporeal signifiers, as trauma made flesh, fetishistic memorials of loss, endlessly (re)staging the trauma of the effacement of identity.

Freud (2001d), in his short but influential paper on fetishism, links the notion of fetishism to castration anxieties, centred around the uncanny surfacing of (repressed) infantile complexes through various tropes related to cutting, wounding, blinding and dismemberment but also the notion of veiling, masking, and covering up the wound. As Williams (1981: 83) makes clear:

Freud shows how the function of the fetish arises from the fear of castration. In the male fantasy, a woman's difference (and desirability) is the result of castration. If the fear of castration becomes a fixation, the tendency on the part of the male unconscious is to replace female love objects with fetish objects that will forever *disavow* castration.

Hence for Christiane there is only the traumatic re-enactment or eternal return of the same process of veiling and unveiling, figured as disavowal, to cover over the wound in those fleeting moments of revelation caused by the uncanny.

Traditionally, the horror film's disavowal of the castration anxieties caused by the female monster is enacted through 'sadistic-investigative voyeurism (the investigation of the woman's mystery) and fetishistic scopophilia (the substitution of the fetish object or the turning of the represented figure itself into a fetish through over evaluation' (Hollinger 1996: 298). This is also true of *Les Yeux sans visage*, through the control and suppression of the

female figure(s) by the various male characters, which are represented through the twin narratives of investigation into the victims' deaths and search for the murderer(s), and the procurement of new victims and disposal of their bodies. Interestingly, Christiane is associated with both narratives but is also somewhere between both: the first narrative is suspended after her (mis)identification and (fake) funeral but is resurrected by Jacques's belief she may be alive and his further investigation, but is eventually terminated for lack of evidence; and her wearing of the mask, the doll-like clothes and appearance, the automaton-like movements and the gothic trappings associated with her imprisonment create a desire to unmask, to see behind or penetrate the surface, of this unreal, fetishised figure.

Further evidence of this fetishisation is present in the scene where Genessier promises: 'You'll have a real face', which is undermined by Louise's entry with the mask, reminding us once more of the fetishisation of the absent identity. It is also significant that we see a butterfly encased in glass on the wall at this point as well as the doves in the cage once more, as if to underline the themes of lost freedom, manipulation, control and masking. Christiane, still with her face buried in the pillow, picks up on these themes as she remarks: 'They've removed all the mirrors but I can see my reflection in the glass when the windows are open. There are lots of shiny surfaces: a knife blade, varnished wood. My face frightens me. My mask frightens me even more'. Clearly the 'they' she is referring to is Genessier or someone working for the doctor and demonstrates his repressive control over Christiane. Patriarchy dominates female appearance and femininity, but Christiane's determination to see her face (despite being frightened by it) signifies the beginnings of her consciousness and transgression. The fact that her mask is more frightening would seem to suggest that she prefers the reality of the ruined face to the artifice of the mask, which is worn more for the benefit of Genessier than her own. At several points in the film Genessier shows his discomfort when Christiane is unmasked, but he is equally upset by Louise's baring of the

scars on her neck, which are hidden by the pearl choker she habitually wears. As Adam Lowenstein (2005: 52) remarks:

Genessier cannot bear the sight of Christiane's burned face or Louise's scarred neckline, so he hides the first behind a delicate white mask and the second behind a pearl necklace. These exaggerated signs of ideal femininity compensate for anxiety about the proximity of femininity and death, which always threaten to undermine Genessier's illusory masculine authority over immortality (he is after all a celebrated plastic surgeon).

The 'bleeding wound' has once again been masked, covered up and fetishised because it is as an assault on Genessier's masculine authority and control. Elizabeth Cowie (2003: 39) echoes this reading, suggesting that his continued experiments are partly explained by his professional ambitions as a plastic surgeon (to successfully perform full facial surgery and the prestige and riches this will bring), but also 'constitutes the real of his desire, the jouissance of his power over the image, eradicating the defacement of time, fate, or nature; it is a fetishising of the flaw - gone in a (re)making of "The Woman Beautiful".

5. The Doll

It is this desire to create something beautiful and perfect that aligns Genessier with the Frankensteinian 'mad' scientists of horror and science fiction but also reminds us of the automaton Olympia from E.T.A. Hoffman's *The Sandman*. Just as Nathaniel is both attracted and repulsed by the automaton, Freud famously marginalises her importance in a much commented upon act of authorial repression.⁷ For Freud Olympia's role had to be downplayed (masked) not only because she interferes with his castration hypothesis but also because she ushers in the threat of homosexuality and bisexuality.⁸ Genessier similarly attempts to erase and transform his daughter's former identity in his fabrication of the living doll - a monument

⁷ See Freud (2001c: 230). For accounts of Freud's sidelining of Olympia see for example Royle (2003), Cixous (2005), and Mulvey (2006).

⁸ See Cixous (2005) for a particularly illuminating account of this issue.

to his skills as a plastic surgeon and as her creator, but it also reveals something that none of the commentators on *Les Yeux sans visage* pursue, namely that Genessier's surgery on the victim-dolls is a form of acting out related to a repetition compulsion that constantly hovers between disavowal and identification (sadism and masochism).

The inevitable result of Genessier's repression and disavowal of the feminine is his psychotic remodelling of reality through destruction (the murder of the women). However, Genessier's re-construction of Christiane's identity, like Freud's re-writing of Olympia, flounders on a paradox: in re-animating these figures all attempts of changing how we perceive them are conditioned by their former identity. So, *what once was* returns to haunt and deconstruct the fabricated, *new* being, whereby the past infects and disrupts the present in an uncanny return, infusing the present with the phantom past. Ironically, his re-construction of Christiane's body is an attempt to break down the borders between interior and exterior, self and other and is further exacerbated by the removal and resuturing of the various donors' faces. As Tania Modleski (1988: 101) observes, when this occurs,

the boundaries between self and other become blurred, and desire for and identification with the other are not clearly separable processes. This "boundary confusion" can be intimidating to the male who, unlike the female, appears to achieve his identity through establishing a firm boundary between himself and woman.

Without these boundaries gender identity, based on the ability to define self and other, in a word *difference*, is radically undermined. Naming and defining are crucial to patriarchy and the phallogocentric policing of heteronormative culture. Already Christiane's comments on her fear of her face (self) and the mask (other) is represented as situated in a liminal space between self and other; but crucially her fear registers as a kind of uncanny realisation, a conscious awareness of her precarious position. It is a traumatic unmasking, but as we shall see it takes many more such moments of such awareness before she embraces the monstrous as uncanny other and the wilful acceptance and pursuit of her becoming-(Surrealist)-monster.

Like Genessier, she is intimidated by boundary confusion because of the pain associated with the consciousness of her monstrosity and the truth of her collusion with Genessier's butchery, prolonging the cycle of killing; and in this sense she identifies at this stage with the masculine regime. Bisexual switching for Christiane is very much limited by such boundary confusion because her inability and reticence in exploring her masculinity forces her to remain locked in to a passive femininity governed by her acceptance of normative discursive practices. As I have already shown, Christiane's collusion also makes it difficult for the spectator because, through our identification with Christiane, we are also led to experience border-crossing as something illegitimate and painful. However, at the same time the taboo associated with such a crossing also offers the promise of a secretive or guilty pleasure, and through repetition this pattern parallels the other chains of assertion and denial that are present throughout the text and prepare us for Christiane's eventual revolt against the patriarchal regime.

When Christiane tells Louise that she blames her father for her ruined face, disagreeing with Louise's pronouncement that it was an accident, she underlines Genessier's culpability and his thoughtless egomania, as it transpires that her father drove like a lunatic: 'he tries to control everyone, even on the road!' Louise tries to calm her, trying to convince Christiane that her father has her best interests at heart and that she must have faith in his abilities to give her a new face, to which she replies: 'I wish I were blind... or dead'. Christiane's language reveals the close links between illumination and jouissance. In other words she sees so clearly that she wishes she could not see but at the same time her desire interferes with this wish, representing its opposite: to not only 'see' but to embrace what is 'seen'. However, this desire is ultimately the desire for the desireless state (the obliteration of self, death) and hovers uneasily between disavowal (neurosis) and foreclosure (psychosis). At this point Louise places the mask on Christiane's face. Her back is turned to the audience so that the ruined face is hidden from view but the reverse shot now allows us our first glimpse of Christiane's

masked face. She hardly moves now, as if the mask possessed the ability to immobilise her and she dutifully sits, compliant, passive, staring at Louise from behind the mask as the latter fetches a hairbrush. Richard Von Busack (1996: 1) observes that when Louise brushes Christiane's hair, 'Christiane holds still as if she were a doll'. Her waxen, expressionless mask and the mechanical movements of her face reinforce the image of her as a living doll. Several critics have remarked on the constructed nature of her appearance. Powell (2010: 147), for instance, points out that her floor length gowns hide her feet 'and add to our sense of her as a moving statue or automaton'. Jonathan Rosenbaum (1995: 3) calls her 'a department store dummy'. This notion of Christiane as a doll or mannequin is based on our reading Christiane's gender identity as constructed, fetishised, outwardly beautiful and subservient, reverting to a stereotypically passive femininity.

We are reminded that Christiane's acceptance of the mask echoes her father's words earlier: to 'get into the *habit* [my emphasis] of wearing it'. Whereas earlier she contests the word 'habit', as she recognises that it is another form of Genessier's control over her when she wears the mask, now she falls silent, accepting her role as a 'victim of duty'. Perhaps it is a strategy akin to Joan Riviere's theory of masquerade, in which femininity is a kind of disguise with which a woman negotiates a subject position within patriarchy and hides her authentic self? In other words, does Christiane possess agency? Is she working from within patriarchy, where the mask functions as a signifier of both her willingness to toe the patriarchal line, as well as hiding or protecting her (true) self? There is some evidence to support this: her verbal attacks on her father's cover-up of her 'death', her lack of faith in his ability to repair her damaged face and the fact that she blames him for the accident as well as for his general controlling demeanour, reveal her opposition. In fact, throughout the film each of these actions can be seen as Christiane's attempts to cross over and switch between a passive femininity, modelled on the law-of-the-father, into an aggressive masculinity. Yet crucially this switching is

fleeting as she constantly retreats to the former position, signifying her resignation and complicity with her father and patriarchy. Or is the mask associated with the 'death mask', acting as an uncanny memento mori, the death drive made visible and concrete? However, it is my contention that Christiane is largely caught up in a form of serial masking and unmasking predicated as disavowal and foreclosure, where the words uncannily evoke her revolt and will-to-freedom, figured as an escape from this situation but also precariously from life (the desireless state, psychosis and *jouissance*). They are phantoms of the future, half-glimpses of her liberation and transformation and, as I have already argued, for the spectator they function in a similar way so that her revolt becomes our revolt.

When Christiane gazes at Louise in this scene, moving her head from side to side, her body immobile - simply sitting still and consenting to the brushing - she not only appears doll-like but also childlike. The stiff taffeta house-coat with its high collar is theatrical and has something in common with the archetypal Pierrot, adding to the unreal doll-like impression. This raises further questions about the validity of the notion of Christiane's gender identity as masquerade and the degree to which she has agency. In a sense this question is partly answered when Louise leaves Christiane alone. It is clear through her body language that she has been waiting for Louise to leave: looking and listening, checking whether Louise has indeed gone. This is followed by a remarkable shot of Christiane as she approaches and then gazes at a photographic portrait of her fiancé, Jacques, which is placed on a small table, whilst above it on the wall looms a much larger picture, a painting of a young girl proudly cradling her doll. Christiane's gaze is fixed on Jacques's portrait, which could suggest her desire for an adult relationship in the present but it is linked, through juxtaposition, with the illusory, nostalgic world of childhood and the past. Despite the photograph being a sign (a representation) and hence constructed, it is a different kind of sign, with a referent that we are aware of (Jacques as doctor and fiancé) from the painting of a little girl and doll from a

bygone era, who may have never existed and is clearly more abstract, fictional. The ambivalence of this juxtaposition depends on our reading of the girl and doll as either another aspect of Genessier's attempts to create a perfect, beautiful doll-like entity, an attempt to freeze Christiane in an imaginary child-like past (as a little girl who never grew up), or as Christiane's playful celebration of the child within, retaining a link to her past. Then again, it may function as simply one more prop in her masquerade, play-acting the doll-child for Genessier and Louise? It is interesting that the doll doubles as a baby in the picture, which adds further support to the notion of Christiane as split between doll-child and adult.

The figures of the doll, waxworks, mannequins and automata, were recognised by both Freud and the Surrealists as intimately linked with the unconscious, fantasy and the uncanny. Freud refers to Jentsch's point that the uncanny is aroused by 'doubts whether an apparently animate being is really alive; or conversely, whether a lifeless object might not in fact be animate' (2001c: 226), and he refers in this connection to the impression made by waxwork figures, ingeniously constructed dolls and automata. It is the sense of uncertainty related to the question of whether they are in fact alive, dead, human or artificial which creates this uncanny feeling. Freud explains the uncanny nature of dolls and the like as related to an uncertainty springing from a resurgence within adult life of more 'primitive beliefs [...] most intimately connected with infantile complexes which have been repressed'.

Christiane, as we have said, is connected to the world of childhood and the imaginary through elements of *mise-en-scène*, particularly the doll portrait as well as her own child-like or doll-like appearance and movements. Her immobility gives an impression of indeterminacy, of death-in-life coupled with her uncanny return as ghost. However, her interest in Jacques also encourages a further doubling, dividing and interchanging of self, split between the preoedipal imaginary dimension of childhood and the symbolic world of adulthood. In many ways she evokes the *femme-enfant* of Lewis Carroll's Alice, so beloved by the Surrealists, a

hybrid figure that is in a process of transformation. We first hear the musical theme associated with Christiane during this sequence, which begins as Louise is brushing her hair: it has a melancholic, fairytale, lilting quality and quite different to the insistent aggressive theme associated with Louise. It is certainly resonant of childhood and nostalgic. After descending to a study, we notice the mirror covered with black fabric, which is another of Genessier's attempts to prevent Christiane seeing her damaged face. Again, the mirror functions in this scene as another signifier associated with Alice, which acts as gateway to another world and eventual liberation. The mirror helps the Alice-as-child transform from the present 'real' world, with its norms and conventions into Alice-as-adult, into an unorthodox parallel world of adventures. It is at this point that Christiane turns away from the mirror, seemingly defeated, but then defiantly picks up the telephone, the musical theme ends and she calls Jacques. We hear his voice on the other end of the telephone but Christiane dare not speak. Christiane's inability to speak to Jacques is a clear indication of her enslavement to her father's will and subjugation to patriarchy. It is also of course symbolic of her lack of 'voice' or individual identity. The musical theme begins again as Christiane looks forlorn, her head turns and she looks up at the portrait of herself with a dove perched on her hand, evoking the free self that is now other. The portrait works as an uncanny reminder of her beautiful face before the accident as well as an idealised, fairytale image of perfection, at one with nature. Despite its evocation of former happier times, we are reminded that it, too, is contained, controlled, framed, a constructed representation of conventional feminine beauty. It also serves to further destabilise her identity through doubling and displacement. However, it provides an uncanny trace of her revolt and subsequent transformation towards the end of the film.

6. Transformation

In terms of pinpointing the specific moment of her revolt it could be argued that this comes much later, in the final five minutes of the film. But at first it seems that Christiane is prepared yet again to allow her father to operate on her and sacrifice the face (and life) of another victim (Paulette Merodon) in the process. Ironically the victim is also not what she seems: she is actually a police plant who has been press-ganged into serving them, and in return they will drop her shoplifting charges. In effect her true identity is subsumed in her new identity as a patient and undercover agent, paralleling Christiane's loss of identity; and like her, Paulette's transformation is effected by representatives of patriarchy.⁹ It is only when Christiane observes Paulette's suffering as she wakes up on the operating table, attempting to free herself, after being kidnapped and drugged, that Christiane makes a decision to put an end to the endless sequence of suffering and death. Genessier has had to leave the room to deal with the police who, ironically, are searching for Paulette.

We begin with a close-up of the disoriented Paulette regaining consciousness. She wears a surgical gown, held in place by forceps, with only her face visible. A circular line has been pencilled in to indicate the area to be excised. As she shakes her head from side to side, trying to get her bearings, she begins to sob. We cut to Christiane, on an adjoining bed, transfixed, sitting up, holding her hands tightly together. She shakes her head from side to side but more slowly and deliberately in a gesture that signifies 'No!' or 'No more!' or rejection. With this simple gesture Christiane's consciousness of her role in this process is given concrete form. Despite her repeated entreaties throughout the film that she would rather die than continue with the operations, or the half-hearted attempts to call Jacques, she has never demonstrated

⁹ Paulette is chosen because she resembles the other victims - apart from the colour of her hair - which the police persuade her to dye blonde - further evidence of patriarchy's control and transformation of female appearance. Interestingly this trope reappears in Hitchcock's *Vertigo* (1958), where Scottie forces Judie (who resembles the dead Madeleine, his former lover) to dye her hair blonde and dress in clothes identical to those of Madeleine. In fact *Vertigo* and *Les Yeux sans visage* are both written by Pierre Boileau and Thomas Narcejac.

any *real* feeling for or empathy with the victims. It has always been a narcissistic protest about how these events affect *her* rather than the women, who must make the ultimate sacrifice. However, finally she is no longer able to look on as a passive observer, disconnected from the events that ultimately depend on her submission and acceptance.

Her ambivalent gesture tells us much about what is going on internally and signifies, both as an attempt to hold onto her former identity as well as an attempt to forge a new one. On the one hand the gesture encapsulates a desire to retreat or hide away from the terrible reality that confronts her, and hence falling back into what is familiar (*heimlich*); and on the other hand there is an awakening of consciousness and revolt, and hence experienced as something unfamiliar (*unheimlich*).¹⁰ Christiane's awakening and transformation depend on her recognition of herself as uncanny monstrous other, as an extension of the monstrous regime associated with Genessier and Louise (in her willingness to collaborate with them) and as a mirror image or double of Paulette. In this latter sense Paulette is no longer perceived as other and it is this recognition and empathy with Paulette's plight that leads to Christiane's decision to free her, and in so doing free herself. Perhaps the reason for Christiane's revolt is due to the fact that the body of the other woman transforms before her eyes, from an inert, silent object, with the focus on her mask-like face (emphasised by the pencil marks that frame the area of skin that will be removed) and the sense that she is sleeping or dead (associated with the world of dolls, fantasy and childhood), and thereby immune to pain; to a speaking subject, a human being, alive and clearly suffering.

Christiane rises from the bed, moving towards Paulette with a sense of purpose, but also appears to glide automaton-like. This impression is created through the focus on the upper

¹⁰ It should be noted, of course, that Christiane's conception of familiar / unfamiliar is already undermined by the uncanny circumstances of her home-life - in and out of a laboratory, attached to her home, which has become (through habit) 'strangely familiar' but hardly 'homely' (*heimlich*). The fact that she has spent so much time in and out of the laboratory is also normalised but, again, there is a growing awareness of the perversity of her situation.

part of Christiane's body, the circular walk, the use of a tracking shot and her artificial appearance (the doll-like gown and mask). Paulette stares at Christiane and appears to faint at first, but when she observes Christiane hovering above her with the scalpel aloft, which she has taken from the bed-side table, she screams, assuming Christiane will do her harm, and thrashes from side to side, trying to escape. On the contrary, Christiane uses the scalpel to cut through the thick strap restraining Paulette. Immediately this is achieved, Christiane looks off-screen and holds the scalpel poised above her like a dagger as Louise enters. Louise orders her to put the scalpel down, takes Christiane's shoulder and repeats the command. but Christiane simply shakes her head from side to side (echoing the gesture she made earlier, before releasing Paulette) and stabs Louise with the scalpel. A subtle track forward has the effect of literally and metaphorically taking us with Christiane, encouraging further identification. As she steps back we notice that the blade is lodged in Louise's neck between the strings of pearls that make up her choker. Her shock is registered through a look of disbelief and hurt, uttering a whispered "Pourquoi?" as she stumbles backwards against the wall, her eyes filling with tears.

It is significant that the weapon of Louise's destruction is the scalpel, which throughout is associated with Genessier and the medical gaze, and by extension patriarchy. Its primary meaning is based on - or rather subsumed - by its function as a medical tool used by surgeons in the pursuit of legitimate medical and scientific goals, but as Hawkins (2000: 73) observes, the medical establishment in *Les Yeux sans visage* is seen 'as an extension of absolute paternal power. It is there, the film insists, not so much to heal people as to exert social control'. Clearly, in the wrong hands the scalpel can easily become an agent of something coercive, sinister and life-threatening, as this film and countless other films featuring rogue surgeons or 'mad' scientists suggest. In fact, its status is ambivalent and is closely tied with the various notions of transformation (physical and psychological) that permeate the film, in

that it is both destructive (mutilating and murdering the female victims, killing Louise) and (re)constructive (repairing Louise's and Christiane's ruined face, freeing Paulette and helping Christiane in her revolt and eventual liberation). In this scene the ambivalence associated with the scalpel is thrown into shocking relief by Christiane's actions that tear asunder the mask of patriarchy. In wielding the phallus she refuses to acknowledge her femininity (with all its attendant patriarchal ramifications) through 'castration,' switching gender roles to assert instead her (latent) masculinity (associated with the original bisexual predisposition). Her cutting free of Paulette in many ways parallels her own freedom, cutting the bonds of her submission to patriarchy. Ironically, her wielding of the scalpel allies her with Genessier yet the masculine authority associated with the scalpel is used against the patriarchal regime. Ultimately, bisexual switching is enacted here through her possession of the scalpel, utilised as a tool of liberty and revolt rather than as an emblem of patriarchal control.

Crucially, the scalpel is associated with cutting through the skin of the subject, penetrating the skin's surface, revealing what lies beneath, and this is close to our notion of *unmasking* or effacement. Yet, as we have seen, the scalpel is also associated with its opposite: with cutting out the facial tissue from each female victim in one mask-like section, to be sutured onto the face of Christiane. In this sense the scalpel becomes a sign of the uncanny par excellence because it serves to unmask and mask at the same time. It both reveals what is hidden beneath the skin and covers over the wound. Louise's pearls serve a similar masking function - to hide the scars of the wound - the only visible markers of mutilation - but also fetishistically draw attention to her neck. Ince's (2005: 141) claim that the pearls are 'a visual marker that identifies her with the figure of the Bride of Frankenstein, the separation of whose head from her body is one of her primary characteristics', is perhaps pushing the analogy between Louise's pearls and the Bride's stitches too far. More convincing is her point that the reason Christiane chooses to stab Louise between the strands of pearls is because it is 'a direct

assault on her identity as a Bride of Frankenstein, and thus her collaboration with Genessier's regime' (2005: 141). Clearly, there is much mileage in seeing each of the women as Genessier's (Frankenstein's) 'brides'. In Louise's case there seems little doubt that Genessier's relationship with her is amorous, reinforcing the link, but it is obviously more problematic in relation to the female victims and more especially his daughter.

The scalpel-as-phallus allows Christiane access to the masculine regime, revolting against and renegotiating her Oedipal relations with her father and Louise, and in the process transforming her gender identity. Castration is reversed, leading to the reclamation of her 'lost' masculinity but crucially informed by her femininity. So, rather than a straight reversal of one for the other she integrates each - not as a synthesis but rather in a more dynamic relationship - switching between both. Her decision to stab Louise in the neck could be read as further evidence of Christiane's phallic power, enacting castration on Louise, opening up the scar in a literal re-writing of the body, as well as a sort of *undoing* or erasure of Genessier's power. Christiane's actions are more complex than a simple revenge scenario, involving punishing Louise for her complicity with Genessier's regime. More importantly, it is her feeling of identification with the female victims that allows her to begin to embrace and come to terms with her other. Up until now this otherness has been figured as monstrous and predatory: she covets the beauty that the women's faces can provide for her, avoiding thinking of them as human beings but simply as disembodied others, as donors of the facial tissue she *needs*; and in the process she disavows her own monstrous appearance and actions. This pursuit of her former beauty is also monstrous in its endorsement and legitimisation of the criminal actions of Genessier and Louise.

However, the convulsive nature of her encounter with Paulette provides the magnetising shock that jolts her out of her complacent acceptance of the status quo, forcing her to acknowledge her culpability as well as her monstrosity. The spark in this case is provided by

Paulette's unexpected (unfamiliar) distraught behaviour: her inability to remain still or silent which is contrasted with Christiane's *familiar* experiences of the drugged, doll-like, inanimate and compliant 'dolls' she has become acclimatised to. This uncanny disjunction between what is conventional and what is unexpected is akin to Aragon's (1994: 204) definition of the marvellous as 'the eruption of the contradiction within the real'. In this case the contradiction is created by the force of Christiane's unconscious desires (her wish to be beautiful) converging with the realisation that in order to be beautiful she must make a monster of (an) other and *herself* by literally taking the face of Paulette, who will be mutilated as a result. This doubling and mirroring of Christiane's monstrosity in Paulette (but also as a representative of the other female victims), as well as with Genessier and Louise, is consistent not only with Aragon's description of the marvellous but also Breton's, in which, according to Michael Sheringham (2006: 116), 'the feeling that an event or series of events in the course of one's daily life depends not only on an evident chain of outer causation but on a hidden chain rooted in the working of unconscious desire.' However, despite the parallels between the marvellous and the uncanny, these terms should remain in a productive dialogue rather than be simply subsumed into Freudian notions of repression and repetition (signifying unresolved traumatic relations), which take away from the positive aspects of the sense of illumination and the possibility of change that the Surrealist terms embody.¹¹

7. Liberation: The Surrealist Monster

In the scene that follows directly after the stabbing of Louise, Christiane releases the dogs from their cages, which unwittingly leads to her father's fatal mauling and death. It is

¹¹ To an extent I find it productive to consider, as Hal Foster (1993: 20) does, that 'the marvellous *is* the uncanny...' because the disorientation (*dépaysement*) triggered by the uncanny can create the conditions necessary to discover the marvellous. However, as Ramona Fotiade (2007: 19) argues 'Foster's systematic use of the uncanny as an all-encompassing hermeneutic device, ends up explaining away the Surrealist *merveilleux* (and its correlate, *dépaysement*), by reducing it to Freudian repression and compulsive repetition of the same'. In conversation with Krzysztof Fijalkowski I think he was correct in suggesting that 'To reduce the marvellous to the uncanny is to lay responsibility for it solely in the (repressed) psyche, not the self's dynamic, active relationship with the world'.

significant that they tear the flesh from his face, seemingly unmasking him in the process. Christiane also sets free the caged doves, who accompany her as she walks out of the tunnel-like entrance of the laboratory. The laboratory functions ambiguously as a liminal space: womb-like, monstrous, associated with imprisonment, horrific experiments and death, but also a place of (re)birth, revolt, transformation and freedom. The final passage through the tunnel mimics Christiane's rebirth and re-entry into the world, yet this is a purely independent 'delivery', on her own terms, finally, as she has killed Louise (who acts as substitute mother) and inadvertently murdered her father. This new self is at the same time a recognition of her monstrosity, as it is a willed transformation of her former (monstrous) self, and as such this transition from *monster* to *surrealist monster* is dependent on what Adamowicz (1990) refers to as 'participation with the radically *other*'. According to Adamowicz, 'the monster is an articulation of the figure of identity comprising the self and the other, the other as the other in the self [...] identity stems not from a sense of unity of the self, but from participation with the radically *other*' (1990: 299). The choice of the words 'participation with' rather than 'unity' is telling: unity implies finality and closure, which of course Breton's 'supreme point' also hints at, while 'participation with' implies negotiation and hospitality. There is also the sense that 'unity of the self' is an attempt to deny the other in the self, to deny the divided self by erecting a barrier between self and other, which 'participation with' quite clearly attempts to eradicate (where we are no longer *strangers to ourselves*).

Bisexual switching is based on a similar dynamic, whereby masculine and feminine elements are able to oscillate back and forth unimpeded by borders imposed and policed by patriarchy. There is a real sense that Christiane is negotiating her passage through this crucial time of rebirth and transformation, slowly yet surely finding her way, forging connections both with those around her and her monstrous uncanny other. Her release of the dogs and doves, for example, is accomplished with a deliberation and empathy that is carried over from her

release of Paulette. Each are mirrors of her own subjugation but also freedom, which she understands deeply, recognising their collective as well as individual plight. Significant in this context is the almost dream-like pace of Christiane's actions following the murder of Louise: she appears to sleepwalk her way through the final part of the film, which can be read not so much as a retreat into herself as an enlarged reality, deeply reflective; neither chained to the past, nor lost in dreams of the future and not entirely connected to the present, but somehow all of these and elsewhere in perpetual motion.

It is Christiane's sense of revolt that leads to her becoming a Surrealist monster. The Surrealist monster is, according to Adamowicz (1990), in a permanent state of revolt, a liminal being that exists between desire and death, beyond the pleasure principle. S/he is associated with the crossing of borders, troubling strict definitions of identity; ultimately, offering a vital critique of such fixed notions, encouraging their dismantling as well as challenging all those involved in erecting and maintaining the ideological machinery associated with the transmission of discourses related to notions of fixed identity. The sense of denial and (passive) acceptance that we associate with Christiane in the early scenes gives way to a reflective (active) revolt.

Encouraged by Franju's own comments, where he suggests that the fluttering of the doves evoke her madness, many critics view Christiane's actions at the end of the film as evidence of a descent into madness.¹² The poetic, dream-like image of Christiane slowly wandering, as if in a trance, in her long flowing nightdress, towards the forest at night, surrounded by doves (one perched on her hand and another on her shoulder), is reminiscent of the sleep-walking women who populate the paintings of Paul Delvaux or the hybrid bird-women of the collage novels of Max Ernst, offering further support to such a claim. However, more recent writings emphasise a quite different interpretation. Ince (2005: 118-19) for instance makes a

¹² See for example Durnat (1967: 78), Lovell (1975: 17), Cowie (2003: 42).

convincing case for seeing the doves as a conventional symbol of freedom and peace, pointing to their appearance in other films made by Franju, where their role supports such a reading. In fact, Ince sees Christiane's actions as an 'act of revolt', claiming that her behaviour throughout the film 'gives absolutely no indication of a weak mind, and that there never was a saner gesture of revolt than hers' (2005: 144). This fits in with a Surrealist reading of the film, which Ince herself acknowledges runs through all Franju's films.¹³ Crucially, Christiane's revolt is seen by Ince as 'ethically feminist', wherein she 'acts for other women, not just for herself' (2005: 140). Indeed, this revolt is linked with bisexual switching through Christiane's ability to *participate with* or switch between self and other. The convulsive encounter with Paulette acts a form of *dépaysement* whereas the phallic scalpel is a symbol of both her revolt and her repressed masculinity.

Although this sense of switching appears to be present for a very short time and towards the film's end, its flickering presence is figured via the various uncanny assertions and denials at the level of content and form already noted. However, unlike in *Un Chien andalou*, they are less visible as they are very much tied to a seemingly realist narrative, contextualised through genre and plot and obeying the laws of causal logic and continuity editing, whereas in Buñuel and Dalí's film assertion and denial are only tenuously connected to a fragmented narrative and constantly foregrounded by the disjunctive editing. Due to the slow-burn pace of the majority of Franju's film the last five minutes suddenly appear to have a breakneck intensity. This is needed to suggest the convulsive encounter, Christiane's revolt and what has come before. The rhythmic switching between assertion and denial centred around Christiane and her relationship with her father help prepare for Christiane's transformation. Crucially her earlier repression of masculinity (and retreat into childhood as *femme enfant*) as well as her inability to acknowledge and embrace her monstrous or uncanny other prevented her

¹³ Durnat (1967), Hawkins (2000) and Lowenstein (2005) make similar links.

liberation and transformation. Her father and Louise are instrumental in this process and ironically her collusion with them also mimics and prepares for her bisexual switching - in that she identifies herself with the law-of-the-father and hence masculinity - but this identification is always fleeting.

What Christiane lacked earlier in the film was the consciousness of her position and although her transformation appears abrupt it has been fermenting beneath the surface, as indicated by her diatribes against her father and faltering faith in her desire to be beautiful, and punctuated by the botched operations and periods of recovery and reflection. And with consciousness comes revolt. As Breton (1994: 97) remarks: 'It's revolt itself, revolt alone that is the creator of light. And this light can only be known by way of three paths: poetry, liberty and love'. It is this light that Christiane is guided by and radiates as she glides across the screen. It is significant that the gentle, fairytale musical theme associated with Christiane begins to merge with the more sinister theme associated with Louise. It suggests a further *participation* with and switching between her uncanny other and herself, no longer a *retreat* from but a *revolt* against and a possible dialogue with her various selves. These selves, as we have seen, are so many masks, which like those associated with folk culture, are, according to Bakhtin (1984: 39-40) connected with 'the joy of change and reincarnation, with gay relativity and with the merry negation of uniformity and similarity; it rejects conformity [...] is related to transition, metamorphoses, the violation of natural boundaries'. In many ways the film's final moments, when Christiane wanders into the forest surrounded by doves, evokes such a transformation, with Christiane appearing to bring to life the portrait of herself and the doves glimpsed earlier in the film, so that she could be said to have broken the bonds of representation (as an idealised object), transcending the frame to become both subject and object, self and other in the act of *her* revolt, joyously constructing her own story. Unlike Orpheus, she walks stridently forward, not looking back.

In many ways it could be argued that the accession to the Surrealist monster is what Breton (1993: 121) described as 'freedom pushed to the point of delirium'. The sense of intoxication and disorientation connoted by the word 'delirium' is close to the notion of *jouissance*, what Barthes (1975) refers to as a surfeit of unbearable, ultimate pleasure related to both the uncanny and the marvellous. However, we can read the convulsive nature of Christiane's experiences as an embrace of the marvellous rather than simply that of her uncanny other. Above all, it is an embrace of the imaginary and the real in the here and now rather than Christiane's former experience of self in some distant 'beyond', where she would one day be transformed through her father's surgery. The unmasking of the false belief in such a fantasy is precisely the moment that the marvellous is ushered in; we have a presentiment of this earlier when Christiane says: 'When I look in a mirror I feel I'm looking at someone who looks like me, but seems to come from the beyond, from the beyond'. At this stage this 'beyond' is far from Breton's question in *Nadja*: 'Is it true that the beyond, all the beyond is in this life?' (1960: 144). The beyond that Christiane speaks of is linked with her monstrous uncanny other, which she first rejected, preferring to cling to the fantasy of her restored beauty, an unreal, fabricated identity bestowed on her by her father and patriarchy, which amounts to a veiling of or retreat from reality, or in a word idealism. The reality that Christiane embraces at the film's conclusion is one based on a separating or rather a liberation of the real from the fetters of idealism and patriarchy.

This goes some way in explaining Christiane's actions and the critical reactions to the film's conclusion. The ambivalence that is at the heart of both is related to what we have been referring to as a monstrous uncanny other, but which is more clearly the Surrealist marvellous, associated with the Surrealist monster. Ambivalence is not seen as something necessarily to be feared or confused but closer to a sense of wonder, awe and mystery, which are to be welcomed. The ability to accept the ambiguity generated by our encounters with the

strangely familiar in the here and now, rather than in some transcendent projected future, is summed up by Breton (1960: 130) in *Nadja*: 'through my long-term undertakings I make myself less deserving of life as it comes, the life I love: life that *takes your breath away*'. It is in this sense that I read the final scene: Christiane wanders deliberately and gracefully towards the forest, looking forward (not back), experiencing everything in her path as if it was the first day of the rest of her life.

Although, as Angela Carter (1978: 27) remarks, 'a free woman in an unfree society will be a monster', Christiane's revolt and transformation makes her a Surrealist monster that has the potential to 'transform the world' (Marx) and 'change life' (Rimbaud). Despite the best attempts of the male representatives - as well as Louise's misplaced masculinity - to control and delimit her gender identity they all fail: she does not remain hidden, she does not conform to her father and Louise's demands and in fact her actions lead to their destruction and her freedom. Ultimately she has 'become a burning star for *everyone*' that 'penetrates the darkness' like an 'angel of liberty' (Breton: 1994: 95). Her decision to 'advance masked', as Descartes might have it, reflects her acceptance of her other as well as acting as a kind of talisman of her new identity, symbolising her agency (the freedom to choose to wear the mask), fusing past, present and future rather than as something forced upon her, hiding behind or denying. The ambivalence associated with masking / unmasking, which we have noted throughout the film, has been linked explicitly with the (re)construction / de (con)struction of gender identity and power relations between men and women. Masking is initially associated in the film with a masculine strategy to control women - to disguise, efface, transform them - so that they conform to masculine desire and male authority. But in the final section, Christiane's decision to wear the mask becomes a kind of unmasking, a blurring of inside and outside emblematising her liminality for all to see. Like the tattooed survivors of the death camps who retain the identification marks as a permanent document of

Nazi monstrosity but also resistance, the mask is evidence of her father's experiments¹⁴ but at the same time a proof of her acceptance and celebration of her liberty and agency.

Ultimately, Franju's technique - combining the poetic violence of *Un Chien andalou* with a predominantly classic realist mode - facilitates bisexual switching and transformation.

Through recognisable generic and plot elements associated with horror, science fiction, police-procedural, film noir and the *cinéma fantastique*, as well as the adoption of other conventional 'classical' formal codes and conventions, the spectator is encouraged to be both immersed in the diegesis - indentifying with Christiane and the female victims - and able to switch from a passive mode to an active one, being able to reflect upon the horrific crimes perpetrated by patriarchy; and to draw parallels between these dreadful acts of control and manipulation and the construction and policing of heteronormative models of gender identity, by the twin institutional bodies of Science and the Law. As I have argued, despite Franju's use of recognisable frames of reference (generic codes and conventions, stock characters and familiar situations and settings), these are utilised in order to aid the spectator in their negotiation of the less familiar, disturbing, shocking and poetic elements that Franju stitches into the fabric of the film.

However, there are points where, like the botched surgical operations on Christiane and the butchery inflicted on the female victims, this fabric is revealed to be a surface, a mask, that is torn asunder, revealing its constructedness, which parallels Christiane's accession from monstrous uncanny other to Surrealist monster. I would argue that what rescues the film from being overwhelmed by these convulsive moments of *dépaysement* - and particularly the excesses towards the end, culminating in the poetic final scene - is the 'slow-burn' approach of the film's various plot elements and reliance on generic conventions. Franju takes some time to lay out the elements of both of these, building logically and painstakingly towards the

¹⁴ There are a number of readings of the film that make links to the holocaust. See Lowenstein (2005) and Hawkins (2000), for instance, but none that read the mask in this way.

climax, predicated on the conventional showdown between the forces of good and evil and the expectation that the latter will triumph and the monster / villain will be apprehended, brought to justice or destroyed. However, the dénouement is anything but conventional: evil is punished (the 'mad' scientist and his accomplice meet their fates) but Christiane's crimes are not (the police investigation is shown to be completely ineffectual) and her destiny is uncertain, denying the audience closure or a traditional 'happy ending'.

Franju's Surrealism, then, is perhaps as subversive or more so than that of Buñuel and Dalí or Cornell in that he was not only able to create a cinematic model that facilitated bisexual switching and transformation, but achieved this within the confines of a form associated with mass entertainment, which in effect enables the film to reach a mass audience. Interestingly, *Les Yeux sans visage* has had a contested history in terms of its audiences,¹⁵ moving between 'pulpy horror film', 'cult' and art-house cinema, which clearly reflects the film's ability to engage with different audiences, and perhaps offer each spectator fresh eyes with a new way of seeing a different - yet familiar - face.

¹⁵ See Lowenstein (2005) and Hawkins (2000) on this issue.

Chapter 4: Transforming Practice-as-Research / Practice-as-Surrealism

'Neither the theoretician nor the practitioner has definitive rights to closure over what an artwork has to say [...] art is fundamentally dialogical in nature (MacLeod and Holdridge 2006: 24).

Art would remain autonomous in its reconfiguration as a kind of science, as poetic research, but it would no longer be separate in the modernist sense, as an end in itself [...] the means of such research were coordinated to the ends of social transformation; in this way surrealism would be 'at the service of the Revolution' (Harris 2004: 4).

Introduction

In this chapter I will examine the various materials that make up my creative practice in relation to how they confirm, challenge, expand and problematise the research findings in the written thesis. The practice materials were created between 2007 and 2012, consisting of: a film trilogy - *The Dream Key Cycle* (identified as TDK 1-3 from now on), seventeen collages in the *Transformation Series*, and two box assemblages (*Transformation cabinets* 1-2). I also created DVD commentaries for each film.¹ The aim of this chapter is not only to demonstrate the validity of my practice as an invaluable research method, working in partnership and in dialogue with the written research on the case-study films, but also to indicate how it is coterminous with the tenets of Surrealism and can be seen as itself extending Surrealist practice, which utilises the creation of various artefacts and the thinking and knowledge produced in the processes of their making and dissemination, for radical ends: to both enlighten and transform the self and the world.

After exploring the links between the merits of practice-based research and Surrealism as a form of research, I will re-examine the key theoretical issues and problems raised by the films

¹ The commentaries feature Paul Cousins, as cinematographer, editor, composer and actor, and myself, as writer, director and actor. There are also interviews with the main cast members: Louise Tyrell, Trefor Jones, and Megan Jones. It should be noted that the films and collages were made back to back whilst the assemblages emerged during the latter stages of work on the final film.

discussed in earlier chapters in relation to my own practice, bringing them into closer dialogue and thereby encourage viewing both the theoretical enquiry and practice from another angle. It should be noted that this switching between the different modes of research (practice-based research and written research) is integral to the overall design of this dissertation, where the practice is understood as an iterative, dialogic research methodology for examining each of the films already discussed in previous chapters (and also in dialogue with my collages and assemblages and other material) that evolve fluidly through various stages, cohering (from a methodological *process* of enquiry) into products-as-results or as data (films, collages, assemblages) along the way.

In this sense then, the practice is another type of thinking or knowledge, representing another form of border crossing - switching between the (traditionally) written and the moving image, collage and assemblage. The creative artefacts also switch between *products* of the research (research-led practice) and a methodology or *process* (practice-led research).² Crucially, the practice is very much a type of autobiography, a slice of personal history - coming from a particular time and place with a specific set of personal contexts: gender, race, age, social class and so on. The practice involves diverse materials, ranging over a lifetime: video and super 8 film from other projects, travelogue and found footage; antique postcards; magazines; newspapers; personal and found photographs; slides; objects discovered in flea markets, the beach and other places; and the contributions of those who worked on the films and helped me connect the various fragments. Autobiography, far from being biased or uncritical, allows an access to the work that can be reflexive and reflective. Breton's *Mad Love* and *Nadja* have been exemplary models and crucial in this regard, in the way that they integrate

² See Smith and Dean (2011: 7) for a definition of these terms. Although these terms are useful, I prefer to use the terms 'written research' to refer to the written aspect, which is both a research methodology, a record of the research and which may prompt practice-based research, of course; and I use 'practice-based research' to also refer to practice as a type of research methodology as well an outcome of that research, which can prompt written research. See also the next section in this chapter for a fuller explanation.

autobiographical elements in the pursuit of Surrealist investigation and transformation. Equally important have been the autobiographical writings of the directors under discussion, but especially Buñuel and Dalí, recording and analysing their film experiments at the various stages of conception, production and reception. In each of these cases there is a powerful sense of the artworks as both Surrealist documents of their researches and a record of their personal engagement in those projects and with Surrealism.

Above all this (hybrid) research should be understood as constituent parts of a constellation and should be experienced in different permutations in order to avoid privileging any particular mode of enquiry in hierarchical terms as well as forging new connections from this approach. In reality this has seemed quite natural to me because the practice and written research have been conducted in tandem and in a spirit of dialogue with each other from the start. As well as being dialogical this relationship between the various research elements is elliptical, with one research element answering, contributing to or completing the other in the manner of finishing the incomplete sentence; as well as opening up new perspectives by being viewed or refracted through the lens of the other.

1. Practice-based research

Practice-based research is now a well-established methodology within academic institutions and recognised by research funding bodies within the UK and in many countries world-wide.³ In my experience as an artist-researcher, practice can be and often is a valid form of research in itself, without the need for explanatory (written) research. The same can be said about the terms 'artist-scholar' or 'artist researcher' and the many other terms associated with research, involving the making of creative artefacts that relate in different ways to the overall aims of the research. My main aim is to demonstrate that practice-based research is especially apt

³ See Judith Mottram 2011: 229-48, for example, for an overview.

methodologically for my own research because of my contention that Surrealists past and present are a research-driven, knowledge-producing community of (predominantly) artist-researchers whose creative output (paintings, poetry, collages, films and other media) can be seen as both research tools or methodologies (process) and documents (products) of the research. I agree with Katy Macleod (2000: 4) who asserts 'that art is a theorising practice; it can produce the research thesis; it cannot be said to be simply an illustration of it'.

Surrealism provides a model of research which is comparable to current practice-based research amongst research students. Katy Macleod and Lin Holdridge (2001: 36) share this view, singling out the Surrealists and Constructivists as exemplary proponents of advanced art practices: 'engaging with intellectual issues, concepts and philosophies, and of making artworks which [are] thoroughly engaged at a critical level'. It is productive to think of such a practice as dialogically engaged with theory (ideas, thought, imagination) and practice (whether this takes the form of an identifiable product - such as an artwork, or as an activity or experience - such as playing games, taking part in a meeting, reading and so on). In this sense MacLeod (2000: 5) suggests that Surrealists can be seen as following in the tradition of the 'artist scholar' who was 'predicted by the first European Academy of Art in the sixteenth century and has been more-or-less undermined ever since simply because in art practice the theoretical premise is realised through artwork'. Moreover, Macleod (2007: 4) also argues that the parallel between research undertaken by the Surrealists and research undertaken by artist scholars involved in practice-based research recognises the *reciprocal* nature of theory and practice. She highlights the similarity with the Surrealists' approach to art and writing:

where little or no separation was acknowledged because both served the purposes of art, which were the purposes of revolutionary change. In the Surrealists' *poème-objets*, automatism and deployment of Freudian theory, it is clear that their ideas mobilised theory and that their cross disciplinary practices such as art and writings produced a lability of that relationship. Art may well refuse stasis: it is action, not necessarily directed at social or political change, as it was with the Surrealists, but it is certainly thought in action.

Similarly, the artist-researcher can utilise the artwork as a methodology, a form of enquiry, but the artwork is also the product, data or result of that enquiry.

When I began my research there was not a great deal of literature on the subject of practice-based research, especially in relation to film. Macleod and Holdridge's book *Thinking through Art* (2006) was extremely valuable but focused mainly on fine art. In terms of supervision at Queen Mary I have been encouraged to develop my own methodology (with the support and encouragement of my supervisors) and find my own way to connect theory and practice, which Sullivan (2010: 48) refers to as 'moving from the "unknown to the known" whereby imaginative leaps are made into what we don't know as this can lead to critical insights that can change what we do know'. Sullivan (2010: 49) is suggesting that working from such a position can be 'purposeful yet open ended, clear sighted yet exploratory'. He is keen to stress the dialogical relationship between theory and practice. The recent explosion of writing and debate on practice-based research suggests that it is finally receiving the critical recognition it deserves and echoes this reciprocal relationship between research-led practice and practice-led research, which is seen as having the ability to create new knowledge and new ways of apprehending such knowledge.⁴ More specifically, Smith and Dean (2009: 5) note that practice-led research emphasises creative practice in itself, with detectable research outputs, but also highlight the insights, conceptualisation and theorisation which can arise when artists reflect on and document their own creative practice.

The main principles of the relationship between theory and practice relevant to my own research are as follows:

⁴ See Smith and Dean (2009), Barrett and Bolt (2010), Biggs and Karlsson (2011), for example. Significantly both the ARE and AHRC now recognise practice-based research as a legitimate form of research.

1. The practice demonstrates key Surrealist ideas such as transformation and liberation in an experiential, sensuous and aesthetic sense as opposed to simply a theoretical contemplation of ideas.
2. The notion of the dialogue encapsulates the idea of exchange, crossing over and switching, which is at the core of the written research. More specifically, it mirrors the theory of bisexual switching. Above all, the idea of a fluid process of becoming, figured in a variety of ways, seems to be a more authentic approach than either theory or practice alone.
3. Crucially, both theory and practice should be seen as equally necessary as research tools, in the sense that the new knowledge produced is only fully intelligible when presented alongside each other (dialogically) rather than separately. It is a matter of identifying in what ways each element contributes to the understanding of the research.
4. Finally, the concluding written research should draw together the findings of both theory and practice (as dialogue), involving the written thesis, accompanying films, collages, assemblages and other materials relating to these. Ultimately, practice is also *theory* (theoria) or a form of theorising, another way of thinking - a methodological tool - and not in a linear or hierarchical relationship whereby the practice is a product, *produced* or *explained* by theory. This dissolving of the theory / practice binary is in keeping with the spirit of this dissertation: to cross borders and challenge the notion of fixity or essentialising discourses that support hierarchical thinking and deny transformation and change. This is also in keeping with the practice of Surrealism.

2. Surrealism as research

What I am arguing for, then, is an understanding of Surrealism as a form of research, that is both theoretical and practical - rather than the widely-held assumption that it as an art

movement. What is more, art is seen as being one method among many to explore Surrealist ideas and is therefore not to be treated any differently from other research methods. Finally, Surrealism should be considered as a living entity and not consigned to the historical past.

As a founder member of the London Surrealist Group in 2004, and as someone who is personally in touch with Surrealist groups and individuals engaged in contemporary Surrealist activities and research nationally and internationally in Leeds, Paris, Greece, the United States, and Prague, I feel in a privileged position to comment on this misrepresentation. Very briefly, it is my view that the artistic activities associated with Surrealism are evidence or *residue* of an on-going *process*, documenting the Surrealists' experiments and investigations, as forms of research, ultimately connected to a much wider political, philosophical and ultimately revolutionary programme. In this sense it is argued that Surrealists have created and used an array of media as research in pursuit of their investigations, in the hope of enlarging and transforming their own (as well as the audience's) vision of reality.

Recent scholarship on Surrealism lends support to such an argument and perhaps signals a shift away from art historical approaches that discuss Surrealism as a literary or artistic school or embodying a certain style or aesthetic. Adamson (2007: 303) speaks of 'the Surrealist project of art as research'; Parkinson (2008:11) refers to the Surrealists as 'international communities that were research-driven and experimental'; and Kadri (2011: 3) uses a similar tack, describing Surrealism 'as a field of investigation [...] its propositions were meant to be put into action, conceived as the basis for experiments and further enquiry [...] on a parallel path with science'.⁵ As Sheringham (2006: 81) makes clear, 'the artwork can only

⁵ We have only to look at the activities and artefacts created by Surrealists past and present to dispel the notion that Surrealism was an art movement. Witness the activities of The Bureau of Surrealist Research, for example, and the researches on sexuality in the 1920s; the playing of games and conducting of enquiries, which were used to gather research on various topics - love and suicide, for example; or the investigations of dreams and other phenomena and investigated in the various manifestoes, and journals; but also embodied through the various

be an experiment, an activity, its residue or record. *Nadja* is not a work of art but a log-book, the register of an experience'.

In fact the notion of Surrealism as, in Harris's words, 'experimental research [...] conceptualised as a kind of science [...] contributing to a greater knowledge of human thought', is clearly at the centre of Surrealist thought from its inception (2004: 3). Significantly, though, this knowledge (interpretation) is not an end itself but wedded to transformation (action) 'in the service of the revolution'.⁶ It was no accident that the first major Surrealist review *La Révolution Surréaliste* (1924-1929) was modelled on the scientific magazine *La Nature*, wherein the various pictures - photographs, reproductions of paintings and drawings - are arranged in such a way as to support the written text in the manner of illustrations and thereby undermining their individual status as artworks. As Dawn Ades (1978: 189) perceptively observes 'they look like documents, like evidence', adding: 'The Surrealists wanted no mistake about the scientific nature of their experiment'. Throughout the thirties in particular, scientific discourse appears in an array of contexts: from Dalí's (1969) essay in the Surrealist number of *This Quarter* [1932], where he talks throughout of Surrealist 'experiments' and 'experimenters', to Hugnet's essay that appeared in the catalogue for the exhibition *Dada, Fantastic Art and Surrealism* (1936: 52): 'The Surrealist is not to be seen [...] as an aesthete, but as an investigator and experimenter [and Surrealism has] extended its research into every field [...] There is no Surrealist art, there are only proposed means'; and perhaps most systematically in Breton's appropriation of the scientific metaphor of the

artworks, utilised as research tools or documents of the research. drawings, paintings, collages, objects, films etc. that embody their researches.

⁶ Walter L. Adamson (2007: 269) suggests, quite convincingly, that the importance of utilising art as research and revolutionary praxis was certainly to the fore in Breton's mind as early as 1916. Adamson argues that Breton sees poets and artists as involved in 'experiments and investigations', as 'seekers after the truth' and as people who 'undertake discoveries'. Breton, and his allies recognised an urgent need to align art not with an art-for-art's sake modernism or aesthetic style (dedicated to producing artistic products), but rather to envisage art as knowledge-producing *activity*, as *processes* and *results* - as *research*, which would be valuable in expanding the individual imagination and preparing the way to discrediting reality as it stands in favour of a complete re-envisioning of the world and existence and its eventual transformation.

Communicating Vessels (1932), As Harris (2007: 86) argues: 'The scientific aspect of this image is an important indication of surrealism's desire or need to reinvent itself as a form of science, in which, however it is intuitive rather than rational thought that will make a contribution to knowledge'. Breton is keen to promote Surrealism as scientific whilst at the same time attempting to avoid its slippage into rationality at the expense of outlawing irrationality and hence repressing desire. As Ades (1992: 188), makes clear the distinction was subtle: 'the pursuit of research [...] could be analogous to but was never identical with that of 'scientists''. It could be argued that Breton's attempts to maintain a balance between remaining faithful to Hegel's dialectical materialism and championing the Freudian unconscious and dreams, whilst also attempting to convince the PCF of his revolutionary credentials, was an impossible juggling act but was necessary to promote Surrealism as a serious, research-driven and revolutionary enterprise.⁷

3. Creative practice and case study films

I wish to draw together the notion of practice-as-research with the notion of Surrealism-as-research through discussing my own investigations towards this thesis. I wish to examine the possibilities posed by such border crossings of academic researcher, creative researcher and Surrealist researcher. I hope to demonstrate that these crossings are extremely fruitful and not incompatible but I will also need to consider the potential issues and pitfalls raised by combining these roles. A central aspect of such an encounter will be its transformative nature for both the researcher and his or her audience. As Sullivan (2010: 50) makes clear, this relationship often results in change and transformation because the nature of such an

⁷ Contemporary Surrealism is no different. Later this year (2012) the next edition of the Surrealist journal of the international Surrealist community *Hydrolith* will gather together poems, stories, collages, theoretical writings, games and other texts which document Surrealists' current practice as research. The subtitle of this collection: *Surrealist Research and Investigations* only underscores this relationship between artwork and research.

experience 'is interactive, encourages dialogue and generates debates.' I am reminded of Breton's words in *The Surrealist Manifesto* (1990a: 225) where he speaks of 'this activity of transformation with this activity of interpretation'. In many ways this is a variation on Marx's much quoted: 'Up until now philosophers have only interpreted the world - the point now is to change it', but it also links with Breton's developing notion of the conducting thread or capillary tissue analogy that he uses to link the inner and exterior worlds of dream and reality, the conscious and the unconscious, thought and action.

The varied aspects of my practice - film, collage and assemblage - reflect a complex engagement with the Surrealist notion of gender identity as dynamic, fluid and multiple. Bisexual switching is explored in and through the different media as an alternative method of spectatorship which posits a 'mobile' spectator, in active negotiation with the various gender positions and identities in a kind of dialogue with the text and practitioner. Utilising different media has allowed me to explore these main aims differently, raising questions about the specificity of each medium and its ability to approach these areas of research in myriad ways. Particularly interesting has been the dialogue between time-based and non time-based media in terms of formulating and testing the strategies I have utilised to explore, problematise and challenge essentialising discourses. Crucial in this respect is figuring gender crossing and transformation as a form of *switching* and *becoming* and their relation to convulsive identity and liberation.

My engagement with the written research, the films of Buñuel, Dalí, Cornell and Franju, my reading and reflecting on my practice, have also enabled me to deepen my understanding of gender identity in Surrealism and the theoretical debates around this area. Again, utilising different platforms for such debates as a form of *bricolage* - writing, practice, interviews, discussions, DVD commentaries, notes and sketches - provides a series of overlapping dialogues and perspectives that allow me to increase my understanding of the research.

This tacit knowledge, writes Estelle Barrett, is 'embodied knowledge or 'skill' developed and applied in practice and apprehended intuitively - a process that is readily understood by artistic researchers who recognise that the opposition between explicit and tacit knowledge is a false one' (2010: 4). Barrett argues likens the process to '*being in-the-game* where strategies are not pre-determined, but emerge and operate according to specific demands of action and movement in time'. It parallels the use of automatism, which is nearly always my starting point for the work, where images and ideas emerge mysteriously, ready formed, but then lead into a kind of dialogue with others, leading me to recognise links and spark other correspondences, which I begin to shape more consciously.⁸

4. Dialogues

In this next section I will re-consider the conclusions of the earlier chapters - the key issues and problems that they raise - in the light of my own practice, through a series of dialogues, using the films already discussed as 'staging points' for these dialogues. The main reasons for this are two-fold: firstly, to re-examine and re-imagine gender identity in the films through the lens of my own practice, as methodology, contributing new perspectives on the films (as well as gender identity in Surrealist film as a whole); and, secondly, to examine the practice in relation to the films in earlier chapters, as research outcomes, data or products of the research, assessing the contribution that the practice has added to or extended the overall research.

These dialogues will necessarily move *between* discussions of the films in earlier chapters and my own films, collages and assemblages; and are open to interruption, fragmentation and digression, reflecting both the highlighting and crossing of conceptual borders and

⁸ In many ways my method is close to Joan Miró and Andre Masson. See Miró's interview with James Sweeney, *Partisan Review*, New York, February, 1948, P.212 where Miró relates his working method. See Ades (1994) and Roger Cardinal (1997), for useful discussions of Masson's method.

embodying the collage aesthetic which defines my research in all its manifestations. This approach is extremely productive but, as Ian Biggs (2006: 198) suggests, care needs to be taken with a dialogical approach as it 'constructs a hybrid narrative that deliberately puts in question its own academic authority, whilst still remaining in close dialogue with scholarly research, argument and critical reflection'. The potential problems arise in the necessary 'schizophrenic' 'shape-shifting' involved in one person taking on what Sullivan (2011: 28) refers to as the 'the dual roles of the researcher and the researched'. In the shifting permutations of this reflexive practice the notion of an objective, authoritative voice or author becomes blurred, simply another voice among many. As Bakhtin (1994: 209) suggests in relation to the author:

He makes use of this verbal give and take, this dialogue of languages at every point in his work, in order that he himself might remain as it were neutral with regard to language, a third party in a quarrel between two people (although he might be a biased third party).

However, for many artist-researchers this seemingly chaotic relationship is inevitable because of the necessary interplay between the engagement with reading, thinking, writing and making which not only form a series of parallel activities - voices in a dialogue - but are also elliptical, in the way each voice replies to the other, filling in the gaps and initiating new dialogues. The effect of this dialogue partakes of what Octavio Paz (1990:1) refers to as 'contrapuntal unity', grouping seemingly disparate texts or fragments in such a way that they form a whole or rather 'a tissue of relations'. In other words, these fragments take on greater meaning and cohesion through their relations with other fragments in a dialogue.

A further issue that should be raised relates to the notion of the status of my own practice in relation to my claim that I am continuing and extending Surrealist research and the possible argument that my practice is merely pastiche. The first point relates to what I said earlier about a number of critics and art historians who insist on demarcating Surrealism as an art

movement with a specific set of historical and aesthetic parameters, with its 'demise' generally linked with Breton's death in 1966, implying that it would be absurd for anyone to claim they are creating Surrealist work or referring to themselves as Surrealists. I am reminded of what Jameson (1991: 174) refers to as 'Surrealism without the unconscious', suggesting that contemporary work is disconnected or 'without the charge and investment' associated with any political, philosophical, revolutionary or even personal root core or relationship with the unconscious. He is clearly demarcating Surrealism past as authentic due to its connection with these aspects whereas any current notion of Surrealism is seen as 'depthlessness', accomplished in favour of a rampant intertextuality, a disjoining of the sign from the referent, with no authentic reference or reality and is rather pastiche.

Clearly, not every contemporary Surrealist work, claiming to be Surrealist, can automatically be considered a pastiche, even if not all work in dialogue with Surrealism is pastiche-free. I will explore pastiche in more detail when I discuss *Un Chien andalou*, because my film-practice clearly evokes and is in dialogue with Buñuel and Dalí's film. There is a rich history of artists exploring, questioning, challenging, transforming and engaging with the work of others, that does not simply render what they produce pastiche.⁹ In this respect Susan Suleiman's (1998: 133) dialogic concept of 'double allegiance' is useful, in its creating dialogues between artists' works and critics that are 'both affirmative and critical, a response that involves talking back as well as talking with' these works. It also juxtaposes works from widely different backgrounds and eras and 'makes them speak to each other' (1998: 133). Perhaps most important of all for my own work is the point that Suleiman raises about the critic: in performing such a staging between artists and works the critic 'must herself

⁹ See for example, Picasso's monumental study of Velasquez's *Les Maninas* or the Barbican exhibition *Dancing around Duchamp* (2012), highlighting the dialogue, between Duchamp, Rauschenberg, Cage, Cunningham, and Johns. In both examples the artist takes as her / his starting point work that already exists, creating a dialogue between it and the resulting work, enabling the practitioner to experience the additional aspect of insights that 'arise through handling materials in practice' as 'tacit knowledge [which] provides a very specific way of understanding the world, [...] grounded in material practice' (Barbara Bolt 2010: 29).

participate in a "double allegiance," be willing to say "yes, but" to earlier work, including work she finds disturbingly misogynist. In this case the only "good" critical position is one that shuttles between positions. No stasis' (1998: 133).

Dialogue 1 Un Chien andalou

As I argued in Chapter 1, the 'dance of genders' sequence presents in microcosm the issues and strategies of *Un Chien andalou*, with its ludic dismantling of gender identity. Through its shifting, destabilised and convulsive identities, any notion of a fixed, unitary gender identity is troubled, leading to fragmentation, hybridity and indifferentiation for the protagonists.

These border crossings allow the subject (and the spectator) to activate, via bisexual switching, a more personal, liberated position in which gender identity is seen to be multiple, mobile and fluid. This is seen as part of Surrealism's larger project, of rejecting *all* essentialising discourses of identity.

Un Chien andalou is a crucial point of reference and intertext in the TDK Cycle. I engage with many of the same issues in my films, particularly in relation to the problematising of gender identity. This involves incorporating some of its formal aspects, especially its collage aesthetic, combining short sequences and fragments of narrative, rendered in a predominantly classical realist style, which are constantly juxtaposed with fantastic, poetic, or absurd material. As a result linearity and logic are subverted, eliciting shock, surprise and humour (*dépaysement*), in the service of a re-envisioning of gender identity. My exploration of the text is figured, above all, as an investigation, a critical dialogue ('Yes, but'), adopting and testing its strategies of problematising and transforming gender identity with the aim of extending and deepening my understanding of how these work from a different experiential perspective, but also to assess their validity and usefulness for a contemporary Surrealist

practice.

There are key differences, however, between my approach and that of Buñuel and Dalí's, such as the deliberate decision to examine gender identity not so much as an *external* 'dance of genders' between a male and female character, in the form of seduction, romance and perverse sexuality, but rather, as a series of interlocking narratives, centred around three characters and their attempts at gender transformation, through the various journeys they are embarked upon, wherein we discover that each protagonist represents individual aspects of the same character - as an *internal* 'dance'.

Even though I argue that Buñuel and Dalí's film exposes and criticises gender stereotypes, I was very conscious of the difficulties and pitfalls involved in dealing with such material, particularly in a very different contemporary context, where gender and sexual politics have become a much more visible presence. The bizarre sexualised imagery and misogynist violence that infuses *Un Chien andalou*, for example, may have become far more commonplace - and far more graphic and disturbing - in film and texts of all kinds, so that their shock value is lessened and even tolerated to an extent. But certainly to utilise such material for revolutionary ends in contemporary society and especially in the name of gender or sexual politics, is more problematic because I think that such material is open to recuperation and therefore, potentially, is not as productive or conducive to fruitful debate, reflection and change. It was something I was very sensitive to in some of my decision-making, particularly with regard to the female body which, as I argued in Chapter 1, has been seen by some critics as an idealised, erotic spectacle or fantasy; or as violated, fragmented, perverse or monstrous. What is also problematic - and this is certainly true of *Un Chien andalou* - is the way that Woman is portrayed as other in her relation to or dependence on Man, moving between the female stereotypes of nurturing mother, submissive victim and that of the duplicitous femme fatale.

Clearly, one of the problems, as I also recognise in my own films and throughout my practice, is that in exposing and criticising gender stereotypes there must be some degree of objectification before such a critique can be mounted. An example will illustrate this problematic. In one of the first edits of TDK1, when the female protagonist first sees Venus, I originally filmed the actress playing Venus naked from the waist up, to make an allusion to Botticelli's famous painting and the idea of innocence and purity (associated with a pre-oedipal lost *feminine*). However, in viewing this early cut with the cast and crew, none of us was entirely comfortable with the scene because of the nudity; or rather, in its staging. Much of the problem centred around the mask, which, in its fetishising function and possible association with sadomasochism, served to further sexualise and objectify the character of Venus / Woman. Deprived of sight, her identity hidden beneath the mask and her status as double further undermined any sense of subjectivity and individuality. However, I also recognised that the mask could also function productively as a signifier of masquerade, performance and feminine subjectivity, fabricating gender identity through active agency; as well as the notion of the eyes looking inwards to represent vision and another way of seeing, in keeping with a Surrealist optics of transformed / transforming vision. The mask-as-fetish could also be seen as drawing attention to gender difference, identity and the idea of the mask as representing different faces or selves, holding out the promise of transformation through their removal and exchange (for an/other).

Despite Venus exchanging the mask with the female protagonist, enacting this idea literally later in the scene, I still found the scene problematic. I realised that the masking in itself was not the issue but rather the combination of the masking and the naked upper body with the attendant ambivalent meanings discussed above. The solution was to reframe the scene so that her breasts are now no longer in view. Now, despite my good intentions to expose and deconstruct female objectification and to figure gender identity through the strategies of

fabrication, masquerade, performance, fragmentation, exchange and doubling, I feel that the manner in which I tried to accomplish this was too clumsy. The scene as first conceived, filmed and edited accords with the Surrealist rejection of 'any control exercised by reason, exempt from any aesthetic or moral concern' (Breton 1990a: 26) and the welcoming of the disruptive force of Eros and the free play of desire, but it seems to me that this can soon descend into something empty, repetitive and reductive. Once again I think that the issue lies in slavishly following automatic procedures - dredging the unconscious - with little regard for shaping the material or considering its true impact as well as the crucial difference between the cultural contexts of the 1920s and the 2000s. Desire here could be easily construed not as unsettling or transgressing gender boundaries but as reinforcing an existing phallogentric conception of Woman as fetishised object. To some extent an ironic or parodic re-working of such figures can be productive, drawing attention to their construction by patriarchy as another form of masquerade, but this is not present here in my view.

However, the scene in TDK1 where the priest imagines the female passer-by as a stripper is an example where I think Eros is used productively, as deconstruction, through masking / unmasking. The use of black humour in this scene is integral to our understanding of transformation as a liberating agent, as another source of *dépaysement* and illumination, providing a valuable correlative to the more 'serious' or disturbing elements. When the priest is slapped and falls to the ground after his mental striptease of the female passer-by, in TDK1, it provokes laughter because we have been forced to capitulate in his re-construction of the woman as object-of-desire. It has been photographed and edited so that we focus exclusively on her fragmented body parts in a state of imagined undress, with the mix of super-impositions and dissolves, colluding in the act of veiling and unveiling, accompanied by a 'seductive' soundtrack reminiscent of 1970s soft porn, which ultimately renders Woman as eroticised, fetishised object. The laughter is not only productive in the sense that the (far

from righteous) priest gets his come-uppance, in being punished - with all the intoxicating pleasures such a moment can bring - but it crucially provides a shock allied with illumination. As I argued in chapter 1, black humour is adept at throwing into relief the gap between what we imagine or expect to be true and the reality of what is *actually* true. The opening up of this gap allows us to see the situation anew - it changes our perception, with a revelatory feeling, that momentarily takes us out of the situation, distancing us from the more disturbing aspects, and leads us to question our own beliefs in relation to what we have experienced.

In approaching my practice I was deeply aware of these criticisms and conflicting positions, as well as the ambivalent attitudes towards gender and sexuality as expressed by Buñuel, Dalí and the original Surrealist group which, on the one hand celebrated and defended the notion of gender difference but on the other sought to challenge or obliterate it. As I have argued, the female body becomes the site for the exploration of gender difference, but for my own practice it was felt that rather than *expose* the body, it would be more appropriate to utilise strategies related to performance, masking and masquerade which would show construction and fabrication as a series of stages, incomplete and open to reconstruction and figured as a process of veiling and unveiling. Both of the examples already mentioned (masked Venus and priest / striptease sequences) fall into this category. In terms of my second example there is a suitably convulsive switching via veiling and unveiling in the fact that the priest 'wears' her (superimposed) face at the scene's conclusion, suggesting desire converted into identification and self into other. Other examples include the female protagonist in TDK1 exchanging masks with her double, in TDK2 the masked mannequin from TDK1 is glimpsed in the study scenes - re-appearing in the penultimate scene of TDK3; in TDK2, we see a woman blindfolded in the film showing in the cinema; and in TDK3 the protagonists from TDK2 and TDK3 wear masks on the beach but moments later these have disappeared and at the scene's close the three faces merge in a masking effect. In terms of performance, in

TDK1, the protagonist imagines herself in various roles, dressed as a dancer, an army officer and in contemporary clothes; in TDK2 the protagonist is a musician, who performs the song for himself and for three women that he meets; in TDK3, the protagonist is a dancer, who is forced to dance for her master but we also see her dancing with another of the dancers, when she escapes.

The constant changes of costume also highlight the notion of gender identity as both patriarchal construct and masquerade / performance. The beautiful 'doll-woman', and the female dancer are initially coded as objects of desire, as spectacle: the dancer is the most extreme version of this but the 'doll woman' from TDK1 also appears to be dressed for a ball and is presumably waiting for her male lover.¹⁰ Through heavily stylised costumes, make-up, wig and jewellery both women conform to patriarchal notions of beauty, but in the case of the 'doll-woman' this is undercut by her decision - in the second section of the film - to wear a plain white nightdress, dispense with make-up, and by having her natural hair hanging down; and In TDK3, towards the end of the film, the dancer wears male attire. Agency is represented by the ability of the protagonists to switch between different costumes and change their appearance, and in its most extreme form is of course demonstrated by the three actors playing the same role or the female protagonists wearing male attire (suits, shirts and ties), their hair is short and the male protagonist wears a kind of long flowing robe, evoking cross dressing and androgyny. Agency is also figured through the variety of roles that the protagonists play and their ability to move the narratives forward and these narratives are very much centred around the protagonists' desire to transform themselves and their ability to find the solutions to achieve this. The presence of doubles, mannequins (especially in TDK1) and mirrors troubles difference with a highlighting of the self as the same-but-different (other). The notion of an original and unitary identity is problematised by the copy.

¹⁰ This was indicated to the actress playing the role through my direction.

These strategies are closely linked with fabrication - the ability to construct and reconstruct one's gender identity - and fragmentation - where the different copies or alternative versions of the self are displaced. Crucially, these strategies move beyond what we see on the surface (visually) to an embodiment of the notion of gender identity as a series of interlocking narratives, revolving around transformation - as a journey, a puzzle, a confrontation and a reconfiguring of the self - at the level of plot and overarching narrative. The ability of the spectator to re-configure this - dependent on the order in which one watches the films - adds to this idea of gender identity as mobile.

In TDK2, as well as in the other two films, and indeed in my practice as a whole, this strategy of fragmentation and 'dismantling' is figured as both an uncovering / foregrounding and deconstruction of gender identity and as kind of alchemical operation involving the reconstruction of these fragments. Through bisexual switching the body is seen as in a process of constant change and exchange. In this sense the body is seen as both a threshold and passage: between biology and culture, 'as positional rather than fixed' (Chadwick 1998: 24). This is figured through having three actors (two females and one male) playing different aspects of the same character, with each of the three films centred around one of the protagonists. At the same time all of the protagonists appear in each film and in TDK3 this becomes more explicit, with the three protagonists momentarily brought together through the overlaying and switching between the faces of each and rhymed with the eclipse. The musician and dancer are shown to switch between and merge with the woman, implying this pattern as ongoing and recurring, *ad infinitum*, as endless transformation .

Throughout the cycle I use an array of media, which also fragments and underscores the process of fabrication as collage: incorporating moving and still images, HD video, DV video, Super 8 film, photographs, cut-out animation, colour, black and white, intertitles, diegetic and non-diegetic sound (dialogue, voice-over, silence, ambient and discordant sound

and various styles of music) that range from classical to pop. The constant shifts between media exacerbate further the fragmentation of gender identity and parallels the notion of bisexual switching structurally and rhythmically and draws attention to its constructed status. This is most noticeable in TDK2: the past being rendered as a series of black and white photographs - signifying entrapment, drained of colour / life and time is seen as destructive; the present utilises colour video and hand-held camera, with the scenes in nature, suggesting growth, movement, flow and the quest; and the future is also colour video, with candle-light and the rich colours of the collages, paintings and other paraphernalia of the musician's experiments, evoking mystery and the thoughts in his head pointing to the discovery of the words he seeks to complete the song and find his 'voice.' This segmentation of his life, roughly corresponding to: past, (job - selling clocks, work life), present (wandering in nature, formulating the song and meetings with the five women), and future (researching, experimenting and reflecting on the alchemical combination of masculine and feminine attributes and eventual transformation). These fragments of his life are presented as so many shifts which extends the pattern of assertions and denials that form an underlying pattern in *Un Chien andalou* and *Les Yeux sans visage*, that not only contributes to the highlighting of gender fabrication but also its transformation via bisexual switching.

At the level of content, these shifts are in the form of scenes that contain every day, even bland, actions and events, to those that are strange, disturbing or fantastic; and the stylistic means for disseminating these vary dramatically from scene to scene or, at times, from moment to moment. Although, as in *Un Chien andalou*, narrative continuity in the TDK cycle exists between shots and within scenes for the main part, involving techniques associated with the classic realist film, such as eyeline matches, match cuts on action and shot-reverse shot (all of which serve to link the shots smoothly and naturalise the action), the repetition of certain shots or sequences of shots can be jarring or give a feeling of *déjà vu* as

well as the unexplained appearance of certain elements of *mise-en-scène*. For example, in TDK1 the female protagonist spends much of her time waiting for some unknown event or person, looking out of the window (the camera constantly circling and objectifying her) with the frenetic mysterious theme ever-present, whispers and children's voices and ambient drone providing a claustrophobic soundscape. There are also frequent shots of her double / Venus (legs and feet) punctuated with the strange and disturbing encounter with the mannequin / double (whom the female protagonist constructs in her image but who is then conjoined with - figured through dissolves and superimpositions of the mannequin and herself); as well as the absurd or bizarre scenarios outside her window and the meeting with her double. Various objects reappear across the films without any explanation, such as the trunk and the mannequin - very much like the striped box in *Un Chien andalou* - and these are deliberately introduced to create mystery and contribute to *dépaysement*, whereby their illogical presence draws further attention to the notion of fabrication by exposing the classical realist text as constructed, where conventionally all the pieces of the jigsaw fit together, so to speak, in some logical order, but here they not do not fit and are further examples associated with the pattern of assertion and denial that we saw in Buñuel and Dalí's film. It is the accumulation of these examples of fabrication at various levels which reinforces the overall notion of gender as fabricated.

The adoption of a narrative frame increases the illusion of coherence I have been referring to, cementing the various pieces of action, events and images together into an apparently seamless whole that in actuality is closer to collage or assemblage. TDK 1 can be seen as a collection of fragments that involve the female protagonist, confronting aspects of her gender identity through the construction and destruction of the mannequin; the journey and eventual confrontation with her double, merging, splitting apart again and finally following her into the sea; the imagined / dreamed scenarios of herself - as dancer, as an army officer in drag,

and as 'herself' removing a mask; and, the two shots of her contemplating herself in the mirror. Her gender identity is indirectly explored via the absurd scenes that appear to occur outside her window.

Each of the scenes or shots relating to the above are linked by point-of-view strategies, that centre upon the female protagonist's confrontation with aspects of her gender identity as glimpsed, imagined or dreamt via the various characters or roles encountered in her inward journey. As a short-hand way of explaining my intentions to the actress playing the main role, as well as the crew, we discussed the idea that the female protagonist is 'a beautiful doll in a beautiful doll's house', bored, unfulfilled, but ultimately bound to convention as an object, dependent on partner, family and friends for her status and sense of self. Her desire for change is largely unconscious or predicated on the desires of others and pleasing others. She has become pure other and is unable to articulate her own individuality or identity. Although she is initially unaware or unable to articulate her malaise, her confrontation with the mannequin and her double lead to her eventual transformation and liberation, becoming a subject rather than an object. It is possible to construct such a narrative and, as I have outlined above, it is largely because of the recognisable trappings of various narrative elements and continuity strategies which encourage such a belief, just as we saw in *Un Chien andalou*. Clearly, though, unlike the classic realist text, the narrative has to be (re)constructed by the spectator, weaving the disparate fragments into some order. Despite lack of names, dialogue or intertitles there is a sense of narrative progression. The cues are there to do that and there was a real attempt to negotiate a position between the bizarre, absurd material and narrative elements.

Without this balance bisexual switching could not occur. It was necessary to encourage a belief that the fictional worlds of the films and their protagonists are inter-connected. In this way the spectator hopefully retains a sense of coherence, believing in the reality of the

diegesis, to the point of being immersed in the experience. The reason for doing this was in order that the spectator is able, as Breton (1978: 43) makes clear, 'to abstract himself from his own life [so that] he passes through a critical point as imperceptible and captivating and imperceptible as that uniting waking and sleeping'. As outlined in my introduction, the importance of fantasy is central to bisexual switching and is similar in many respects to Goudal's 'conscious hallucination', or Artaud's (1978: 64) advocacy that fantasy 'appears ever more real', whereby the spectator willingly 'submits' to or 'hallucinates' the perceived reality of the film, which is akin to a waking dream or fantasy. As a result of this relaxation of the critical faculties, the (passive) spectator is more susceptible to the effects of surprise or sense of disorientation (*dépaysement*) which comes in the form of unexpected, bizarre or illogical material or juxtapositions that are introduced. At the same time an active spectator is needed to interpret and question the material so that s/he is able to use his or her critical faculties. Bisexual switching is based on this same model of passivity and activity, so it was crucial that I maintained a balance between the two modes of spectatorship.

Discovering a way to conclude the cycle, whilst avoiding closure - and at the same time retaining the experience of transformation, for both characters and spectators - was a difficult undertaking. In *Un Chien andalou* the protagonists are shown to be both at the mercy of their desires (Eros and Thanatos) and confounded by the situations they find themselves in, never attaining real agency or achieving their goals. One problem that I have with the conclusion to *Un Chien andalou* (reflected in my disappointment with the conclusion to TDK1) is in the way that transformation and liberation are coded as death / rebirth, which could be interpreted as falling back on the Romantic trope of the lovers united in or reborn through death, or as a final leave-taking or rebirth, which in TDK1 could be read as a kind of escape from the world into the sea, whereby the female protagonist is united with her double. However, in Buñuel and Dalí's film the final image of decaying, half buried bodies in the sand has a very powerful

impression of pessimistic, finality and deadly stasis or entrapment that is quite tangible and difficult to counter. Although the two pairs of legs and footprints lead to the sea in TDK1 surrounded by the objects we saw earlier (associated with the protagonist's transformation in the scene in the bedroom), especially the egg shells with their connotations of (re)birth, the movement is still very much undermined by the sense of withdrawal from and rejection of this world. Union is also implied by the mythical notions of the sea as fruitful womb and the associations with her double, Venus (who came from the sea and now returns to the sea with *her* double). I resisted the temptation to show one set of footprints in the sand (which would have made union much more obvious) but was left with an ending that is still too ambiguous. I would return to this issue in the other two films.

Of course, as I have argued in chapter 1, it is possible to read the ending of *Un Chien andalou* as an indictment of a society that cannot allow such a union - and this is also raised earlier with the death of the androgyne figure. The androgyne, again, connotes a final union or synthesis of male and female which closes down any notion of active switching or oscillation between male and female so that the death of the androgyne might be read as a rejection of that union or conversely the impossibility of such a union surviving, suggesting that society must change before the longed-for destruction of the binarised division of gender that Breton suggests in the notion of the 'point sublime'. It seems to me, though, that the figure of the androgyne in *Un Chien andalou* externalises and is a reminder of the pre-oedipal dimension, associated with the original bisexual disposition, in which neither masculine nor feminine predominate; or put another way, it suggests that the male protagonist needs to reconnect self and other so that masculine and feminine *co-exist* rather than have to choose *either* masculine *or* feminine.

Although Breton (1990a: 301-02) makes the point in the Second Manifesto that we should 'undertake the reconstruction of the *primordial Androgyne* [...] and its supremely desirable

and *tangible*, incarnation within ourselves', I felt that it still implied a totalising union rather than a fluid process or dialogue. Although the androgyne, with her liminal status, is evoked to trouble any simple, fixed gender identity, s/he is problematic in that she still evokes a final union of male and female, which closes down any notion of active switching between male and female. However, it took some time to recognise that the androgyne was a messenger, an intermediary and not a solution.

In fact the decision to create the three parts of the cycle was an attempt at 'reconnecting' masculine and feminine and male and female via the narrative trajectories of each of the characters, with each in pursuit of nameless goals that must be deciphered by the protagonists but is also figured formally in the *mise-en-scène*, structure and music which developed as I attempted to forge closer connections between the three films by adding new material. In TDK1, despite recognising that the female protagonist makes progress in the way she negotiates her gender identity, switching between various gender identities that she tries on, discards, borrows or combines, I felt that the woman's decision to follow her double into the sea seemed a kind of defeat, an escape from this world, a failure to engage with her reality and the knowledge she had gained in the 'here and now' of this world. Once I decided upon a second film, I deliberately planted images of her throughout TDK2, in the long montage sequence that accompanies the song / transformation sequence, to show that she is still present¹¹

Even when TDK2 was underway I still had not realised that the male protagonist was actually another aspect of the female protagonist from TDK1, and only became convinced of this when I was half way through TDK3, recognising that I needed to find a more tangible way of

¹¹ I also used the same chest from the first film in the third film. This chest contained the mannequin, a torn piece of paper, with the mysterious message: 'The time on the clock is now,' and the butterfly pictures that also lead to her transformation. It is also the same chest that she fills with the objects that we see her take out of her mouth: candle, rose, shoe and dice. I would also later add the cut-out animation sequences, which show her transformation at the end of each film.

articulating the gender crossings of the protagonists via bisexual switching. In TDK2 this takes the form of the male protagonist's (the musician's) alchemical transformation of the various elements associated with the women he meets. Crucially, it is the female voice that completes the puzzle, the voice that the female protagonist in TDK1 does not have yet. Most obviously, his incorporation of the various elements associated with the women symbolically re-integrate the feminine in the form of the five senses. In this schema the five senses represent the constituent parts of perception and the attendant idea of perceiving the world through the senses of a woman, with the ultimate desire to be able to experience, share and understand what it is to perceive the world as a woman, yet to still be able to switch between masculine and feminine.¹² It is also significant that his thoughts are coded as feminine via the association with the close affinity with the women he meets, but their meaning is initially inaccessible - like the solution to the song that is only complete when he incorporates the female voice.

At the end of the third film the dancer escapes when she discovers that the key she has been seeking all along was inside her. She frees the other dancers and eventually is washed up on the beach. Her meeting with the protagonists from the other films, leading to the merging of their faces in the mirror and the eclipse of (female) moon and (male) sun suggests that rather than being individual characters they are possibly aspects of the same entity or a combination of the different gender identities that we all carry with us. My solution of how to articulate this stemmed from my disappointment with the ending in TDK2. The idea of union is represented through the male protagonist incorporating the feminine via the various elements associated with each woman he meets through the alchemy of dreaming. They become

¹²Another indication of this desire to incorporate the feminine is via female voices that we hear in the scenes in his study, which are, at this stage, voices in his head that speak in riddles but help him connect the various elements that will lead to his solution.

internalised, fused, rather like Dalí's notion of edible beauty.¹³ There is a suggestion that male and female aspects will be combined in a kind of internal dialogue,¹⁴ but I feel now in retrospect that the final image of the male protagonist / stone angel and the voice-over, 'In the river of becoming I merge blissfully with the others', is over-stated and takes away from the montage sequence preceding this, which should have ended the film. Again, we are left with an image of androgyny as well as the notion of 'merging' as a final synthesis, instead of the more complex set of associations signified by the dreaming protagonist and the montage, which resists closure and encourages the notion of becoming. Bisexual switching is replaced by a dialectical model, denying the idea of switching *between* states, dialogically, wherein masculine and feminine haunt each other, cross over and resist any single, unitary position. It would have perhaps been better to eliminate the voice-over as I think it is here that the problem lies, stating so categorically what is only suggested in the visuals, which at least show the merging as a *temporary* coming together. The link with the angel is also productive, in the way that it is associated with being a messenger and passing through opposite states as well as its relation to prophecy and guidance.¹⁵ Therefore, when it came to the final scene in the third film my intention here was to avoid the mistakes of the second film's finale. Also, I tried to actualise the notion of bisexual switching as a form of becoming, and therefore was keen to avoid any sense of a final synthesis. This would also be an opportunity to demonstrate that gender identity is plural, a multiplicity of *identities*.

¹³ See Finkelstein (1996: 168) .

¹⁴ I am thinking here of Freud's theory of projection and closely related theories of introjection and incorporation, in relation to Fischer and Eva (and the other dancers). What all three theories share is the switching between something that is incorporated from the outside world into the subject, cannibalising it (incorporation, introjection) and expelling something that the subject refuses to recognise or rejects in oneself (projection). I see a parallel here with bisexual switching and Fischer's inability or refusal to recognise and identify with the dancers (his feminine other). For a more detailed discussion of Freud's theories see the separate entries on each of these theories in Laplanche and Pontalis (2006).

¹⁵ Patricia Allmer (2009:12) suggests that 'the angelic position is a position of in-betweenness' and angels are seen as prophetic messengers, which she associates with flux, multiplicity, transgression and transformation.

Dialogue 2 Rose Hobart

Gender transformation in *Rose Hobart*, like *Un Chien andalou*, revolves around the liminal status of its central, nameless character, the actress Rose Hobart of the film's title, switching back and forth between masculine and feminine and male and female. As I have argued, Rose is constructed as both an object of desire, fantasy, muse and idealised film-portrait and as a subject that challenges and ultimately escapes any notion of a fixed, unitary identity.

Interestingly, the notion of Rose as a figure of identification, a kind of gender double, shifted the focus from bisexual switching between characters (in *Un Chien andalou*) to switching between character (Rose) and author (Cornell). Switching is therefore articulated as a matrix of desire *for* and identification *with* Rose. As we saw with *Un Chien andalou*, the formal aspects of the film support bisexual switching and highlight the constructed nature of gender identity through a range of strategies. In Cornell's film, this is achieved through its collage aesthetic. Despite Cornell's addition of a blue filter, the suppression of the dialogue track in favour of Brazilian sambas, and the slowing down of the footage to silent speed, signs of its assembly are everywhere: scratched, damaged footage, appearing as a series of 'scarred' film fragments and links between many of the shots are 'poetic' rather than connected in any logical or conventional manner and characterisation is relinquished in favour of Cornell's own private design.

My collages and assemblages also utilise this strategy of fragmentation. In many of the collages, such as *The Friends*, *At the Birth of the Androgyne* and *Immaculate Conception* (see appendix) the figures possess ambivalent, hybrid, gender identities. Their bodies are made up of male and female body parts and their faces contain both male and female features. Cross-dressing is common and masks frequently displace and display gender identity (see *Evolution* and *Convulsive Cinema*, for instance, in appendix) Elements from mannequins, dolls, insects and animals are fused with human elements, further emphasising fabrication and creating

uncanny syntheses (see in particular *The Meeting, Smile* and *The Cathedral Doors - Unmasked*).

Through what I term 'the palimpsest effect', this sense of fragmentation and fabrication is further reinforced by building up several layers of images, along with other techniques (such as dusting the surface with ash to highlight the borders between each pasted element in the collage) which constantly reminds us of the constructed status of the figures' gender identity. We never lose sight of the fact that these are representations created from everyday items, bearing the traces of their disparate origins (see *Dream, Beyond the Veil, Evolution* and *At the Birth of the Androgyne*). In many of the collages the central portion of the picture features the idea of fabrication as a kind of spectacle, where a figure is in the process of being created. Other figures and faces frame this event, making it both more dramatic and voyeuristic. (See especially *Immaculate Conception, At the Birth of the Androgyne* and *The Ceremony*). In many ways, all the collages either explicitly or implicitly deal with transformation as an ongoing *process of becoming*. The 'supreme point' is always 'elsewhere'. This is why each collage displays an almost unfinished quality that highlights its status as fabricated. My initial attempts to combine and synthesise both male and female features in a single figure have gradually given way to the search for other strategies which explore gender crossings differently, as an ongoing dialogue rather than a synthesis, emphasising constructedness as always a work in progress (See *Forbidden Games, The Cathedral Doors - Unmasked* and *Convulsive Cinema*, for example).

As I mentioned in Chapter 2 Cornell's collages are quite different from this - with the exception of some of the earlier ones, inspired by Max Ernst - which, rather than highlight the process of transformation overtly, encourage links between separate (usually whole) objects, based on association, and affinities between objects rather than disassociation, chance or

montage.¹⁶ The polished quality of most of his work betrays a desire to mask the marks of their assembly and transformation and to create and maintain the perfect conditions for communion with the female and androgynous objects of his desire. In this way Cornell can both desire these objects and identify with (become) them without feelings of shame engendered by his role as the creator of such voyeuristic fantasies.

In my own collages a similar change has been effected, where my earlier collages were more raw and 'unfinished' but I certainly was not consciously influenced in this by Cornell. I was, though, aware of the links between Rose Hobart and TDK2 - in attempting to highlight gender identity as fabrication and fragmentation and was seeking a way of rethinking how gender crossing and transformation might be figured differently. It was the rediscovery of Ernst's *Vox Angelica* (1943) which provided the answer, recognising in this work a cinematic quality, serialising - on one level - Ernst's engagement with the various styles, iconography and concerns prior to its painting as well as a kind of film of his life, with each box mimicking a film frame, evoking a memory of another time and place. As Werner Spies (2005: 78) has so convincingly argued, this 'memory picture' is about exile and loss but also new beginnings. Tellingly he also uses the phrase 'flaunting boundaries' which not only relates to Ernst's exiles but is at the same time - and in common with the Surrealist re-mapping of the world - a refusal to conform to any dualist, essentialising doctrines of space and place but also as applied to all forms of binary thinking which denigrates difference and the other. Ernst's work helped me to create the 'Transformation Board', which became an important prop in the film that acted as a conduit for the protagonist's transformation as well as radically changing the approach I used with collage, dividing up the space into more defined boxes or frames. The cinematic links with montage became much clearer,

¹⁶ For examples of the early collages, boxes and objects see McShine (1996: plates 1-51). The objects in these collages usually retain their individual identity and are juxtaposed with other recognisable objects rather than creating new objects from separate fragments.

emphasising both a sense of movement - through the likeness of these boxes or frames to film frames and shots - but also of stasis, through their immobile, fixed status as photographic images, with the frame-like borders.

The creation of the *Transformation Cabinets* was the logical next step, combining the same qualities of stasis and movement, along the lines of montage and juxtaposed with real three dimensional objects. What is now much clearer is that this movement or journey from collage via film enabled me to recognise that the assemblages were 'cinema by other means', as Pavle Levi (2012: xv) terms it, which, put briefly, argues that despite the work not being directly grounded in the materials of film (camera-less films, so to speak), shares much in common with the qualities associated with cinema. Of crucial importance was the ability of a static medium to generate a sense of movement so that the dynamic notions of gender crossing, bisexual switching and becoming could be encountered by the spectator in ways equivalent to film, suggestive of movement. I was unsure at this stage whether non time-based media would be able to provide the correct conditions for immersion to take place. It also occurred to me that this combination of movement and stasis could produce the convulsive quality which Breton speaks of in *Mad Love*.¹⁷

This paradoxical quality, that in *Nadja* Breton (1960: 161) refers to as 'neither static nor dynamic', suggests a liminal state *between* stasis and movement, one that is also somehow a combination of both yet its lack of precision could also render it as neither. In this sense the temporal dimension - implied by the possibility of movement and hence becoming - and the potential for narrative (what has occurred prior to the event? What is happening now? What will happen next?) is both inferred and delayed. This tension is productive in its ability to provide 'jolts and shocks', fundamental to Surrealist practice, involving the heightening of the moment through the bringing together or collision of contrary ideas or states (1960: 160).

¹⁷ See chapter 1, note 18.

Robert Short's (1997:107) comments on Magritte's paintings - which he convincingly argues work better as static rather than moving images - are relevant here; he says that in order to experience the convulsive spark or shock it must derive 'from the tension between the suggestion of movement or of a transformation in the image, and the fact of its fixity'. This is because the paintings are to do with ideas and not processes, and in Magritte's enigmas 'the transmutation of one object into another - the challenge of one quality in the world of appearances by another - is a movement of our thought, not a movement in the entities themselves. If there is process - narrative even - it is an internal one'. This notion of what I term 'convulsive cinema' would prove central to my own practice, in my turn from film to the object (*Transformation Cabinets*) as well as helping me to understand how each of the films under discussion utilises convulsive elements in the service of deconstructing gender identity.

Returning to the impact of *Vox Angelica* on the *Transformation Cabinets*, I recognised that this painting helped me to formulate a solution to combining stasis and movement through the use of a series of boxes or frames within a single text. The juxtaposition of such material on a horizontal and vertical axis has the effect of montage. However, the cinematic nature of such juxtapositions, with the movement implied by montage, was only suggested, is only a kind of simulation (simulacrum). This perceptual confusion creates a moment of vertigo or shock. I tried this approach in my later collages as well as in the second film, where I include black and white photographs to represent the protagonist's 'work life' which is juxtaposed with the (colour) moving image material in the other two narratives, relating to his encounters with various women and the scenes of him, alone, in his study. In both the collages and the film I felt that the effect was only partially successful due to the limits of each media. With collage, I had moved from a series of overlapping layers or fragments of different shapes, sizes and variations in scale - where the surface of the collage was uneven and textured, the joins often visible and indeed foregrounded by rubbing cigarette ash over the surface to

emphasise the 'cuts' and creating a palimpsest effect - to a flatter *trompe l'Oeil* effect, wherein the material was arranged more geometrically in frame-like sections with a more seamless relation between the various images, due to a reduction in layers and not using ash. The presence of the Muybridge and Marey figures also encourages a reading based on montage, due to their resemblance to film frames (photograms) representing the individual frames of movement in time.

The notion of images becoming concrete (materialised) or still / moving has a significant bearing on my own experiments with assemblage as 'convulsive cinema' wherein I dream of film images (characters, objects etc) liberated from the screen and re-materialised as three-dimensional objects or as concrete interventions in reality. The cabinets could be seen as providing a setting for the staging of this migration or transformation from screen to the world beyond the screen (quotidian reality), but instead of dispensing with the notion of a 'frame' (parergon) altogether, the series of boxes create depth and three dimensionality, evoking 'real' space rather than the 'flat' membrane of the screen, spatialising the way in which sign and referent or representation and 'the real' haunt each other or are framed by each other. The inclusion of real elements - such as seashells, feathers, and watches - placed alongside mediated reality - such as photographs, film strips and postcards - rehearses this liberation and in so doing contributes further to the notion of creating convulsive identities. It achieves this by juxtaposing sign and referent, exposing the gap between signifier and signified as an artificial construction, as a signifying practice or *re-presentation* of reality, so that the imagined solidity of the sign is exposed as a sham, a mediated reality, a constructed fiction.

However, convulsive identity is also created simply by the individual object's placement in a new context, a new parergon, but the frame struggles to contain the external reality that has invaded the work. It renders what was once real (referent) as representation (signs or

simulacra). In fact the process is endless: referent-sign-referent-sign and so on; and more accurately reality and representation haunt each other producing a convulsive tension (liminality) provoking the desire for a real which is only represented but also escapes from the real into an imagined 'real' akin to the marvellous. There is a dizzying erection and dismantling of an imagined border in this process so that there is the possibility of both the fulfilment of desire (fantasy) and its elusive dispersal (interpretation). The distancing foregrounds the constructedness of the sign (representation) but at the same time falters so that a kind of derealisation occurs where the sign and referent are confused and where representation and reality are blurred or interchangeable.

This convulsive tension is furthered by the almost uncanny effect of the incorporation of real things which constantly migrate between referent and sign - both, neither and between.

Assemblage engages with real life through its incorporation of real fragments whereas film can only (re)present this real in montaged fragments. At the same time, the real elements in assemblage also take on the role as representation when re-framed as an element of a greater whole (the artwork), mimicking those other represented elements alongside them. Most importantly, for my research on gender, it allows me to 'slow down' and to reveal the process of how gender identity is fabricated. The frames within the boxes - as well as other strategies such as cropping, veiling and unveiling, distortion or collage - all highlight constructedness, as moments or versions of a possible narrative or reality, and very much dependent on the active intervention of the spectator forging connections in the cabinet, but also in their own lives; and to encourage bisexual switching, moving between various levels of identification and estrangement, interpreting and ultimately being transformed by the process. The paradoxical play between sign and referent is a perfect metaphor for the fabrication of gender identity, which is a process of the 'constructed-real' or a representation that masquerades as reality, like Butler's (2006) notion of performativity. It becomes fixed so that the joins do not

show. The deliberate gaps, fissures and arrangement into frames within the cabinets allows us to un-fix, de-construct and make visible the ways in which gender identity is formed, unformed, re-formed (like Bataille's *informe*) displayed, decentred and displaced. Therefore, the importance of maintaining the gap and tension between the two is important because it dramatises how one transforms into the other or is framed by the other. It highlights the unfinished process, its construction. It is rather like Derrida's (1987) notion of the parergon (frame), which foregrounds the difficulty of judging inside from outside.

It is also useful to consider Cornell's drastic re-editing of *East of Borneo* as a 'reframing' that exposes the convulsive tension between Rose as desired object and Rose as gender double. Ultimately, Cornell's reframing is an act of mastery akin to Freud's grandson's attempts to regain a sense of control over the distressing feelings that were provoked by his mother leaving him, through his staging of the *fort / da* game (Freud 2001d: 14-16). What unites these two seemingly disparate situations is the desire to manipulate and control the appearance and disappearance of a woman at will, as well as to procure pleasure and avoid unpleasure; and is, indeed, loaded with the sadistic and erotic underpinnings that such a scenario invokes. In fact this need for mastery is related to the notion of Cornell (or of myself, too) as surgeon, operating on the bodies in the text and the text-as-body, and has much in common with the figure of the magician or what Adamowicz (2005a: 22) terms 'the male magician-cineaste', who, like Méliès (the model example) controls and transforms reality. In particular, the male conjurer transforms (usually) female bodies in a variety of often sadistic and misogynistic ways through the magic of cinema's trick effects. As I already argued in relation to Cornell, this conflation of filmmaker and magician is convincing in relation to Cornell's 'conjuring up' and re-imagining and transformation of Rose - especially in his re-configuring and re-editing of the Melford source material, so that Rose is now 'magically' present in nearly every shot. This also links with Cornell's attempts to mask the

signs of assembly in many of his collages and boxes, so that we might view the re-editing in Rose Hobart as Cornell's attempts to eradicate the signs of a rival's marks of assembly. Re-editing becomes transformation becomes mastery. As we have seen with *Les Yeux sans visage* the surgery metaphor is even more apt: it is literalised in the figure of Genessier and its subject matter, relating to the surgical removal of facial skin, as well as through Franju's role, stitching together the fragments of the text. As Adamowicz (2010: 78-81) makes clear it is also useful to think of Buñuel in the same guise, but she also coins the formulation of 'magician as surgeon', which unites each of the ideas we have been discussing.

However, as we have already noted in chapters 1 and 2, the sadistic mastery involved in controlling the female body is also figured masochistically via identification, and this is more obvious in Cornell's case with his alignment with Rose. Cutting her free from Melford's film, more-or-less discarding the other characters, could be seen as Cornell's identification with her plight, and thereby acceding to the feminine. In fact Cornell's switching between both positions troubles any easy distinction between the various gender binaries and this extends to the argument relating to the male magician-cineaste. In all three case study films the relationship is one of *illusory* (male) mastery over the (female) body or body of the text - in the sense that the conjured up / transformed body foregrounds the process of construction and makes the spectator aware of this relationship between the male 'constructor / transformer' and female construction / transformation. Questions are thereby provoked, which hopefully lead to the spectator seeking to undo or change this situation as well as the various strategies employed by Cornell and Buñuel and Dalí, which problematise subject / object relations, switching between desire for and identification with the female body - both master and mastered, but also perhaps neither or somewhere between?

Clearly, though, the convulsive tension generated by switching between these positions is in keeping with a Surrealist conception of a mobile spectator and a new way of seeing. For

example, Buñuel's eye-slitting was justified by Buñuel, as a way of producing 'a near traumatic shock' at the start of the film in order to create 'the cathartic state necessary to accept the subsequent events' that follow (quoted in Aranda 1975: 67). Indeed, it resembles Breton's (2002: 1) 'eye [that] exists in its savage state,' which enables one to '...see differently from the way in which anyone else sees [...] and even what I begin to see *which is not visible*.' Following this logic, Buñuel's 'opening up' is aimed at the eye-I of the spectator and linked with a female eye to intuit its links with the feminine, which in Surrealist terms is viewed as superior, visionary.¹⁸ Cornell's method, as examined in chapter 2, is to explore the gaze through Rose's association with the eclipse: Rose, as (female) moon, turns the tables on the male magician-cineaste by causing the (male) sun to fall from the sky, as well as through her liminal status between (male) sun and female (earth).

This latter position was one that certainly offered a more productive solution in TDK3 because in the first scenario, to simply trade one gaze or form of domination for another is still an unequal relationship: from patriarchy to matriarchy. Like Rose in Cornell's film, the female protagonist in TDK3 is linked with the eclipse but instead of causing the sun to fall from the sky, culminating in Rose gazing downwards - suggesting a sense of shame or sadness at her part in its downfall - the gaze of the female protagonist in TDK3 elevates the moon, which virtually blots out the sun. Alchemically, this is the marriage of (female) moon and (male) sun but crucially the eclipse is neither total - the sun's rays protrude on each side - nor complete: the eclipse is a brief union, is always in the process of becoming. Again, it is a convulsive moment that both draws attention to and deconstructs the gender binary, ultimately transcending it. We should also note that like Rose, TDK2's protagonist's association with the moon lies in between the (male) sun and (female) earth, presenting a

¹⁸ See Breton (1990a: 301): 'In Surrealism, woman is to be honoured as the great promise, a promise that still exists even after it has been kept' or 'The time has come to value the ideas of woman at the expense of those of man' (Breton 1994: 61).

further blurring of male and female binaries in the moment of total eclipse: neither one nor the other, in-between, both.

The three protagonists are shown to be aspects of the same person at different stages of her or his transformation. Their implied union echoes the 'NOW' from the shared spoken mantra of 'The time on the clock is NOW!' It is a form of becoming, recognising the importance of the different identities we carry or can become, unbounded by time. Their overlapping and blurring signifies the act of construction and reconstruction: the transformation and liberation implied by exploring different identities. In fact, the faces of the protagonists from the two other films, have been momentarily merged with the female protagonist's face from TDK1, as they gaze in unison in the same mirror that was used by the female protagonist in TDK 1 but are less visible than hers. She confronts our gaze again in a medium close-up, in the mirror, but smiles this time. It is also worth reminding ourselves that the first shot of the female protagonist's eye in extreme close-up in TDK 1 rhymes with the final shot in TDK 3 of the eclipse, with its similar circular form, with the moon as pupil and sun as iris. However, at the beginning of TDK 1 the gaze, as in *Un Chien andalou*, is directly aimed outwards at the spectator in an active, assertive manner but also allows the camera eye / I of the spectator specular access. It enacts the subject / object split as a kind of 'split' gaze. As the camera zooms out, moving away from the female protagonist, she seems to lose her concentration, looks startled, her gaze shifts downwards, she turns her back to us and the camera tracks with her as she moves towards the window. The gaze of the spectator is now focused on the gaze of the female protagonist and it could be argued that through identification, the gazes coincide. However, this opening already introduces the fraught, contested relations between female / male, through the act of looking. What begins as a potentially powerful extra-diegetic gaze, one that confronts the spectator's gaze, is quickly transformed from one-that-looks into one that-is-looked-at. This exchange of spectatorial positions highlights the

problematic at the centre of each of the films: the sense that the gaze of the protagonist is exchanged for the gaze of the spectator.

Not until TDK3 will this binarised notion of gazing (the subject that gazes and the object of the gaze) be challenged and transformed in the final moments: each protagonist gazes at us as their faces merge and the masks are removed with a deliberate intertextual link to Claude Cahun's (2007:183) statement: 'Beneath this mask, another mask. When will I be finished lifting off all these faces?' Then, in unison, the camera eye / I is drawn to their unified gaze in the mirror, which cuts to a shot of the protagonist from TDK1, once again, confronting our gaze with the faces/gazes of the two other protagonists, which are visible beneath her face. The smile is crucial, as it acknowledges the gaze of the camera eye / I of the spectator in a moment of pleasure that fundamentally transforms the split gaze, associated with desire (for the object of the gaze) and identification (with the object of the gaze) into one of mutual desire or identification, figured as exchange and switching between the various spectatorial positions. The cut to the eclipse emphasises further a movement away from a dualism, implied by the alchemical marriage or synthesis of (masculine) sun and (feminine) moon, in favour of a perpetual switching between these positions. It is a deeply intersubjective moment. The mirror, as both a screen and a gateway to another world (and between cinema screen and the diegetic / extra-diegetic world) once again emblematises the passage and exchange between the various sets of binaries and the gaze-turned-inwards and the gaze-facing-outwards. In its doubling function, it represents the dichotomy between self and other, but here this doubling is further troubled and transformed by the expected reflection being tripled or triangulated, suggesting a 'third' way: liminality, interchange, exchange and becoming.

The notion of 'haunting' cited earlier in relation to Cornell's relationship with the female and androgynous figures that we encounter time and again in his work is useful in explaining how

bisexual switching operates between the characters in the TDK cycle. It is argued that the protagonists in my films could be conceived as my own projections: haunted by me, and in turn haunting me. It is interesting to consider that the protagonist of TDK1 has no voice and no name, the protagonist of TDK2 has a voice but no name and the protagonist of TDK3 has a voice and a name. These are key indicators of identity and as with the notion of the three individual films, with the same role being played by three actors, along with a triangulated gaze, there is a radical revisioning of identity. In terms of their conception I certainly did not work out in advance this structure or pattern, mimicking both my model of bisexual switching, convulsive identity and the dialogue between the written research and my practice.

In the TDK cycle this haunting is also figured as a re-writing of identity: a series of individual quests that coincide in a shared quest (in TDK3), culminating with the three merged faces in the mirror, preceded by the eclipse. The re-writing is shown to be a dialogue, switching between self and others, in an endless becoming and crucially, this movement is timeless. The mirror and eclipse are important in this respect as each figure haunts in different ways: the mirror does not simply reflect the face of the protagonist (self) from TDK1 but is shown to contain the faces of the protagonists (others) from TDK2 AND TDK3. Indeed, they haunt each other. The eclipse works similarly but emphasises gender, alchemically, with the (masculine) sun haunting the (feminine) moon and vice versa.

TDK2 feels closest to *Rose Hobart* with its very visible collage aesthetic cutting the narrative into fragments of past, present and future and with gender identity again foregrounded through this fragmentation but also through the notion of exchange, figured as the quest for, and gathering of, the various elements associated with the women that the male protagonist meets, and the eventual merging with the angel. Although it was the most automatic of the three films in its writing it took the longest to piece together and needed several edits and the shooting of new footage because I felt my central idea - the man's desire to perceive the

world as a woman, to retrieve the feminine (repressed or lost via the Oedipus Complex) - was unclear. The collecting of the various elements puzzled those who viewed early edits and so I added the scenes in the study, with the voices the male protagonist hears, speaking in riddles, that become progressively easier to fathom; as well as introducing intertitles that work as chapters and also offer clues; plus the addition of the scene with the transformation board, where he assembles the various elements, linking alchemy with dreaming, leading to his transformation.¹⁹

I was aware that unlike the first or third films, TDK2 uses time and narrative in very different ways. TDK1 AND TDK3 are largely chronological, anchored by the female protagonists' desire to overcome the hurdles with which they are confronted. In TDK1 it is uncertain what these hurdles are but they are somehow connected with her doubles (the mannequin and Venus) and the mysterious message "The time on the clock is NOW!" In the third film the female protagonist appears to be a damsel in distress, in a fairytale for Adults that focuses on her escape but also her confrontation with the dream key and its meaning, leading to the discovery that the protagonists from the other two films are different aspects of herself. The merging of the faces in the mirror and the link with the eclipse, along with the collectively spoken "The time on the clock is NOW!", suggest a narrative arc, forging closer connections between the disparate material. Again, in TDK3, the narrative is fairly conventional in terms of the way that the plot develops with identifiable goals, resolution of conflicts and characters who, although, unconventional in many ways, do share recognisable traits or psychologies.

With the first and third films, it was important for the spectator to be encouraged to enter into the world of the film, to identify with the main female protagonist and participate in the fantasy that is offered *through* her. Periodically, I would introduce moments that produce a

¹⁹ This approach is akin to Cornell's except that I cannibalise my own films. In TDK 2 I incorporate a scene from one of my features *5 O'Clock Shadow* (1991) as well as various footage taken on my travels throughout the 1980s, 1990s and more recent material.

shock or cause the spectator to pause and reflect on the disruption - such as the discovery of the mannequin in TDK1 or the realisation that the dancer is in a bird cage embedded in the man's chest. Both of these are connected with gender identity and the patriarchal positioning of women. The mannequin is an extreme form of otherness: woman as spectacle, a constructed doll. The birdcage punningly traps a human 'bird' (slang for girlfriend) in the cage, controlled by Fischer. The male body is fragmented yet this seems to be Fischer's doing. He attempts to close up the fragmented body through veiling but he always returns to that which paradoxically fragments him but at the same time offers to complete him as a kind of repetition compulsion. Despite the close proximity of the feminine other Fischer misrecognises its true significance and his taking her outside himself mimes this impossibility of recognition or unity of self and other. It could also be seen as a form of masochism in its repetition of the traumatic split.²⁰

What might appear to be another articulation of bisexual switching is quickly seen to be another version of patriarchy, with the female contained and controlled by Fischer (Man), but Woman is figured as a dancer, who performs for him, a doll-object, just another version of the mannequin. These two examples (and there are many throughout the three films) illustrate the importance of creating the right conditions for bisexual switching to occur. Each of the situations may incorporate fantastic moments (the mannequin whom the female protagonist constructs in her image; or the doll-like dancer in the cage; or the merging of the musician with the stone angel), but these are rendered in a realistic manner that largely obeys the laws of classical cinema. The preponderance of migrating boxes (the chest that appears in all films,

²⁰ At the same time there is no doubting that Fischer could be read as a kind of Sadeian manipulator, imprisoning (along with the other discarded female dancers, now imprisoned and decaying) and forcing her to dance nightly for him; but he is also a victim, ushering in masochism through the repetition of this traumatic event. Above all, for me, TDK 3 works as the impossibility of containing the feminine and of trying to control it, to impose limits upon it.

the tiny glass boxes in TDK2 and TDK3), the props washed up on the beach (TDK1 and TDK3), the androgynous appearance of the female protagonists (in TDK3), the female protagonist looking out of the window, who sees a series of strange and absurd events and the 'established' space each occurs in and is replaced by other spaces - to name the most obvious - all evoke Buñuel and Dali's film. It should be noted that some of these are deliberate intertextual references that seek to engage with *Un Chien andalou* in filmic terms, but others are unconscious, part of my automatic procedures in the writing and I only became aware of them through reflection.

Dialogue 3 Les Yeux sans visage

Franju's Christiane, like Rose, is a liminal figure, more developed and complex in her characterisation than Rose or the female protagonist in *Un Chien andalou*, but at the same time she haunts the boundaries and margins of the text, through her status as monstrous, uncanny Other. Once again, gender transformation is linked with cutting, fragmentation and exchange, but this time the metaphor is literalised: Christiane and the other female victims are controlled and manipulated by patriarchy through *actual* surgical operations, exchanging their faces so that Christiane can be given a new face and identity in place of the mask she habitually is forced to wear.

In my collages, cabinets and three films the use of masks is utilised in relation to gender identity, as a masquerade or performance; as well as being related to the gaze, and especially the gaze turned inwards (in-sight) and to transformation. In the TDK cycle each of the protagonists wear masks and this reaches a climax in TDK3, where the superimposing of the three protagonists' masked faces articulates the notion of masking, as a form of switching (layers of) gender identity. It also figures the process of transformation as a bringing together of different gender identities in a process of crossing over and switching. The idea of *in-sight*

is here translated as a higher form of *vision*, attained through the act of connecting the individual identities. I also had in mind the line from Jan Švankmajer's *Alice* (1988) where Alice warns us in the prologue: 'You must close your eyes. Otherwise you won't see anything'.²¹ As with the conclusion to *Les Yeux sans visage*, I realised that Christiane's decision to retain the mask could also be seen as a form of vision and transformation, in the sense that true transformation comes from the ability to combine the gaze outwards (reality, logic, consciousness) and the gaze inwards (dream, imagination, unconscious).

In Franju's film the mask is also a fetish that hides another fetish: the open wound that is Christiane's face. Its refusal to heal figures the refusal to acknowledge the other, and the constant cycle of searching for, kidnapping, experimenting on and murder of the young women is a form of repetition-compulsion that seeks to enforce difference but constantly threatens to cross the border that separates the self from other, to confront the symptom. Neither surgery nor the mask can prevent the other from showing itself, but what is vital here is to acknowledge that even Christiane fails to understand this initially; and, in fact, for most of the film she is doubled with Genessier in her blindness and complicity to share his desire for the other. This desire is for the heteronormative vision of 'the body beautiful', as determined by the phallogentric regime.

As with the three films in *The Dream Key* cycle, each of the 'characters' is in a process of not only acknowledging difference but celebrating that difference. The desire for the other is based on the paradigm of identification - to identify and empathise with, to *be* the other, intersubjectively - but at the same time not be dissolved in or become the other permanently. At the heart of this thinking is the model of bisexual switching which involves willingly and

²¹ Švankmajer alludes to a different way of perceiving reality - or a new kind of vision - needed in order to understand the world which Alice discovers, just as Breton comes to a similar conclusion in relation to the impenetrable enigma of De Chirico's paintings. In fact Breton (2002: 18) quotes a remark in *Surrealism and Painting* by De Chirico, which is similar to the one in *Alice*: 'there is only what I see with my eyes open and, better still closed'.

joyously crossing over the perceived divide between self and other, embracing the notion of transformation and identifying with or becoming other but *temporarily*, as a kind of sharing of the same path, more dialogical than dialectical. Fundamentally, bisexual switching embraces switching: difference (our various others - gender, race, sexuality etc.) is acknowledged as difference and the other but in an act of celebration and identification.

In TDK1, then, following this logic of 'sharing the same path', perhaps we might re-read the two pairs of feet and twin sets of footprints as an example of such a parallel crossing, a meeting of minds on the same path, a voyage of mutual discovery. It is an externalisation, a metaphor for reaching a point of empathy and identification.

I picture the idea of bisexual switching as a crossing, characterised by *exchange* - switching from 'masculine' to 'feminine' like an alternating current, and vice versa; but also *interchange* - inverting or reversing masculine and feminine so that it is almost impossible to gauge their position or point of intersection and hence their *interchangeability*; and I am again reminded of Breton's 'Supreme Point', which leads me to reflect that this point where the 'old antimonies' are no longer perceived as such is very much a point of identification. In other words it is the point at which we are able to identify with our other/s and travel on a continuum between these two alternating states rather than a synthesis or dissolution of binarised thinking. Although, there are a number of uncanny moments that lead to Christiane's consciousness of the unethical and monstrous nature of the crimes against the women who sacrifice their faces to make Christiane beautiful again and her complicity in them, the key to her transformation is once again centred around a cutting tool: Genessier's scalpel.

The worlds of the three films in the TDK cycle, as well as those of the collages and assemblages, are populated by monstrous figures that in different ways all stage this same convulsive, transformative encounter between self and other/s. In my early collages there is

often a central relationship that develops between two main characters. This relationship commonly and explicitly comments on gender binarisation, exploring relations of power through variations in scale or through placement (conventionally the characters who dominate the upper levels of the collage are shown to be looking down upon the characters placed below them, connoting an authority 'on high'). The other major strategy, as discussed in the previous dialogue, is through the use of hybrid or fragmented figures, combining male and female body parts as well as those of dolls, mannequins, animals and insects in a way that dramatises gender identity as construction and transformation.²²

In TDK1 doubling occurs primarily through the confrontation with the mannequin - constructed and then rejected by the female protagonist - as well as the Venus character, whom she embraces, briefly merges with, exchanges blindfolds with and then follows to the sea. The female protagonist also appears in the guise of a male army sergeant, as a dancer in a flamboyant costume and long wig and in a contemporary dress and with a mask, which she removes. It is unclear if these are doubles or projected fantasies. What is clear is that the female protagonist is gradually brought closer to her other/s. It is as if she is trying on, switching between and exploring different identities. The decision to dress the mannequin in identical clothes, wig and make-up, with both adopting the exact same pose (firstly frozen, facing the camera and secondly, their faces are once more transfixed, in the mirror that they both hold) creates a series of disturbing convulsive encounters. It underscores femininity as artificial, doll-like, an object that is literally constructed. It is not only monstrous in its uncanny doubling but in its obvious hold over the female protagonist and in this sense clearly evokes E.T.A. Hofmann's character of Olympia. What is different, though, is that *she* has constructed the double, suggesting *her* agency, but this is undermined because it is clearly

²² The butterfly (symbol of transformation) in particular, appears throughout my work: in the collages, films and assemblages. In TDK1, for example we see the female passerby carrying the collages, featuring butterflies; then later, the female protagonist is seen carrying some butterfly prints upstairs and which also adorn her bedroom wall; the butterfly prints re-emerge in the study in TDK2 and the trunk in the penultimate scene of TDK3.

influenced by patriarchal notions of femininity (like Christiane, who goes along with her father's wishes). The kiss that she shares with Venus, before following her to the sea, results in a merging of their faces as they fill with a crimson that engulfs both of them momentarily. Like the merging with the angel in TDK2, this moment signifies an encounter between self and other/s that posits becoming as a shared encounter or point of identification. Again, though, this switching is articulated as a temporary crossing, with the female protagonist retaining her individuality and difference.

Les Yeux sans visage contains many moments and elements that could be considered absurd, fantastic or uncanny and might jeopardise bisexual switching, which depends on the spectator's ability to become immersed in the diegesis and identify with the central character. Franju's Surrealism is more subtle than that of Buñuel, for example, because the fantastic elements are contextualised or naturalised through their connection with generic conventions. Another key difference from Buñuel's first film is that the spacing between these fantastic elements is more pronounced, extending a greater degree of realism because there are fewer intrusions.

In TDK1 and TDK3, especially, but also in TDK2, I recognised from the beginning - but also developed as I went along - the need to balance the fantastic and real elements so that the spectator maintains a level of identification and immersion necessary for bisexual switching. If there are too many shocking, strange, or absurd 'interludes' the spectator will find it difficult to relax and re-enter the film. Clearly, it is impossible to say or attempt to measure what is the optimum number of fantastic versus real elements and the process depends on the individual spectator, but I think it is possible to gauge this to some extent; and it is instructive to consider it, as we have, in relation to the three case study films. In the Buñuel film there are many fantastic elements in a short space of time, but there are even more in Cornell's film, which never really establishes a balance. Out of the three films under discussion Franju's film

is the most classical and it is interesting that he speaks of its status not as a straight horror film but as 'an anguish film. It's a quieter mood than horror, something more subjacent, more internal, more penetrating. It's horror in homeopathic doses' (cited in Durgnat, 1967: 83).

This is very revealing as it suggests, first of all, that horrific or shocking material will be introduced in small doses, slowly, as a kind of homeopathic 'poison' - which works by treating the disturbing effects of horror with elements drawn from horror - in the sense of treating 'like with like,' so that it stimulates the body's own healing powers to cope with its traumatic effects; so what was initially seen as poison becomes a cure. Secondly, it suggests that gradually the spectator will be able to cope with further and possibly greater horrors.

This is important as it means that the spectator is prepared, to an extent, for such shocking moments but at the same time able to retain a sense of identification and immersion. It is through our identification with Christiane and the other female victims that we are able to experience these horrors and to recognise the absurdity and outrageousness associated with the phallogocentric discourse of 'the body beautiful' and especially the equation between facelessness and a lack of social identity. As Tohill and Tombs (1995: 23) contend, Christiane 'becomes the emotional centre of the film. She helps us escape from the sordidness and horror of the events that surround her, not into unreality but into a new reality'. The importance of this cannot be overestimated because it is impossible for bisexual switching to take place without this ability for the spectator to identify with Christiane, in a way that leads to eventual transformation; and enabling us to experience the world and ourselves in a new way.

It is also important to note that, like Buñuel, Franju makes use of genres which help audiences read the film; and in this case he makes use of conventions borrowed from horror, science fiction and film noir. Even though Buñuel, Dalí and Franju subvert these genres, they still offer readymade meanings and frames that audiences can make use of to anchor their

readings. In the TDK cycle I also try to maintain a balance between the fantastic elements and realism. Like Franju and Buñuel I borrow elements from a range of genres; and in my case the main genres I have used are fantasy, horror, mystery, comedy and drama. Although I adopt a classical realist mode throughout, this is also subverted constantly, as I have demonstrated. But I do think that TDK3 is far less disruptive formally than either TDK1 OR TDK2, with its narrative and characterisation far more straightforward. On the other hand I do feel that I learned a lot from Franju's technique and recognise that *Les Yeux sans visage* is a much more complex film than meets the eye; as I suggested in chapter 3 it could be seen to be more radical in its working within the mainstream.

So, despite the break-neck pace of the preceding events and the possibility that we might have little time for bisexual switching, it is clear that Franju has carefully structured the film, book-ending these climatic events with calmer, more reflective scenes, in so doing creating ample opportunity for reflection. What is more, without this 'slow-burn' approach our identification with Christiane would not be as complete. The idea of the TDK cycle, with three separate films leading to a dramatic crossing and transformation, owes a debt to Franju's technique. Whereas Franju achieves a moment of repose and reflection in his book-ending approach, I extend this by presenting the films as individual files so that there is a recognisable physical (as well as mental) pause involved in accessing the next file / film - as well as a deliberate engaging of the spectator in his or her choice of programming the order in which to view the films.

Conclusion

I have spoken of a certain 'sublime point' on the mountain. It was never a question of establishing my dwelling on this point. It would, moreover, from then on, have ceased to be sublime and I should, myself, have ceased to be a person. Unable reasonably to dwell there, I have nevertheless never gone so far from it as to lose it from view, as not to be able to point it. André Breton (1987: 114)

Poetry and life are "elsewhere" [...] but "elsewhere" does not designate a spiritual Or temporal region: elsewhere is nowhere; it is not the beyond; it signifies that existence is never where it is. Maurice Blanchot (2004: 92)

This thesis has argued that its three case study films articulate gender as contested, shifting, in a state of flux, and that their makers challenge and deconstruct unitary notions of gender, frequently crossing the gender binary in the process. At the same time, viewed from a contemporary perspective, Buñuel, Dalí, Cornell and Franju - despite the various strategies employed by them to question and subvert patriarchal notion of gender - are not entirely free of or able to extricate themselves from the contradictory discourses that circulate around notions of gender identity and therefore can themselves be seen as linked to patriarchal discourses of power, that seek to control or punish those whose gender identity does not conform to a heteronormative position.

As I have argued, though, judgements relating to assessing the progressive or regressive representations of gender identity must always remain conditional, dependent on the specific 'horizon of expectations' (Jauss 1982) that each reader brings to the text, such as the original socio-historical and ideological production and exhibition contexts of the films, as well as those of the contemporary reader. This distinction is crucial because many of the accusations

of misogyny and sexism attributed to the early Surrealists often stem from a collapsing of these positions by later critics into a monolithic one, so that we read such representations from a very different ideological position, which can seriously distort how we interpret these issues. Even so, my own view on Surrealism's alleged misogyny acknowledges both positions for, as I have argued, there does exist evidence of contradictory gender politics, but this is also offset by far more evidence to suggest that Surrealism was also one of the first significant platforms for women. As the movement grew the ever-increasing number of women in its ranks helped to address such issues and shape it accordingly. Indeed, the presence of contradiction in the works of the Surrealists can be productive for deconstructing gender identity, foregrounding that gender identity is constructed and therefore open to reconstruction.

What is also often left out in such arguments is the fact that Surrealist texts associated with the first Surrealist group not only reflect the contradictions and inequalities of a world that was very unequal in terms of gender inequality but also sought to challenge and transform it. So, to ignore the fact that such inequalities and contradictions exist is to collude in and support the very discourses that maintain such a position. Indeed, without contradiction art gives the lie that we already live in utopia. As Rosemont (1998: xlv) so eloquently argues, what was remarkable about those young men who founded Surrealism 'is not that they occasionally reflected some of the misogynistic climate of the post-war years, but the truly amazing extent to which they avoided and rejected it'.

I have argued that the female body is central to debates about gender identity and each of the films reflects this, with differing degrees of success. I have already observed in relation to the dialogue between my own practice and *Un Chien andalou*, for example, that I have reservations about how the naked female body has been utilised (fragmented, eroticised and fetishised), recognising that, particularly from a contemporary point of view, more

sophisticated strategies are required to challenge unitary notions of gender identity and essentialist notions of women because of shifting perspectives in relation to the body. Indeed, what has become even clearer to me as my research progressed was how much of this debate has centred in particular on the body, which is shown to be unstable. In a variety of ways, the case study films explore, explode and remap the conflicting positions relating to the gendered body and its transformation, so that despite reservations these contradictions - like those mentioned earlier - help to problematise and draw attention to patriarchal discourses of power. In the process it also highlights gender differences between females and males without pretending to resolve these or glossing over and closing off further debate.

In this way each of the filmmakers has drawn on an array of strategies to represent the instability of the body, both at the level of content and form. Central to all three films is a focus on cutting, fragmentation, fabrication and construction, and each film, to a greater (*Rose Hobart*, *Un Chien andalou*), or lesser (*Les Yeux sans visage*) extent, utilises a collage aesthetic. Basically, these various figures are used to underline gender identity as (cultural) construction, but also open to destruction, deconstruction and re-construction. To be more precise these figures relate to literal, implied (or unseen) and metaphorical cutting. We have also shown that cutting is associated with a collage aesthetic, relating to the films being seen as stitched together from other texts, in terms of genre hybridisation and a mixture of different styles, and even, in the case of *Rose Hobart*, in being composed of material from other films. Cutting also figures through editing, cutting up the (body of the) text into shots and scenes, creating the possibility for further parallels with the notion of cutting and construction.

As I have argued, in each film a series of assertions and denials are established through montage and juxtaposition, which is very much dependent on the rhythm created by the deliberate chains of transformation through cutting and editing. Ellipsis as well as the various

transitions (fades, dissolves, superimposition and jump cuts) are all used to represent the body in fragments or the instability of the body. We have also seen how the body can be fragmented through close-ups and other cinematic devices like iris-ins. Body parts disappear, reappear and are exchanged between male and female, though trick effects, reminiscent of magic shows and the gags associated with the films of Méliès, which, as in the 'dance of genders' sequence, can be profoundly disturbing and comic, presenting gender identity as ambiguous, unstable or fluid.

At the level of narrative each film utilises narrative but also combines this with non-narrative elements as well as unrelated narratives, which emphasises the constructed nature of the film, but also its gaps and interstices provide further evidence of *dépaysement* through the loss or breakdown in cause and effect logic and continuity, and encourage a more poetic means of linking the disparate material. In each film, but especially *Rose Hobart* and *Un Chien andalou*, the spectator must work hard to connect the various threads, whereas *Les Yeux sans visage* provides an abundance of narrative threads that seemingly cohere, yet at the same time they come undone because in many ways what is being asserted is fantastic and extraordinary. But because the events that occur are within the bounds of logic (and obey generic conventions) and presented in a realistic manner, for the most part the spectator is taken along with the events. Therefore, when the breathtaking series of shocking, disturbing and poetic events occur right at the end of *Les Yeux sans visage* it is as if the narrative is torn apart and the fragments no longer fit. The reality is that they never did, because the earlier narrative is associated with patriarchal logic related to Science and the Law, which are shown to be emissaries of patriarchy. At the same time Franju realises that without narrative he would be unable to achieve the effect that he does as it provides a useful foundation from which to embed more poetic and mysterious elements.

In terms of sound both *Un Chien andalou* and *Rose Hobart* are silent films with a musical accompaniment which is often used contrapuntally, emphasising the fact that both visuals and audio are conventionally synchronised so that they seem unified, whereas in both films they often jar, appearing at odds, again underscoring the artifice of the film-making process - which echoes the other strategies that link with the notion of gender identity as something artificial and fabricated. Of course, as I have argued, the spectator is forced to try and make connections through the repetition of the audio tracks but in both films they are used in a way that defies expectation as they are not linked to any specific character, setting, situation or theme. As I have shown, the cumulative effect of these figures, related to cutting, works by association and repetition, to create a network or constellation of references to gender identity as constructed but that can also be deconstructed and reconstructed.

Elements of performativity and masquerade are also used to foreground gender identity as construction or fabrication, such as the role-playing of the protagonists in Buñuel and Dalí's film as well as the proliferating Roses in various costumes evoking seriality and multiplicity in Cornell's film. Christiane, too switches between, on the one hand, automaton, mannequin, the doll-child and monstrous uncanny other, and on the other, Alice-as-adult, that leads to Surrealist monster. Strategies of masking and unmasking further trouble the boundaries of gender identity and the stable self, where the mask becomes a fetish, which like the uncanny other ushers in ambivalence through its concealing and revealing self and identity. This ambivalence is carried over in its function as both a signifier of Christiane's oppression and repression but also her revolt and liberation (demonstrating agency and self-hood).

Bisexual switching is linked to transformation and liberation: each of the films stages the emergence of convulsive identities which cross back and forth between the binary border and offer the possibility of transforming character, author and spectator intersubjectively. The creation of a fictional world as well as the presence of characters with whom we can identify

are necessary for the spectator to become immersed in the text, so that bisexual switching can occur, based as it is on a model of fantasy, wherein the original (repressed) bisexual predisposition can be re-activated in such conducive conditions. However, in order that the spectator is not completely absorbed in the fantasy, various strategies are needed to disorient, jolt or shock the spectator back to consciousness in order to reflect upon issues such as how gender identity is constructed and could be *other*-wise. Transformation and liberation are connected with the revelation provided by this convulsive encounter. Each of the films, with varying degrees of success, achieves this. It is no surprise that Cornell's film is the least successful, because it is so fragmented and there are few passages without some form of disruption, preventing any real sense of immersion in the text. However, ironically, the proliferating Roses (despite her seriality) do provide a constant anchor or constellation, as a locus of identification and desire, around which everything else is pulled together.

In fact it becomes clear that a Surrealist film practice is very much dependent on such anchors - particularly through narrative, characterisation and genre with their attendant conventions, all of which offer ready-made frames that guide the spectator and suture her / him into the film-fantasy. In addition a predominantly realist style is needed to endow the film with an authenticity or belief in the events depicted, particularly when poetic, strange, shocking or fantastic material is introduced into the film. This enables the spectator a certain mobility, switching between passive and active modes, offering him / her the ability to enter or exit the film-fantasy so that identification and interpretation can occur.

As regards my own practice I have constantly tried to develop strategies to explore, problematise and transform binarised notions of gender identity. I have also striven to create the conditions necessary for bisexual switching, which depends very much on establishing a convincing narrative frame, utilising a classic realist approach to maintain the illusion of reality, the presence of sympathetic protagonists, and the introduction of strategies designed

to disrupt the narrative flow and encourage the spectator to take stock and reflect on what they have experienced. The films have been through several re-edits over the years as a result of feedback, ongoing reflection and in dialogue with the written research. Working on each film has enabled me to explore different strategies for challenging and subverting a binarised notion of gender identity, and in turn has furthered my understanding of the ways in which gender identity is articulated in the case-study films, but has also raised wider questions about what a Surrealist film practice might offer in the 21st century.

Additionally, the creation of the three films has given me the opportunity to experiment with and develop my model of bisexual switching. In the first two films I felt that bisexual switching was still too tied to a binarised model of gender identity rather than switching back and forth, in a dialogue. The introduction of a third film, with its explicit links to the two other films and their protagonists, as well as the re-editing of TDK1 and TDK2, introducing material to make further links, went some way to resolving this issue, as TDK3 not only figures the three protagonists as a single character, made up of shifting gender identities in a state of becoming, but it also encouraged the spectator to approach the films as part of the same universe. At the same time, these could be accessed in different permutations, which would further facilitate the notion of switching and dialogue but also raise more questions about how experiencing the films in a different order affects our reading of the films and the protagonists in terms of gender identity. This suggests that there may be more than one way of perceiving the characters and the narratives, so that the notion of construction underpinning this process is seen as artificial. There is only a short step from applying this logic to gender identity to realising that it too is constructed and can be reconstructed. It also has the effect of making the spectator the creator, deciding on her / his own version of events, inventing new connections. In fact this sense of ownership and authorship is crucial in recognising *our* own stake in constructing gender identity.

Another important influence on the changes I made came about through a long process of engaging with the key Surrealist notions of convulsive beauty, the marvellous and Breton's 'sublime point' and my own rejection of dialectical thinking in favour of a dialogical approach. Crucial to this has been a re-modelling of the marvellous as something not hidden behind or latent in reality but rather interpenetrating reality. Bisexual switching, for example, allows us to reach that point of identification necessary to cross over between masculine and feminine, and in so doing produces a convulsive moment akin to a revelation, making visible what was there all the time. This *what was there all the time* is not only our repressed other/s (rather than an uncanny 'return of the repressed') but the ability to connect these and switch between them in a state of meaningful dialogue and becoming intersubjectively. What is underlined here is Max Ernst's (2009: 33) dictum that 'Identity will be convulsive or will not exist'. The scene in TDK3 leading to the eclipse emblematises this process in a much more successful manner than the resolutions of the other two films, with the dialogue between the various gendered selves in a visual and verbal dialogue - represented by the transparent faces that are superimposed over each other - suggesting gender crossing, the repetition of 'The time on the clock is NOW!', ending with one of the female faces speaking with a male voice, and finally its linking with the eclipse, that reminds us of the chemical wedding between (male) sun and (female) moon.

I initially felt that perhaps Surrealism's 'turn to the object' in the 1930's might reflect a rejection of cinema's purely representational qualities, its images and narratives fixed and flattened behind a screen membrane in a specific order, as directed by the filmmakers, in favour of tangible, three-dimensional objects that are concrete interventions in reality, bringing a rich sediment of history with them but also beginning a new life as an element (sign), among other signs, directed by the spectator. The collage and assemblages, with their constant switching between the conflicting pairs of opposites, relating to sign and referent or

representation and the real that I discussed in the previous chapter, might provide a convulsive tension that is lacking in cinema.

Considering the viability of bisexual switching in relation to the assemblages - or indeed, any non moving-image or time-based media - has had a significant bearing on my understanding of what constitutes a Surrealist film and Surrealist spectatorship. More precisely, can collage and assemblage approximate the immersive qualities found in film? Clearly, my arguments regarding the cabinets, with their kinetic, cinematic qualities, simulate the dynamic relations of the moving image, as the idea of 'cinema by other means' suggests is possible. However, this is largely dependent on the spectator's ability to recognise that it is more than a collection of static elements framed in a box cabinet; but we might also argue that the viewing of a film requires us to link the images and sounds in particular ways so that they form a coherent unity. Indeed, as has been argued in relation to *Un Chien andalou* and particularly *Rose Hobart*, this is not something that is guaranteed by the medium of film itself, but instead relies on utilising a range of elements familiar to audiences, such as those associated with classical narrative. Both of these films (Cornell goes further) break the rules associated with classical narrative so that they, too, resemble a series of fragments or 'moving collages or assemblages', but it must be re-iterated that Buñuel and Dalí's film does not fully depart from many of the elements associated with classical narrative.

It is interesting to compare this with Man Ray's film *Emak Bakia* (1926), which was received coolly by the Surrealist group: 'I thought I had complied with all the principles of Surrealism: irrationality, automatism, psychological and dreamlike sequences without apparent logic, and complete disregard of conventional storytelling' (Man Ray 2012: 274). Indeed all of these do feature in his film and the overall effect is even more fragmented than the films just mentioned. As Knowles (2012: 88) correctly observes, Man Ray's film not only comes across as a collage-film but foregrounds its formal properties and 'self consciously highlights the

illusory nature of cinematic representation that keeps the spectator at a distance, preventing any kind of conventional narrative identification'. It is also instructive to compare Man Ray's and Breton's different forms of spectatorship as they help to throw light both on what constitutes a Surrealist film and the kind of spectator needed. We recall the habit of Breton and the other Surrealists of 'cinema hopping', turning up halfway through a film without any idea of what the film might be and leaving at the first sign of boredom. Man Ray would also avoid consulting the cinema programme, posters and so on, and during the screening would utilise ingenious optical devices, involving mirrors and prisms, which had the affect of abstracting and transforming the film on the screen, or simply closing his eyes.¹

In effect the spectatorship of Breton and Man Ray is also a kind of filmmaking, and is akin to Cornell's collage practice of composing his film from found footage and adding filters, changing the speed and adding music. However, their transformation of the films differ: Breton links the fragments of the films he has seen in a different order, giving them a narrative frame, producing a new narrative in effect, containing unusual, absurd and surprising juxtapositions in the process, whereas Man Ray is unconcerned with narrative transitivity, making his transformations at a formal or abstract level, focusing on the individual images or fragments in isolation, without connecting them into a whole.

Man Ray (2012: 287) suggests that his reasons for abandoning cinema in favour of photography and painting are related to the latter's non-moving qualities and his championing of 'the permanent immobility of a static work which allows me to make my deductions at my leisure, without being distracted by attending circumstances.' His initial forays in film came about because of his excitement in bringing static images to life so it ironic that he returned to static forms again, but crucially, these are static forms that evoke movement. Like Duchamp, he was interested in the idea of creating 'a static representation of movement', like his

¹ See Knowles (2012: 82-3) for a useful account of Man Ray's spectatorship.

celebrated photograph of the flamenco dancer, which became one of the models for Breton's notion of *explosante-fixe*, related to convulsive beauty, with its quality of arrested motion, combining both static and dynamic characteristics (Duchamp 1989: 124).²

It seemed to me that my own experiments in film, collage and assemblage led me to come to similar conclusions as Man Ray and Duchamp, but what is different is that for me they are another form of cinema - still-moving cinema or 'cinema by other means'. Crucially, Breton's (1960: 160) notion of convulsive beauty, and his various photography-related examples of this concept led me to my notion of still-moving or convulsive cinema. I realised that in fact it was the spectator that provided the movement. Clearly, certain cues had to be present but essentially it is the perception and imagination provided by the spectator that activates these - and not cinema. It is not dissimilar to Duchamp's (1989: 126) wish in 'recreating ideas in painting [...] I wanted once again to put painting at the service of the mind [...] This is the direction in which art should turn: to an intellectual expression'. In fact it fits Breton's (1990: 181) privileging of the activity of the mind at the expense of the physical object that inspired that activity: 'We will ultimately concede that everything *creates an image* and that the most lowly object, which doesn't have a particular symbolic role assigned to it, is in a position to represent anything at all'. It is rather the unconscious that assigns meaning to the object, which is not led by the object's physical characteristics. Ultimately, it is another form of the border crossings that 'work towards making the distinction between subjective and objective unnecessary and worthless' (Breton 1990: 258).

From such experiments it followed that bisexual switching could occur in non-moving media if the right cues were present. It could also offer a far more sophisticated way of highlighting gender identity as fabricated and open to reconstruction. Utilising the Marey and Muybridge figures in my cabinets in different combinations allowed me to recognise that the implied

² Wall-Romana (2013: 149) refers to Man Ray's image as 'freez[ing] cinema back into photography'.

movement parallels the fabrication of gender identity, as a constructed, edited sequence. It traces in slow(ed) motion the passage from and movement between these moments of transformation or, to borrow one of Duchamp's terms, evokes a *delay* in gender transformation. In this sense it both captured a sense of this movement and its expiration or transformation.

The introduction of these figures in the cabinets, alongside other images and real objects in rows of miniature boxes, gave the illusion of a three-dimensional film strip. Yet, these real elements are also simulacra, which contributes to both a focus on constructedness and transformation or interchangeability, creating further instances of convulsive identity.

Assemblage engages with *real life* through its incorporation of real fragments whereas film can only represent this fragmentation. At the same time, because these real elements are transformed into simulacra, they retain their material identity and in fact oscillate between both, as pure liminality. Placed in such an environment, they might better resemble the still-moving, convulsive cinema I sought, with a combination of narrative sequences and fragments, that interrupt and switch between masculine and feminine, in staging points for reflection and revelation. The intention was to provide a parallel with Surrealist cinema (beyond cinema?) combining passages of narrative (in suggested movement) with moments of disorientation and transformation, so that there would still be opportunities to become immersed in the cabinet through its resemblance to the moving image.

In many ways these intersections between film and assemblage open up new directions for the Surrealist object and also throw new light on the reasons why not many more Surrealist films were made by Surrealists after the 1930s. I would argue that the enthusiastic turn to the Surrealist object and the decline in film production by Surrealists are connected, relating to a greater desire to embrace the everyday and intervene in reality directly, recycling and transforming the outmoded detritus of modernity associated with bourgeois convention, and

in so doing offer up the Surrealist object as an *alternative* reality, as one reality among myriad others in the hope of throwing into relief and ultimately challenging the notion of *one* reality. Whereas film transforms reality into representation, the Surrealist object problematises this relationship in that it incorporates representation, via man-made objects (a shoe or toy horse, for example) and reality, via 'items' / 'things' taken directly from the material world (leaves or human hair, for example). Yet as we have seen when either represented or actual objects are transformed into art - either individually or by combining real and represented elements - they retain something of their former existence so that a convulsive relationship results from the union. Transformation would also be directed both at the maker of the object and its audiences who come into contact with it: the former would be affected at each stage of creation and reception, involving reflection and interpretation through revelation, and makers would also be encouraged to reflect upon, interpret and transform themselves and the world. In both cases the (dialectical) interplay between the inner and outer worlds is transformative, reflecting later Surrealist theory's renewed determination to incorporate action and interpretation.

Above all, this research has utilised an array of media alongside writing to explore gender identity in Surrealist film in a variety of ways, where each element represents an integral part of a dialogue, construed as a constellation. The practice has demonstrated 'thinking through art,' which in many ways sums up the notion of Surrealism as research: Surrealists creating artworks both as research tools or methodologies and as outcomes and products of their research. The research has shown that gender identity in Surrealist film is contested, shifting, in flux. In a variety of ways, the films explore, explode and remap these conflicting positions, centred in particular on the body, which is shown to be unstable. Transformation, liberation, and convulsive identity are active terms that imply fluidity, process, the crossing of borders,

passage, exchange, interchange and the becomings that these transformations hint at are resolutely incomplete.

Bisexual switching restores the repressed other in our various spectatorial relations with the text, in dialogue with characters and filmmaker in myriad permutations of self and other/s.

However, this restoration is not a unity or synthesis but a highly charged, convulsive encounter, momentary, 'a point of identification' but also one of difference and becoming.

Surrealism, in the words of Louis Aragon (1924: 22) 'is at best a notion that slips away like the horizon before the walker, for like the horizon it is a relation between the sensibility and what it will never attain'.

Surrealist film is that which shall be...

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Betty Blue (Jean Beineix,1986)

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The Children's Party (Joseph Cornell,1968)

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Dark Passage (Delmer Davies,1947),

East of Borneo (George Melford, 1931)

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L'Etoile de mer (Man Ray,1928)

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Fantomas (Louis Fueillade,1913-14)

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Las Hurdes (Luis Buñuel, 1932)

The Invisible Man (James Whale,1933)

The Island of Lost Souls (Erle C. Kenton, 1932)

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Legend For Fountains (Fragments) (Joseph Cornell,1957)

Midnight Party (Joseph Cornell,1968)

Nick Carter (Victorin Jasset, 1908-1909)

Onibaba (Kaneto Shindo, 1964)

La Perle (George Hugnet, 1929)

The Phantom of Liberty (Luis Buñuel, 1974)

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Rose Hobart (Joseph Cornell, 1936)

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