# Lesbianism, Cinema, Space

## The Sexual Life of Apartments

Lee Wallace

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# Lesbianism, Cinema, Space

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*For Annamarie*

# Contents

# Acknowledgments

An unanticipated corollary of writing about sexual publicity and sexual privacy is that I feel strangely enabled to thank people for things that usually go unrecognized in academic circles.

Perhaps part of this shamelessness is due to the minor scandal that surrounded the public funding of the wider project of which this book forms a part. I would like to say that along with my collaborators, Annamarie Jagose and Barry Reay, I was briefly thrown into the twisted circuits of public debate that surrounded the Royal Society of New Zealand's Marsden Fund giving half a million dollars of taxpayers' money to investigate sexual acts and sexual identities but it would not be true. The truth is much crueller. Barry and I were completely overlooked as media attack centered on Annamarie's research into orgasm, a topic about which even Prime Minister Helen Clark was asked her opinion. First thanks are therefore due Deputy Vice-Chancellor Raewyn Dalziel who, on the day the Marsden news broke, thought to ring and offer her support to Barry and me as if our respective research on heterosexuality and space were as patently worthless as Annamarie's. I really appreciated the gesture. Second thanks go to Athina Tsoulis, who stood by Barry and me as the difficult week wore on and still the shafts of public scorn showed no sign of landing anywhere near. Third thanks go to Barry's Dad, who at the time was lying in Auckland Hospital on what everyone thought was his deathbed but whose multiple lifelines included talkback radio so that whenever his son joined him he could say, "They mentioned that woman again. They didn't mention you," thereby bringing new meaning to the phrase gay shame.

Lest the Marsden Fund and its appointed agents Don Smith and Lydia Wevers get all the blame for the abuse of public monies this project represents, I feel duty bound to mention those other institutional boards and committees who have supported it since its inception. A full public inquiry should commence looking into the dealings of former Vice-Chancellor John Hood, whose newly established University Development Fund awarded a generous seed grant in 2000, and the University of Auckland Research Committee, which awarded further grants in 2001, 2002, and 2003. Further errors of judgement were concentrated in the Faculty of Arts,

who pledged funding in 2004 and approved the 2007 research and study leave in which this manuscript was completed, and the Department of English Research Committee who assisted with teaching buyout in 2006. Ultimately La Trobe University, Monash University, New York University, and Johns Hopkins University, who all assisted by graciously lending Visiting Scholar status between 2000 and 2007, must also be held to account.

Other culpable organizations and individuals should not be spared thanks. At various stages particular assistance was given by staff at the Special Collections Department of the Margaret Herrick Library, Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences; Arts Special Collections, University of California, Los Angeles; the American Film Institute; the Lesbian and Gay Media Archive, a subsection of the Hall Carpenter Archives, Middlesex University; the National Sound Archive, British Library, which holds the Hall Carpenter Oral History Archive; and the University of Auckland General and Architecture Libraries. In the final months, commissioning editor Erica C. Wetter, the original readers for Routledge New York, and my research assistant Zita Joyce, all steadied the transformation of this manuscript into a book, sections of which have previously appeared in print: "Continuous Sex: The Editing of Homosexuality in *Bound* and *Rope*," *Screen* 41, no. 4 (2000): 369–387; reprinted in *Queer Screen: A* Screen *Reader*, ed. Jackie Stacey and Sarah Street (New York: Routledge, 2007), 106–122; and extracts from "Queer, Here: Sexuality and Space," in *Cultural Studies in Aotearoa New Zealand: Identity, Space and Place*, ed. Claudia Bell and Steve Matthewman, 66–83 (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 2004).

Unthinking contributions to this book came from all those academic and nonacademic lesbians socially unguarded enough to provide compelling disclosures into the way their professional and intimate lives are organized. Thanks to Barb Burt and Ange Wither, for their novelistic capacity to analyze their own and other people's motivations; to Una Jagose and Jenny Keate, for refusing to do the same; to Ann Cvetkovich and Gretchen Phillips, whose combined memory for people and music is an archive without seeming limit; to Carolyn Dinshaw and Marget Long for being urban and rural with equal intensity; to Barb Creed and Jeanette Hoorn, whose Westgarth house has seen more sexual configurations than Bloomsbury; to Linda Hardy and the late Kim Walker, for their adjacent office romance; and to Kate Lilley and Melissa Hardie, for knowing that two apartments are better than one.

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that remind me that lesbians and gay men are not the only ones to forge new relations to space and intimacy; to Shuchi Kothari and Nabeel Zuberi, for buying in Mt. Albert, thereby making me feel I was in on the ground floor of gay gentrification; to David Halperin, who allowed Annamarie and me to think that we had chosen his Ann Arbor house for him and keeps us updated on its subsequent interior transformations; to Witi Ihimaera-Smiler, for his ability to transform a corridor into something much more illicit; and to Tom Bishop, for turning up in New Zealand six months ahead of his family and spending much of it propping up the kitchen bench as if it were a lesbian bar.

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With so much official and unofficial support it is hard to believe that anything stood in the way of this project being completed; yet, in 2005, something happened, of nine months duration, that others might call a

career interruption: home renovation. So strong was the pull of the building site that I would cut school to spend my days making coffee and scones and talking to the cabinet-makers, electricians, locksmiths, stonemasons, painters, and lighting designers that are the true experts in my field. Three years down the track, I take the opportunity to thank in print the architect, Lisa Webb; the builder, David Kisler; and the landscape designer, Patrick Stokes: They are to my mind the true authors of lesbian space.

A distinct sort of thanks goes to my research collaborator Annamarie Jagose, who only the most dim-witted of readers will have failed to realize is also my domestic partner (sadly, this category of reader includes all those investigative journalists sent to cover the Marsden scandal). With the hidden private agenda behind this public disgrace finally revealed, I can only hope that Annamarie and I get to continue these academic shenanigans for some time yet and also maintain the private world with which they make such a seamless fit. Annamarie's benign interventions in this book, as in all my writing, are so great that it can sometimes surprise me that her name does not appear next to mine on the cover just as it does on all those checkbooks, mortgages, wills, powers of attorney, and telephone listings that comprise our intimate public life.

Last, thanks or no thanks to my twelve-year-old niece Emily Miles who is coming to stay this weekend, a visit that falls two days before this manuscript is due and who, if she works out quickly enough that Annamarie and my sleeping in the same bed for as long as she has breathed probably makes us lesbians, or that Uncle Bevan's penthouse apartment furnished with a superabundance of classical statuary and the collected recordings of Barbra Streisand maybe, just maybe, makes him gay, will almost certainly find herself in print.

# 1 Introduction
## The Lesbian Chronotope

> Architecture is, in quite a profound sense, the subject of nearly all feature films. Architecture frames the story film tells.
>
> Katherine Shonfield, *Walls Have Feelings*

The late architectural theorist, Katherine Shonfield, has argued that all films tell their story spatially.[1] This is perhaps most true of films that tell the story of homosexuality, since one of the ongoing legacies of the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors Association (MPPDA) Production Code is that the homosexual story, in comparison to its heterosexual counterpart, continues to be less vested in character and more vested in scene. The capacity of classical film texts to connote gay and lesbian material visually while making it disappear narratively has been documented in both popular and theoretical accounts of Hollywood cinema, though few of these accounts have specifically linked the chimerical appearance of homosexuality on screen (everywhere seen but nowhere understood or nowhere seen but everywhere understood) to the formal grammar of film and, in particular, its illusionist expansions and compressions of projected space.[2] It is not by chance that some of the most compelling lesbian-themed films from the post-Code era distribute their homosexual effects across the primarily spatial components of the film text rather than concentrating those effects in character. As counterintuitive as it seems, the sexual perversity represented in these film texts is carried by cinematographic details that are often cast into shadow by the overexposed presence of the lesbian and gay characters who, post the censorship repeals of 1968, are dramatically licensed to appear in mainstream American film for the first time. Decked out in their post-Stonewall colors, new Hollywood's gay *dramatis personae* variously project as hysterical, suicidal, pathological, and depraved but are frankly less interesting than the old-school visual devices and editing techniques that anachronistically frame them the better to persuade us of their homosexual profile.

The post-Code films selected for this study have one thing in common: the lesbian story they tell crucially depends on the apartment space in which it is set. Spread across thirty years, these films represent several different production regimes and industrial economies: 1970s independent Hollywood, New German Cinema, a major US studio venture from the early 1990s, a coproduction aligning film and television moguls Dino de

Laurentiis and Aaron Spelling, and, finally, an abandoned television venture subsequently reedited as a feature film. Despite the manifest differences between *The Killing of Sister George* (Robert Aldrich, 1968), *The Bitter Tears of Petra von Kant* (Rainer Werner Fassbinder, 1972), *Single White Female* (Barbet Schroeder, 1992), *Bound* (Wachowski Brothers, 1996), and *Mulholland Drive* (David Lynch, 2001), these films ask to be read together because they are in one sense five different versions of the same story. Whatever their generic affiliation—film adaptation of stage drama, female melodrama, sexual thriller, or some hybridized combination of all three—each film plots the relation between lesbianism and the apartment space in which it appears. Recurring across this series of films, the apartment is revealed as the cinematic chronotope for lesbianism, not simply the neutral locus for the film's action but the place predisposed to assist lesbian narrative developments and outcomes over other sexual possibilities. The spatiotemporal coordinates of the cinematic apartment bring into the field of representation female homosexuality, a sexual formation that has a notoriously difficult relation to visibility. The apartment does this with the able reinforcement of cinema's other spatial technologies, such as editing and the deployment of synchronized and nonsynchronized sound. These spatial devices allow us to apprehend the implied story world that encompasses the lesbian action that is nonetheless always seen to best advantage in the visually circumscribed setting of the apartment.

The recognition that lesbianism is implicitly linked to, even reliant on, the representation of cinematic space enables critical insight into both the ideological workings of the cinematic apparatus and the wider cultural history of homosexuality. Analyzing the sexual life of cinematic apartments, for instance, shifts many of the currently accepted understandings of the relation between female homosexuality and space, most of which derive from forms of social history or social anthropology better attuned to the sexual behaviors and life patterns of gay men. By placing cinematic space and social space in close conjunction, the chapters that follow keep in mind that sexuality and space are both representational systems that produce sexual identity as an effect of their dual interaction.[3] In this sense, sexuality and space do not simply knock up against each other in a positive or negative fashion but need to be recognized as mutually constitutive activities whose cross-engagement has a temporal as well as a structural dimension.

Since the object of this study is narrative film, the role of temporality in producing sexual and spatial effects remains at the forefront. Narrative theory has long recognized that the place in which a story occurs is never a neutral backdrop but has an instrumental relation to the story it ostensibly foregrounds, overdetermining the possibilities of narrative development and causally linking character and action before the overlays of psychological motivation that dialogue belatedly bestows on

plot. This insight into narrative space is usually credited to the Russian formalist critic Mikhail Bakhtin who, in order to capture the role of place in the constitution of story, elaborated the concept of the chronotope. Condensing the dimensionalities of time and space, the chronotope, according to Bakhtin, is the "place where the knots of narrative are tied and untied."[4] Specific chronotopes advance specific stories, Bakhtin argues, identifying the road as an exemplary narrative scene in which events are configured as journeys or passages through time and space. Essentially transient, the road chronotope derives its narrative valence in distinction to other, more permanent chronotopes, such as the home, which signal stability and self-containment. Different kinds of characters and different kinds of narrative action will occur in the alternative spaces of road and home, which also have distinct temporal clocks, one engaging the episodic time of the picaresque, the other the cumulative or memorial time of the family. The social (and sexual) encounters that emerge in these particular narrative spaces—the spontaneous liaisons or sexual adventures of the road, on the one hand, and, on the other, the slow-burning romances or emotional crises that are resolved within the unvarying confines of the marital home—are settled in advance of the interventions of plot or genre affiliation.

As Vivian Sobchack identifies, Bakhtin's delineation of the narrative chronotope remains significant for film theory insofar as it provides a way of "comprehending historically the phenomenological relation between text and context in a way richer than that afforded by traditional generic analyses."[5] Since the question of the relation between textual representations of lesbianism and the sexual cultures with which those texts are historically contemporaneous is a concern of this book, it is worth considering this claim in more detail.[6] In Sobchack's own work on film noir, the notion of the chronotope is engaged to revisit received wisdom about the origins of noir style in a postwar crisis concerning relations between masculinity and femininity. Notoriously difficult to prove, the assumption that there is a relation between textual form and sociological cause nonetheless runs through noir criticism in ways that fail to illuminate either text or context. By shifting the focus away from remote sociological explanation—the large-scale introduction of women to paid work during the war years, the existential crisis posed by US nuclear capability—towards the noir chronotope and its highly specific narrative locations—the "radical grounds and material premises figured concretely before us . . . the cocktail lounge, the nightclub, the bar, the hotel room, the boardinghouse, the diner, the dance hall, the roadside cafe, the bus and train station, and the wayside motel" that are the familiar settings of film noir—Sobchack is able to contribute new insight into both this particular film genre and the historically emergent social contexts it represents on screen.[7] "Lounge time," she argues, is the signature noir chronotope, the elements of which include "loose" women and "idle" men

brought together in the aimless time and transient space that is the social and ideological underside of patriarchal and capitalist culture whose reified spaces are traditionally those of conjugal domesticity and masculine labor.[8] Though film noir of the 1940s and 1950s frequently includes nostalgic or idealized reference to those other spaces in which men work and wives keep house,

> the noir world of bars, diners, and seedy hotels, of clandestine yet public meetings in which domesticity and kinship relations are subverted, denied, and undone, a world of little labor and less love, of threatened men and sexually and economically predatory women—this world (concretely part of wartime and postwar American culture) realizes a frightening reversal and perversion of home and the coherent, stable, idealized, and idyllic past of prewar American patriarchy and patriotism.[9]

As Sobchack demonstrates, film noir's narrative and stylistic delineation of the newly common scenes of postwar American life isolates and invests those social sites with exaggerated meanings that can nonetheless be traced to actual experience and cultural change. The task of the historically attuned critic is, therefore, not to invoke the social cause behind the text but to read together "the internal logic of the films and the external logic of the culture" as they interlock in the spatial archive comprised by a particular genre or style of film.[10]

Sobchack's deployment of chronotope to reanimate the relation between textual aesthetics and social context is extremely well suited to exploring those cinematic representations of lesbianism which rely on the apartment to tell their sexual story. By analyzing the apartment chronotope new insight can be gained into both the cinematic delineation of female homosexuality and the real-world sites associated with lesbian sociality that are hyperbolically reflected in the parallel worlds of narrative film. In the first instance, giving critical precedence to narrative space over plot or character alters our perception of the relation between background and figure so that elements previously regarded as peripheral details—the rooms and corridors which frame the action, for instance—are suddenly revealed to have an informing relation to story events—particularly those events that comprise the sexual story—which could not occur without the spatiotemporal coordinates those background details provide. The chapters that follow attend to the way in which cinematic space produces the lesbian story within five distinct films that all deploy the apartment chronotope in highly idiosyncratic ways. The chapters read each film in turn, concentrating on the particular cinematic element or technique without which the lesbian story would remain untold: set, mise-en-scène, location, editing, and diegetic story world. As this varied list conveys, perhaps the only thing linking these films is their combined

focus on lesbianism and apartment space. It is worth considering, therefore, why the apartment chronotope should feature so consistently in post–Production Code films that deal with lesbian content, particularly as this motif is not typically associated with lesbian history or cultural representation.

In lesbian criticism—broadly understood as that range of texts that addresses the cultural history of lesbianism and its representation in all forms of media—two social sites emerge as the privileged locations of the lesbian-life world: the bar and the schoolroom. While there are other spaces associated with lesbian possibility in the twentieth century, for instance the barracks, the convent, and the sports field (not just the amateur softball pitch but the professional tennis circuit and Ladies Professional Golf Association tournament, which has its annual lesbian apotheosis in the Dinah Shore Classic at Palm Springs), these special-interest sites do not have the same general cultural resonance as the spatial motifs of the bar and schoolroom.[11] Associated with leisure and education, the bar and schoolroom index a more generic lifestyle than that associated with military, religious, or athletic pursuits. While some of these lesbian spaces will no doubt be eclipsed in time by other more culturally numinous locations (the fertility clinic and crèche, the wedding chapel, the gay resort, and, as yet unimaginable, the lesbian retirement village) and the narratives they enable (lesbian maternity and parenting, lesbian commitment, lesbian indulgence, lesbian mortality), this historically overdetermined process can be better understood by concentrating on the bar and schoolroom as symbolic sites that catalyzed lesbian possibility for the duration of the twentieth century.[12]

The all-purpose terms of bar and schoolroom are convenient compressions of a range of connecting spatial motifs that can be found in many discussions of lesbian history and the cultural politics with which this identity formation has been associated. Assembling together real-world spaces and fictional locations, these two chronotopes are so well known that they hardly need specifying. What does need specifying is their diacritical relation to each other since, broadly speaking, the spatial motif of the lesbian bar exists in some tension with the spatial motif of the schoolroom. The bar is the backdrop for the story of a hard-knock urban lesbianism that has its epitome in the butch-femme culture associated with the middle decades of the last century for which it remains the primary reference point.[13] Sexualized and class-codified in equal degree, the bar motif also extends to the sexually and racially dissident nightclubs featured in literary modernism and histories of the Harlem Renaissance, and the lesbian sex clubs and performance spaces of the 1980s and 1990s.[14] Fundamentally working class, the bar is nonetheless equally hospitable to high-cultural and subcultural nuance although it is consistently hostile to the middle-class life world against which the bar derives its demimonde status.[15] The schoolroom motif is the backdrop for a different lesbian

story: the story of an erotic initiation that is often less than explicit and that frequently entails the nontraumatic adjustment of sexual identity and its invisible assimilation into a mainstream middle-class life trajectory. This motif extends from the schoolrooms of childhood to the sorority house and dormitories of the women's college, and the female professions those institutions support.[16]

The real-world and fictional events associated with each of these spatial motifs are as predictable and predictably different as the lesbian personalities they help profile. The familiar camaraderie of the toilet line, the drunken brawls and jealous stand-overs that comprise an eventful night out, no less the substance-assisted euphoria or depressive state into which the regular clientele are impelled, derive their narrative inevitability from the bar space in which they are sited. Similarly, the lesbian crushes, scenes of female instruction, role-playing of breeches parts, and repeated representation of reading and writing as practices that access other imaginative worlds, take their significance as plot elements in a sexual story that depend on the schoolroom in which they appear.[17] Temporally these two spaces are distinct since the clock of the schoolroom runs on the incipient time of youth (entirely appropriate to the sexual bildungsroman where everything lies ahead including social compromise), whereas bar time goes nowhere and is endlessly resumable, however enlivening or deadening that prospect can seem.

Other distinctions are worth drawing between these two lesbian chronotopes. The butch-femme culture associated with the bar is framed in resistance to a patriarchal social order that it superficially replicates, whereas the conduct of the schoolroom suggests power's evasion rather than its flagrant disregard. As the site for the culturally sanctioned practice of teaching, the lesbian schoolroom is continuous with the heterosexual world that surrounds it, a world in which the sexuality of teacher and student is always presumed to be straight. The chronotopes are nonintersecting insofar as their typical personnel are rarely in each other's company or space. The closeted lesbian schoolteacher will no sooner cross the threshold of the lesbian bar than the out bulldagger will take class. The narrative incompatibility of these parallel sites is more fully gauged if we take each to their logical extreme. Under interpretative pressure, the outlaw status of the lesbian bar yields to the underworld precincts of the women's prison where the historical relation between lesbianism and criminality is metaphorically enacted between the inmate and her wardens. Under the same conditions of association, the schoolroom or, more typically, the girls' boarding school, segues into the sorority house or women's college. Although they are both the setting for the story of lesbianism, the distance between the socially abject space of the women's prison and the socially reified space of the women's college can only be crossed in the imaginative compressions of popular and critical culture.[18] So, too, is the temporality of these spaces (and the narratives they support)

utterly distinct since the college operates on the value-added time of intellectual endeavor and cultural improvement, the prison on the dead time of criminal sentence and the repeated routines of incarceration.

From both the perspective of the social sciences and the humanities, research on lesbian culture continues to find the lesbian bar and schoolroom chronotopes definitive of lesbian existence across the twentieth century. While this is not the place to engage the specificities of that work, I do want to make a number of very general observations about that now substantial critical archive in order to demonstrate why the spatial chronotopes of bar and schoolroom have more recently been displaced by the apartment as the premiere cultural location for the lesbian story. The lesbian bar chronotope tends to appear with most authority in lesbian ethnography, particularly that represented by the oral history projects of Madeleine D. Davis, Elizabeth Lapovsky Kennedy, and Esther Newton.[19] While it has recently been picked up as a figure in cinema studies in the work of Kelly Hankin, her disciplinary interest in the screen representation of lesbian bar space manifests strong ethnographic and historicizing impulses.[20] The schoolroom chronotope, on the other hand, appears with more regularity in critical discussion of literary or cinematic fictions most of which steer away from real-life scenarios, preferring highly formalist interpretations of the lesbian identifications facilitated by pedagogical dynamics.[21] The fora in which the nonfictional schoolroom appears as an actual site of homosexual identity formation tend to be those that engage the topic of sex education or argue for the presence of lesbian and gay teachers as positive role models for proto-gay youth.

This ethnographic/formalist, real world/fictional world distinction whereby the bar emerges as the historical site of lesbian experience beside which the lesbian schoolroom can seem almost a site of collective fantasy is, however, reversed when we consider the extreme forms of the bar and schoolroom motifs: the women's prison and the women's college. In comparison to the historically documented lesbian bar, to which it exists on a metaphorical if not actual continuum, the women's prison appears in lesbian culture more often as a fictionalized venue. While we might expect this site to feature in midcentury lesbian-themed pulp fiction, the women's prison and its lesbian subtext is so prevalent in mainstream culture that it amounts to a film and television subgenre in its own right extending from B-movie classic *Caged* (John Cromwell, 1950) and the perpetually rerun Australian soap *Prisoner* (Grundy Organisation, 1979–1986) to the British drama series *Bad Girls* (Shed Productions, 1999–2006).[22] While the women-in-prison subgenre has recently been embraced alongside other exploitation and pulp genres as contributing to the history of lesbian representation, those social science studies that concern themselves with the lives and sexual practices of female prison inmates or sex workers have tended to proceed from

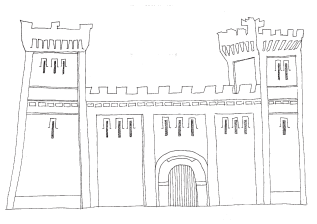
outside lesbian culture.[23] Similarly, although the lesbian schoolroom is a primarily imagined site, its extreme version, the women's college, is more often the subject of lesbian ethnographic inquiry. While the link between lesbianism and further education has been fictionalized in a number of media, the women's college is most thoroughly associated with Lillian Faderman's historical reconstruction of the homophile environment of the turn-of-the-century residential colleges such as Bryn Mawr and Vassar.[24] Like her earlier work on the nineteenth-century cult of female friendship, *Odd Girls and Twilight Lovers* stresses structures of social and affective affiliation, including professional affiliation to the institution itself, over sexual engagements between women.[25] Faderman's historical work nonetheless names women who identified as lesbian and attests to the longevity and social impact of their relationships and feminist politics. Faderman's biographical focus and real-world orientation thus marks the furthest point away from those women's prison fictions which demonstrate not lesbian social identity but a highly fantasized discourse of sexual acts where the prison environment is on its own enough to drive any woman to lesbianism or make her vulnerable to lesbian assault.[26]

Representing these tendencies diagrammatically gives a clearer sense of the multiple connections, both real and imagined, between these four lesbian chronotopes: the bar, the schoolroom, the college, and the prison. Bringing together concrete and fictionalized spaces, real and imaginary lives, the strong interconnecting axes between the four cornerstone sites reveal the overall complexity of the lesbian spatial assemblage. The diagram divides into two halves across the invisible line of cultural legitimation. On the one side, the bar and prison are linked on a scale of cultural decline that associates lesbian sexuality with clandestine activities that slide toward the criminal. On the other side, the schoolroom and college are linked on a scale of lesbian cultural improvement wherein lesbian sexuality is regarded as fully consistent with other culturally sanctioned aims such as education and upward class mobility. Within each scale the first or upper term is the more inclusive since any woman can enter a bar just as attendance at some kind of schoolroom is compulsory for all girls. The second or lower term operates as the more exclusive underside of the first: only some women spend time in prison just as only some women matriculate from school to college. Thus, while we anticipate a high degree of overlap between the first set of terms, bar and school, the second two terms, prison and college, are more strongly marked by their noncorrespondence. Put another way, the women who go to lesbian bars have all been schoolgirls at one time, but the women that go to prison and those that go to college are regrettably almost entirely separate constituencies.

This vertical splitting of the lesbian map into low-cultural and high-cultural left–right hemispheres is reinforced by the upper and lower horizontal axes, which also keep the two halves of the diagram from collapsing


Bar

Schoolroom



Prison

College

in on each other. These axes represent two influential but alternate understandings of lesbian sexuality. At the top of the diagram the bar and the schoolroom represent distant markers on the lesbian continuum model that nonetheless draws a connection between sexualized relationships among women, such as those foregrounded in the lesbian bar, with the nonsexualized but highly eroticized relationships of the schoolroom.[27] At the bottom of the diagram the prison and the college are similarly arrayed at opposite ends of a Foucauldian model of sexuality whereby the prison site represents the cultural longevity of a discourse of sexual acts against a counterdiscourse of sexual identity, which has its spatial match in the women's college that provides a sexually hospitable environment for the lesbian personality. But, if first impressions suggest that the bar/prison and schoolroom/college axes are fundamentally parallel with little possibility of material or metaphorical crossover between the two sides of this diagram, this impression is quickly dispelled as other diagonal axes are drawn between these cornerstone spaces. First, there is the double-crossing relation outlined whereby the prison and schoolroom are connected as the most fully fictionalized sites of lesbian possibility and the bar and college are connected as material sites of ethnographic exploration. This catachrestic action draws together sites that might be assumed to stand furthest apart but which on reflection reveal highly suggestive commonalities. For instance, the prison and the schoolroom often represent classically opposed states of corruption and innocence but in this assemblage

they have more in common narratively speaking as dual sites or staging posts of lesbian initiation—one via sexual acts, the other via structures of identification.[28] Likewise, the bar and college might be assumed to stand at greatest distance to each other as the respective sites of working-class and middle-class lesbian culture but through the ethnographic impulse they are connected historically in relation to the trope of the sexual closet. The highly gendered butch-femme culture of the midcentury lesbian bar and the passing culture of female friendship associated with the women's college are each defined in relation to the visibility or invisibility of the sexual identity they reference, which is perhaps opposite for each: the bar making highly visible the sexual connection between women who love each other; the college manifestly building social and professional relationships between the same.

I map these connections not to adjudicate between them but to draw attention to how this highly complex lesbian spatial assemblage in effect maximizes the number of imaginative and material access points to a sexual/cultural matrix that is anything but stable.[29] The very instability of the assemblage produces several standoff effects that can be traced in critical and political debates about lesbian sexual and social identity. One of these is the continued association of outlaw sex with lesbian subcultural affiliation and the glamorized sites of the sexual underworld, and the counterpart association of vanilla sex with the material sites of a culturally aspirant and domestic lesbian culture.[30] Most famously evidenced in the feminist sex wars of the 1980s, this effect is also evident in more recent debates on public sex culture which tend to reproduce the same categorical standoff though in updated terms: on the one hand, queer sexual performativity is associated with radical urban subcultures and, on the other, lesbian sexual monogamy, if not monotony, is linked to suburban conformity and the socioeconomic dictates of home-owning and child-raising.[31] That said, the best recent work on lesbian culture does not accept the hard-and-fast validity of these ideological standoffs but demonstrates the capacity to respecify the sexual and political coordinates of traditional lesbian chronotopes and identify others that shape contemporary lesbian existence and its relation to private and public, political and intimate spheres.[32]

This tension between a lesbian nostalgia for an outlaw sexuality and an equally strong drive toward social aspiration, evident since the founding of the Daughters of Bilitis in 1955 and recharged by the political gains of gay liberation, suggests a number of reasons why a new chronotope for the lesbian story might emerge at the end of the 1960s. With the historical intersection of post-Stonewall gay activism and second-wave feminism, the social and political landscape on which lesbian culture is sited is suddenly expanded and diversified. Now obliged to come out, the new compulsion towards noncloseted forms of social interaction in both the straight workplace and gay and lesbian leisure activities lessens the importance of bars as primary shapers of lesbian sexual styles, just as

it multiplies possibilities for lesbian identificatory patterning beyond the pedagogic realm. The apartment topos detected in the lesbian-themed films that comprise this study reflect, among other things, the socially aspirant ambitions of post-Stonewall lesbian life. No longer confined to the clandestine space of the lesbian bar or the closeted space of the schoolroom, the lesbian apartment assists the possibility of an out lesbian life that is not limited to a subcultural or institutional environment but avails itself of the peculiarly hybridized nature of multiple-dwelling space. As the traditional domain of the bachelor and bachelorette, the apartment indexes the widest horizon of sexual singleness and adventure just as its peculiar body-corporate spaces (foyers, stairwells, corridors, laundries) compromise the in–out logics of the closet and make sexual discretion a negotiated condition of the residential lease for every occupant, not just the members of a pathologized subclass.[33] Neither entirely private nor entirely public, the apartment house bridges or confounds a number of oppositions that the schoolroom and bar chronotopes tend to keep separate: privacy and publicity, domesticity and urbanity, innocence and corruption, work and leisure.

For this reason, analyzing the apartment chronotope as it appears in five post-Production Code narrative films aids reflection on the extraordinary transformation in lesbian life worlds from the 1960s to 1990s. No matter the abusive, psychologically arrested, pathological or homicidal lesbian characters the films project, these five lesbian apartment stories help achieve—albeit in the conflicted way that popular culture always achieves its social advances—the new social landscape of which we real-world lesbians are now the beneficiaries. Behind the hysteria and violence, these films depict some of the things that many of us work hard to attain; for instance, a seamlessness between a lesbian homelife and a lesbian work life, unthinkable in the 1970s outside women's collectives and a handful of creative industries. It is hardly by chance that several of the female protagonists in the films under discussion work in television and film (June Buckridge in *The Killing of Sister George* and Betty Elms in *Mulholland Drive*) or the world of fashion (the eponymous Petra von Kant and Allie Jones in *Single White Female*).[34] Furthermore, the lesbian cultural shift away from the collective houses and womyn's land communities of the 1970s and early 1980s to the single-family dwellings that many lesbian couples now occupy as, in New Zealand law at least, de facto relationship property, might redouble our imaginative (even compensatory) investment in spaces, such as the apartment, which are less well aligned to heteronormative models of capitalist accumulation. Last, at a point in lesbian history when female homosexuality no longer relieves a woman of maternal expectation, the renewed appeal of the apartment chronotope as a child-unfriendly space fundamentally at odds with the reproductive narrative could never be overestimated.[35]

The apartment eclipses the schoolroom and the bar as the privileged spatial marker of lesbian possibility because it can encompass both the

anxieties and the aspirations of post-Stonewall lesbian culture, retaining the sexual charge of the lesbian underworld and making it consistent with social, material, and professional advancement. No longer is the life trajectory of the lesbian reduced to the mutually exclusive pathways represented by the bar and schoolroom: the nonproductive, wasteful time of the bar versus the academically applied or salaried time of the semester; sex as butch-femme role-play or sex as pedagogy; subcultural kudos or cultural capital. In the accommodating environs of the cinematic apartment post-1968, the lesbian can have it all. More than this even, the apartment reveals the key to the perennial problem of lesbian visibility. First appearing as the backdrop to the notorious sex scene that is the plot climax of Robert Aldrich's *Sister George*, the lesbian apartment foregrounds the relation between female sexuality and technologies of visual representation. By the moment of David Lynch's *Mulholland Drive,* the apartment chronotope is so well developed that it can turn the sexual story inside out, providing the setting for visually explicit sexual scenes between women in a film that systematically withholds lesbian narrative continuity. Lynch's decision to make both apartment space and lesbianism integral to his postmodern allegory of Hollywood is far from random and has everything to do with the history of the Production Code and its historical breaking of any straightforward connection between homosexuality and narrative. As I demonstrate in the following chapter, it is this long-standing rupture between sexuality and story that determines the ongoing importance of cinematic space in post-Code films that deal directly with the subject of lesbianism.

# 2 Lesbian Representation and Cinematic Space
## *The Children's Hour*

One of the advantages the apartment chronotope offers anyone interested in the cultural history of lesbianism is the capacity to configure sexuality and space as two interlinked representational systems. Many sociological interrogations of gay and lesbian sexual space continue to think of the encounter between homosexuality and space in a fairly one-dimensional way insofar as homosexuality is assumed to precede social space, which it then encounters to either positive or negative effect.[1] Film theory's account of sexual identity as the product of the representational system of gender, even when it presumes a heterosexual framework, nonetheless promotes a far less literal understanding of the relation between sexuality and space, just as it has always understood that space includes aesthetic, temporal, and narrative aspects. Analyzing the lesbian cinematic chronotope allows us to interrogate the relation between these two representational systems, the system of sexuality and the system of space, in ways that will ultimately extend the sociological account of cultural space and the variant sexualities it enables.

Let me provide one example that supports this claim. The relationship between sexuality and space has recently received much critical attention within the expanded field that comprises contemporary sexuality studies. Scholars working across a wide range of disciplines from architectural theory to social history, literary studies to human geography, political theory to postcolonial studies, have considered how, throughout the twentieth century, the terms governing the emergence of modern sexuality—and in particular homosexuality—are frequently bound up with spatial formations of public and private culture. Despite its disciplinary differences, most of this work shares the recognition that far from enjoying a logical relation to social space, homosexuality has a fraught relation to both the ordinary and intimate locations of daily life such as the workplace, the home, or the bedroom, and the more ideologically charged sites of imagined collective belonging: the heartland, the city, the nation.[2] In all these locations heterosexuality has operated as the sexual default setting, endlessly reflected in the blueprints of dwellings and their ornamentation, in the physical articulation of the spaces of sociability, work, and commerce,

and in the political discourse that articulates the parameters of the public sphere. Completely unremarked, heterosexuality is so hardwired into the spatial practices of modern life that the appearance of any other sexuality on the premises is exceptional if not disruptive. Surrounded by an everyday architecture that on the surface appears sexually neutral, an all but invisible homosexuality has by corollary been forced to negotiate its clandestine occupancy of these spaces, or to take up cautious residence in other, socially discredited, locations.

Unsurprisingly, therefore, any number of scholars are now engaged in compiling a spatial history of homosexuality in the twentieth century that focuses on precisely these oppositional strategies of homosexual occupancy and the semipublic sexual traditions they generate around such loci as the street, the bar, and the bathhouse.[3] Demonstrating the relation between an evolving public sex culture and the emergence of gay and lesbian identities, these spatial histories frequently make an explicit or implicit argument for the ongoing importance of homosexual claims on public space to the continued evolution of sexual politics.[4] Precisely because this political argument has such contemporary sway, there is much less critical interest in the equally rich history of gay and lesbian domesticity and a tendency to assume that the spatial practices associated with the private space of the homosexual home are, and always have been, more socially and sexually conservative than public forms of homosexual sex. It seems to me that this assumption against sexual domesticity has particular consequences for constructing the history of lesbianism in the twentieth century not least because private domestic culture has always been associated with both femininity and an ideology of sexual restraint, the one frequently held responsible for the other. In its drive to make clear its status as a sexual history rather than a history of, say, domestic cohabitation, contemporary lesbian criticism is predisposed to turn against the private sphere as the realm of female intimacy and seek out those expressions of lesbian conduct that announce themselves in public sites.[5] As a result of these impulses within gay and lesbian history and criticism, thinking about homosexuality and space tends to concentrate on public sex culture and advances, even in its lesbian iterations, gay male sexual practice as the paradigmatic model for the homosexual occupancy of social space. This provides yet another incentive for considering the cinematic apartment's role in figuring lesbian sexual possibility as intimately connected to domestic rather than public space.

In the introduction I have invoked the figure of the chronotope to argue that cinema always tells its story spatially. In the chapters that follow I consider a highly selective range of post-Production Code films that tell sexual, specifically lesbian, stories in spatial terms. Excluding a far larger archive of lesbian-themed films, including commercial and experimental films made by lesbians, these five apartment films permit me to annex the discussion of cinematic technique to a parallel investigation of homosexual

space and its differential demarcation as lesbian or gay. But to establish that the emergence of the lesbian apartment chronotope is culturally and industrially symptomatic rather than arbitrarily dependent on my process of selection, I first turn to William Wyler's *The Children's Hour* (1961). Often named alongside Otto Preminger's gay-themed *Advise and Consent* (1962) as one of the two films that precipitated the end of the Production Code ban on the representation of sex perversion, *The Children's Hour* lends itself to a reconsideration of Production Code aesthetics and how they pertain to lesbian representation.[6] Already enshrined in both popular and academic histories of Hollywood's Production Code as a limit case example, *The Children's Hour* when read spatially rather than thematically reveals the continued dependence of lesbian representation on cinematic form and style rather than character and plot. Despite its apparently progressive inclusion of lesbian content, Wyler's film does not markedly break with the codes that still govern the representation of homosexual material on screen, even though the contemporary industry recognizes that those codes are utterly out of step with the social mores of the time. If I make this argument via a close formalist reading of Wyler's film that should not obscure the larger point that the terms by which lesbianism plays out on screen from the 1960s forward are almost completely consistent with the terms set across the previous decades. To understand the implications of this voluntary anachronism with regard to female sex perversion, we should first consider two dovetailing accounts of Production Code aesthetics and their capacity to sustain homosexual inflection, which have recently emerged in gay and lesbian studies.

Perhaps the singularly most influential essay on homosexual representation in classical cinema published in the 1990s was D. A. Miller's "Anal *Rope*" with its high-octane argument about the constitutive function of suspicion in producing sexual knowledge within Hollywood narrative film and the paradigm of connotative excess through which Production Code–approved films disseminate gay content across a representational field otherwise exclusively in sway to heterosexuality.[7] Miller's argument that sexual connotation in the Code-approved film text is double-edged insofar as it simultaneously denies homosexuality while raising its suspicion everywhere is first and foremost derived from a highly imaginative, unpredictably inventive reading of a single canonical text, Alfred Hitchcock's *Rope* (1948). This point is important because Miller's argument about connotation is now so widely dissipated that it is possible to forget that it is firmly anchored in a close reading of a specific film and the particular historical and aesthetic conditions that produced it, all of which are much less standardized than the all-purpose term "Production Code" indicates.[8] If this tendency to abstract a generalizable argument from a reading of a specific film and apply it to other films loosely governed by the three-decade-long term of the MPPDA Production Code is hardly unusual, what is remarkable is that this tendency goes hand in hand with a critical refusal to take

up Miller's equally extractable argument about psychoanalytically derived film theory and its inscription of a heterosexist teleology of sexual difference based in the fetishistic disavowal of phallic castration. Although it is inscribed in his deliberately provocative title, Miller's insistence on the pertinence of anality for rethinking the formal experiment of *Rope* and its significance as a counter to dominant apparatus-based theories of gender and sexual differentiation is largely ignored by those next-generation critics who nonetheless lift wholesale his argument about connotative excess and apply it to other Production Code era films that likewise present homosexuality under erasure.[9]

I draw attention to these aspects of Miller's argument in order to highlight their irreducible formalist specificity and to check the critical impulse to transfer his insights to other texts that are only loosely speaking parallel. The wholesale application of a general theory of homosexual connotation runs the risk of collapsing classical film into a homophobic apparatus whose cinematic procedures (sexual innuendo at the level of dialogue and image) and narrative outcomes (heterosexual closure, however implausible) are known from the outset. Insofar as this leaves intact the theoretical oppositions that have underwritten film studies since its emergence as a discipline in the 1970s (story/image; masculinity/femininity; subject/object; visibility/invisibility; heterosexuality/homosexuality) it has little correspondence with Miller's project of dismantling a too-readily accepted critical superstructure that reinforces the heterosexist ideology of mainstream cinema while seeming to challenge it. Furthermore, a general theory of homosexual connotation also runs the risk of erasing the distinction between the representational techniques that frame male homosexuality and those that frame lesbianism on the classical Hollywood screen.

It hardly needs stating that the history of female homosexuality and male homosexuality are not the same. This is as true of gay and lesbian representation in popular culture and film as it is of other aspects of their parallel evolutions. In her book-length discussion of classic Hollywood film and lesbian representability, Patricia White argues that Production Code censorship is not a stable and second-guessable phenomenon but a culturally embedded practice that generates its particular effects in relation to both specific narrative texts and the wider social context in which they are produced and consumed. It follows that the prohibition against "sex perversion," the generic term used in the Code precepts which refers to not just gay and lesbian content but any departure from an assumed sexual norm, is not consistent in its representational effects but highly idiosyncratic, particularly in the differential way it handles gay and lesbian content. Insofar as sex perversion was banned from filmic representation by the letter of the Production Code, White accepts that lesbianism, like male homosexuality, never straightforwardly appears in classical Hollywood cinema. She goes on to argue, however, that the prohibition against lesbian representation in classical film produces a paradox whereby an erotic and social identity

that is unable to appear on screen on its own terms is nonetheless registered and legitimated as a possibility for women through certain discursive effects, both filmic and spectatorial, which are concentrated in the genre of the women's film. "The woman's picture's scenarios of secret suffering, anonymous desire, immediate recognition, forbidden physicality—of perversion and excess," White argues, "have definite queer appeal."[10] Developing across the decades of the Code's application, the formal characteristics of the women's film, far from denying lesbian possibilities, support "visual and narrative codes that structure spectatorial 'inference' about the existence and force and significance of desire between women, in the movies and in the social formation."[11] Far from being a sexually repressive force, Hollywood's censorship system is, according to White, an exemplar of expressive power as defined by Michel Foucault: rather than silencing or rendering invisible dissident sexualities, the censorship Code actively produces perverse sexual effects across the representational field, effects that, in the case of lesbianism most particularly, are transferred from text to audience as a sexual ignorance rather than a sexual knowledge.

Although deeply indebted to D. A. Miller's argument about homosexual connotation in classical cinema, the originality of White's argument about spectatorial inference in Hollywood films subject to Production Code control is in the way that it accounts for the distinctiveness of lesbian representation rather than assuming gay and lesbian meanings are produced via exactly similar mechanisms of visual and verbal innuendo or stereotype. It is not without interest, however, that like her gay male predecessor, White arrives at her general theory of lesbian representation through the interpretation of a single film text and the various contextual pressures brought to bear on that text throughout its production process. Specifically, her argument that the Production Code's compulsory eradication of lesbian narrative content perversely enables a wider scale female-female erotic investment in the women's film proceeds from a discussion of William Wyler's *These Three* (1936), his first screen adaptation of Lillian Hellman's successful Broadway play of 1934, *The Children's Hour*.[12] It is worth tracing the steps of White's interpretation of *These Three* since Wyler's first filmed version of Hellman's play is as routinely credited with inaugurating the Production Code clampdown on lesbian content as his second version is credited with ending it.

Based, like *Rope*, on an historical event, Hellman's original dramatic plotline involves two young women, Karen Wright and Martha Dobie, both unmarried schoolteachers at a residential school for girls, whose reputations are ruined by the malicious actions of one of their young students who reports their apparent sexual intimacy to her grandmother, the socially powerful patron of the school. Since the Production Code officials that oversaw the development of the Goldwyn-United script insisted on the removal of the play's lesbian content, the story underwent an apparent heterosexualization as it crossed from one medium to another.[13] In the

script Wyler eventually directed, the sexually volatile relationship between the two women is triangulated and ostensibly neutralized through a new emphasis on the male figure of Dr. Joe Cardin who as one woman's fiancé becomes the object of the other's jealousy. Observed by the young schoolgirl and only half-understood, this conflicted situation is incoherently relayed to her upper-class guardian in whose far more sophisticated mind it takes on the clear lines of an illicit affair. Socially if not sexually naïve, Joe and the two young schoolteachers are ill equipped to defend themselves against the gossip and rumor that subsequently escalates around the innocent threesome they form. The burden of compulsory heterosexualization is carried in the Code-approved film less by Joe (Joel McCrea), whose attractiveness to women is such a foregone conclusion that it is all but removed from the realm of narrative interest, than by Martha (Miriam Hopkins), whose affective alliance with Karen (Merle Oberon) is only partially annulled by the jealousy required of her by the Production Code office. Not only does Martha's envy of Karen and Joe's relationship remain sexually ambiguous insofar as her friendship with Karen achieves as much diegetic representation as her desire for Joe, but the gynocentric relations associated with the girls' school in which the story is set keep asserting precedence over the heterosexual love plot which should, if the Code were the repressive apparatus it is sometimes presumed to be, secure their narrative extinction. While telling the mandated story of femininity's maturation via heterosexual romance, *These Three* also attests to the intensity and resilience of relations between women (not just mature friends such as Karen and Martha but also immature schoolgirls, aunts and nieces, wards and guardians, students and teachers) all of which relations—affectionate or adversarial, candid or manipulative—are grounded in the transference of a specifically sexual knowledge, however little understood, from one woman to the next. Indeed, sexual knowledge being little understood seems to be a requirement of the Production Code, a condition female melodrama is more than able to meet as it puts into circulation multiple variants of same-sex affiliation and desire.

If, as White demonstrates, the effect of the Code-mandated rescripting of Hellman's play is hardly the erasure of lesbianism we associate with censorship regimes neither is it the thickening of suspicion that a theory of homosexual connotation leads us to expect. In supposedly wresting the story away from the original lesbian plotline and filling it with generic material consistent with the standard content of the women's film (the intergenerational tribulations of femininity and its difficult fulfillment in heterosexual romantic love), *These Three* more effectively delivers a narrative structure that impels its female viewers to identify with forms of female desire (the obscure intensities of companionate friendship, the schoolgirl crush, the fervent bullying, and submissiveness that seems part and parcel of school-life and on which the plot heavily depends) that cut across socially inscribed patterns of heterosexual identification while still

leaving them intact.[14] Thus White can authoritatively conclude that *These Three* inaugurates the classical phenomenon whereby lesbian affective content passes within a storyworld everywhere coded as straight. In White's larger account of this historical phenomenon, the compulsory censorship of sexual perversion and the subsequent diffusion of lesbian affect across the generic elements of the women's film makes endemic to the Hollywood melodrama a female cinephilia that is homoerotic in cast and supported by any number of textual and extratextual elements including narrative subtext, spectatorial fantasy, and star intertextuality. Rather than concentrating on lesbian-like characters who must carry unaided the largely negative burden of homosexual connotation within particular film texts—the starting point for Vito Russo's discussion of butch lesbian types in Hollywood film—White's discussion of lesbian representation in the women's film (evocatively rechristened "femme films") is broader, taking in generic convention, melodramatic form, the female star image, and the less monolithic spectatorial identifications this cinematic nexus supports.[15] In her emphasis on sexual spectatorship over sexual specification, White aligns herself with a number of critics, including Richard Dyer, Jackie Stacey, Judith Mayne, and Brett Farmer, who attest to the capacity of classical cinema to sustain forms of male and female pleasure that exceed the heterosexual mandate of the industrial apparatus.[16]

The importance of White's theory of lesbian representation is, however, not exhausted by its application to classical Hollywood cinema and, in the remainder of this chapter, I sketch out its relevance to a rethinking of lesbian representation in post–Production Code film. In short, I will argue that lesbian representation after the repeal of the MPPDA Code does not unfold outside the representational double binds established under its order but is in many ways continuous with them. To make this argument I turn to Wyler's second film adaptation of Hellman's *The Children's Hour*, a project that coincides with the apparent dismantling of the Production Code system at the beginning of the 1960s. Appearing twenty-five years after *These Three*, Wyler's second version of *The Children's Hour* differed from his first in retaining both the title of the original Broadway play and, in defiance of the still-standing Code proscription against the inclusion of sex perversion, its lesbian content.[17] When Wyler announced his decision to remake Hellman's play as a film about two women accused of unnatural relations, the ban on representing sex perversion was the sole remaining prohibition specified in the Production Code under which Hollywood voluntarily operated. Five years earlier in 1956, the Production Code office rescinded the prohibitions against the portrayal of prostitution, miscegenation, and the use of narcotics in motion pictures in favor of an assessment method that considered the manner in which socially subversive subject matter was treated within a particular film. In October 1961, in response to pressure from Hollywood producers including the Mirisch brothers who were coproducing *The Children's Hour*, the MPPDA officially announced

that, "In keeping with the culture, the mores and the values of our time, homosexuality and other sexual aberrations may now be treated with care, discretion and restraint."[18] Released a number of weeks before this liberal dispensation came into effect and therefore distributed without Code approval, Wyler's second telling of this particular lesbian story nonetheless ushers in the final phase of the Production Code era which ran until 1968 when the film industry adopted the "alphabet soup" rating system in which completed films were classified pre-distribution by an externally administered censorship board rather than draft scripts repeatedly being put through an internal process of Code review throughout the development and production phase.[19]

Set in an exclusive girls' academy in conservative small-town America, Wyler's 1961 film continues to triangulate the relationship between the two women through the character of Dr. Joe Cardin. Entirely absent from the historical events on which Hellman's play is based—a sexual scandal raised by a young girl's report about the behavior of two young teachers in an Edinburgh boarding school in 1810—Joe's role in the second film is as crucial as it was in the first, though not in the least similar.[20] If in *These Three* Joe is necessary to the heterosexual cover story that maintains lesbianism as the inadmissible subtext of the film, in *The Children's Hour* Joe, and the heterosexuality he represents, is the first thing narratively bypassed when lesbianism loses its conventional status as a carefully maintained ignorance and enters the diegesis as a capacity associated, at least potentially, with all women. In White's account of *These Three* the story of female homosexuality is the hidden underside of cinematic, particularly melodramatic, heterosexuality but, as I will demonstrate, in Wyler's second, more faithful version of Hellman's script these two sexual formations, heterosexuality and lesbianism, are revealed to be fundamentally incompatible within the contemporary storyworld.

Affianced to Karen (a razor-thin Audrey Hepburn on whom even the practical clothes of the working woman appear stylish), the Joe of 1961 (James Garner) is unable to stand outside the circuits of slander that imbue her relationship with Martha (a short-haired Shirley MacLaine) with a sexual meaning no less communicable for going unspoken throughout most of *The Children's Hour*.[21] In the absence of any denotative reference to lesbianism, the film takes as its initial theme the off-the-record spread of tacit knowledges that are harder to confront than direct accusations of sexual misconduct. As many critical discussions note, *The Children's Hour* stages many of its most homophobic effects around the circulation of a single word, "unnatural," which originates with Martha's ditzy, theatrical aunt, Lily Mortar (Miriam Hopkins), who, insofar as she fails to turn up at the libel case the two women instigate in an attempt to clear their names, carries at least some of the blame the film apportions for the situation the teachers find themselves in.[22] Overheard by Mary Tilford (Karen Balkin), a schoolgirl who, as a liar and a nocturnal reader of prohibited—possibly

erotic—books, understands better than her teachers that the value of words is less in their truth than in their effects, "unnatural" takes on a life of its own when repeated on her childish lips.[23] The sexual relations the two women are implicitly accused of by the child's guardian remain beyond interrogation in the film, a fact that is only incidentally related to Wyler's decision to drop the court scene from his final edit.[24] The sexually maligned schoolteachers, as D. A. Miller might have predicted, never get their day in court because, far from hampering the advance of sexual scandal, the mere suggestion of female deviance proves a more effective way of disseminating perverse knowledge than calling lesbianism by its name.

Yet why, we must ask, should this connotative effect be brought into play in relation to female homosexuality at the period of the MPPDA Production Code's weakening rather than across the decades of its tighter jurisdiction? This apparent contradiction is worth pursuing since it allows us to keep a critical distance from the theme of sexual connotation which, far from marking the radical edge of sexual representation circa 1961, makes it appear to at least one contemporary reviewer a "cultural antique."[25] Released in Britain under the title *The Loudest Whisper*, Wyler's film posts the soon to be outdated logics of sexual connotation so blatantly they scarcely need critical ratification.[26] No surprise, then, that the explicit avowal of lesbianism remains forensically inadmissible in a film that represents the transmission of sexual hearsay through visual exchanges that command more suggestive force for remaining out of earshot: Mary whispers to her grandmother Mrs. Tilford (Fay Bainter) things she cannot say out loud; a concerned father, removing his vulnerable daughter from the schoolhouse, finally tells Karen what it is the two women have been accused of, a revelation all the more compelling for remaining completely unheard. Each disclosure, one observed through the soundproof glass of Mrs. Tilford's limousine, the other in long shot through the filter of a screen door, is virtually contentless but the melodramatic framing underscores how—in both the small-minded community in which the story is set and the thematic force field of the film—sexual connotation works overtime spreading the suspicion of homosexuality.

Instead of looking beyond the connotative logic of sexual knowledge to detect any advance in homosexual representation *The Children's Hour* might secure, the secondary literature condemns that logic as homophobic, a position that seems entirely consistent with the liberal stance that in the first place promoted the film as a final challenge to the Production Code's rule. Julia Erhart, for instance, in an essay that explores the necessarily invisible nature of lesbianism within the film gives much critical attention to the connotation of female-female desire conveyed by the kiss Hepburn gives MacLaine after telling her she and Joe have set the date for their marriage. Subjectively indexed to the child's point of view, the lesbian kiss is "bracketed by two cutaways to Mary's face in close-up, dramatically shadowed in the dark across the hallway, staring

intently into the camera, in what we take to be the direction of Martha's room."[27] Although the viewer understands the consolatory nature of the kiss transacted between the two women, the shot sequence makes sure we also understand the schoolgirl mistakes it for something else. This scene, argues Erhart, inaugurates the fantasy of lesbian desire, a fantasy that originates in the perspective of the polymorphously perverse child but, once "voiced aloud and symbolically transmitted" abroad, provides "the ground by which Martha's interpretation of herself as a lesbian subject is able to come into being."[28] As she concludes, female homosexuality "is never corroborated in the realm of the visible: as an effect of discursive production, of gossip, lies, and rumor, Martha's 'lesbianism' . . . is shown to be contingent upon its diegetic uncertainty, its invisibility."[29] While it is impossible to disagree with Erhart's emphasis on this connotative logic or the way in which the "late-Code-specific signifying configurations" of Wyler's film establish lesbianism everywhere except in character, I am less persuaded that character is where lesbian representation ought to be.[30] In Erhart's account it is an insufficiency of Wyler's film that it "displays profoundly little interest in lesbianism *per se*, instead it obsesses over the problem of identifying lesbians. In so doing, *The Children's Hour* offers a lesson in reading rather than being; lesbianism is less an identity or set of practices to be explored than a condition to be apprehended."[31] While the "accusation of lesbianism" drives the narrative forward, "knowledge of or about lesbianism" is not the destination to which the plot delivers us but its "ever-vanishing *mise-en-abyme*."[32] Yet, according to Erhart, "in the gap opened by the accusation, in the distance between rumor and fantasy . . . arises the opportunity for new knowledges to form, and new subjects to come into being."[33] The historical implication of Erhart's argument is that these new sexual knowledges and experiential subjectivities will come into the forefront of representation after the final repeal of the MPPDA ban on gay and lesbian denotation. That, indeed, is the founding presumption of most readings of post–Production Code films which, it seems to me, collude with the idea that the designation of certain characters as homosexual is no longer permissible but mandatory.

Jennifer A. Rich's discussion of the film similarly engages with the connotative–denotative standoff embedded in *The Children's Hour* but does so in order to promote an almost diametrically opposed point to Erhart's. "The film's greatest critical potential," insists Rich, "comes not from the inclusion and introduction of a lesbian character, but from its consideration of the effects of social categorizations of sexual behavior and identity, and the inevitable social exclusions that result from such categorizations." Radically opposed to denotation, Rich concentrates on Karen Wright as a character who "both problematizes such identificatory imperatives and, in so doing, reveals the inherent instability of sexual identity."[34] Caught in a categorical seam between Martha and Joe, Karen is defined by "two identificatory double negatives" being both "not-not

lesbian" through the accusation that connotes her as sexually deviant in the eyes of the local community and "not-not heterosexual" through her relationship with Joe.[35] After her friend's suicide, Karen rejects the social order that places her in this position of contingency only to take it up more willfully in the final scene of the film where she fails to reconcile with Joe: "Whether lesbian or not, whether in love with Martha or not, Karen clearly positions herself as a 'lesbian,' with all the connotations that we have delineated."[36] Wyler's connotation of the lesbian, a connotation that Karen can finally be said to go along with, thus allows Rich to instate *The Children's Hour* within a "postmodern epistemology" in which "all [sexual] categories are made to be unknowable because they are always-already deconstructed."[37]

Whereas Erhart objects to the film's specification of the lesbian as a conundrum to be solved instead of a subjectivity to be explored, Rich celebrates the film's capacity to produce lesbianism as a "definitional instability" that reveals the impossibility of any sexual identity unmarked by its others.[38] Diametrically opposed over the issue of lesbian identity though they may be, these identitarian and non-identitarian alternatives both rise to the bait laid down by the film: connotation. Yet, given the absence of verbal denotation of lesbianism within the diegesis let alone anything as tasteless as visual proof of lesbianism, it is hardly surprising that the final effect of sexual slander in Wyler's mainstream film is less the establishment of sexual guilt or impropriety than the undermining of any certainty about female sexual orientation, irrespective of lesbian acts indulged or foresworn. Under the order of sexual connotation, we might conclude, it hardly matters if women are one thing or another. Perhaps this is why the matronly Mrs. Tilford warns Karen and Martha when they finally confront her that there is no satisfaction to be found in court. Refusing to withdraw her accusation, Mrs. Tilford provides the key to understanding the film's simultaneous compliance with both a seemingly outmoded censorship system which precludes homosexual denotation and an apparently progressive representational regime which insists on it. "Clean your house," she instructs the two women in disgust, knowing that this sexual task is harder if not impossible to achieve when your house is a girl's boarding school whose very name announces female-female bonding as its pedagogic mission: "The Wright-Dobie School for Girls." Institutionally robust enough to withstand even Mrs. Tilford's homophobic bullying, Wyler's cinematic schoolhouse marks an innovation in lesbian representation on screen insofar as it comprises the necessary setting, or chronotope, for a sexually explicit story that nonetheless acquiesces to Hollywood's new censorship parameters of "discretion and restraint."[39]

I am not the only one to note the crucial role of setting to the resolution of the lesbian plot in Wyler's remake. Commenting on the critical role played by the house in figuring the denotative possibilities of lesbianism, Rich argues that Karen must cross the threshold and leave the

house before a concerned father will tell her of the sexual accusation against her:

> It is as if the actual naming of lesbian sexuality cannot be uttered by a heterosexual male within the confines of a now "lesbianed" house. Karen thus is forced to straddle both worlds, becoming most explicitly lesbian to her spectators within the film and not-lesbian to the actual film audience. She is, at this moment, caught in the fissure that has been created between house, now a borderlands [*sic*] of "deviant" sexuality by virtue of its association with Karen and Martha, and the nondeviant, "outside" world. [40]

Where Rich pursues a deconstructive reading of the house in terms of lesbian nonidentity, I am more interested in why, at this point in film history, the lesbian habitat is necessarily a schoolhouse whose foundations are deeply sedimented in the almost outdated conventions of female domestic melodrama. Why, too, would Wyler decide that a seemingly contemporary mise-en-scène is best revealed through black-and-white film stock, as if the representation of lesbianism necessitated formal anachronism?[41]

In 1936, in Wyler's first version of the story, Karen and Martha renovate a fallen-down farmhouse into a schoolhouse with Joe's assistance, a wholesome endeavor that nonetheless lays out the triangular coordinates necessary for heterosexual jealousy to thrive. Living together though forced apart by their mutual interest in Joe, the two women set about teaching in what is also their home. In 1961, house and school are similarly indistinct. A letter Wyler wrote to Hellman shortly before she withdrew from the project reveals that the hybridized space of the schoolhouse scarcely needed invention: "We have found a good location for the school right here in the [San Fernando] Valley. I wish you would see it. It used to be a girls' private school and is perfect in appearance and we are designing interiors to fit it. We are starting 2 weeks of rehearsals in the real sets."[42] Whereas the 1936 house-cum-schoolroom is full of domestic ornaments and chintz, the 1961 schoolhouse is stripped of sentimental trappings so that the ostensibly innocent surrounds register as a false or distorted version of home. As Michael Anderegg writes,

> Wyler creates a *mise-en-scène* that reinforces the tale's atmosphere of deceit and lies, of menace disguised by seeming innocence. The art director, Fernando Carrere, and the cinematographer, Franz Planer, have built and photographed (in black and white) the sets to appear simultaneously genteel, domestic, and somewhat suffocating. The domesticity is, of course, fraudulent: Karen and Martha, along with the latter's loving aunt, are the "parents" of a group of seemingly well-behaved young girls (the Wright-Dobie school is, significantly, a converted house). The

> menace beneath this façade reveals itself in the low ceilings and arches that seem to entrap the characters within this artificial "home."[43]

In terms of location *The Children's Hour* all but restricts the three leads to the expansive interior of an oversized house in which domestic and institutional spaces constantly overlap.[44] Wyler's decision to frame the story within a single dominant location which determines all aspects of the lesbian story—the schoolhouse—is the real advance of the 1961 over the 1936 version, which moves the same key figures between sites that multiply in order to meet the demands of the increasingly heterosexual plot: the women's college, the Lancet railway station, the renovated farmhouse, the road in between, the milk bar and county fair in which Joe and Karen become intimate, Mrs. Tilford's mansion, the courtroom in which the libel case is heard, the hospital boardroom in which Joe is let go, the railway carriage in which Martha leaves town, the pupil's house to which she returns, and, almost arbitrarily, a Viennese coffee shop in which Karen is romantically reunited with her fiancé. So weakly embedded in the storyworld that it seems to flaunt its status as a set, the wheeled-in European location in which *These Three* ends also displays the faked quality of heterosexual closure demanded by the Production Code officials in the mid-1930s.[45] Twenty-five years later, however, relations between Karen and Martha are subjected to a more thorough cross-examination by being confined to the sexual architecture of the schoolhouse and exposed to mise-en-scène editing. Whereas the original film resolves its plot in Mrs. Tilford's mansion where Martha, without Karen, confronts the old lady with evidence that Mary has been lying, the remake hands this function over to the mother of the schoolgirl so that it can dramatically contain its female leads within the voluminous interior of the schoolhouse.

After their libel suit against Mrs. Tilford has been rejected, the movements of the two women are tellingly restricted to the schoolhouse and grounds. The one time they try and go for a walk they get no further than the front door before they see a pickup truck full of hoodlums staking out the school gates. Retreating back inside they then have to deal with the local delivery boy who invades the house in order to get a look at the two female perverts. When Joe joins them to announce he has sold his place and wants the two of them to accompany him to a new life in "farm country," Martha quickly withdraws deep into the scene before exiting a door into the offscreen space of the kitchen. Her removal conveniently focuses the action on the heterosexual couple left behind in a sitting room denuded of ornament and disconcertingly open to the adjacent classroom. The feminocentric space of the schoolroom is now revealed as one in which heterosexual doubts are impossible to allay. Mulling things over, Karen recognizes that there are no longer any straight answers to anything: "Every word has a new meaning: child, lover, friend, woman.

There aren't many safe words. Even marriage doesn't have the same meaning any more." With his grasp of heterosexual romance slipping away, Joe begins to question out loud Karen's putative innocence. "Is it? Was it ever?" he asks, in a series of broken-off inquiries that remain beside the point since heterosexual complacency has already been sacrificed to a spatial regime that doesn't so much turn one thing into another—his fiancée's heterosexuality into her lesbianism, for instance—as make it impossible to sustain such reassuring distinctions. Embracing each other beneath the illuminated lunette of the schoolhouse window in a pose as monumental as it is intimate, the straight couple breaks apart. Joe's departure from the frame exposes in deep shot rows of chairs in an empty classroom and this spatial revelation, far more than the dialogue that precedes it, makes clear that Joe is all that stands between Karen and a future as a spinster schoolmarm along with all the sexual ambiguity that job entails. In this schoolhouse setting the at-first cautious acknowledgment of lesbianism between the two heterosexual lovers (like the careful and discreet acknowledgment of lesbianism managed by Wyler's film more generally) steadily escalates into a generic inability to distinguish between female heterosexuality and female homosexuality, the immediate narrative effect of which is to make untenable the master-plot of marriage (and the drive to reproduction with which it is assumed to be cognate) so that the encounter between Karen and Joe can only end with the termination of their engagement and Joe's removal from the lesbian scene.[46]

With Joe and the conjugal prospects he embodies out of the picture and unable to return, *The Children's Hour* can only resolve its sexual narrative by turning the plot over to Martha, whose lesbian recognition is put in train, not by the circuits of sexual accusation and insinuation that the film so heavy-handedly foregrounds but by the subtle background mechanics of melodramatic space and form that are their real source. Amounting to a false climax, the scene between heterosexual lovers gives way to a more overwrought confrontation between Karen and Martha in which the two women take up positions within the same mise-en-scène used to frame the straight couple and embark on a similar process of cross-interrogation. When Karen reflects that "this isn't a new sin they say we've done. Other people haven't been destroyed by it," Martha picks up this line of thought as if she and Karen were still protected by the heterosexual promise lodged in Joe's presence: "They're the people who believe in it, who want it, who've chosen it for themselves. We aren't like that. That must be very different." Seated before a large mantelpiece—normally the centerpiece of family life—it seems the difference between straight girlfriends and lesbians gets sucked up the chimney in the sheer absence of a man. Drawn out of whatever closet the old Production Code provided her, Martha's subsequent confession is hardly necessary except that it puts in her mouth the marital vow it takes out of Joe's and reenacts the heterosexual annulment his departure represents: "But maybe I love you the way they say I loved

you. I don't know. *I do*. I do love you the way they say I do."[47] As if to make her sexual imposture of Joe visually as well as verbally manifest, the mise-en-scène—in a gesture as hysterical as anything Martha achieves—places between MacLaine and Hepburn a phallic fire iron silhouetted against the depthless black cavity of the fireplace.[48] The sexually explicit camerawork plays to the ostensibly outdated rules of the Production Code, graphically indexing something the diegesis never has to acknowledge explicitly, namely acts between women that no one within the world of the film ever doubts occur—not the elderly guardian or her childish ward, the middle-class parents or the wayward theatrical aunt, Joe's medical superiors or the completely unknown young men who come to stare at the sexual freaks.

This graphic setup is as good as it gets for lesbianism in *The Children's Hour*. Immediately interrupted by the arrival of Mrs. Tilford, the action shifts to the hallway. Newly convinced of Karen and Martha's sexual innocence, Mrs. Tilford's apology is too late to restore a truth now thoroughly disputed by the evidence of the mise-en-scène. All it can do is drive Martha from a scene that no longer provides any sexual cover. After she has closed the door on Mrs. Tilford and the offer of reparation she represents, Karen follows her friend upstairs to the bedroom that has previously functioned as the site of the single kiss the diegesis has afforded them. Far from providing the space of sexual consummation, the bedroom represents the removal of female desire from the more slippery terrain of the schoolroom below. Relocated upstairs, Karen enters the bedroom to find Martha lying on the window seat. As Karen stands in the open doorway, the space between the two women is breached only by the double graduation photograph that frames the two of them in the romanticized space of the women's college where sexual innocence is at less of a premium than the girl's boarding school.[49] A series of crosscuts follow in which Hepburn casts doe-eyed looks at MacLaine who refuses to catch her eye as if yielding to the rules of montage might lead to other, more sexual, things. By this primarily spatial means the camera registers Karen's sexual about-turn, her accommodation of lesbian possibility, before it is confirmed in the verbal invitation she extends Martha to leave with her and begin again "some place" else.

Explicitness of this second order—that is, of the unreliable order of sexual speech—is quickly closed down within the scene in favor of further spatial thematics. "Let's talk about it tomorrow," says Martha who then feigns sleep until she hears Karen leave first the room and then the schoolhouse. Abandoning the bedroom at the precise point where Karen has imagined a companionate future for them both in an elsewhere unspecified except for being not here and not now, the action moves outside. Emerging through the screen door that has previously signaled the highly permeable boundary between sexual knowledge and sexual ignorance, Karen moves into an outside already overrepresented in the sexual economies of the film. Silently she walks the airy length of the treelined driveway formerly the setting for the child's volatile revelation to her grandmother and Joe's

signals of love, both of which involve a car as literal vehicle for a sexual disclosure otherwise left unsaid. On the night he sets a marriage date with Karen, a rapturous Joe drives his car around the driveway turning circle, a gesture made all the more heterosexual by being observed by Martha from inside her upstairs bedroom. Now seen occupying the same position at the first-floor window, Martha's observation turns Karen's slow walk down the driveway into a lesbian processional, the driveway having marked the spatial limits of sexual tolerance throughout the film. When, for instance, the runaway Mary is returned to school by her grandmother it is only when they enter the school gates that the child whispers the secret that will make her guardian command the chauffeur to stop, a direction that simultaneously ejects the camera out of the limousine into the exterior and muffles the sexual plain-speaking the audience assumes to be going on in the soundproofed backseat.

Almost interminable, the long tracking shot required to film Karen's walk toward the gates of the school exceeds the time of heterosexual story, which would normally—if not normatively—find its conclusion in precisely this melodramatic leave-taking in which the heroine walks either toward or away from (it little matters which) the heterosexual lover and the reproductive futurity they represent. But Joe, as we know, has been thrown over for Martha so cannot be the structuring male absence around which heterosexual closure, however tragic or redemptive, would hinge. Nor does the film end here for, as everybody except Karen understands, the time it takes her to walk the driveway is merely the time it takes Martha to kill herself in offscreen space. Alerted to this by the reappearance of Aunt Lily in the doorway of the house, Karen's run back is oddly lengthened by a series of jump cuts that have no formal precedent within the film but serve to highlight that the time-space coordinates of the film have fully adjusted to the requirements of lesbian story.[50] With the clock now set to lesbian time, the camera stays on the still-mute Karen who finally regains the house, takes the stairs, and throws herself at the locked bedroom door. As improbable as it seems, the waif-like Hepburn proceeds to smash at the door with a heavy brass candlestick conveniently to hand and no less phallic than the fire iron it visually references.[51] Karen's sexual athleticism is too late, however, since the camera has already attained the bedroom via an expedient cut that allows Wyler to show the shadow of a still-swinging rope against the door that Karen is at the same time battering down from the other side.[52] Wyler then repositions the camera at the height of the slowly yielding lock the better to capture Karen's fall into the room. What follows is a long-held close-up on Karen as she slowly lifts her eyes to see what the shot setup keeps out of sight: the lesbian body, its sexual status made incontestable by the character's suicide. Viewed only by Karen, Martha's body appears at several fatal removes: the close-up on Hepburn's face gives way to an extreme low-angle take that presents MacLaine's character as nothing more than a long shadow suspended from the top of the frame.

Reduced to a ghostly element of the mise-en-scène, the lesbian hangs free of diegetic heterosexuality and its supporting conventions, which have been kicked away as conclusively as the chair that lies on its side beneath her lifeless form.

Out of keeping with their melodramatic host material, the expressionistic effects called into play at this late hour suggest that the avowal of lesbian desire by a female character, an enunciative act impossible until this moment in cinematic history, nonetheless requires that character's spectacular removal from the dramatic scene. Once she embodies the lesbian, the camera can no longer focus on Martha, who remains an indistinct dark blur on one half of the screen as Wyler refuses to engage the simple ratchet movement that would bring her shadow into clear view and partially restore her character's claim on cinematic space.[53] Instead, the focus stays in the foreground plane occupied by Karen who stands on the very threshold of the lesbian bedroom in a final indication that the film must resolve the contradictions between lesbian possibility and cinematic image solely on her.

Rendered speechless by the burden of closure as fully as the death of her companion, Karen speaks to no one in the rest of the film except the dead Martha who lies in a casket at the center of a funeral scene that requires the surviving woman to take up a new position on the sexual periphery. With the lesbian seemingly laid to rest, Karen escorts Aunt Lily, bags packed, to a taxi that could equally well run her safely out of town. Yet the taxi drives off without her, leaving the black-bereted Hepburn to look around her one last time before walking yet another tree-shaded driveway, this one emphatically not straight. Seen from a distance, Karen curves through space in a right to left movement matched by a pan shot that eventually picks up the stationary presence of Joe who is also turning his head to look at Karen from the same distant point the camera commands. Male eye and camera lens gaze across at the woman who fails to look back in the direction of either. Karen's withholding so much as a parting glance from her former fiancé defies any number of cinematic rules: a mere glance back at the apparatus assembled on the horizon—the conjunction of man and camera representing the full ideological force of heterosexuality—would cinch tight the sexual sacrifice required of femininity under an old melodramatic order of which the Production Code officials are merely the most convenient representatives. Under the new liberal regime, however, Karen walks on, taking the sexually progressive image with her. Skirting the narrative dead end that Joe and the graveyard represent, Karen steps through the cemetery gates into a blossoming natural world in which she appears like any other woman who, in passing, you mightn't look at twice.[54] Unaccompanied by Martha, the frumpy and, we may as well say, butch offsider who would give the game away, the high-femme Karen, coiffed and costumed in full Left Bank style, is dressed not for school but for the twilight world of Greenwich Village.[55] Cut loose from the schoolroom, Karen is

free to walk the streets of America unmolested by the gaze of Hollywood cinema until 1968, when the final repeal of the MPPDA Production Code resets the terms on which lesbianism comes into view.

The suicidal erasure of the self-declared lesbian, the sticking point for many gay-friendly readings of *The Children's Hour*, is perhaps less important than the film's final transfer of lesbian signification to the sexually inscrutable survivor.[56] After all, the killing off of homosexual interest, though it undoubtedly takes on genocidal proportions in the post–Production Code era that Wyler's film prefigures, is hardly a new skill.[57] At this point in film history, on the other hand, Hollywood has still to learn how to draw the lesbian story into filmic discourse and keep it in the foreground of representation without inadvertently dismantling the heterosexual ideology that is supposed to position homosexuality as the object of "care, discretion, and restraint." As my primarily formalist reading of *The Children's Hour* indicates, Hollywood has to learn this lesson in homosexual representation at the level of image rather than character or dialogue since it is at that level that cinema has always lodged its most sexual effects, not just in the fetishistic close-up and the hypervisibility accorded the female face and body since the inception of narrative cinema but also in the spectator's experience of cinematic space and the camera's ability to exploit it to sexual ends. Lesbian and gay representation after the repeal of the MPPDA Production Code does not unfold outside the representational double binds established under that order but in many ways remains continuous with them. Post 1968, Hollywood simply retools its standard repertoire of visual techniques and devices (the elements of mise-en-scène, its favored locations and sets, its systems of editing, and the implied storyworld all these devices support) to scaffold homosexual visibility and a gay or lesbian diegesis with the same energy it had previously invested in maintaining homosexual invisibility within Code-sanctioned productions. Moving into an order of censorship that classifies degrees of explicitness in the sexual image, new independent Hollywood finds that what was once true is still true: sexuality's base refusal to succumb to the representational order of transparency is both the perennial problem of homosexual representation and what turns it into an inexhaustible resource for cinema.

Appearing on the cusp of the Production Code era, *The Children's Hour* prefigures not the Code's final annulment but the oblique persistence of its representational logics into the post-Code era. If there is a general critical lesson to be extracted from this film, it is not that connotation must yield to denotation but the more complicated recognition that homosexuality continues to have a problematic but highly productive relation to cinematic representation generally and to cinematic space specifically. In this context it is worth recalling that Martha cannot say or name what makes her different: "I lie in bed night after night praying it isn't true. But I know about it now . . . There's something in you and you don't know anything about it because you don't know it's there." In 1961, Martha's inarticulacy

is a condition of her lesbianism. She is the same as she always was except for having crossed the threshold between sexual ignorance and a still inexpressible sexual knowledge, which in this film at least is conceived less as a closet than a lethal trapdoor. Sexual secrets in *The Children's Hour* are thus convincingly wrested away from the discursive model of speech (and metaphor) and given over to spatializing sequences (and metonymies) that are better geared to the effective transmission of sexual categories that refuse rationalization, such as the driveways, doorways, hallways, and staircases that assist the transition from heterosexual to homosexual without further explanation.[58] Hence, too, the importance of entries and exits from on-screen space in the dramatic denouement of a film wherein cinematic framing is all that is needed to register a lesbianism that, for the last four minutes of run time, all but abandons any obligation to the dialogue that refuses to acknowledge it by name.

Displayed to such effect in *The Children's Hour*, the logics of sexual setting and cinematic space continue to determine the appearance of homosexuality in later post-Code films that accord the lesbian plot dominant status. Whereas subordinate lesbian characters might briefly intrude into the sets associated with the straight romance, telling the lesbian story seems to require, and no more than minimally, the right location: schoolroom, convent, prison, or brothel. It can sometimes seem, and in the films I analyze in the following chapters it is certainly the case, that all the motivation the lesbian plot needs is the bringing together of two women in the same space, ideally the cinematic apartment.

# 3 The Lesbian Set
## *The Killing of Sister George*

According to its director Robert Aldrich, *The Killing of Sister George* (1968) was designed to showcase not any of the above-the-line talent, all of them relatively unknown to a US audience, but the soundstage on which they performed and through it the capacities of the newly purchased and designed Aldrich Studios on North Occidental Boulevard, Los Angeles.[1] Publicity releases from August 1968 show *Sister George* principal Susannah York unveiling the building's dedication stone in an image that ties together studio and star and anticipates both the thematic content of the film and my own interest in it as a defining example of lesbian cinematic space at the end of the Production Code era. As Aldrich Studios' inaugural project, *Sister George* was designed to promote the for-hire facilities within which it was made, demonstrating that independent directors could operate outside the major studios, avoiding their escalating production costs, without compromising artistic standards. The peculiar requirement that the film somehow display its mode of production explains Aldrich's decision to adapt Frank Marcus's stage play about an aging lesbian actress about to be axed from a long-running radio serial and reset in the world of British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) television, as well as his decision to limit the film's London location shoots, preferring the counterfeit duplication of stage sets in LA "Instead of shooting the works in Britain," writes Aldrich, "we transported chunks of an English pub, pieces of an English Ford truck and BBC-TV cameras and control panels—to say nothing of costly stars and co-stars—to Hollywood."[2] The authentic British sets so expensively reconstructed on Aldrich's new soundstage included a second artificial soundstage, putatively one of several at Television Centre, White City, London, upon which stood the more obviously fake plywood set of *Applehurst*, the BBC-produced daytime soap around which much of the film's story line turns. Plot and set thus continually reference the acting conventions, constructed spaces, and mechanical technologies that create and sustain the realist illusion of filmed narratives.

Toggling between spaces diegetically marked as real world and artificial, the parafictional qualities of *Sister George*'s set-within-a-set might almost

persuade us of the one-dimensionality or fictional flatness of another of the sets Aldrich's production team put together in North Hollywood: the apartment in which the two lead characters, June Buckridge (Beryl Reid) and Alison McNaught (Susannah York), live. Naturalistically presented, the claustrophobic apartment—or flat, as it would be called in Britain—functions as the dingy but reliable background against which the two women's sexual relationship appears to cinematic advantage. The story of the lesbian breakup, initially at least, claims a straightforward relation to the realist space that is its dominant setting. The term flat, however, also refers to the false walls erected on a stage or film set to define the architectural parameters of pretended space, a random connection that should nonetheless remind us that the self-contained dwelling in which the two women live is no more nor less real than any of the other locations depicted in Aldrich's film.[3] Indeed, Aldrich's film consistently depicts sexual relations between women in ways that foreground the architectural forms that enclose them as well as the camera that frames and records them, as if these elements were more indispensable to the visual recognition of lesbianism than, say, York's nudity or her orgasmic vocalizations in the notorious seduction scene for which *Sister George* is chiefly remembered. Rather than adhering to certain characters who are identified as lesbian, female homosexuality is presented within *Sister George* as a practice that lays perverse claim to the various architectures of private, public, and fictional space. Despite its heavily promoted interest in establishing new benchmarks of explicitness in sexual representation, Aldrich's 1968 film marks not a departure from an outmoded Production Code tradition that denied homosexuality a straightforward relation to story but its aesthetic apotheosis.[4] As much critical work on the representation of homosexuality throughout the Production Code era has demonstrated, Hollywood filmmakers were adept at deploying many elements within the Code-sanctioned mise-en-scène, such as the layering of verbal and physical innuendo, acting style, costumes, and stage props, to suggest gay and lesbian possibilities that could not be acknowledged licitly.[5] Timed to exploit the introduction of the MPPDA's classification code and ratings system, which made no intervention in script development or production but merely certified pictures prior to release, Aldrich's film appears to permit homosexuality unchecked access to narrative, character, and image. On closer inspection, however, the film is revealed to take the established logics of lesbian representation—those developed across the decades in which the MPPDA Production Code held sway—to their absurdist limit.

In *Sister George*, sexually speaking at least, space is everything, most particularly the space of the set. At first glance there are two locations within the film with obvious claim to homosexual coordinates: the lesbian household that June and Alison share and the lesbian bar they visit in the course of the story's development. While the bar scene, filmed on site in London's Gateways Club with its clientele serving as extras, has recently

been taken by Kelly Hankin to evidence Aldrich's heterosexual exploitation of lesbian space, the significance of the extended location shoot only becomes fully apparent when it is read against the rest of the film's exploration of domestic and professional space. Whereas Hankin isolates the *cinéma-vérité* scenes filmed in the Gateways lesbian club to argue for the materially complex relations between public sexual space and private sexual identity, I am primarily interested in the apartment space shared by the live-in lesbian lovers and the boardrooms, corridors, and studio sets associated with the female television executive who comes between them.[6] As I have pointed out in the introduction, the role of lesbian bar space in creating lesbian social identity, while supported by evidence of ethnographic study, should not eclipse our interest in fictional representations of lesbian space and the challenge to notions of sexual authenticity they frequently present. Further, gay and lesbian studies' continued favoring of accounts of public space in the formation of twentieth-century homosexual identity risks discounting the equivalently rich history of queer domestic space. Architecturally perverse, if not cinematically, Aldrich's lesbian flat deserves pride of place in any account of lesbian homelife on the cusp of gay liberation.

In the dark terrace mews that the film's lesbian couple share, the walls can seem all that stand between the sexually infantilized femme with her close-cropped hair and late-1960s style and another life in some more swinging version of London. In the film's opening setup, however, it is not Alison, known at home as Childie, who takes on the city, but June, her butch partner, who everywhere goes by the masculine surname of her television persona Sister George and forcefully strides through a title sequence in which brickwork alleyways and tight lanes repeat and reverse with labyrinthine complexity. The counterclockwise pan and wipes that suture the shots together seemingly connect the almost monochrome streetscapes as if they are continuous in three-dimensional space but the interleaved movement of Reid within and across the frame works against logical progression as if, for all her foursquare stridency, her character is going nowhere at all. George walks first towards, now away, from the camera, on a series of raked pathways, diagonal or vertical, that cut at cross-angles back and forth from one shot to the next, so that the editing bestows a visual continuity upon the architecture of alleyways at the same time that it withholds a rational continuity from the mobile figure who navigates them. It is finally impossible to know what relation these different street locations bear to each other in any order besides that determined by the editing sequence itself. This incoherence is amplified by the glimpses of high streets and NW6 street signs behind George that indicate a pedestrian traversal of London from Shepherd's Bush to Chelsea, via Hampstead.[7]

Production notes indicate that Aldrich initially conceived a pre-title sequence showing Reid en route from the BBC to her local pub, asking his British production and location manager David Bennett to let

his "artistic, creative imagination run rampant and see how many little alleyways, how many little unique picturesque passages you can discover . . . that we can shoot to make these titles as interesting and picturesque as possible."[8] While Aldrich eventually included a pre-title scene in the public bar of the Marquis of Granby, the alleyways and passages scouted by Bennett served as the location for the title sequence that commences after Reid has abandoned the pub and ends with her forcefully striding along a Thames embankment about to descend on the person she has rung from the bar's pay phone. While the London streetscape put together is not unpicturesque, Aldrich's editing instruction that George was "not to walk out of shot" indicates that the title sequence refuses to establish any geography of the city that is not visually indexed to the character moving through it.[9] Thus George is as inseparable from Aldrich's cinematically contracted version of London as her alter ego is from the fictional location of *Applehurst*. When George finally breaks into open space, the Thames appears beside her and the long shot of bridge and river iconically stabilizes the coordinates of a London we might even think we know before George, striding right to left between terrace row and docked houseboats, collides with a vertical frame which wipes horizontally left to right, erasing her from the scene as the exterior location yields to the interior of her yet to be arrived at destination.

After Reid has disappeared from sight via a technological gesture that also silences the theme music, a slow pan takes in a drab living room overstuffed with furniture, ornaments, and china dolls. From down a deep hallway comes the less antique sight of York in a pink baby-doll nightie stepping forward and down into the living room to pour herself a drink. From the silent interior there is a cutback to Reid, shot from high up and still buoyed along on the theme music, entering an enclosed quadrangle, a Dickensian rabble of children running diagonally across the flagstones behind her. Her chunky shape—first diminished from above then strangely enlarged by a new shot setup that maintains a deep-field focus from ground level—curves forcefully towards the lower right corner of the frame. With the next shot the camera rises to reveal a yellow front door into which the trench-coated Reid inserts a key. A further cut returns the scene to a dissembling York, tidying the room before the camera takes up a place on the inside landing, looking down on Reid, who looks up as she enters the flat then aggressively takes the stairs to complete the lesbian homecoming that inaugurates the film proper.

Edited by Michael Luciano and scored by Gerald Fried after the walk-out of Frank de Vol, the title sequence breathlessly cues in a London which is as timeless as George herself, its leafy rows and cobbled mews standing in for an urbanscape that is as British as the houndstooth tweeds dictated by George's rod-and-gun aesthetic. As Home Counties as it is butch, George's taste in fashion is reinforced by the décor of the flat, which houses her collection of horse brasses and antique prints, as well as the trophy

that is her significantly younger girlfriend. Like the city whose vernacular architecture it is, the terrace dwelling acts as an extension of George herself, whereas Childie visually contradicts the fusty interior being simply too tall, too blonde, too naked, ever to be genuinely at home there despite her relation to George. The shared lesbian flat has none of the decorative seamlessness of conjugal space wherein the sexual intimacy of its inhabitants disappears into the accumulated furnishings of married life with its double beds and family photographs, but instead manifests a stylistic and emotional incompatibility that is never fully assuaged by the butch-femme configuration that is its only cover story. In this way George, and George alone, becomes the flag-bearer for an authenticity of place that is both lesbian and nationalist, as the signifiers of female homosexuality do double duty for an Englishness as unimpeachable as Vita Sackville-West's, though far less class-bound.[10]

Although it bears an exterior borrowed from an actual house in the Knightsbridge mews Aldrich lived in while filming *The Dirty Dozen* (1967), George and Childie's dwelling is, of course, a temporary construction nailed together on the brand-new soundstage at Aldrich Studios.[11] As fake as the set of *Applehurst*, the interior in which George and Childie live is mocked-up as a modest set of first-floor rooms accessed by an internal stairway: an all-purpose living room, adjacent kitchen, and an unspecifiable number of rooms leading off a central raised hallway. The location of the bathroom is confirmed as the first door on the left but the film never conclusively establishes how many bedrooms articulate to the central hallway, so that the question of the sexual relationship between the two women might be framed spatially: one bedroom or two? The most architectural feature of the flat is its central light well, which is battened like a Tudor ceiling and manages, like the flat's electric candles and rotary telephone, to look neither modern nor antique and so recalls the faux fittings of the generic British pub that George frequents around the corner from the television studio. Falling short of two different epistemes of style, being neither old nor new, the rationale behind the light well is, of course, more cinematic than diegetic. It provides Aldrich with the fill light necessary to illuminate the crowded interior fittings and the actors who negotiate a pathway among them. Similarly, the serving hatch that connects the kitchen and living room, like the banisters that define where the hall landing extends into the space of the living room, enables the director to vary the framing of the tight internal space in ways that physically magnify the emotional at-odds-ness of the lesbian flatmates. "Kindly close that hatch," yells George at Childie in a moment of crisis, meaning both her mouth and the gap in the wall, the figure of speech securing the conflation of sexual body and three-dimensional space even as the partition functions divisively, closing the lesbian couple off from each other. This insistent metonymic doubling whereby the house is an extension of the sexual relationship that it both harbors and threatens to displace is extended to the images that adorn the

internal walls. Amid the horse prints and souvenir reproductions of English ancestral piles looms a photograph of George and Childie in costume as Laurel and Hardy, a sight that temporally precedes their later appearance in drag as Stan and Ollie and functions as yet another routine for displaying the ingrained and decidedly non-erotic dependencies that comprise their lesbian relationship.

Against the stuffy domestic interior and brick-row exterior of the lesbian flat, sexual modernity makes its presence felt in the glass-curtain exterior and floodlit white corridors of Television Centre, the professional headquarters of Mercy Croft (Coral Browne), executive producer of the daytime soap in which June Buckridge plays Sister George, a community nurse. The contest between these two architectural modalities, the traditional and the modernist, is fundamentally a narrative one since it is Mrs. Croft who ultimately decides the story line of the *Applehurst* television series in which George plays her fictional part. Yet the question of story is not confined to the deciding of plot. Again and again within the film the seemingly stable coordinates of private space are compromised or complicated by the domestic technology of television and the dual-story chronology it repeatedly institutes. While the double story line is itself easy enough to follow and keep track of, it also introduces certain representational conundrums that are not reducible to the conventional story-within-a-story setup. In general, for instance, the switchbacks between the lesbian flat and the *Applehurst* television drama signal a temporal jump in story time, allowing Aldrich a very adaptable ellipsis mechanism that can fast-forward or rewind the film's encompassing narrative while also clarifying its plot. A typical scene transition would thus be the one in which we first glimpse the *Applehurst* televisual storyworld. After arriving home in synch with the end of the film's titles, George has an agitated exchange with Childie about the "murder" that is planned for her, and once her none-too-bright girlfriend has finally understood that she is talking about the demise of her on-screen character, the Technicolor screen image resolves to a monochrome television console on which we see a dole-faced Sister George, flanked by two male figures, seated before a casket. As we follow the conversation held among these characters, the film toggles back and forth between the black-and-white shot and another color shot of the television control suite that reveals the former visual as a scene in progress. The three fictional mourners are balanced by three studio personnel seated in a line behind glass, cuing close-ups and camera shifts on the soundstage they overlook. Observing the editing rules of three-camera filming as required by its serial format, the inset *Applehurst* scenes ostensibly play out in real time whereas everything in Aldrich's filmic montage reinforces cinema's capacity to manipulate place and duration via montage editing. The visual and thematic emphasis on the framing of filmed action increases as the sequence continues to run. Still in black-and-white, a minister enters the television shot and proceeds to lead the small congregation in a hymn. When the cut is

then called down from the director to the floor manager, the footage floods with color and the shot enlarges to disclose the wider mise-en-scène of the eponymous village, with its featherweight stone chapel and mock mock-Tudor exteriors. The toyland proportions of the fake set are then measured against the human dimensions of the production secretary Mildred (Rosalie Williams), an Australian giantess as tweedy and cantilevered as George herself.[12] Over tea with the cast, Mildred deliberately lets slip that Sister George "is for the chop."On hearing this news, George's on-screen pieties give way to the frank obscenities that will become her trademark utterances in any and every professional context from this point forward, whether she is drunk or, more infrequently, sober. Pursued by Mildred and her clipboard, George storms out of Studio B down a featureless stairwell and through an exterior door, determined to grab the drink and make the phone call to Childie that inaugurates the present-tense action of the film, as if there really existed a more trustworthy space beyond the enfolded relations of stage and set.

Only a viewer completely unskilled in what George drunkenly refers to as the "rudimentary technicalities" of the medium would, it seems, misunderstand the discursive relation between the different fictional and production spaces of the television drama and the film's larger narrative setting. It would be hard, that is, to confuse the pretend village of Applehurst and the actual city of London, but in sexual terms the distinction between the two storyworlds becomes harder to sustain. By cutting from one diegetic space to another or pulling the shot back to reveal that one diegetic space is physically enclosed within the other, *Sister George* supports our understanding that the two worlds are not the same: one storyworld, that of the narrative film, frames the other, that of the fictional soap. Yet at the same time the conventional representational breach between order of story and order of discourse is contradicted by a perverse sexual continuity that refuses to heed any such fictional hierarchy. The coordinates for reading sexuality from one location to the next are confusing not because they change but because they remain the same. Beamed into the homes of the nation George is, visually at least, very nearly the same figure on- and offscreen: an unmarried woman of a certain age, frumpy but professional, her preference for either stout or gin one of the few things that changes with her on-screen–offscreen role. "A role-playing lesbian in more than one sense," George is, as Patricia White writes, "a bawdy, domineering, cigar-smoking butch" whose sexuality remains invisible to her legions of television fans. Instead of separating out these two versions of George and insisting on the distinction between "covert and overt" identities, Aldrich's film reveals "the continuity between the off-screen 'masculine,' tweed-suited dyke type and the on-screen 'asexual,' tweed-suited nurse type."[13] White is, of course, referencing a vast amount of critical and historical work on the relation of lesbianism to regimes of visibility, where the lesbian's blatant presence within heteronormative structures of representation, as in classic Hollywood

cinema, is frequently undetected. George's role in the film as a character whose corrosive straight-talking exposes the dishonesty and falseness of all who surround her is thus complicated by her lesbianism, which has a less than transparent relation to visual and verbal disclosure. Despite George's frankness and her butch sexual style, she is everywhere mistaken for the childless but motherly woman she represents on-screen, as if George and Sister George were seamless. George's lesbianism, while seemingly common knowledge among her professional colleagues, has a tendency to disappear in social settings, even those with an explicit sexual aspect such as the house-cum-brothel of her confidante and neighbor Betty Thaxter, aka Miss Whiplash (Patricia Medina), where she goes to discuss her relationship problems. Conflating sex and domestic space, Betty's dwelling would seem to make explicit the implicit conditions of the lesbian flat opposite, but within its walls George, despite being addressed by her friend as June, is simultaneously mistaken by the prostitute's dimwitted "understudy" Marlene (Elaine Church) for the character she plays on *Applehurst*. The entire exchange, which shuttles between upcoming *Applehurst* scandals and the more fraught unfoldings across the street, takes place in a lounge impeccably furnished to middle-class tastes that gives no clue to the profession of its inhabitants, and so seems to imply that reality will always give way to illusion in matters of sexual identification.[14]

Indeed for George, like many another gay character actor, the distinction between on-screen and offscreen type is never hard and fast but open to biographical slippage.[15] George's queer capacity to be two things at once is emphatically confirmed after her fictional alter-image—according to production files, actually Reid's body double—is knocked down on a traffic roundabout in an accident planned to coincide with Road Safety Week.[16] On set the dead Sister George proves an unruly corpse who occupies the dispensation of offscreen space in order to disrupt on-screen action. Splayed out with legs wide apart—a position withheld her lesbian persona throughout Aldrich's film—George's refusal to die offscreen is later followed by her apparent professional suicide in the farewell party hosted for her in the same place, the *Applehurst* soundstage. While George's bad behavior, on set and off, is never enough to see her ejected from the BBC entirely, she is finally threatened with banishment from on-screen space altogether when Mrs. Coote (Cicely Walper), the director of *Toddler Time*, suggests she play the voice of an animated marionette in the disembodied role of "a flawed, credible, cow" named Clarabell. The scene in which this exchange occurs culminates with Childie and Mrs. Croft, the executive producer of *Applehurst*, going offstage together, an action that once again conflates the extinguishing of George's expansive screen presence with the threat to her lesbian relationship. The spatial parameters of this sexual transition are reinforced as Childie and Mrs. Croft are seen to disappear through a door that hinges the studio with the unknown depth behind it. Slipping out through the white door, the two women are both

leaving George and taking their first steps towards a sexual location that will require a representational architecture outside anything the film has yet deployed.

While Childie and Mrs. Croft move off into some as yet unknown realm beyond the studio walls, the thankless role offered George as the unseen vocalizer of a puppet character on a children's television program is simply the final manifestation of a representational problem that plagues her throughout the film insofar as she never gets to occupy sexually the space she is in nor limit the space where she is not. Numerous times in the film Aldrich deploys a television broadcast to suggest that George's screen presence goes on without her, as when a television set, on which the *Applehurst* series screens, is shown in front of two children who sit at floor level watching the daytime soap. Unknown children in an unknown lounge, these figures are only anchored by the televisual broadcast itself, which suggests, not fictional containment within the storyworld of the film, but the simultaneity of represented events with an everyday Britain that is elsewhere evidenced by ancillary characters or extras: a man in a raincoat playing the poker machine in the foyer of the pub, the high-street pedestrians whose pathways the film crosses but does not follow. Like the black hackney cabs and the double-decker buses that are incontestable indices of London, these nondescript figures usually remain in our peripheral vision, contributing to but never superseding the narrative authenticity they are asked to support. The first time we see children watching *Applehurst*, for instance, their innocence is used to frame the increasingly complicated sexual spatialities that the film's story line engages. Two children—anonymous figures who continue to float free of the diegesis—sit watching an *Applehurst* wedding at which matronly Sister George is asked if she is "still waiting for Mr. Right to come along." That the shadowy children occupy less a house than the ideological present of sexual naïveté is clear from this scene's relation to the scene it interrupts in which Aldrich's adult-oriented film seemingly explores the perverse depths of the shared female living arrangement.

The broadcast segment in which Sister George is interrogated about marriage occurs in the middle of a lengthy scene inside the lesbian flat where a knock on the outside door signals the unexpected arrival of Mrs. Croft. If Aldrich's sensationalist tagline is to be believed and the film really is "The Story Of Three Consenting Adults In The Privacy Of Their Own Home," then Mrs. Croft's dropping by might be expected to lead to something raunchy, a sexual threesome, say, whereas nothing of the kind occurs. Indeed, as the scene unfolds, it becomes clear that for all his putative interest in lesbian sex Aldrich is more interested in exploring the domestic aspect of the ménage à trois the three women form. Taken by surprise, George and Childie quickly prepare the flat for Mrs. Croft's inspection, which means nothing more provocative than showcasing George's Daily Mirror Award. Once Mrs. Croft is inside the flat, the serving hatch comes into play as the first indication that the renegotiation of sexual relationships

between the three women, which eventually sees George sidelined, will be achieved architecturally. "How nice" for George to have a "flatmate," comments Mrs. Croft, before George flings griddle scones across the room at Childie, demonstrating a short-fused jealousy incommensurate with non-erotic house-share arrangements. "Girls!" exclaims Mrs. Croft, as if she were their headmistress rather than an executive producer at the BBC, before the scene cuts to the *Applehurst* wedding. The televised nuptials are simultaneous with the catfight that comprises so much lesbian static on the official bandwidth of heterosexuality. When the film cuts back to the interior of the flat, George, Childie, and Mrs. Croft are still circling each other conversationally, making this the only instance in which *Applehurst* footage does not advance or reverse story time, an editing action that reinforces the fraught sexual present of the lesbian ménage and the place with which it is coterminous.

Although Mrs. Croft subsequently excuses herself to "the little girl's room," the lesbian flat is incapable of harboring any sexually innocent space. This is reinforced when Mrs. Croft returns to the sitting room to take up a disciplinary matter. Putting on her best professional demeanor, the executive producer has George answer the charge of sexual assault on two Irish novices detailed in "a letter from the Director of Religious Broadcasting." While maintaining her innocence, George sits with a drink between her open legs as an appalled Childie interjects through the hatch and continues to move between living room and kitchen with swing doors flapping behind her. The slapstick physical acting of Reid and York throughout the scene recalls the incident in question in which a drunken George attempts to hail a cab held at the lights on a busy London intersection. When she opens the door of the already occupied cab, the passengers are revealed as two religious sisters in full habit. George squeezes herself in between the nuns, closing the door behind her so that our view of the encounter is framed through the cab window before the shot cuts to the face of the outraged driver. The focus ultimately recedes to a distant bird's-eye view of the traffic intersection, but throughout the roadside scene the soundtrack retains the intimacy of the cab interior, indexing sexual activities which remain beyond visualization. In the scene of putative lesbian molestation, that is, Aldrich displaces the sexual reference away from the image onto the soundtrack, breaking synchronicity in the process. The director previously deploys a similar technique in a scene outside Television Centre where Mildred tries to order an absconding George back on set. Though it is clear from the image track that George tells the oversized production secretary to "Fuck off," Aldrich mutes the sexual reference with the perfectly timed noise of a car horn. If, as these scenes demonstrate, the link between sexual image and sexual sound is repeatedly open to directorial intervention this is in order to preserve the flat as the ideal site for their eventual synchronization, which is set to occur in a bedroom kept back by Aldrich for this purpose alone.[17]

Always associated with George, the severing of sound and image occurs at several other moments in the film. The most striking occurs after a script-reading session on the *Applehurst* soundstage where George walks out in high dudgeon having been diagnosed as ill by Ginger, the on-screen persona of Leo Lockhart (Ronald Fraser), as if the state of her character's health required her own convalescence. The scene then cuts temporally forward to the flat where, framed by the serving hatch which has roughly the same proportions as a television screen, George composes letters of concern to the BBC, writing in the guise of viewers who fail to distinguish between real and fictional turns of event. Themselves imaginary, Sister George's fretting fans suffer the further derealization of a voice-over in which Reid does each letter in a different voice as she writes it. In this way the enfolded nature of film text and television text—always most densely signified in the figure of George—is further amplified via the technology of a voice-recording that is visually referenced as writing not speech, as a pretense rather than the authorizing consciousness to which voice-over conventionally provides access. Still recognizable as Reid's voice, and thus that of her diegetically anchored character, George's voice-over channels yet another fictive or made-up character which doubly distances it, as writing and as acting, from interior monologue. Indeed, George is repeatedly associated with capacities for vocal projection that are cut loose from personal subjectivity, as when she does her Sydney Greenstreet impersonation for the bartender at her local pub. "There is so much human sadness in the world," she rumbles in Greenstreet's famous baritone, as if her body were already the marionette cow that is fated to become her on-screen synecdoche.[18] At the same time, the line lifted from one fictional film into another stands as an accurate transliteration of George's final utterance, a bathetic moo that suggests, once again, her tragic inability to synchronize lesbian identity with the scene of representation.

In the lesbian flat no such problem exists. Lost in the scene of letter writing, George is brought back to the moment by the entrance of a near-naked York, who appears in deep shot coming down the hallway from the bedroom hooking her bra behind her. The naturalness of the gesture is belied when York hits her mark within the mise-en-scène and stands in the one place where shadow lines from the skylight above fall across her body. As the scene between the two women develops, George's overacting yields to sentimentality as, in a voice otherwise reserved for her unguarded exchanges with Betty Thaxter, she recollects her first encounter with Childie. By this point in the film it should come as no surprise that when George remembers falling in love she recalls it as a spatial experience: years ago, in a Notting Hill boardinghouse, she entered a vacated bathroom, still steamed and wet, and stood in the damp footprint of Childie, to whom she had yet to address a word. Spoken in the presence of Childie, George's reminiscence affirms her prior sexual occupancy of the other woman's space but this claim is architecturally rescinded in the present moment of

action by the shot sequence mapped out in the lengthy scene, which initially frames George through the kitchen hatchway and keeps her girlfriend out of sight before placing them in tense relation within the cramped living room. Transacted at close quarters, George's highly emotional speech is punctuated by two choker close-ups on Childie's face, which register her discomfort at the lesbian recollection. Action and camerawork then assist the younger woman to reestablish a spatial quarantine between herself and her older lover as she rushes to leave the flat. Drawn back by George's fury, the two women are briefly held in a level two-shot setup but only to record Childie's emotional disclaimer "I'm not married to you, George." With the stairway banister used as a visual divider, the scene starts to register Childie's desire for the safety of distance from George. Before Childie exits the flat to join her young straight friends in the wider storyworld of London, her sexual separation from George, like their prior sexual intimacy, is registered spatially: the two women are on different planes, Childie standing on the internal landing with George below her. The younger woman's physical dominance over the older, like her earlier kneeling submission before her in a scene in which George makes her eat an old cigar butt, initiates a series of reverse over-the-shoulder shots which confirm Childie's spatial removal from George in the sexual present, just as the film previously deploys a series of cutaways against George's romantic reconstruction of their sexual past.

George's inability to tally the time and place of love is less a character defect than a reflection of the representational challenge that lesbian space presents to Aldrich in 1968. Distributed on the eve of the 1970s, the decade in which homosexuality claims the foreground of cinematic representation for the first time, *Sister George* includes a scene in London's Gateways club which attempts to document lesbian social activity just as the subsequent sex scene between York and Browne is Aldrich's attempt to push the boundaries of the permissible sexual image. If Aldrich's film still engages a critical audience it is because both of these scenes continue to entangle problems of sexual legitimacy. According to White, for instance, the Gateways scene was "filmed on location and thus with extraordinary subcultural verisimilitude" as if location alone were enough to secure lesbian authenticity.[19] Although Hankin disputes Aldrich's right to access this space for heterosexual vision and draws attention to his exploitation of the lesbian extras who were never credited for their appearance on camera even when they took speaking parts, like White, she never doubts the tight knit between homosexual identity and homosexual place despite the film's putting under pressure precisely such spatial assumptions in both the scenes that were filmed on location in the UK and those recorded on Aldrich's new soundstage facility in North Hollywood.[20]

Most of the location footage Aldrich collected in his two-week London shoot provided the film with strong visual indices to the contemporary city in which the film's characters live. These include the background

streetscapes of the title sequence, the two scenes in the Marquis of Granby public house, both of which involve exterior establishment shots, and the incident involving the Irish novices, filmed at the intersection of Gresham and King Streets, EC2.[21] The remaining London footage functions less as local background than as plot device insofar as it is used to suggest alternate homosexual and heterosexual story lines, as when Childie claims to be subjected to a constant demand from her boss that she work late at his East London factory. Always suspicious, George reads something sleazier into this and goes to meet Childie outside an actual factory site located at 21 New Street, Bishopsgate. Not finding her girlfriend among the departing late-shift workers, George's jealousy is dispelled as soon as she enters the factory, a fake studio set constructed at Isleworth Studios, London Road, Middlesex, and sees that Childie's boss is not the sexual threat she has imagined him to be.[22] If George need no longer fear the workplace as the scene of Childie's return to heterosexuality, she has still to discover that her girlfriend has only pretended to be working late in order to meet her female rival Mrs. Croft at another actual location: Broadcasting House, Great Ormond Street. Rather than being the space of Childie's secret heterosexuality, the Wapping garment factory turns into yet another of those sites, both real locations and fake sets, that facilitates a lesbian possibility that will ultimately be consummated in the shared flat.

The Gateways Club is the most thoroughly explored actual location taken in en route to the sexual encounter that provides the narrative climax of the fictional film. Aldrich went to some lengths to select an appropriate venue for the shoot, one that yielded logistical convenience for the film crew as well as the clientele he needed in order to convey the predominantly lesbian profile of the nightclub.[23] The shift to the lesbian club in Bramerton Street, Chelsea, is achieved without any establishing shot. George and Childie merely enter a cab in their Knightsbridge Mews before a cut reveals the interior of the Gateways, in which an all-girl house band (actually The Mission Belles, "a guitar-and-drum combo of three sisters and their sister-in-law, all named Brown") provide the backing for their Stan and Ollie stage routine.[24] Whereas George and Childie make an effortless transition to the lesbian venue, one minute entering the black cab vacated by Betty and her client, the next minute appearing on the Gateways stage, when Mrs. Croft arrives at the club she must descend via a vertiginous stairwell awkwardly negotiating her way past the unyielding bodies of the masculine women who lean against its walls. To further sexualize her transition into the lesbian club, Mrs. Croft's entrance is shot from below, which exaggerates both the steep rack of the stairs and the length of Browne's legs discreetly disappearing into the dark recess of her skirt. Once past the door-minder (a role played in fiction and life by Gina Ware, the club's manager-owner), Mrs. Croft stands and surveys the Gateways' basement space, taking in the performance stage, the large dance floor, and the long bar before which dozens of butch and femme women are

crushed. Aldrich's handheld camera has already exposed the Gateways site and its regular occupants to the viewer but from this point forward these *cinéma-vérité* techniques will be linked to Mrs. Croft's visual initiation into the spectacle of lesbianism, culminating in the slow-dance sequence which reveals girl-girl couples in embraces that even at a glance, let alone the stare allowed her by Aldrich's direction, cannot be confused with those of female friendship.[25] Finally stripped of illusion about the sexual nature of the relationship between the two female flatmates, Mrs. Croft is free to take the professional conversation elsewhere. That elsewhere is the real Gateways' fictional extension: the poolroom and lavatories constructed the following month at Aldrich Studios in North Hollywood.

Within this invented space, the three women are open to the steady aim of Aldrich's studio camera as Mrs. Croft authoritatively delivers George's on-screen death sentence.[26] When George learns of her *Applehurst* character's fate her response is to retreat to the fictional Gateways lavatory, which enables Childie to take up the space she has vacated alongside Mrs. Croft. A classic two-shot conversation then transpires in which the older woman invites the younger to call her at the BBC in order to discuss her poems and wider prospects of an unspecified nature. Thus evolves the next phase of an inevitable seduction process in which the sexual interest of one woman in another is always conveyed via a patently fake concern with something else: poetic talent, career opportunities, emotional welfare.[27] During this see-through conversation—transparently innocent, transparently not—George is offscreen composing herself in the narratively adjacent space of the Gateways' lavatory. When Childie finally goes to see how George is managing, the film cuts to a new set where a service-type butch is combing her ducktail at the bathroom mirror. As Childie proceeds to open the doors of toilet cubicles looking for her girlfriend, the butch woman's approach ("Are you alright, dear?") seems more innocent than anything associated with the chic Mrs. Croft, whose sexual sophistication translates effortlessly from one location to the next however stylistically out of place she may seem. Unlike George, whose lesbian sexuality disappears in certain contexts, Mrs. Croft sexually stands out against whatever background she is placed before. If in the fictional world of *Applehurst* there is nothing to give Sister George away as a lesbian, in the hybridized real/fake world of the Gateways her character is at greater risk of merging with the scenery entirely. In the scene in the Gateways loo, for instance, George is completely screened from sight by the faked up arrangement of the set.[28] Seen neither entering nor leaving the privacy of the public convenience, George is nothing more than a voice inside a lavatory cubicle. Refusing to come out of the toilet, George stays inside writing "something very obscene about the British Broadcasting Corporation" on the partition walls. Unseen though it is, George's graffiti, like her final act of tearing apart the *Applehurst* set, is a form of material revenge against a cinematic architecture that makes lesbianism primarily a spatial attribute.

The transition from the real to the fake Gateways is marked by the technical move away from documentary-style recording back to studio camerawork and, in the exchange between Childie and Mrs. Croft, the familiar editing conventions that narrative cinema has developed to convey sexual suspense.[29] Unsurprisingly, these conventional effects attain their apotheosis in the lesbian sex scene that resolves the film's plot. Relying on the style and technique of film noir (the genre in which Aldrich established his film craft), the sex scene includes extreme close-ups, chiaroscuro lighting effects that fall across the frame, and the deployment of objects within the mise-en-scène, such as the bedstead, to create movement around the actors who, for most of the scene, maintain a physical stillness at the center of the scene.[30] In particular the camera invests Browne's face, with its raised eyebrow and dry lips, with the capacity to register silently a sexual response that is in some sense shared by the film's spectators insofar as it responds to the noisy spectacle York is making of herself. As is well known, both mainstream and pornographic film frequently rely on aural rather than visual devices for conveying female sexual arousal but not even this recognition can lessen the impact of Aldrich's breath-stopping termination of the accompanying music score, cued in by the unclipping of a bra, as the two women negotiate the preliminaries to sex. Maintained across the next three minutes and fifty seconds, the diegetically consistent silence is broken only by the rising sound of Childie's sexual climax.[31] Until this point in *Sister George*, Aldrich's famed layering of sound has been deployed to amplify the potential dislocations of voice and the body from which it emanates. Now dramatically reversed, the commonplace synchronization of sound and image—and very little else—authorizes York's vocalizations as the on-screen consummation of lesbian pleasure.

Once this aural climax has been enacted the scene is broken by the perfectly timed interruption of George's voice: "What a perfect little gem for the Sunday press." Having delivered her line silhouetted in the bedroom doorway, George flicks on the overhead light in an action that thoroughly extinguishes the noir illumination so that the two figures on the bed suddenly appear not as standard-bearers for a new sexual authenticity but like any other couple caught having sex they shouldn't be. Her *Applehurst* television character may have been sideswiped by a "ten-tonne truck" but George knows enough to meet this situation head-on and so confronts her lover and her boss with the only question that remains to be asked: "Did it have to be here?" Where else might it have been? Certainly not at Mrs. Croft's home which is nowhere represented in the film except as the final destination to which Childie and her new lover disappear. With no need of an illusionist set, the executive "pied-à-terre" is more properly the pure or fantasmatic space of social ambition, which promises to dissolve the constraints of sexual identity associated with the lesbian flat.[32] Unlike the homosexually housebound and traditionally British George, the sexually ambitious Mrs. Croft represents a harder-to-pin-down modernity that is oriented to the future and

whose best spatial signifiers are the executive boardrooms of Broadcasting House, Portland Place, and featureless long corridors and internationalist exteriors of Television Centre, White City.[33] There are few coordinates for reading these modernist spaces, and the figures set against them, like those drawn into architectural diagrams, seem as if they are only there to establish a human scale everywhere contravened by the built environment. When Reid, for instance, takes up position in the red wooden phone box outside Television Centre in order to ring her indifferent girlfriend, it is as if we have been transported to Jacque Tati's *Playtime* (1967) where the brutalism of the architecture makes us root for the character now diminished before it. Where the film has opened with George hissing menacingly into the saloon bar pay phone, she now stands exposed, helplessly pleading with Childie to meet her before she is killed off that afternoon. As the image cuts to the interior of Childie's workplace, it is clear that the humanly crowded sweatshop allows one woman the opportunity to dissimulate while the modernist surroundings give the other no place to hide. Trapped inside the phone box with the high-rise building filling the frame behind her, George's physical stoutness and emotional vulnerability are both strikingly eclipsed by a glass facade that offers no spatial depth to the camera.[34]

As Mrs. Croft is moved to say when given free range of George's living room, interiors "do reflect their owner's personalities in an incredibly accurate way." Mrs. Croft's stylistic aversion to George's "English" taste in home furnishings ("Horse brasses! Horse brasses!") is no more nor less predictable than her ability to deploy Childie's equally hateful ornamental doll collection as the means to remove her from the lesbian premises and into some sexually polymorphous space that has yet to find fictional form. Mrs. Croft's deft negotiation of the filmic architectures of sexual representation is everything that Aldrich's film leads us to expect of an executive producer at the BBC or any other production company that may or may not resemble the one that he presides over. *Sister George* demonstrates that lesbianism, like all things cinematic, belongs to the spaces that make it visible and only secondarily to the characters that occupy those sets. The final scene of the film brings this lesson home not by leaving the abandoned George in the now empty flat (into which the absconding Childie posts her keys in yet another gesture that brings together sexual and architectural rejections) but by transporting her back to the after-hours set of *Applehurst*, which is destroyed far less convincingly than the lesbian relationship for which it stands in. The damage done, the camera suddenly pulls back from the "pathetic old dyke," as Mrs. Croft finally calls George, to fix her in a bird's-eye shot taken from high above, the track lights of Aldrich Studios clearly visible in the foreground. As if more reinforcement were needed, the shot that introduces the closing credits reduces the screen image to the scale of a television monitor in order to measure visually not the diminishment of George's lesbian character but its utter dependence on the spatial technology of film.

# 4 The Lesbian Mise-en-Scène
## *The Bitter Tears of Petra von Kant*

It is a founding premise of this book that there is much to be gained from unlearning the ways in which we habitually watch lesbian-themed films. One of the strategies for such unlearning—a strategy imminently suited to thinking about lesbian visualization in cinema—might be to attend to those systems of filmic organization that provide the infrastructure for character- or action-driven narratives but are largely ignored by the interpretative forms generated in their vicinity. In the dominant understanding of classical film narration, for instance, cinematic space is conventionally considered subordinate to the plot it nonetheless facilitates. The camera's formal manipulation of mise-en-scène is what organizes visibility, producing cinematic space as the transparent structure we look through in order to discern the complications of character and theme embedded in the filmic narrative that unspools before us. The representation of place, that is, provides the physical and temporal coordinates within which narrative causality unfolds and remains explicable, just as all elements in the mise-en-scène are understood to contextualize and deepen our understanding of character motivation. Andrew Klevan argues that this understanding of Hollywood style, most widely disseminated via the collective and independent work of David Bordwell, Janet Staiger, and Kristin Thompson, is, as it were, taken in by the very success of the system it promotes, with the apparent transparency and effectiveness of classical narrational style determining that the interpretative focus remains on the plot events and characterizations that are taken to be its formal rationale.[1]

Elsewhere, Fredric Jameson suggests that, if we reverse this founding assumption and consider cinematic space as taking precedence over the character and plot development it formally deepens, other systems of meaning move to the foreground from which "a rather different realization of concrete space is produced which is no longer scene or backdrop for an action or for actors, but includes those in some new, qualitative way."[2] According to Jameson, the suspension of the realist code of interpretation yields different understandings of the connection between the very same plot events: dialectic replaces causality as the foundational principle underlying event and action that, in turn, reveals character as an effect of these relations rather

than their motivating source. "This story—of the adventures of space, if you like—will not turn out to be terribly different in its form from the psychological or character-development story," Jameson continues, "but it offers a better, non-subjective way of telling that story (doing away with consciousness, 'character,' and the anthropomorphic), and thus may not really be 'the same' any longer in the important senses."[3]

Jameson's elevation of space above character and narrative in the cinematic hierarchy of meaning has a peculiar salience for the rethinking of same-sex sexual plots in narrative cinema, particularly those that are denoted as lesbian, and for a more general rethinking of the relation between homosexuality and film style. If we think, for instance, of sexuality as being assigned by the cinematic space in which it appears rather than attached to the protagonists who move through it, we might reformulate our understanding of the interdependence of homosexuality and formal style so that, rather than looking outside the film text for the historical circumstances that determine that relationship (the order of the Production Code, say, or the cultural prevalence of sexual stereotypes), the film text itself reveals the material conditions through which the gay or lesbian story gains cultural ascendancy. In the film this chapter concentrates on, for instance, the camera's production of cinematic space, particularly those formal elements that are referenced by the term mise-en-scène, makes legible a lesbian sexuality that is coterminous with the apartment dwelling in which it appears. Through various stylistic meanderings that work against the seamlessness of Hollywood-style narrative, lesbianism appears as the characterological extension of the apartment chronotope, a fictional effect amplified by the film's refusal to visually validate any other narrative space.

Confining its action to a single split-level apartment, Rainer Werner Fassbinder's cinematic chamber piece *The Bitter Tears of Petra von Kant* (1972) couples a lesbian narrative scenario with an expressionist mise-en-scène. As I will go on to argue, it is this second element rather than the first that makes the film a significant placemarker in the history of homosexual representation on screen. Under various Hollywood production orders and the censorship regimes that superseded them, homosexuality, whether lesbian or gay male, has always had a less than straightforward relation to cinematic narrative, character, and image. Although it proceeds from a European art-house tradition in which sexual themes are dramatically foregrounded, *Bitter Tears* has, nonetheless, a highly developed relation to more mainstream aesthetic and ideological conventions which preclude a head-on approach to homosexual material. Despite its explicit lesbian story line and its thoroughgoing characterization of same-sex female desire as variously narcissistic, masochistic, and sadistic, Fassbinder's film is most noteworthy for its sustained reliance on cinematic space as the means for making this particular form of sexuality visible. Articulating lesbianism as a spatial relation, *Bitter Tears*' causal linking of homosexuality and space makes it the endgame of classical film style.

More than just the setting for character and event, the cinematic apartment of Petra von Kant—via the intervening agency of the mobile camera—can be said to stand in metonymic relation to the sexuality of its inhabitants whom it frequently displaces as the focus of the film. The initial sequence, for instance, establishes a set location that is more expressive than the inanimate characters who occupy it. The opening shot presents two cats grooming on a stairway, an image statically held for the duration of the titles. When the titles have ceased, the camera observes, through the open rises of the stair, the head and back of a female figure climbing from the floor below. The frame enlarges to show her ascending to a strange sunken landing formed by the intersection of three flights of stairs before she angles past the camera and is lost to sight. Before the viewer can confidently determine the architectural space on show, the camera pulls back in an incoherent spatial motion in which the component features of the apartment, its floors and walls, only belatedly assemble into rational three-dimensional relation. The mobile camera grazes back across what is revealed to be the thick open weave of a white flokati rug, all the while maintaining a floor-level perspective on the space it is effectively backing into. The camera then widens the frame to the left to take in two recumbent naked figures who first appear to be lying on the carpeted floor but, as the frame continues to extend, spatially recompose as two-dimensional forms comprising part of a painted tableau that covers an entire internal wall of an apartment whose measure the viewer is just beginning to take. As the visual field deepens before the still-withdrawing camera, the wall mural (cropped from Nicolas Poussin's *Midas and Dionysos*) flattens out behind a large, high bed that emerges from the bottom left of the frame and in which another figure—this one corporeal rather than pictorial—sleeps. Throughout, the muffled footsteps of the partially glimpsed moving figure can be heard entering and crossing the room's right perimeter outflanking the camera in its retreat backwards through the same space. Having crossed behind the camera, the figure, still only partially glimpsed, pulls open slatted blinds and so slashes light across the scene in an action that wakens the prostrate woman on the bed.

The late rising of Petra von Kant (Margit Carstensen) inaugurates a film that makes no attempt to visualize the lesbianism of its characters in other than spatial terms. As the tight opening sequence suggests, *Bitter Tears* confines itself to the apartment shared by Petra, a divorced fashion designer, and Marlene (Irm Hermann), her slavishly obedient live-in secretary and collaborator. Despite the everyday closeness of the two women and the domestic paraphernalia which surrounds them, the studio space that is their shared home recalls nothing so much as the brutal prison architecture of Jean Genet's *Un Chant d'Amour* (1950) which also establishes a mandatory relation between location and sexuality. As in *Chant d'Amour* where locked doors, bricked partitions, and institutional peepholes intensify and convey homosexual desire even as they stand in its way, walls and

objects in *Bitter Tears* have a similarly dual functionality that is routinely engaged in the place of dramatic action. Restricted to this one-room space, Michael Ballhaus' camera constantly emphasizes both the claustrophobic containment of the split-level apartment and the unboundedness of its interior where internal screens offer only the illusion of privacy and exterior walls are comprised of floor-to-ceiling glass. Visually ambiguous, this doubled space, transparent and enclosed, allows the camera to generate what little action the film could be said to engage. The timber uprights and open shelving that separate Petra's bedroom from the step-down work space that adjoins it, for instance, both check and facilitate the maintenance of sight lines and physical communication, a contradiction which the camera freely exploits both dynamically, shooting from one space through to another, and pictorially, using the exposed supports as horizontal or diagonal divisions or internal borders within its own frame.

Contained within this visually accommodating but physically restrictive set, a story unfolds in which Petra's supposed friend, the bitchy Sidonie von Grasenabb (Katrin Schaake), introduces the would-be model Karin Thimm (Hanna Schygulla), with whom Petra commences an affair. While the "almost Racinian dialogue" exchanged between the three women coolly dissects the discontents of heterosexual relationships, the diegesis never requires any male character to cross the threshold of the apartment.[4] An exclusively female space, this long gallery of rooms provides a highly aestheticized setting in which sexual intimacy is referenced not by any of the naturalist conventions associated with the filmic representation of romance but by the dramatic conjunction of figures within the deep space of the shot or the flat space of the frame. As their highly stylized forms and movements reinforce, the women are offered as spectacles or gestural citations of sexual affects: lust, jealousy, indifference, pain. Fassbinder's film syntax avails itself of a raft of melodramatic techniques (rack focus, deep field, mirror images, the thematic ghosting of actors with mannequin props, and figurative décor) that enable every element in the mise-en-scène to index ironically the interior state of the character that it is taken to represent more truthfully than their speech.[5] Although the arrangement of the domestic scene repeatedly marks the limits of Petra and Karin's self-knowledge and their capacity for sexual self-delusion, their inability to address anything but the camera is less a sign of human failing than a compulsory requirement of a visual style that withholds the imaginary plenitude or suture achieved by classical montage.

Denied eyeline matches and shot-reverse-shot sequencing, Fassbinder's characters inhabit a mise-en-scène that refuses the usual hierarchies of background and foreground. Only late in the film, after Karin's departure when Petra's mother Valerie (Gisela Fackeldey) and teenage daughter Gabriele (Eva Mattes) are briefly drawn inside the apartment to witness her abject breakdown, does Hollywood-style continuity editing assert itself, relegating scenic details into their customary supporting role and synchronizing the

emotional climax of the scene with a Verdi aria, the only nondiegetic sound in the film.[6] For a brief moment, everything in the scene is aligned with the vanishing point of heterosexual love (Alfredo's aria to Violetta, being unsourced to anything in the lesbian mise-en-scène) whereas the unstable relation between action and backdrop has previously pointed to the more intractable scenario of same-sex desire. In the earlier nocturnal seduction scene, for instance, the strikingly thin figure of Carstensen is positioned in a postural match before the nude figure of the classical voluptuary. Both Carstensen and the painted female figure behind her extend on a diagonal tilt across the frame, with breasts and pelvis thrust forward but, against the fleshly sufficiencies of the bacchante's naked pose, the metallic bustier and costume chains worn by the emaciated Petra are reinterpreted as sexual aggression and need. Similarly, scene lighting intensifies the pale fleshliness of the blonde Schygulla who—having taken Petra's place in a second morning scene—lies passively among the mussed bedclothes as physically ample and sexually inviting as the recumbent bacchante illuminated by Poussin's chiaroscuro.[7]

Under this representational order, the cinematic signature of the lesbian relationship is achieved not by character development but by scene, a point brought home by the elaborate physical contortions required before the two women can kiss. Her attention drawn to her own photograph in the daily newspaper's review of Petra's latest fashion collection, an excited Karin rises from the bed and takes the paper from Petra who stands on the lower level of the studio. Enthralled by her own success, Karin, with her back to the camera, lowers her head to an awkward horizontal so that it lies at right angles to Petra's own. Giving equal emphasis to the telephone adjacent to the kissing women, the shot setup obscures the faces of both. Above the veil formed by Carstensen's red wig, we see the equally lifeless face of a mannequin staring into the vacancy occupied by Ballhaus' camera. As the two women stiffly hold this posture the kiss's eroticism is further contradicted by the loud ringing of the telephone, which is answered by Marlene who intrudes into the scene from further back inside the studio antechamber in which Petra is physically anchored. Without need of dialogue, the lesbian affect transfers from the two women kissing to the mute onlooker who is efficiently sutured into the triangulated structure of sexual jealousy. Abruptly sent away by her mistress, the ostensibly peripheral Marlene, who is often diminished by perspective like a servant in the background of a Dutch interior, nonetheless shares a three-dimensional space with her mistress, whose kiss from Karin—another of Petra's employees—is transacted through the open partition wall that both connects and separates work space and bedroom. Everything about the kiss is architecturally perverse, bestowing on the characters a shared sexual affiliation that falls away when, for instance, Karin departs the household to rejoin her husband, Freddy, in the nominally heterosexual space that defines the outer limits of the von Kant apartment and the lesbian plot with which it is coterminous.

According to Timothy Corrigan, one of the effects of Fassbinder's use of mise-en-scène is that Petra's apartment acquires an "overwhelming presence" that so dominates the film that "extra-filmic places have less reality than the large wall mural of the set or the Trojan fantasy that the character's costumes create: here the power of the visual imagination to control its space minimizes the substantiality of any other geography on the edge of the film."[8] The other story locations cited by Corrigan are the Miami to which Petra's mother journeys and the Australia where Karin lived as a newlywed, but the list could be extended to include other explicitly heterosexualized spaces such as the Frankfurt specified as the site of the reunion of Karin and her estranged husband, or the city nightclub where Karin, in order to provoke Petra, claims to have encountered "a big black man with a big black prick." Although the straight histories and futures of the characters are invoked via dialogue, Fassbinder's film emphatically refuses to visualize any straight place or time outside the lesbian mise-en-scène constituted by the apartment dwelling so that the scene of heterosexuality remains ghostly and ill defined. Even Petra's own recently annulled marriage has difficulty claiming a space or temporality of its own insofar as its three-year time span is exactly that claimed for Marlene's having been with Petra, which means in story terms that the apartment can never have constituted an exclusively conjugal home. Revealingly, Corrigan argues that Fassbinder's manipulation of cinematic space creates a "longing" in the spectator "for an activity of open spaces, an interaction of bodies rather than poses, and a temporal process other than nostalgia," but insofar as the film's representation of lesbianism is indexed to and continuous with the refusal of open space, the refusal of bodily interactions that are not compositionally derived, and the refusal of narrative progress, to long for another spatiotemporal order is to long for another sexuality.[9] In Corrigan's case, a desire for the time and place of heterosexual narrative action rejects the expressionist mise-en-scène as incapable of providing an adequate story-world for anything other than lesbianism, as if that were a dramatic shortfall rather than the filmic authorization of an alternative sexual system that is more dependent on spatial organization than character or event.

For Corrigan, the inescapably lesbian nature of the film's diegesis is finally irrelevant, claiming the film's plot, as it were, but not its theme or intellectual significance. "In terms of audience expectations," he writes, "the story itself is formulaic, with the important exception that the players of the melodrama are lesbian, a minority group generally ignored by films." Rather than having its own value, female homosexuality is, in Corrigan's account, an ironic device deployed by Fassbinder to accentuate the underlying relations of class that would be obscured if the narrative ménage described the complications of conventional heterosexual romance. Referred to as a "ripple in the standard Hollywood situation," for Corrigan the lesbianism of the relationships that would normally be the focus of the melodrama makes the romance recede in importance and allows the

ideological formations that are normally disguised in classical cinema to saturate the film text and consume the spectator's attention.[10] Corrigan is only interested in the homosexual narrative insofar as it reveals the class-determined relations of power that enmesh the protagonists. Whether suffocating or incidental, the lesbian diegesis is, for Corrigan, always less than the full story.

Corrigan is not alone in simultaneously over and under reading the film's sexual narrative. Other critiques of the film are likewise both insistent and oddly neglectful of the lesbian narrative the film is taken to represent, interpreting the sexual relations between the women exclusively in terms of the power relations they are said to allegorize. Emphasis is frequently given to Petra's bitter analysis of her former marriage as if her abuse at the hands of a patriarchal husband were enough to lend a feminist quality to the relationship she offers Karin. These interpretations typically confine lesbianism to the relationship that exists between Petra and Karin, with the relation between Petra and the subservient Marlene interpreted in terms of class position alone. Lesbianism conveniently functions as an enlarged template for understanding the insidious power relations disguised by class but is not worth comment in its own right. In order to preserve this one-way traffic between sex and power, relatively little attention is paid to the figure of Sidonie, whose visit to her divorced friend is made solely to introduce her to Karin. Precipitating their sexual entanglement, Sidonie's manipulative interest in the other two women and the obvious pleasure she takes in Karin's subsequent abandonment of Petra, is less assimilable to a reading based in the contradictory dynamics of class and so disregarded by those who prefer lesbianism to disappear in favor of other, less sexual, ideologies.[11]

One of the effects of this critical inability to focus on female homosexuality as the film presents it is that most plot summaries of *Bitter Tears* read absurdly, everywhere substituting a story discourse for the filmic discourse that is its barest support. Wallace Steadman Watson, for instance, confidently asserts that when Petra falls for Karin she embarks on "her first lesbian affair" and stresses the disapproval this draws from her "domineering, conventional mother" as if this information were verified by the film text rather than his freestanding interpretative projection.[12] Watson's account of the film—the details of which largely derive from the Fassbinder play on which *Bitter Tears* is based—refers to any number of things that are unknowable to even the most attentive of viewers including Petra's exact age, Karin's taking modeling lessons, her sleeping with men, the duration between scenes, and the length of time Petra's daughter has been away at boarding school. If Watson can assign plot details to a film in which they never appear, he has an equally strong capacity to miss things that are right before his eyes. For instance, while he is in no doubt about the relationship between Petra and Karin, its verisimilitude anchored in word and image, his discussion of the film excludes Marlene from the circuit of lesbian desire as if the mute doggedness with which she serves and observes her employer

bears no relation to the sexually indentured relations linking the other two women. In Watson's account of the last scene, Petra simply turns to her secretary and "in what seems to be a sincere gesture of friendship" apologizes to her, although this reading makes little purchase on Marlene's response, which is to depart the apartment with some hastily gathered necessaries, namely a revolver and the unclothed blonde baby doll (a Schygulla clone) that Sidonie has previously bestowed upon the emotionally bereft Petra.[13] Watson, that is, insists on reading the film as if it were a character-driven romantic narrative although to do so is to remain insensitive to the way in which lesbianism is indexed less to character or story than to mise-en-scène and all it contains, including those props that have little or no plot purpose: the gun, the doll, the noisy typewriter on which Marlene takes a letter to a Mr. Manckiewicz.[14]

Against this critical tendency, I am suggesting that the sexualized mise-en-scène, rather than being the suturing medium of the diegesis, is more emphatically the device that stops the film's story elements coalescing into a persuasive character-driven plot. While the many one-sided telephone conversations connecting characters inside the house to those outside it whom we never hear or see (Karin's estranged husband Freddy; the Lufthansa desk attendant who arranges her flight to Frankfurt), appear to establish a storyworld that extends outside the apartment, the arrival of the daily newspaper inside the apartment punctures this illusion. Instead of the image of Karin at the launch of Petra's new fashion collection that the dialogue prepares us for, an over-the-shoulder shot reveals a grainy black-and-white photograph of Schygulla, Carstensen, and the seedy Fassbinder of the early 1970s.[15] Instead of offering fake evidence of a fictional world that continues beyond the lesbian scene, the image insists on the filmic quality of everything before the camera.[16]

Revealed as it is through costuming and the annexation of furnishings such as the unmade bed, the nude mannequins, and the graphic wall mural, the sexual nature of the relationship between Petra and Karin is minimally supported by the sexual disclosures that comprise their conversation (Petra's account of her ex-husband as sexually repulsive and Karin's more dubious account of the pleasures she takes with a male partner who is, in story terms, reduced to genitals as emblematically black and engorged as Dionysos' are compact and white). The relationship between Petra and Marlene is destined to remain even more obscure at this level since Marlene's muteness keeps her outside the circuits of confessional speech, just as her dressing in dark shapelessly layered gowns locates her beyond the specular circuits of female fashion that it is her job to design but not to embody. Similarly, of all the actors in the film it is Hermann who is required to make most athletic use of the on- and offscreen spaces that comprise the von Kant apartment. Hermann's is the mobile body that dollies through the fullest range of rooms, some of which remain in almost irreconcilable relation to the combined sleeping and studio space in which the main sexual

action occurs, just as hers is the look that exploits the innumerable sight lines those multiple spaces afford. Again and again framed by the camera looking back at those other combinations of figures whose voices dominate the scene and whose affective relationships are more strongly suggested by their mimicking of the Poussin backdrop, the silent Marlene is—as many commentators have noted—the one who views the spectacle of Karin's seduction by Petra as if it were staged for her peculiar humiliation.

In keeping with the diegetically occluded nature of the relation between Petra and Marlene, the most suggestive encounter between the two women is staged spatially with most of their figures kept out of the frame. As Petra prepares for Karin's arrival, Fassbinder—filming from the lower studio into the raised sleeping level—uses the horizontal lines of the carpeted floor and bed to crop the screen into an elongated sliver that visually cuts her off at the knees. When Marlene, responding to Petra's request for assistance, ascends from the studio space she effectively climbs out of the frame leaving only her shoes and legs to join those of her mistress in the tight space beside the bed. In offscreen space Marlene enacts the binding of Petra in costume chains while, on-screen, both women take mincingly effortful steps through the thick shag rug, their feet turning in tight circles around each other. The hobbled action recalls the dance which brought them together in the opening scene but the dropping of the medium shot setup to floor level marks it as technically perverse, the staging of something obscene or, strictly speaking, out of sight. With the two figures cut off at hip level, Fassbinder inverts the classical plan-américain setup that earlier framed Petra and Marlene as romantic leads swaying to the sound of "Smoke Gets in Your Eyes." Visually denying the conventions of Hollywood cinema, Fassbinder's nonnaturalistic framing ultimately makes no distinction between figure and field so that it is finally hard to gauge whether lesbianism is a character attribute of Petra and Marlene or merely a quality of the mise-en-scène they happen to inhabit.

The relation of lesbian sexuality to scene is cinched tight when Petra, in one of the few brute actions the film requires her to perform, places yet another record on the turntable that contributes to the clutter of her room. Unlike the telephone that is its technological counterpart within the film, the turntable, and the audio track it amplifies into the room, has a low fidelity to story development but a high fidelity to the space of lesbianism as the film defines it. As the Walker Brothers croon "In My Room," the diegetically anchored sound opens lyrically onto a trebled scene of fantasy in which the link between sexual desire and sexual possession can only be secured spatially: in my room. A space of fantasy where sexual love is unchecked by the demands of realism, the teenage bedroom invoked by the male voices of the American pop song is at once the diegetic apartment in which Petra would entrap Karin and the claustrophobic mise-en-scène of Fassbinder's set. In each scenario—the imaginary room conjured up by the Walker Brothers' song, the fictional apartment in which Fassbinder's

female characters are listening to the song, and the physical film set which brings these alternate worlds into symbolic alignment—the sexual object is indistinguishable from the interior space in which it is imagined. Karin and Petra, no less Marlene and Sidonie, even Valerie and Gabriele, are less characters than movable props temporarily sited in the mise-en-scène by the lesbian architectures of the film. They resemble, that is, those elements of the set that shift between scenes without causal explanation: the wall hangings, the turntable, the oversized bed. In an ultimate indication of how dependent lesbianism remains on its cinematic furnishing, the bed that is the material sign of the sexual relationship between Petra and Karin simply disappears when Karin leaves. Each rearrangement of things, however unmotivated, asks the viewer to reconceive the rational distribution and relation of objects in three-dimensional space, as well as the sexual alignments those objects support unaided by the conventionalities of character and plot.

Throughout *Bitter Tears* there is no suggestion of erotic interest or romantic escalation between any of the characters that is not foremost a quality of their spatial relationship within the film frame. Sexual affect is continually displaced onto and carried by the typically static configurations that hold two, sometimes three (at one point, four) of the actors in tense connection with each other and with the nude mannequins or figures included in the scene by the Poussin reproduction that defines the internal wall of Petra's bedroom. The manifest displacement of sexuality from character to space is so thoroughgoing in *Bitter Tears* that lesbianism seems to attach to any woman who enters the mise-en-scène excluding, perhaps, Petra's mother and daughter who are protected not by their familial relation but by the assertion of Hollywood-style editing in their presence, which temporarily licenses eye contact between characters and a more naturalized acting style.[17] Sidonie's earlier interview with Petra, in contrast, is statically arranged and shot to include numerous setups that forcibly place the two women in intimate physical relation. They sit touching back-to-back on the edge of the bed, for instance, in a pose lengthily maintained despite its awkwardness, or they lie together across the bed as Petra recounts her revulsion at the sexual advances of her former husband. Simply by blocking his actors in one way and not another, Fassbinder is able to place even the most heterosexually affiliated of the film's characters in postures of lesbian seduction, as if the tales of masculine conjugal brutality shared by these women were preliminary to more feminine consolations that are nowhere delivered upon except decoratively.

Just as the visual saturation of the scene with lesbian potential operates in excess of the backstory information being conveyed by the dialogue, it is seemingly contradicted by the male figure included in many of the film's figurative tableaux. Lynne Kirby, for instance, argues that the relation between Petra and Karin is articulated via the androgynous presence of Dionysos, whose placement within the Poussin painting lofted high between King Midas and the naked bacchante "seems to say, 'on the one

hand, men; on the other, women—' and in between, himself."[18] In Kirby's psychoanalytic reading of the film, the narrative lesbianism of the characters is revoked by the profound undecidability of gender within the film's wider scopic regime. Story-line development is thus secondary to a system of sexual representation, founded on lack and phallic substitution, whose outcomes—femininity/masculinity, heterosexuality/homosexuality—are fundamentally insecure. Kirby therefore values Karin's erotic wavering, "her indecisiveness and inability to take up Petra's offer," above the narrative implication of either her lesbianism or her heterosexuality and criticizes Corrigan for placing undue emphasis on the moment in the film when the mise-en-scène annuls Karin's lesbianism by perspectively hanging the classically posed phallus above her blonde head.[19] In Corrigan's account, the nude Dionysos hovers above Karin and Petra as deus ex machina, the intervening divine who can rectify the narrative deadlock that is their lesbian relationship. Once Karin is symbolically aligned with this masculine deity, then she can leave the von Kant apartment and end her estrangement from her husband and her heterosexuality. Against this masculinist reading that mistakes the male penis for the fantasy object it represents, Kirby stresses the submissive posture taken up by Petra before the upright Karin, an exact graphic match of Midas' supplicant attitude before the naked god. According to Kirby, the female actors' relation to the "embedded representation" of the figurative mural reinforces that it is power not gender on which this "system of identity and difference hinges."[20] But either way, whether as physical organ as in Corrigan's account or phallic prop as in Kirby's, Dionysos' wall-bound penis provides the prosthetic device that turns lesbianism into a more familiar architecture of sexual difference.

Both critics, that is, assume an indexical relation between the decorative mural and the film's heterosexual visual economy and at the same time discount the indicators of homosexual setting and décor. While noting that Fassbinder's film "more or less respects that classical unities of place and action," Kirby nonetheless argues that "the lesbian subject matter, the temporal and chronological uncertainty of the diegesis, and the often incoherent visual style of the film pose the threat of instability, of heterogeneity against any sense of homogeneous unity. Thus, for example, spatial continuity, as well as continuity between character and camera, are set up only to be undermined, made discontinuous, throughout the film."[21] Rather than acknowledging the film's connection between mise-en-scène editing and female homosexuality, and the deployment of both against the normative economies of classical narrative cinema, Kirby's essay abandons any discussion of the film's presentation of lesbianism in pursuit of a radical discontinuity between sexual subject and representational system ("character and camera") more in keeping with psychoanalytic accounts of the accession to gendered identity. As compelling and persuasive as it is, Kirby's reading of *Bitter Tears* erases the cinematic lesbianism of Fassbinder's film and recuperates it to a system of sexual representation based on lack

and—in a conflation common to much film theory of the 1980s—to a system of filmic representation based on the cut. Fassbinder's film, however, holds out a different promise, suggesting perhaps that a lesbian film syntax might be based, not on montage or editing, but on the sufficiency of mise-en-scène shooting within the plenitude of cinematic space.

Picketed by lesbian groups when it played at the New York Film Festival in 1972, *Bitter Tears* remains something of an outcast in conventional histories of lesbian representation in narrative film.[22] In 1977, five years after the film came out, Caroline Sheldon placed the film in the "freak show *genre*" of "men's films about lesbianism," where it has lain ever since out of sight to lesbian criticism.[23] While the film's high theatrical style quickly saw it claimed for a tradition of homosexual camp, the significance of the way in which it reifies same-sex desire as an effect of cinematic space remains critically unmined. That the specularization of lesbian sexuality should be defined by a primarily spatial practice is not without interest to a heterosexually inflected film theory that has repeatedly linked the fetishization of sexual difference to a montage system based on the cut. Indeed, the spatial articulation of lesbianism in film suggests not only the possibility of a visual economy unindentured to castration and lack but also the more urgent need to rethink the history of film style in relation to the history of sexuality in ways that psychoanalytic paradigms do not currently allow.[24] The lesson of Fassbinder's film may well be that the defining mechanisms for the visualization of lesbianism in cinema have always been emphatically spatial and, as a corollary of this, once mise-en-scène is marked as lesbian, sexuality's relation to space can never be invisible again.[25]

If this lesson has been lost on a generation of lesbian critics, at least one lesbian filmmaker has recently taken it to heart. Twenty-five years after *Bitter Tears*, the story of the lesbian ménage repeats: a woman, who shares an apartment with her female lover, remains an impotent observer as an affair unfolds between her girlfriend and another heterosexually identified woman whose motivation remains unclear, doubled as it is between erotic and professional aims. Second time around, the plot belongs to Lisa Cholodenko's *High Art* (1999), its derivation from Fassbinder's film most legible in the director's decision to replay the lesbian story as the story of space.[26] Although it does not restrict itself to a single location, Cholodenko's film just as insistently links mise-en-scène with the lesbian narrative it facilitates. Whereas Fassbinder's original makes continuous female sexual alienation and the fetishized forms of the fashion industry, *High Art*'s lesbian story tracks between a grungy subculture of artists and actors and the slick world of art publication, seemingly upholding a distinction between creative production or auteurship and the secondary market-driven industry that feeds on it. However, the film's diegetic representation of art photography—and the cinematic system to which it stands in analogical relation—ultimately extends *Bitter Tears*' critique of sexual authenticity. Taking a thousand liberties with Fassbinder's plot (including the biographical details

that subtend all his films), Cholodenko pushes the spatiotemporal coordinates of *Bitter Tears* to their logical extreme: reinscribing an inalienable connection between female homosexuality and mise-en-scène, *High Art* disputes the possibility of ever keeping separate lesbian identity and the mechanical reproduction of the image.

In the fictional world of *High Art*, Syd (Radha Mitchell), an assistant editor at *Frame* magazine, and the photographer Lucy Berliner (Ally Sheedy), are brought together by nothing more than the contiguity of their Manhattan apartments. The sexual intrigue between the two women commences when Syd's after-work soak in the bath is disturbed by drops of water falling from the ceiling above. Her nakedness screened from the camera by the art industry journal she reads, Syd calls out her annoyance to her live-in partner James (Gabriel Mann) whose response feeds in from offscreen space. Establishing Syd and James' heterosexual intimacy via a physical dislocation, the bathtub scene recalls that of the previous scene in which Syd enters the apartment to find her boyfriend already there but talking on the telephone. Even when girlfriend and boyfriend are placed in the same room they are rarely in the same plane, the unevenness of the composition revealing as fully as their speech that Syd and James are frequently at cross-purposes. The camera uses the interior space of the apartment to expose the limits of the straight relationship, indexing an incompatibility that has less to do with sex than the demands of work. Repeatedly found in the kitchen and bedroom, James is associated with a domesticity discounted by the film's restless sexual and spatial economies that are more invested in the lesbian loft above in which no one eats and no one sleeps, being too occupied with the joint demands of art and drugs.

In narrative terms all that stands between the space of heterosexuality and the space of homosexuality is the less than watertight ceiling that also forms the floor of Lucy's second-floor apartment, where she lives with her German girlfriend, Greta (Patricia Clarkson). As James is the first to recognize, the getting together of Syd and Lucy is almost inevitable as soon as the distance between the two apartments is physically breached. Syd's transition upstairs is conveyed by a cut that locates the camera inside the other apartment, focused on a door that will open to reveal the straight girl standing in the hallway, ratchet in hand, like an eager girl scout. In keeping with the spatial thickening of the sexual plot, Syd's initial perception of how lesbians live comes from the low vantage point offered her by the bathroom floor where she grapples with the faulty plumbing as Lucy looks on. Still flat-out on the floor, Syd glances up then awkwardly behind as she sees a number of framed photographs affixed to the bathroom walls. With the camera shot now indexed to her point of view, the photographs are initially seen upside down before the camera rotates them right way up, the visual corollary of Syd's assuming a new position in three-dimensional space the better to see what turns out to be a series of underwater photographs of Greta taken by Lucy. Formally obtuse, the blatant camerawork

cues in the dual complications that drive the film from this point forward: the lesbian rivalry between Syd and Greta over Lucy and an associated rivalry between the still and moving image, both of which play out in primarily spatial terms.

From this point forward, sexual and aesthetic rivalries are mutually engaged throughout the film. Syd is associated with the well-lit modular offices of *Frame* magazine and its state-of-the-art technologies of photographic reproduction. The heavy square-framed glasses she wears at work, like the artificial lenses and magnifiers she frequently peers through, indicate both Syd's relentless scrutiny of detail and her inability to know herself despite her sexual and professional motivations being transparent to everyone around her. Greta, on the other hand, is most closely linked to the dim interior of the timeworn upstairs apartment with its obscure light sources, partial screens, and softly upholstered sofas and beds. What hard surfaces the apartment does afford are mostly used for the drug taking that is the fairly constant activity of the apartment's residents and visitors who all identify as artists of some stripe. Greta's drug use is first established in the opening post-title shot: squatting on the floor, her red dress visually crisp against a depthless white background, she inhales two powdered lines from a closed toilet seat before rejoining her girlfriend in a restaurant banquette. The disjointed and highly jaded conversation the two women subsequently pursue reveals Lucy's impatience with the extent of Greta's drug use although, as the conversation continues, this point of conflict is eclipsed by their shared cynicism about the contemporary art world and its modes of recognition. Holding MacArthur grants and indigenous artist awards in contempt, the photographer and actor, whatever their personal difficulties, jointly adhere to a model of artistic merit that is associated, not with funding bodies and the honors they dispense, but with auteurship and a creative moment, both past and foreign, which gathers itself under the proper name Fassbinder. "You know, Fassbinder always told me the ugliest quality in a woman is vanity," says Greta and her heavily accented English endorses her relation to the German director as fully as her Schygulla-inspired diva-ness.[27] Taken in combination with her drug addiction, no one can dispute Greta's claim to the Fassbinder aesthetic, which ties together homosexuality, artistic intensity, and an unchecked impulse to self-destruction. On the other hand, Lucy's obvious American-ness, her sobriety, and her resolutely untheatrical nature indicate her highly mediated relation to this creative inheritance.[28]

If Germany, Fassbinder, and drugs represent creative possibilities for Greta, the film subsequently unreels just enough backstory to establish they represent the opposite for Lucy, who leaves her real home, New York, to be with Greta in Berlin in order to escape the critical recognition her photography is starting to attract. Artistically counterweighted across the US/German divide, the national contradictions instantiated by the lesbian couple are ethnically redoubled by the later revelation of Lucy's Jewishness

when her mother—in an accent as thick as Greta's—kvetches about her daughter's German girlfriend all the while sitting inside a New York apartment oppressively sedimented with the signs of European culture. Returning to live in New York, Lucy and Greta come burdened with a cultural and creative history that sets them at odds, which might explain the straightforward appeal of Syd who, named after the Australian city in which she was born, wears her relation to place far more lightly. Thrown together in an almost featureless walk-up apartment house, Lucy is increasingly attracted to Syd's relentless professional ambition against which Greta's European decadence appears less and less desirable. Like a Jamesian ingénue, Lucy must finally decide between Syd and Greta and the two spatiotemporal alternatives they represent: new and old worlds; still and moving images.

The blonde on blonde standoff between the impassive faded film actress and the pert creative executive also engages two different narrative paradigms, one motivated by nostalgia for the past, the other entirely future directed, each associated with distinct sexual locations. High in both spatial and narcotic terms, the upstairs apartment Lucy and Greta share provides the setting for scenes that reveal the temporal dislocations that occur under the influence of drugs. Most significantly, the absorption of drugs is repeatedly shown to retard or slow time and action, so that it becomes impossible for anyone upstairs to achieve any straightforward task, most particularly leaving the apartment. Lucy's attempt to have sex with a doped Greta, like her attempt to talk with her in a second restaurant scene, simply ends with her girlfriend's drift into a tranquilized state that is not quite sleep but an evacuation of the shared temporality necessary for conversation and even for sex. But whereas drugs in association with Greta signal an incapacity for lesbian sex, in association with Syd they figure its very possibility. When Syd, otherwise anchored in the downstairs apartment and the goal-oriented world of art publication, inhales for the first and only time, the film abdicates its adherence to the rules of cinematic realism in order to render the experience subjectively. As she lolls back on the upstairs' sofa, Syd looks up at one of Lucy's photographs hung on the wall above her. The photographic image captures two women (who, in diegetic time and space, sit across the room from Syd) lying together on a white-sheeted bed. The camera shot stays on the mounted photograph before a cut to Syd's face shows her closing her eyes, followed by a cut back to the photographic image now cropped to a full-screen bleed. Indexed to Syd's drug-assisted imagination, the photograph's material border is replaced by the cinematic frame preliminary to the animation of the formerly still sexual image. The two women are seen to kiss and writhe on an unmade bed as the filmic image overrides the photographic one in a sexual scenotope that signals the capacity of the cinematic apparatus to alter temporal space. Via the expedient of the moving-image camera, Syd's lesbian fantasy inserts itself into the plot-time of the film, establishing the mechanical dependency of sexual story on filmic discourse. Thus *High Art* organizes the lesbian

contest between Greta and Syd as the encounter between two reproductive technologies: cine-film and still-photography. In a direct reprise of Fassbinder's *Bitter Tears*, Cholodenko resolves this lesbian/filmic contest in mise-en-scènic rather than story terms.[29]

Insofar as they organize a narrative relation between space and time, drugs in *High Art* approach the status of cinematic chronotope as clearly as the car in which Syd and Lucy make the journey from Manhattan to the upstate cottage where they sleep together for the first time. The leathered interior of Lucy's mother's Mercedes-Benz is the cinematic marker of spatial and sexual transition. Like Lucy's darkroom, the car lends privacy and erotic purpose to the two women although neither of the exchanges that occur in those enclosures is obviously sexual. Car and darkroom nonetheless take narrative precedence over those other spaces—upstairs bathroom and bedroom, the lounge of the apartment below—which, while foregrounding sexual action, are all compromised by being associated with Syd and Lucy's neglected partners, James and Greta. When Syd and Lucy kiss on Greta's bed, for instance, Greta lies unconscious in the bathtub, yet to be resuscitated mouth-to-mouth by Syd, the "teenager" whom she despises.[30] The conversations that take place in the darkroom and car determine two things, one about work, the other drugs. In the darkroom, Lucy to Syd: I like your ambition. In the car, Syd to Lucy: I don't like your habit.

In order to resolve this incompatibility between work habits and drug habits (in order, that is, for Syd and Lucy to have sex) the film requires the advent of an entirely new spatial and temporal order. This is provided by the upstate cottage which becomes, first, the on-screen location for lesbian sex and, second, the offscreen location that Lucy, absenting herself from the downtown apartment building, goes to for time "out." Somewhere—anywhere—off Manhattan, this other place would seem to be the place of rehabilitation given that Lucy's second withdrawal is less from her girlfriend, whom she has already sexually betrayed, than from their shared drug use. Lucy's renunciation of drugs and of Greta, however, is nowhere represented except as a return to the stairwell that separates the two apartments, a space which has never before appeared in the film. The now clean Lucy, suitcase in hand, is captured at the base of the stairs by a camera located at the height of the upstairs landing. Climbing upwards Lucy thus achieves a spatial (and so sexual) agency that can choose between high and low apartments and the women they house. For the first time *High Art* represents the gap between those locations as part of the mise-en-scène, where previously it toggled between them via the mechanism of a cut. Animated neither by addiction nor professional ambition, the darkened, featureless hallway is lesbian space temporarily sequestered from the telos of story.

The film's delivery of Lucy to this hiatus space marks her utter removal from the space of the bedroom that would normally stand as the sexual

chronotope, the conventional background for foregrounding sexual possibility just as the road conventionally represents the journey. Previously, the bedroom of the rural cottage provided the nighttime location for the montage sequence in which Lucy and Syd have sex. Segueing to a morning-after scene in the same room, Lucy and Syd have sex again this time abetted by the presence of Lucy's camera, set on time-release, its lens angled in on the bed in which the two women lie. The exceptional natural light of the bedroom scene now seems motivated, the room lit, the bed placed for photographing its occupants twice-over, the mise-en-scène belonging to both Lucy's photograph and Cholodenko's film. As if further thematic reinforcement were needed, this sexual moment is captured a third time when Lucy's portrait of the naked Syd ultimately appears on the bar-coded cover of *Frame* magazine. Reified in both the film's codes of satire (which relentlessly target the editorial staff of *Frame*) and those of romance, the cover image stands dual testimony to Syd's unrelenting ambition as well as her finally tragic love for Lucy.

Stranded between two women and two apartments, Lucy must decide on one. She climbs the stairs to the upstairs apartment but only to convey to Greta what she already knows, that she is leaving her and the apartment space they share. By way of good-bye, Lucy takes a final line of powder with her now ex-lover. An abrupt cut moves screen events forward to a new time and place caught in an exterior establishing shot, the second of only two in the film and a direct reprise of the first. Syd is seen coming out of a blank apartment building where she discovers Greta's drug-buddy Arnie (Bill Sage) sitting hunched over the wheel of the Mercedes. This is exactly the same location where, in exactly the same car, Syd has formerly joined Lucy in order to drive out of the city and away from the drugged milieu that everyone else calls home. For the second time in the film, Syd opens the car door and climbs in. Arnie, the spatial ghost of Lucy, conveys the fact of her death before getting out of the car, leaving Syd as she had found him, cushioned inside the Mercedes, unable to move the story forward. Technically in shock, Syd says nothing coherent in the three minutes of run-time left. Going nowhere in story or character terms, Syd can nonetheless still be moved through cinematic space. In lieu of narrative resolution, Cholodenko merely places the dazed Syd back in the precincts of *Frame* before visually shifting the burden of perspective onto the red-haired receptionist who throughout the film has sat at her desk dully plodding through Dostoevsky while keeping a competitive eye on Syd's rise through the ranks. The last image of the film is the silent head of the vacuous office girl who records Syd's return to work with the mechanical efficiency of a moving-image camera.

As I have argued from the outset of this book, the capacity to register lesbian story in the dynamics of cinematic space is hardly an innovation but what we have come to expect from the Production Code system and its extended afterlife in post-Code film. What is most surprising

about Cholodenko's remake of Fassbinder, however, is that despite an unambiguous lesbian story and the inclusion of sexually explicit images (neither of which can be said of *Bitter Tears*) lesbian affect and thematic resolution is still primarily invested in mise-en-scènic effects. As late as 1999, we are forced to conclude, visual evidence of sex between women doesn't prove the lesbian story so much as reaffirm its dependence on the spatial coordinates of cinematic representation.

# 5 The Lesbian Location
## *Single White Female*

Since its release in 1992, Barbet Schroeder's *Single White Female* has repeatedly been called to account for its misogyny and homophobia by a number of queer critics who regard the film's affiliation to the thriller genre as less important than the psychic metanarrative it inscribes.[1] Indifferent to those aspects of the film that indicate Schroeder's directorial homage to Roman Polanski's earlier apartment trilogy, *Repulsion* (1965), *Rosemary's Baby* (1968), and *Le Locataire/The Tenant* (1976), these readings tend to ignore the primary role ceded to story location within Schroeder's film, which utilizes the exterior and interior spaces of an actual apartment house, in favor of the character psychology that story space secondarily supports.[2] In abstracting the psychological drama out of the material or environmental dimensions of the film's story, however, these readings offer no real resistance to a psychic narrative they nonetheless find objectionable: the archaic drama of female narcissism, here presented as the story of lesbianism or the failure of women to achieve appropriate ego boundaries.[3] As incisive as these readings are, and as indisputable their accounts of the film's politics of sexual representation, I wish to approach Schroeder's film with less of an emphasis on psychic narratives of feminine identity formation and more of an emphasis on the apartment space in which these narratives are grounded. Accordingly, I have little time to spare for the pretitle sequence that jump-starts many other readings of the film but seems clunkingly like something added on after the polling of preview audiences revealed some confusion about character motivation.[4] At best dreamlike, at worst pedantic, the sequence reveals two little girls, dressed exactly alike, one applying makeup to herself and her identical twin whom she cossets adoringly, both staring into a dresser mirror that the camera shot deftly exploits to redouble their already doubled images. In this apparatus shot *par excellence*, the frame widens to one side to reveal the two girls initially perceived as reflected figures standing in the illusory depths of the mirror, before a final reorientation sites them before the camera less ambiguously. Spatially and temporally unanchored from the diegesis it nonetheless inaugurates, the mirror sequence functions in excess of the requirements of plot intelligibility: it provides no significant backstory information that is not

delivered on cue within the film by the discovery of aged newspaper clippings referencing the death by drowning of a young girl, an identical twin to the needy young woman who is aggressively remodeling herself in the image of her roommate in the narrative present. Adding nothing in story terms, the real purpose of the childhood sequence is to incentivize psychological interpretation *per se*: the Besch twins—no less than the mirror in which they appear—stand for femininity itself, and for the identificatory mechanisms that are considered endemic to it. But we might for the moment decline this invitation to elucidate plot in psychological terms and try to keep separate the film's sexual thriller narrative and the interpretation it seems to insist on, that femininity is a masquerade or lesbianism is pathological, both arguments that appear with deadening frequency in the secondary literature.[5] Given the physical logistics of the thriller plot, in particular its spatial twists and turns through the apartment house that is its primary location, the film can be made to tell a different sexual story, perhaps less homophobic, than the one we think we know.

This other story starts in bed. Almost. Against a night sky appears the daunting partial exterior of a huge sculpted building, dark except for the illuminated windows of its upper floor landings and stairwells, and those few apartments where the residents are still awake. The soundtrack gives way to the sound of a man and a woman talking, a conversation that seems the more intimate for its first going unseen. The long take slowly pans across the upper reaches of the building then steadily draws in to focus on the darkened windows of a corner apartment before a cut takes the scene inside the bedroom from where this pillow talk proceeds. A twentysomething couple, Allie Jones (Bridget Fonda) and Sam Rawson (Steven Weber), lie across a double bed, he fully and she partially dressed, discussing their wedding plans and fantasizing about the children they hope to have together. Heard before it is seen, Allie and Sam's conversation commences over an establishing shot that inaugurates the time and place of heterosexual action from outside its interior domain. Moving from exterior to interior, Schroeder's shot sequence foregrounds sexual location before sexual scene, a relation of priority confirmed as the bedroom scene progresses over a blackout through a long night in which the now-naked couple's sleep is interrupted by repeated phone calls from Sam's estranged wife. At the sound of the second phone call, Allie rises from the bed to go and disengage the answering machine located in the hallway, hesitating long enough to hear Sam's ex-wife refer to the sex she and Sam have had that afternoon. Forced to confront his sexual infidelity, Allie's rejection of Sam is manifested in two actions, the covering of her nakedness and his immediate eviction from the apartment they cohabit. Of these actions, only the first is seen: Standing in the bedroom doorway, Allie takes up the silk kimono she wore in the opening scene to hide the breasts and buttocks she has previously displayed moving through the underlit apartment. Quickly extinguishing heterosexual romance, the film offers in its place the

less familiar drama of sexual location as Sam's unseen departure from the building is immediately counterbalanced by the distraught Allie's 4 a.m. removal to the apartment upstairs where, too upset to stay in her own apartment alone, she spends the rest of the night. From this point forward the narrative suspense lies less in the romantic question of whether or not Allie will get Sam back than in the more obscure, though equally sexual, relation between the two apartment spaces, variously defined as heterosexual and homosexual locales.

The second apartment has already been connected with the original apartment before the tearful Allie enters it. In the wake of the phone call from Sam's former wife, as he and Allie argue over his sexual indiscretion, the camera's steady focus remains not on the couple but on the heating vent located in the wall beside the bed they have until this moment shared. Their raised voices continue to be heard across a visual edit which cuts to a different interior in which an unknown man cranes out of another bed in the direction of an exactly similar vent through which the now-muffled sound of Sam's explanations carries: "It was the anniversary of our divorce, she was upset and we had been drinking." In a reversal of the film's opening setup in which the sound of voices is first encountered outside the space in which they originate, Schroeder provides a literal sound-bridge between the two apartments affirming the priority of location over the angst-ridden characters who inhabit it. In the next scene the unknown man, now bare-chested and buckling his pants, answers Allie's knock at the door of apartment #1203. Despite his nocturnal eavesdropping and state of undress, any suggestion of erotic motivation in Allie's male neighbor is extinguished as soon as his character's homosexuality is revealed. As necessary as he will be to the film's violent resolution, Allie's gay friend and confidante Graham Knox (Peter Friedman) is denied any claim on sexual plot, as if his being uninterested in women were the end of that particular story. But if Allie, for one, takes for granted the transparent and commonsensical distinction between gay and straight sexual interests, Schroeder simultaneously deploys the architectural peculiarities of the fictional apartment building to establish that inside its reassuringly stout walls heterosexuality and homosexuality are always threatening to converge.

Like many gothic fictions, *Single White Female* systematically generates and amplifies a profound spatial paranoia about the imminence of sexual collapse. Its most obvious cinematic predecessor is Alfred Hitchcock's screen adaptation of Daphne du Maurier's *Rebecca* (1940)—a rewriting of Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre* which has in its own turn spawned feminist sequels—which likewise sets two women (the first and the second Mrs. de Winter) in a dwelling (Manderlay) where feminine cross-identification albeit across the grave seems to mitigate against heterosexual romance, but that similarity should not obscure the innovation of Schroeder's film which makes indispensable to the otherwise rote story the actual architectural features (corridors, elevators, basement) of a specific building: the Ansonia

apartment hotel.[6] First seen in the opening nocturnal shot, we get a second look at the Ansonia when Allie hurries out of bed in Graham's apartment, running late for a business brunch meeting, and takes to the street below. Architecturally distinctive with its round corner tower and two-story mansard roof adorned with single and double dormers, the building as it appears in daylight from the perspective of Broadway is instantly recognizable to some as the Ansonia but recognizable to far more as a cinematic near relation of the Dakota Apartments, which, as The Bramford, provided the location for *Rosemary's Baby*.[7] Twelve or so blocks apart on Manhattan's Upper West Side, the two buildings are thematically far closer as dual settings for filmic narratives in which domestic architecture aggressively undermines the conjugal relation it is more typically thought to secure. The apartment building's symbolic antagonism to married life is not, however, limited to fiction since from their first appearance in New York's urban landscape multi-occupant dwellings in general, and the Ansonia in particular, were thought to challenge ideal models of family life dependent on the clear separation of public and private space.[8]

Designed by French architect Paul E. M. Duboy to take advantage of new codes permitting apartment buildings greater height, the Beaux Arts–style Ansonia Hotel (1902) architecturally eclipsed Henry Hardenbergh's nine-story Dakota Apartments (1884), one of New York's first-generation luxury elevator apartment houses. Taking up an entire block at 73rd and Broadway, the more modern Ansonia's seventeen stories comprised 340 residential suites of which only 120 had kitchens. In an architectural innovation that reflected the changing needs of middle-class Manhattanites, the other suites ranged from bachelor apartments comprising only parlor, bedroom, and bathroom to family units of four to five rooms purposefully lacking kitchens, dining rooms, and servants' quarters. The permanent residents of these so-called nonhousekeeping suites availed themselves of building-supplied staff and services for whatever housekeeping requirements they had, preferring to eat in the restaurants and dining rooms contained within the hotel or have their meals sent up from the hotel kitchens rather than take on the expense of maintaining a kitchen and full staff. As Elizabeth Collins Cromley writes in her architectural history of New York's early apartments, the Ansonia was exemplary of a shift in the design of multiple-dwelling spaces in that it "also provided great numbers of public conveniences for its tenants: the basement had a fully staffed laundry with steam clothes dryers, an automobile garage, and a Turkish bath; the lobby had a bank, bookstall, cigar shop, telegraph office, doctor, and dentist. The building had a staff of cooks who prepared meals to be served in the seventeenth-floor conservatory dining room or in the private suites."[9] As Cromley points out, the advent of nonhousekeeping suites in apartment hotels like the Ansonia effectively redrew the dividing line between private and public space in the middle-class home by placing activities previously thought to be at the heart of family life—the preparation and consumption

of family meals, for example—firmly in the public and commercial realm. Similarly, the conjunction of bachelor and family apartments within the same building brought together residential constituencies that were normally kept apart, the married and the unmarried, the established and the aspirant middle class. Simultaneously maintaining and blurring social distinctions, even the technological infrastructure of the Ansonia suggests the high premium placed on social convenience and communication within a space variously divided for individual use. Not only did the building supply heat, light, and power to every room and include numerous passenger and service elevators—standard amenities in luxury apartments by the 1880s—but Duboy's design also offered refrigeration units, artificial ice makers, delivery dumbwaiters to private suites, push-button services, long-distance telephones, and a pneumatic tube system that allowed tenants to exchange written messages with other residents without human intermediary.[10]

According to many sources, although contrary to its filmic representation, the Ansonia was known for its thick sound-muffling walls, which throughout the twentieth century continued to make it the favored address of musicians and theatrical stars, occupants considered on the fringe of middle-class respectability. Built on a nondomestic scale, the Ansonia building was said to be so vast that Broadway impresario Florenz Ziegfeld could house his wife and mistress in separate apartments.[11] As Cromley documents, the popularity of apartment hotels such as the Ansonia prompted widespread critical commentary from those who believed they "disrupted the traditional patterns of married life." The problem was twofold in that the "publicity of shared housing was supposed to expose women to temptation and flirtation on the one hand and deprive them of housekeeping work, leaving them with nothing to do, on the other."[12] Although late nineteenth-century responses concentrate their anxieties around the Ansonia's spatial threat to female morals the building is perhaps more famous for the homosexual facilities it offered Upper West Side residents and transients from the late 1960s when Steve Ostrow opened the Continental Baths in the basement of the landmark hotel. As described by Derek Jarman, eleven dollars entry gave you access to a dance floor

> alongside a very large swimming pool with fountains, surrounded by beach chairs. Off to the side was a labyrinthine white-tiled Turkish bath whose corridors ended in pitch black: the scalding steam took your breath away. In the darkest recesses a continuous orgy was under way, but the heat was so searing that only the most intrepid could get it up.
>
> Besides the Turkish bath, there were saunas, a hundred bedrooms, a restaurant, a bar, a games room, and a hairdresser's, back-rooms with bunks, pitch-black orgy rooms and a sunroof; on a weekend it would be packed.
>
> It was possible to live there—and at eleven dollars a night cheaper than an hotel, or apartment. I met one young man who had lived there

> for three months; he had only left the building a couple of times. Like the desert, though, the Baths played disturbing tricks: down there time dissolved you in the shadows. An afternoon passed in seconds.[13]

Capable of distorting the space-time continuum of ordinary life, the Baths closed in 1974 but the same site reopened in 1977 as Plato's Retreat, a heterosexual swingers club that ran until 1980 when it moved downtown.[14] Seemingly flexible enough to accommodate all sexual persuasions and activities, the historical Ansonia is fictionally reduced in Schroeder's film to a much tighter sexual floor plan that, initially at least, strictly segregates heterosexual and homosexual apartment spaces.

While Allie moves freely between her apartment—an oversized suite of rooms including an entrance lobby, wide corridor, living room, two bed chambers with walk-in robes, sit-down kitchen and bath—and the considerably smaller gay apartment with which it is vertically aligned, the film refuses Graham two seemingly unrelated things: access to the apartment below and any sexual interest. The spatial and sexual prohibition placed on the perennially single gay man has as its effect what might rather be its cause: the strict quarantining of Graham and his straight white counterpart, Sam (also and often seen in half undress), that ensures homosexual man and heterosexual man can never occupy the same space either within or without the apartment building. Graham is free to wander the streets of his Manhattan neighborhood with his girlfriend Allie, but he cannot share so much as an elevator with her boyfriend, alone or even in company, as if sheer same-sex proximity held some sexual threat, as indeed it does in the ostensibly straight apartment below.

Sexual infidelity notwithstanding, the straight couple formed by Allie and Sam instantiate a domestic compatibility that never needs to argue for itself, unlike the homosexual possibilities the film appears to present only to invalidate: the gay man living alone in his bachelor apartment, bereft of boyfriend and with no sexual prospects on the horizon, permanent or otherwise; the single-girl apartment-share that starts well but develops a lesbian undertow that will conclude, as if logically, in extreme violence and the merging of female identities. But if Sam's pre-diegetic tryst with his ex-wife is everywhere recognized as a false threat to heterosexual romance—nothing makes this clearer than the make-up sex assigned him and Allie when their relationship resumes—the narrative and domestic dominance of the straight couple is more thoroughly contested within the film by a cinematic architecture that puts in place far less easy to dismiss homosexual effects, all of which depend on the material environment of the apartment house and its contradictory relation to personal and private space.

Newly single and alone in her apartment, Allie's relationship problems are inseparable from her anxieties about living space. Unable to afford the apartment, but equally unable to let go the rent-controlled lease, Allie is forced to take in a paying roommate, an economic arrangement that compromises

the domestic ideal of home. Like the rise of tenements, boardinghouses, and apartment buildings in nineteenth-century Manhattan, the rent-controlled status of Allie's fictional apartment and the apartment-share arrangement she informally negotiates with a subtenant, both crucial plot motivators, reflect official and unofficial responses to the ongoing escalation of property values and rents in the New York real estate market.[15] Nominally divided into subrentable space (large separate bedroom, shared utilities), Allie's apartment now resembles the space of the commercial hotel room to which her boyfriend retreats once his infidelity is exposed.[16] Throughout his sexual exile at the Atherton Hotel and even after Allie allows him back in her bed, Sam is forced to make spatial compromises of this kind. Unable to resume living with Allie because of the presence of the new female roommate called in to fill the vacancy opened by his leaving, Sam spends the entire film outside the conjugal space represented by the past of his married life and the future he and Allie imagine for themselves. Once reconciled, Sam and Allie are initially reluctant to make the new roommate homeless so they agree to look elsewhere for their ideal marital space. As if exploring the realm of fantasy not real estate, they view together a contemporary high-rise apartment that is well beyond their financial means but meets the ideological requirement of conjugal exclusivity. A blank empty shell, the alternative apartment is devoid of all traces of occupancy, presenting an open-space architecture in which Sam and Allie's heterosexual future would be unrestrained by so much as an internal wall, let alone an unwanted housemate.

Unable to secure this ethereal space, Sam and Allie renew their worldly options in relation to the rent-controlled Ansonia apartment. Despite their experience of sexual infidelity, the straight couple remains naïve enough to think the only thing between them and the space of heterosexual fulfillment is the roommate, Hedra ("Hedy") Carlson (Jennifer Jason Leigh), who outstayed her welcome the moment Sam came back on the scene. By this point, however, the film has disallowed any naïveté about sexual space, heterosexual or otherwise. As the unwelcome telephone call from Sam's ex-wife earlier demonstrates, sexual relations have a way of exceeding both the time span of the conjugal contract and the spaces it counts its own. Proceeding from his former marital home but amplified into the darkened apartment he shares with Allie and Allie alone, the disembodied voice of Sam's ex-wife is the acoustic reminder that space and sexual action are not independent but subject to each other. By this logic Sam and Allie's real problem is not just the other woman, be that Sam's former wife or Allie's current roommate, but also the apartment building that assists in the spatial sabotage of the heterosexual relationship.[17] Affianced or not, the straight couple must negotiate, together and apart, a range of spaces in which their heterosexual presumption will be challenged by a countersexual architecture indifferent to the claims they make for love, for family, for futurity itself. Most of the time the film grants Sam and Allie together they spend predicting the life ahead as if the present were already behind them,

as forgotten as Sam's recent cheating past. Planned to include one girl and one boy, their imagined family lacks only the dog that Hedy gives Allie in her own distorted attempt to make an alternative family. Subsequently falling through a cast-iron window grill booby-trapped by the rejected roommate—another actual feature of the Ansonia apartment put to good plot use—the death of the puppy is another sign, if one were needed, that the space of the apartment is not conducive to family life of any kind.[18]

As the introductory tour of the building she gives her new roommate demonstrates, Allie is already scared of the Ansonia long before Hedy takes over the second bedroom down the hall. While Allie's apprehensions concentrate on the little-visited underground depths of the building, which house the furnace and storage cages for the tenants' use, she has reason to distrust its aboveground architecture as well. The Ansonia, like many another apartment complex both cinematic and real, offers at best a compromised privacy. As Sharon Marcus has established, the modern apartment building confounds many of the ideological oppositions on which the illusory forms of private life are thought to depend: public/private; exterior/interior; masculinity/femininity.[19] Unlike the freestanding and self-contained family home, apartment buildings contain collective spaces of restricted access that are neither strictly private nor public. Removed from the public thoroughfare of the street, the apartment house nonetheless includes foyers and landings that residents must share, making these spaces at once strangely intimate and strangely exposed. Although collective spaces are generic to apartment buildings, within *Single White Female* the clearest enactment of this confusion of public and private space is provided by the film's deployment of an architectural feature peculiar to the Ansonia's design: the light court. In architectural terms the light court represents the deliberate recessing of exterior space, a form of complex massing for which Duboy was celebrated since the innovation both permitted light and air to penetrate the interior and broke up the enormous bulk of the building when seen from the outside.[20] In plot terms, however, Duboy's light court serves another more clandestine purpose when Hedy, leaving the apartment that is now her home at Sam's unexpected return, takes up a position on the Ansonia landing one flight up. From this vantage point Hedy has an unimpeded sight line into the apartment she has just left: she looks out the landing windows across the external space of the light court back through the apartment's windows into its ostensibly private interior and onto the scene of Sam and Allie's reconciliation.[21] Occupying the same floor level as the homosexual Graham, Hedy now shares his privileged access to heterosexual events occurring in the rooms below as she looks through and across the light court, a physical involution of the building's exterior that simultaneously externalizes its interior and makes everything open to view. The light courts are thus analogous in fictional effect and physical form to the building's ventilation system—to which gay Graham is linked—since both courts and vents are invaginated spatial features that turn exterior

barrier walls, assumed to insure the privacy of physically discreet interiors, into conduits through which intimate information travels.[22] The assumption of heterosexual privacy is thus challenged by a spatial knowledge that is marked as homosexual and specifically associated with the architecture of the apartment building. By this purely cinematic logic and without the need for psychological profiling of any kind, Hedy is now as indexically homosexual as the openly gay apartment dweller.

From the first, Hedy, like Graham, is associated with the material infrastructure of the Ansonia. One of several women answering Allie's advertisement, Hedy wins a place inside the rent-controlled apartment in part because of her way with the plumbing. Adeptly closing off a broken faucet, Hedy proves she is as good with hardware as Allie is with the design software she holds copyright over in the film's fashion subplot. The initial meeting between the two women establishes relative roles that will not be contradicted by their ongoing relationship. Hedy's butch competencies are not, however, confined to the domestic sphere: she makes any number of aggressive interventions in the heterosexual relations that comprise Allie's private and professional life, fending off Sam's attempts at reconciliation and verbally threatening her business client, Mitch Myerson (Stephen Tobolowsky) who sexually harasses Allie while trying to screw her over financially. In neither instance do Hedy's actions require her to leave the apartment, the telephone providing her with all the means she needs to subdue the sexual threat these two men pose, if not to Allie, then to her. Hedy's wiping of Sam's lovelorn messages from the answering machine's memory, for instance, effectively keeps him out of Allie's life and the apartment space with which it is increasingly coterminous. No surprise then that Sam's separation from Allie and his exclusion from the Ansonia are both repaired by the same action, his self-described forced entry into the apartment interior. More than coincidentally, Sam's sexual return to the apartment interior is also his return to a screen space he has been visually denied access since the argument with Allie that inaugurated the film's present-tense action. Although Sam has taken a room at the Atherton Hotel this space does not claim visual representation until his romantic banishment from the Ansonia apartment is ended. Under- and overfurnished in the way of hotel rooms with little more than a king-size bed, the Atherton Hotel room, when it finally appears on-screen, functions not as bachelor digs but as the backdrop for heterosexual sex that is far more explicit than anything permitted Sam and Allie at home in the Ansonia.[23]

Experiencing Hedy's presence in the Ansonia apartment as a check on their coupled freedom, the Atherton should continue to be the place the now reconciled Sam and Allie go to be alone. Yet they don't. Even given a hotel alternative, Sam and Allie prefer to have sex in the Ansonia bedroom, broadcasting the sounds of heterosexual renewal about the shared apartment and into the apartment above, as Graham later confirms. For the straight couple sex off domestic premises is chiefly reserved for the

infringements of their relationship. This unsanctioned sex includes that between Sam and his former wife, which occurs in the unrepresented elsewhere of the expanded storyworld, and the sex between Sam and Hedy later transacted under false appearances in his hotel room. Despite only once showing Allie coming or going from the Atherton Hotel, the film requires us to accept that she is a familiar enough visitor to Sam's suite that the night clerk can misrecognize a disguised Hedy as Miss Jones. Once again, the necessities of location outweigh those of character or plot plausibility. By these overdetermined logics, the Atherton hotel room necessarily provides the spatial turning point of the story when Hedy—newly made-over as an exact facsimile of Allie—enters Sam's room while he sleeps. Without speaking, Hedy slips between the sheets and, fulfilling the sexual promise of her name, goes down on him. Still half-asleep, Sam's arousal precedes his fully waking, a dislocation between body and conscious intention that continues after he realizes it is not Allie, but Hedy, in bed with him.

With its foregrounding of the supposed involuntariness of male sexual response, the sexual scenario assigned Sam and Hedy by the diegesis explicitly raises questions of sexual motivation, but the issue of Sam's orgasm, an orgasm he would rather not have, like the issue of Hedy's intention in bringing him off, are both less important than the scene's exploitation of the cinematic conventions that pertain to the representation of oral sex, and specifically fellatio, in mainstream cinema. In this regard Hedy's imposture as Allie, perfected down to the high heels and trench coat beneath which she is naked, is merely a visual decoy device to blur the fact that most of the action assigned the scene is invisible, occurring outside the frame or discreetly obscured within it, as with the repeated point-of-view shot that has Sam look down the length of his body to see nothing but Allie's trademark red bob, rising from between his legs. The nonconsensual sex forced on Sam, itself a stand-in for the unseen sex he willfully engaged in with his ex-wife before the film commenced, distracts us from the spatial infidelity of the sexual image. Looking over the scene's discreet occlusions and suturing edits, the viewer responds to the cues it gives and understands certain sexual actions to be occurring out of sight within or beyond the frame: the motions of oral sex; a male ejaculation however undesired. Sam's climax thus achieved, the murder that follows seems no less implausible. Letting loose a few home truths at each other, Hedy and Sam take up position within the hotel room before Hedy swings a stiletto-heeled shoe across the room where it lodges in Sam's eye socket. Fatally literalizing the eyeline match already established between the aggressively engaged protagonists, the action makes defiantly explicit the role of camera shots and editing in sustaining the illusions of sequence and causality. Whether or not we lament the loss of him as a character, the scene asks us to recognize that Sam is condemned by an impersonal apparatus indifferent to narrative truths grounded anywhere but the here and now of cinematic space.

Dead or alive, Sam's inability to master sexual space has been apparent for some time. In forcing his way back into the Ansonia apartment, Sam may demonstrate his physical dominion over Hedy who is unable to hold him out but in all other respects Allie's boyfriend is no match for her female roommate, who is unrivaled in her freedom to come and go from any number of different interior and exterior locations. Up against the highly mobile Hedy and ultimately the film's system of montage editing, Sam is a lost cause, as spatially vulnerable as the hapless puppy that plunges from the apartment window onto the sidewalk below. Felled by a cut, the editing device that makes it appear a stiletto heel has entered his brain, the spatial coordinates of Sam's demise are independently vertified when his death is announced to Allie, a plot task unsentimentally assigned a television reporter. Casually looking up while making breakfast, Allie takes in the local television report of a homicide at the midtown Atherton Hotel, the victim reduced to a profile ("a white male around thirty years of age") as telegrammatic as that specified in her original classified. Any doubt Allie has about the identity of the dead white man is rescinded when the newsreader gives the number of the suite where the body was found: 612. The crucial fix is not Sam, therefore, but the room with which he is terminally cognate. Reduced to place, Sam's character disappears all the more thoroughly for being glimpsed in the grainy newscast. Zippered into a black body bag and gurneyed to a waiting ambulance through a crowded midtown street, Sam's posthumous emergence into exterior space is the clearest signal possible that the apartment story playing itself out at the Ansonia has no more need of him. At the same time, the live television broadcast beams into the straight apartment a real-time Manhattan that Allie's screen character will never achieve again.[24]

Hedy's greater adeptness in physical and sexual space is most conclusively demonstrated in the scene where Allie, newly alert to her roommate's hidden past, tracks her downtown. Involving two yellow taxis hailed outside the Ansonia, the background street scene—a staple of hundreds of films set in New York—is so iconic that it removes any doubts we might have about the plot plausibility of what the scene foregrounds: one woman's visual impersonation of another. The transition from uptown to downtown achieved, Allie follows Hedy into a sex-on-site basement club where the relation between sexuality and space is so manifest that even obtuse Allie can recognize it. In the first room she enters, a voyeuristic huddle has formed around an obscured couple engaged in some kind of sexual display. On seeing Allie, a woman breaks away from the group and walks towards Allie asking her if she wants to "play." Confused, Allie backs into an adjacent room and into the arms of a male figure who pulls at her through the bars of a grilled enclosure. Eluding the man's grasp, Allie moves deeper into the club until she sees Hedy at the bar talking with another man as the barman repeatedly calls her Allie. The real Allie is forced to understand that Hedy has been sexually impersonating

her. With no time to waste, the film rescues Allie from the blatantly perverse space of the sex club with a cut that deposits her back in the putative safety of Graham's Ansonia apartment, where the sexual and spatial threat is much more insidious.

The scene at the basement club, like the murder scene that follows it at the Atherton Hotel, literalizes the relation between sexuality and space with such concentrated efficiency that it prompts reconsideration of the spatial coordinates of the film's other representations of sex, particularly that between Sam and Allie. Typically confining itself to affectionate preliminaries or sleepy aftermath, *Single White Female* refuses to represent the sex Sam and Allie have at home as other than coital noise transferred into the homosexual apartment directly above their bedroom, or dispersed throughout the space of the apartment they occupy. Heard elsewhere, where Sam and Allie are not, sound alone establishes the present tense of heterosexual sex otherwise discreetly consigned to the story's recent past or imminent future, all moments outside the film's visualization. The first time this aural device is used in the inaugural bedroom scene, it is crucial to establishing the physical relation of different locations, the two apartments within which most of the story unfolds. However, the second time the same device is used—when Sam and Allie have reconciled—its effect is rather different. Though Allie will later be embarrassed to learn that Graham knows she and Sam are back together because the noise of their fucking has resumed in his apartment, the film does not represent this sound via sequential shots of the air vents in the two separate apartments, nor as we might ordinarily expect, on a visual of entangled male and female figures but instead records it against a strange image of their enlarged shadows thrown against the bedroom ceiling and walls. If in the opening scene the fraught sound of heterosexual estrangement is impersonally framed as a crucial plot element by a series of cuts on fixed architectural features (the air vents in the two apartments), the sound of heterosexual sex is continuous with the dimensional limits of the mise-en-scène itself. That is to say, the sound of heterosexual sex is less a plot element than a point of identification between camera and space, an identification so tight it leaves no room for character. Significantly the heavy breathing and deep moans of heterosexual sex fill the apartment air as if they were part of it, unlike the heavy breathing and deep moans Hedy gives out while masturbating, which is represented as an infringement of personal space as the noise she makes carries from her bedroom across the hallway into the nighttime bedroom where Allie sleeps beside Sam.[25] Aided by subjective camerawork, Allie tracks the at first unrecognizable sound through the apartment, establishing beyond doubt that Hedy's vocalizations, unlike the sounds of heterosexual arousal, are traceable through apartment space, proceeding from a source the camera can expose, as it does when Allie glimpses her roommate facedown on the bed, hips grinding into the mattress.[26]

But while *Single White Female* briefly allows the sounds of heterosexual coitus to saturate the mise-en-scène of the apartment—momentarily establishing a sexual and spatial intimacy that conventionally marks the melodramatic culmination of romance—the sexual reunion of Sam and Allie is only demonstrated in order to be more thoroughly decimated by an alternative system in which space can always dislodge character-based claims to sexual identity. For a few seconds of screen time, the sound of straight sex fills up all available screen space but it is precisely this spatial/sexual ideal that Sam and Allie forfeit, the heterosexual losing ground to the homosexual with the transition of the film's action upstairs. As most critics are forced to admit, once Hedy has killed Sam and violently detained Allie inside Graham's gay apartment, the residual generic elements of psychological drama fall away, along with the mise-en-scènic devices they have until this point depended on, particularly mirrors and other visual doublings. Most tellingly, in the post-murder denouement of the film, Hedy no longer appears as Allie's costumed mirror image but resumes the secondhand dreck she originally wore when answering the advertisement. Now operating without check, the thriller format is initially kick-started by a scene in the upstairs apartment where the homosexual Graham seemingly falls victim to Hedy's homicidal impulses, just as the heterosexual Sam has in the Atherton Hotel. Gagged and bound to a chair within the homosexual apartment, Allie waits for Hedy to leave before racking up the volume on the television in an attempt to exploit an inherent flaw in the fictional Ansonia—the leaking of sound from one apartment to the next—as the means to draw the building's superintendent. When this fails, trapped and without any doubt about Hedy's murderous capabilities, Allie responds to the contingencies of sexual time and place by giving Hedy the same-sex kiss required to reassert the forms of psychological drama over the thriller format, however brief the stay of execution.

With the two women newly aligned on the basis of nothing more than the lesbian kiss, Allie is effectively held hostage to a sexuality that seems to derive firstly from the apartment space in which she is entrapped. Kiss transacted, Allie is next seen at the keyboard of Graham's computer accessing the fledgling Internet of the late eighties/early nineties in order to book her and Hedy's getaway air tickets. When Hedy leaves the room, Allie pulls up a CompuServe screen and logs into a chat room under her usual alias, desperate to send out a real-time rescue call that prioritizes her locational coordinates inside the homosexual apartment: "PLEASE HELP ME. THIS IS NOT A JOKE. I'M AT 769 W.74TH STREET, APT. . . ." Hedy returns just in time to pull the cable and Allie's unsent CompuServe message fades from the screen and is ultimately replaced by a false suicide note. Allie's next best attempt at escape comes with the arrival of the sexually and professionally predatory Mitch who briefly but incompetently assumes the form of her heterosexual rescuer before becoming Hedy's

third victim, shot repeatedly as a cutaway reveals the lifeless homosexual form of Graham lying in the bathtub. Unplugged from everything except the sexual restraints of screen place and screen time, the film now revivifies the gay man who has lain as if dead in the internal bathroom of the apartment. Brought back from the dead, Graham weakly assaults Hedy who goes on regardless but his appearing in shot so unexpectedly is a far more effectual demonstration of a homosexual claim to on-screen space and time almost indifferent to the action logics of the thoroughly wound-up thriller plot. Graham is brought back to life, that is, as if to further demonstrate that he is entirely surplus to story requirements. Falling to the floor expended, the homosexual dramatically upstages a diegesis to which he remains irrelevant, as indifferent to it as it is to him. Graham's gay persistence in the apartment mise-en-scène demonstrates the independence if not priority of other filmic elements over the character-driven story line they ostensibly support. The homosexual's return from the dead is as persuasive as the lesbian kiss, an indisputable part of the here and now of the sexual scene that occurs without reference to more tiresome questions of plot plausibility or character psychology. Completely unanticipated, Graham's on-screen resurrection is much more believable in terms of film logic than the reference Allie makes to his survival in the final voice-over which ends the film. After all, life without screen time and place, according to the film's homosexual coordinates, is no life at all.

Let down by everyone and everything in the homosexual apartment, the odds against Allie only improve when Hedy leads her at gunpoint out of Graham's apartment and down into the bowels of the building. Although the fictional Ansonia is known to contain both gay and straight apartment spaces, its architectural infrastructure is harder to read sexually. Like the ventilation system that fails to keep heterosexual and homosexual interiors separate despite the apartment block's strict-seeming segregation policy, the lift is a transitional facility that shuttles between variant possibilities. With its defective metal cage-door recalling the sex-cage at the basement club, the lift provides Allie another ineffectual defense mechanism to set against the threat that Hedy embodies. Repeatedly slammed against Hedy, the lift's cage-door merely serves to establish that she is physically immune to any obstruction another character might throw in her way. Cut free from the sexual coordinates of the upstairs apartment, the only thing that can stop Hedy is an intervention from screen space itself, the first sign of which is Allie's disappearance from the mise-en-scène. Having been strangled into unconsciousness by Hedy, Allie's inanimate body is dragged from the lift into the quasi-public space of the basement where it is hidden from sight beneath a blanket. Hedy then goes to get the wheelbarrow she needs to lug the deadweight of Allie to the Ansonia's furnace but when she returns all that is left is the abandoned blanket. Allie is now exercising the same spatial prerogative as Graham: an ability to come and go from screen space despite the implication of past events. The camera then reveals Allie curled inside a

recess of the building's ventilation system but when Hedy looks in the same place she is gone. Hedy continues looking for Allie in all the wrong places before opening a closet to see her own reflection in a mirror. Confronted by the image before her, Hedy has no defense against the assault simultaneously made on her back as Allie swings into the frame from above, screwdriver in hand, to deliver the puncturing stab that will simultaneously kill character and assert the claims of screen space now completely untethered to cause and effect.

In *Single White Female*, the fictional Ansonia is the site of a heterosexual/homosexual struggle to which its corridors, elevator, and basement are indispensable but finally indifferent. Thought dead, Allie disappears from sight before miraculously reappearing inside the crawl space offered her by the rat-infested ventilation system. Nothing more, though nothing less, than a hole in the wall, this is not the space of last resort so much as the logical outcome of the apartment building's enfolding of heterosexual and homosexual logics. Not yet her tomb, still less the womb figured by Polanski's fictionalized Dakota, the wall cavity of Allie's unseen retreat is, perhaps, a space beyond compulsory sexual differentiation of this order. Safe in the interior of the interior, if only for the meantime, Allie's miraculous reemergence ushers in an utterly new visual architecture, one the Ansonia cannot provide. For the film's final scene, Allie is relocated in the aerial space of her new apartment, the one she and Sam had previously considered taking the lease on. Silhouetted against its oversized floor-level windows, Allie is visually airborne, floating in space above the New York cityscape below. Barely held by gravity, Allie has slipped the spatial constraints of causality once and for all: for the first and only time in the film her voice floats free of the image track entirely, claiming the unimaginable place and time of storytelling, not story. Attesting to a postmortem compassion for the incomplete identical twin, the final visual—a photo frame containing snapshots of both women spliced together to form a single portrait face—is easy to read as evidence of Allie's taking over Hedy's position within the narcissistic identificatory structures of lesbianism. However, the disembodied voice-over better confirms that Allie is outside herself, no longer anchored to her on-screen character or restricted to the parameters of on-screen space but adrift in the inside of cinema where these lesbian apartment stories continue to run without end.

# 6 The Lesbian Edit
## *Bound*

If the lesbian apartment in Barbet Shroeder's *Single White Female* has both fictional and real-world coordinates, the Wachowski brothers' *Bound* (1996) is located in an apartment whose reference points are purely cinematic. Shorn of the cityscape usually required of the mob movie, *Bound* unfolds in an apartment setting in which even the architectural fixtures seem to derive chiefly from other films about sexual dissimulation and the spatial paranoia aroused in its vicinity: toilet bowl and plumbing from *The Conversation* (Francis Ford Coppola, 1974); shower tub from *Psycho* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1960); and staircase from *Vertigo* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1958). All three of these cinematic antecedents set their heterosexual plots in hotels that, like the apartments under investigation in this study, confound the rules of sexual certainty while substituting spying and surveillance for privacy. The abundance of these filmic associations—and the generalizations about sexual identity they readily support—can, however, obscure the fact that *Bound* bears a strict formal allegiance to a specific film in which homosexual plot and apartment setting are virtually inseparable. Celebrated as an experiment in uninterrupted shooting, Alfred Hitchcock's *Rope* (1948), in which the indisputable homosexuality of the young male protagonists is nowhere visible, provides the theoretical template for the Wachowski brothers' manipulations of cinematic time and space as the most appropriate means for making lesbianism, a notoriously invisible phenomenon, legible on screen. While the elusiveness of female homosexuality is crucial to the film's narrative, *Bound* simultaneously requires lesbianism to function evidentially and to disclose itself within the visual field. Under this representational double bind, the film—like Hitchcock's film before it—frequently makes up for the fundamental indeterminacy of sexuality with cinematic technique.

In the enigmatic opening sequence of *Bound*, Corky (Gina Gershon)—shortly identified as an ex-con good with her hands—lies unconscious, bound and gagged, at the bottom of a closet the tight dimensions of which the mobile camera has distorted with its wide-angle focus and first vertical, then horizontal, trajectory so that the place of confinement is oddly capacious, holding as it does not just a limp body but the fetishized accessories

that could be said to constitute both her character and that of her female accomplice, Violet (Jennifer Tilly). Like many things in *Bound*, this scene invites a direct parallel with *Rope*. It would seem that the Wachowskis are deploying Hitchcock's famous moving camera in the one place he never allowed it: the closed space that holds the body. Toward the end of *Rope*'s dinner party, when Jimmy Stewart finally lifts the lid of the chest that hides the strangled victim, the camera shot continues to conceal that much anticipated sight offscreen. The circumspection of Hitchcock's framing, according to D. A. Miller, has little to do with the conventions of a murder plot that generically require the discovery of a corpse and everything to do with the "pathways of symbolic signification" that inevitably return to the sexual status of the young man's asphyxiated body. Miller goes on to argue that the "obscenity" of the aroused male body "'murdered' from behind," and its implications for a heterosexual visual economy mortgaged to castration anxiety, require that the young man's body remain hidden for the duration of Hitchcock's film.[1] However, the still-breathing body discovered inside *Bound*'s most recessed space, far from remaining unseen, is repeatedly submitted to the trial of visibility. Not once, but three times, *Bound* revisits the spectacle of the restrained figure held in the dark and that female body's vulnerability to the camera's investigative eye returns us, as unfailingly as Hitchcock's visual reticence, to a consideration of its homosexual status.

In the inaugural scene, the camera's discovery of that body is obscurely diagnostic. Entering the closet from above and commencing its high-angle descent, the tracking camera curiously elongates the distance from the patterned hatboxes neatly aligned across two high shelves, down past the metal hangers which hold Violet's visually foreshortened synthetic dresses, to the rows of white heels that gleam out of shadow nearer to the floor before panning across to Corky's heavy black boots, dark drill pants, cotton tank, and labrys tattoo. Throughout, disconnected samples of dialogue in female and male voice-over, both seductive and aggressive, echo across the scene never quite coalescing into anything like a sequence: "I had this image of you inside of me, like a part of me"; "You planned this whole thing"; "Where's the fucking money?" Disorienting in spatial and acoustic terms, the shot nonetheless establishes a visual continuity between the feminine accoutrements of Violet's wardrobe and the butch tackle that Corky wears throughout the film so that the optically attenuated space between them is narratively abbreviated or, in character terms, reduced so that Corky's dyke taste in fashion verifies the lesbian potentiality of Violet's own. Having placed these feminine and masculine garments in some soon to be elaborated relation, the camera, now settled at floor level, holds on Corky's attractively battered face, stopping short of knitting into her character those other props which also contribute to the sexually suggestive quality of the scene: the rope, the gag, the designer bruises.

Ellis Hanson's description of *Bound*'s opening sequence similarly draws attention to the visual and sexual ambivalence of this scene:

> Once the title disappears from the screen, we are unsure what we are looking at. We cannot make sense of the shapes on the screen. Slowly they resolve themselves into a scene in which a woman bound with rope is trapped in a closet. The visual cues slip from bondage as sexual play to bondage as sexual assault—and so we are still unsure what we are looking at. We cannot fix the scene or the fantasy that motivates it. A woman is in the closet, in bondage, and yet her very restraints, not to mention all those shiny shoes, turn the bondage into a fetish and release the very eroticism that closets are supposed to negate.[2]

As Hanson suggests, it would be hard to underestimate the resonance of this opening scene for contemporary theorizations of lesbian representation. Since Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick argued the historical pertinence of this figure for modern understandings of homosexual/heterosexual distinction, the closet has become the governing trope through which the impossibility of homosexual containment is understood.[3] Far from being an architectural site, let alone a secure one, the closet functions as an epistemic figure which organizes the relations of knowledge and ignorance which inadequately cordon homosexuality from the heterosexuality for which it is everywhere mistaken. The closet, in this sense, is oddly expansive, though finally restrictive in the revelations it orchestrates, its permeability always in the service of holding a distinction—however unstable that line may prove to be—between in and out, gay and straight. *Bound*'s closet, and the narrative it initiates, does indeed function as a sexual proscenium, staging the display of lesbian identity in a visual register that is not without its own troublesome relation to the unreliability of homosexual difference. Notoriously obscure, sexuality is, after all, the last thing to submit to regimes of full and final disclosure.

The question of lesbian recognition, its difficult emergence within a visual field enthralled by heterosexual difference, is foregrounded throughout *Bound* both thematically and stylistically. The film's plot, an elaborate confidence heist, depends on the invisibility of same-sex desire and the uncertainty of sexual affiliation. Thrown together by little more than the proximity of two apartments, Violet's own and the vacant one next door (#1003) that Corky has been hired to make over, Violet and Corky commence an affair unbeknown to Violet's longtime mobster boyfriend, Caesar (Joe Pantoliano). When two million dollars of mafia money comes into Caesar's care, Violet sees a way "out" but needs Corky's help to steal the money and leave herself clean. The planned "redistribution of wealth" involves a straightforward theft from Caesar and Violet's apartment but when Caesar discovers the money gone, instead of running as the women anticipate, he decides to brazen it out with the mob's collectors holding Violet hostage to his plans. While it occurs to Caesar that Violet might be capable of double-crossing him with Johnnie Marzzone (Christopher Meloni), who has been fingered in the setup, it never occurs to him that she might be in cahoots

with someone outside the orbit of the mob, let alone that of heterosexuality. Invisible though their criminal pact is to the sexually myopic Caesar, the film nonetheless "uses the whole gamut of classic scopophilic lures—carefully staged sex scenes, fetishistic costumes, killer cosmetics, shadowy lighting, voyeuristic point-of-view shots, and so on—to help [the viewer] recognize the sexual intensity of the relationship between the two female leads, Violet and Corky. Theirs is a desire that the men in the film cannot see, though the women hide it in plain sight."[4] Thus, while Corky's butchness is worn like ID, a credential as assertive as the low-slung badge of the lesbian cop who confronts her at her local bar, Violet's allegiance to the sartorial codes of femininity makes her sexual registration more dubious, capable as she is of magnetizing the attraction of both the lesbian Corky and most of the dark-suited men the plot sends her way: Caesar, Johnnie, the hangdog Shelly (Barry Kivel) who has siphoned off the two million in the first place but seems unable to leave without Violet, and the paternalistic Micky (John P. Ryan), whose romantic attentiveness disguises many of the plot's implausibilities, including its resolution.

Violet's dubious sexuality is foregrounded in *Bound*'s inaugural seduction scene. With Caesar absent, Violet calls Corky to her apartment to retrieve an earring from the sink, a lure so old that even Corky is wise to it. Earring restored, the two leads move to the darker environs of the living room where they take up the drinks etiquette dictates. Violet continues to come on to Corky who continues to give nothing away, her suspicion of Violet running as high as her curiosity. "What are you doing?" Corky asks, after Violet has taken her hand and lifted it to her own tattooed breast. "Trying to seduce you," is Violet's disingenuous reply, before she attempts to assuage any doubts Corky might have about her motivation by demonstrating its sexual quality. "You can't believe what you see, but you can believe what you feel," says Violet who, first moistening Corky's finger in her mouth, proceeds to place it between her own thighs. Violet's invitation and the gesture which accompanies it draw attention to just how false things are, both Violet's seemingly heterosexual appearance and also the scene itself: the ploy, the come-on, even the plumpness of the sofa, everything camera-ready for sex. Violet asks Corky to rely not on looks, however, but on the litmus of sexual response as if the viscous secretions of the body, tested by fingertip, could inspire some further confidence, or even some outcome less predictable than the one that occurs as Corky's slippery progression from first to second base is interrupted by the utterly expected arrival of the excluded Caesar.

Rather than curtailing the thematics of sexual trust, Caesar's entrance merely shifts their terrain from the desirous body to its gendered manifestations. Although the two women quickly resume a quiescent distance and dress, Caesar believes he has disturbed a cheating Violet. He strides aggressively into the room, only to be brought up short. His angry certainty is rescinded with the revelation that the work-clothed figure in the

shadowy apartment is a woman, not a man. Caesar's dawning recognition of Corky's sex serves to restore a chauvinist ignorance in the place previously occupied by a mistaken knowledge: he was right about the scene when he took her masculine gender at its word. The sting, therefore, is that Caesar is caught out in both judging by appearance and failing to do so since his first impressions, which simply assigned to Corky a masculinity she thus far inhabits, were more accurate in detecting sexual deceit.

*Bound* continues to transpose the question of heterosexual or homosexual orientation with that of masculine and feminine identification, though less than straightforwardly. Violet's voluptuous appearance and helpless manner, for instance, signal a passivity that is everywhere belied by her initiations in both the sexual and thriller plots. Corky also plays against type. In bed her Y-fronted masculinity strips down to a sexual receptivity and, in the action sequences, she is patsy to Caesar's more virile intelligence and strength. Judged by diegetic event, not appearance, the thriller plot thus seems to reinforce the lesson Violet had attempted to instill on the make-out couch: handsome is as handsome does, or action overrides image. Butch and femme credentials are given a final shakedown in the action climax when Caesar knocks Corky unconscious a third time, leaving nothing but the money between Violet and himself. Violet holds a handgun on the unarmed Caesar, who stakes his life on knowing Violet better than she knows herself: "You don't want to shoot me, Vi." He is wrong, as it happens, and Violet shoots him dead allowing the film to resolve all its questions about lesbian desire with a finger after all, this one held to the cold steel of a trigger. In *Bound*'s climactic scene, ambivalences that are crucial to the suspense of the film are aggressively closed down in favor of character depth and understanding, and these seemingly cinch tight the case of Violet's sexual loyalty. Caesar is the fall guy here, taking the rap not only for his earlier facile confidence that a fetishized femininity is the inalienable property of heterosexuality, but also for the sexual thriller format itself. Violent though it is, the abstract, designer pulp of Caesar's slow-motion death is oddly lacking in suspense. Where *Bound* elsewhere keeps its audience tautly wired to the intricacies of a plot that seems to invest even the inanimate objects in its vicinity with a capacity for violence and betrayal (telephone, television, porcelain toilet bowl), the final standoff between Violet and Caesar is strangely hesitant, its outcome supported in the mise-en-scène by nothing other than Violet's character motivation, to which it is sole testimony. They stare at each other across a sea of white paint. Violet pauses long enough to offer Caesar the chance to run, but he would rather cajole, seeing in her delay an indecision disallowed by the requirements of the plot which insists on Violet being one thing, not the other.

Previously, left to the throes of romance, and without the intercession of the mafia *deus ex machina*, the two women are themselves incapable of resolving the question of sexual motivation. Newly aware that she is not the only one to take up Caesar's place in Violet's bed, Corky, having vacated

exactly that spot, deflects Violet's attempt at avowal. The enigmatic, "I had this image of you inside of me, like a part of me," previously heard as a disembodied voice-over but now sentimentally lodged in Violet's languid figure, meets with a response that suggests Corky's own, less obscure, imagination has been jealously thinking of Violet's insides as repeatedly filled by male parts. Sullenly dressing at the bed's edge, Corky's aggression battens down, not on her male rivals, Caesar and the unlikely Shelly, but on Violet's doubtful sexuality as neither exclusively heterosexual nor homosexual. Sexual compatibility notwithstanding, lesbian desire now becomes a disputed field between the two women. Corky insists that she and Violet are "different" by the rule that reads sexual availability as identity: Violet's having sex with men disqualifies her from the ranks of dykes that fill the black banquettes of the Watering Hole, the lesbian bar which is Corky's nighttime retreat. For Corky, as for Caesar, the name dyke operates metonymically, as does her labrys tattoo, as testimony to acts that are signaled even in their representational absence. Violet, despite her earlier come-on, now holds, petulantly, to the idea that sexual acts alone can neither confirm nor deny orientation, preferring to think of her time under Caesar as "work." Violet's five years with Caesar implies a more than temporal parallel with Corky's lag inside. Corky's pre-diegetic jail term locks her in with a fleetingly invoked cellmate who serves her time for "being caught." In the imaginary women's prison, for which *Caged* (John Cromwell, 1950) provides the cinematic model, the lesbian status of sex acts between, say, Corky and this unnamed woman might be compromised by the mandatory homosociality of the institution. That is, Corky too, might have been trapped in a situation in which acts strangely fail to secure identities, an implicit support of Violet's rebuke, "I think we're more alike than you'd care to admit." Like many another bedroom argument, this one is less significant for what it says than what it doesn't. The subject of the dialogue, while crucial to the thriller plot insofar as it verifies that Corky is not altogether sure of Violet's motives and whether or not she is being worked, like the other occupants of Violet's bed, for some payoff that is more than, hence not really, sexual, is countered by the scene's affect which establishes that the more the two women fight and disagree about sexuality, the more they affirm the extent of their mutual desire. This bedside conversation thus complicates the sexual relation between the two women, which is here suspended, providing an erotic rift that delays the satisfaction of the film's romantic narrative.

Perhaps perversely, the homosexual lesson *Bound* administers depends less on romantic complication than the thriller narrative, and its associated set pieces, which take over the sexual plot and its spatial and graphic motifs in order to generate the illusion of a lesbian diegesis. Consider the manner in which Violet and Corky's sexual estrangement is bypassed via the brutal sacrifice of Shelly's little finger in the searingly well-lit bathroom of Violet's apartment. The importance of fingers to regimes of truthtelling has already

been established in the first sexual hold between Violet and Corky, but now this connection is violently restated as Micky calmly declares he will ten times ask the whereabouts of the mob's money, counting off each question with a close of the secateurs around each of the digits on Shelly's two hands. Likewise, the sound of this torture scene establishes the adjacency of different spaces, a function previously reserved for sexual noise alone. Heard first by Corky who labors in the neighboring bathroom, Shelly's terror conveyed through the connecting pipes she works on, the scene also distresses Violet who is linked to the torture via her kitchen blender, whose everyday noise and whirlpool action, visually and aurally linked to the white toilet bowl against which Shelly's head is repeatedly smashed, takes up then dissipates the visceral horror of the events in the room through the wall. Micky graciously suggests Violet leave the apartment and this precipitates her advent next door, miraculous insofar as it occurs without any establishing shots. Violet simply appears in Corky's apartment, the close coordinates of on-screen space being all that is required to suggest their rapprochement. Together they remove to a second—straight—bar where, in the safe enclosure of a white banquette, they discuss for the first time Violet's leaving "the business" and her plan to steal from the mob. Thoroughly hijacked by the thriller scenario, the film's plotline thus keeps live the question of Violet's loyalty, replaying it as the dangerous necessity for trust among thieves. It is this substitution, the way the film has the thriller plot carry and rework its romantic narrative, that enables the resolution of the earlier question about the sexual difference between Corky and Violet, butch and femme. It is only by detouring this thematic concern through the cinematic format of the thriller that *Bound* can achieve satisfactory romantic closure. The lesbian diegesis remains dependent on the graphic violence of the thriller—and, as I will show, its chromatic design—to secure its sexual outcome.

The hybridization of genres that the sexual thriller instantiates is, perhaps, familiar noir territory but what seems worthy of comment in the context of a film that has been welcomed as an advance in lesbian representation is the way in which this conflation of genres works at the level of image rather than character. Although *Bound* quickly puts its two female leads through their sexual paces in several choreographed seduction scenes, the film's closure is certified as lesbian not by this sexual athleticism—spent within the opening half hour—nor by the character development it minimally supports, but by the film's visual style and its repeated distortions of spatial and temporal continuity, most of which are in the service of the thriller format. The romance narrative's girl-gets-girl outcome, however satisfactory, is utterly reliant on the graphic design of the mise-en-scène and the film's formal manipulation of editing devices, many of which play with the physical adjacency of the apartment spaces the two women occupy.

Questions of technique have long haunted cinematic representations of homosexuality. The Wachowski brothers' concern with homosexuality and the conventions of cinematic space comes almost half a century after

Hitchcock spliced together apartment space and the plot of male perversion in the formally experimental *Rope*. In his formidable discussion of Hitchcock's film, Miller identifies the deniability of homosexuality as symptomatic of not only the film but also the critical discussion that surrounds it. The example of *Rope* reveals a homophobic hermeneutic that raises within the film's story the possibility of homosexuality only to deny it. This denial operates on two levels: as an effect of the connotative system of gay signification that the Hollywood Production Code necessitates and, less predictably, in the critical discourse addressing the film's formal structure that assumes the homosexual content of the film to be there, though without interest.[5] Hitchcock's film everywhere maintains the forensic deniability of its homosexual subject. Approved by the Hay's Office as nowhere disclosing the presence of sex perversion, *Rope*'s dialogue and mise-en-scène (in particular the way its camera angles suggestively frame male bodies in a too-close proximity that recalls the clinch of romance) nonetheless repeatedly work to connote a homosexuality that is nowhere to be found in the film.[6] This second-order invocation of an interdicted topic is signal, not to the failure of the Production Code, but to its peculiar success as a representational order the enforcing logic of which is to produce homosexuality under a ban. Rather than silence or cancel homosexuality, the Code articulates it outside the denotative quarantine of the film's diegesis. This representational logic keeps a stranglehold on homosexuality through three decades of Hollywood film production. The administrative order of Code-era films requires that sex perversion be compulsorily forbidden, yet always illicitly known.[7] *Bound*, on the other hand, is evidently interested in the diegetic possibility of lesbianism. That is, it would seem the representational field of *Bound* marks a break with *Rope* insofar as the Wachowskis have the discretionary privilege to make homosexuality their film's thematic and graphic subject. However, that assumption is in many ways false. It suggests that homosexuality is within the one film and without the other, though held in its magnetic vicinity as its interpretative effect. The tact of Hitchcock's film, a tact that is more but never less than its upholding of the Production Code, is that its homosexual meaningfulness is everywhere maintained as an ignorance, and the perennial lure of *Rope* is the invitation it extends to viewers to align themselves with this knowledge without ever having to claim it. But *Bound* too reveals homosexuality as an interpretative effect of a representational system, not, of course, the Production Code, but its Hollywood ally, classical continuity editing. Long after there is any requirement to do so, *Bound* continues, perhaps inevitably, to substitute the ploy of cinematic technique in the place of homosexuality. This connection is important to trace because it suggests a continuity in homosexual representation that overrides the historical aegis of the Production Code and enables the illumination of other, less institutional, mechanisms which discipline the performance of male homosexuality and lesbianism in the field of cinematic representation.

*Bound* repeatedly substitutes graphic meaning in the place of a psychological depth for which it is then mistaken, a cinematic sleight-of-hand for which Hitchcock's thrillers are also known.[8] Familiar from *Rope* as a technical accessory to the Production Code order that bans direct referral to homosexual content, this same cinematic procedure is detectable in *Bound*'s ostensibly explicit lesbian sex scene, which is most interesting for its refusal of illusionist effect and its blatant recruitment of the camera as sexual prosthetic. Susie Bright's technical consultancy notwithstanding, the sex scene between Gershon and Tilly suggests that things are, perhaps, much the same as they were in 1948. The preliminary holds of this sexual encounter occur in Corky's red utility truck before a vertical wipe to Corky's apartment releases into the new mise-en-scène a mobile camera that describes a 360-degree orbit around two naked bodies on an already familiar mattress. The camera shot begins at floor level before moving higher and closer into the two figures who provide its orienting center. The camera tracks the length of Violet's body, past her raised shoulder and haunch, before rounding the foot of the bed. A medium close-up captures from low angle the foreshortened length of Corky's torso, her pelvis lifting against Violet's hand. The orchestration of the scene synchronizes the sounds of sex with nondiegetic music, both of which are keyed to the stylized progression of the camera whose circumnavigation of the bed is completed on the attainment of a close-up on Corky's face, Violet's finger inserted between her open lips, a soft-core placeholder for that earlier wetted finger pressed to unseen depths. Both actions, sex and camerawork, are satiated in a seventy-second take, which then cuts to a bird's-eye shot looking down on the women, now silent, from high above the bed. If this scene can lay any claim to sexual realism, lesbian or otherwise, it would probably rest on the elasticated sheet riding up the corner of the mattress. Everything else is subservient to the exertion of the 360-degree crane, an apparatus shot that is fully invested in the kinaesthetic possibilities of the agile camera and almost indifferent to the requirements of character and narrative.[9]

*Bound*'s indebtedness to *Rope* is most succinctly acknowledged in its title and in the length of white rope that is first seen binding Corky's black-booted ankles as she lies, gagged and unconscious, in the darkened recess of Violet's closet. Of this rope's several returns the last is the most resonant: now lying outside the closet, it signals not merely Corky's escape and the start of the final suspenseful sequence but the film's belated attainment of a narrative present for which Hitchcock's film, and its eponymous object, remains the most condensed of tropes. Like its predecessor, *Bound* foregrounds cinema as a spatial system, a filmic organization of place and time, which generates among its effects narrative causality and, less straightforwardly, character motivation. If the "shooting technique" of *Rope* can be said to be animated by "the dream of a continuous film," that of *Bound* is doubly invested in the potentialities of continuity as they augment a diegesis that is itself already concerned with a diagnostics of homosexuality.[10] Any attempt to specify the location of homosexuality in *Bound* must,

therefore, map two allied systems which between them provide the ground for the emergence of lesbianism within the film's representational field, the parameters of which extend beyond its diegesis. The first system involves the editing conventions which stabilize the connection between cinematic space and narrative temporality, and therefore keep the time and place of plot events intelligible to the viewer. The second system is the graphic or pictorial method by which the film couples the romantic or erotic narrative to the suspense thriller that provides both the driving momentum of the plot and the mechanism for its thematic resolution.

Scene transitions are the most important element in maintaining the hierarchical relations within these spatial and narrative systems. Consider again *Bound*'s opening scene. Constituting the present moment of the thriller story line, the closet sequence ends with an inaugural fade, a nondiegetically motivated whiteout which cues in the first of the flashback sequences that will comprise most of the film's plot. The tense present moment of the closet will not be attained until late in screen time, though it will be reprised twice in the interval, once when another nondiegetic whiteout clears to close-ups on the fluttering lids and twitching fingers of Corky's bound figure and a second time when, having been jumped by the more powerful Caesar, a subjectively indexed whiteout signals Corky's fall out of consciousness and the fade-in reveals her lying in the same trussed pose described in the opening shot. The visual cues are strong enough to trigger a recognition for the viewer and, in combination with the sound of Caesar's "Wake up! Wake up!" a false confidence that the flashbacks have achieved the present moment of the film's start. However, immediately a second whiteout, keyed to Corky's coming to at water tossed across her face, reveals her to be lying in an open room alongside an equally restrained Violet, about to be interrogated by Caesar who will stash her inside the closet only when he is interrupted by the ring of the intercom. The film's forward accelerations are potentially disorienting insofar as these shots graphically signal a temporal simultaneity that is then rescinded by the camera's subsequent enlargement of the mise-en-scène which reveal that plot events still lag behind the film's opening.[11] *Bound*'s pictorial scheme dominates its narrative in this way, flexibly asserting the ability of the image to override then restore the temporal chronology required to support the logical chains of cause and effect that comprise the film's plot.

In the chromatic design of *Bound*, scene transitions cued by white frequently execute reversals or shifts in chronological sequence whereas changes in location that are realist in effect, spatially distinct and temporally forward in story time, are initially cued by red. Consider, for instance, the film's deployment of Corky's red utility. A high-angle shot of Corky, her day's work done, climbing into the red Chevy, establishes an exterior outside the apartment building. The 1963 Chevy has previously featured as the subject of a dialogue between Corky and Violet when, alone in apartment #1003, Violet introduces herself and the erotic motifs that will be recycled through the romance and thriller narratives. Accordingly connected with

coffee and sex, the cab of the truck can legitimately supply the location in which, once Corky is joined by Violet, the women can resume the sex that Caesar's arrival has earlier cut short. Violet's breathless inquiry, "Do you have a bed somewhere?" cues a camera movement upwards through the headspace of the Chevy's cab in a shift which disorientingly converts the roof of the truck into the cross-sectioned floor of Corky's stark bedroom which appears as a dark horizontal line wiping vertically down frame. The scene transition signals a conventional ellipsis in time and space, Corky's room, like Johnnie's soon to be wrecked lounge, existing at some unspecified distance from the apartment building that Violet and Caesar call home. More manifest is the aesthetic distance between each location, the heterosexual baroque of Johnnie's bachelor pad being more than miles away from the spare interior and rumpled linen that comprise Corky's lesbian minimalism. The scene transition from truck to bedroom is fully integrated with narrative form, the wipe a placeholder for those events we understand to have occurred in an interim that is nowhere represented: the time it takes to drive across town, the time it takes two women to undress.

After sex, the red Chevy transports us just as efficiently back to the original apartment building. A cut moves story time and place forward to the parking lot where Corky is seen arriving in the red truck, the morning-afterness of the scene reinforced by the nondiegetic soundtrack which fades out on the disclosure on-screen of the figure of Shelly, clawing at the building's intercom telephone. Shelly's first appearance in the vicinity of the red utility is preliminary to the revelation that he too is a lover of Violet's. His subsequent return to the apartment lot is also linked to the red Chevy, however, in the later scene the erotic quality of the truck, like that of many other things (most memorably plumbing and fingers), is quickly displaced by an association with violence. Corky stands on the deck of the truck, as a slow-motion point-of-view pan tracks the arrival of a black limousine out of which three mobsters climb. One of them, Johnnie, withdraws a reluctant Shelly from inside the relative safety of the car, then escorts him across the forecourt and back inside the building, delivering him to a violent fate. Now a marked man, Shelly is the male figure on whom the substitution between sex and violence is made, just as Caesar's body will later provide the visual counter on which to switch those things back. Masculine corporeality, in line with *Bound*'s visual codes, stands in for a feminine carnality harder to represent.

Once the mob's torture of Shelly is realized the film's exploitation of sexual tension will be replaced by a suspense generated in line with the requirements of the thriller, the automotive red now replaced by a wash of blood that will render incarnadine many of the white transitions previously favored in its plot development. Consider the cut from Corky in white undershirt and Y-fronts, lying against a white sheet in her own apartment, to a paint roller whiting out a wall in the apartment she is renovating. Corky's pose on the bed, and the camera angle from which it is filmed, is

restaged in the later sex scene, her frustrated twanging of a blue's harp now replaced by Violet's ministrations and the acoustics of sex. The temporal expediency of these matches on white is exploited in the opening twenty minutes of the film chiefly to establish the coordinates of the romantic plotline. Once the thriller format takes over white is stained with red as violence replaces sex as the epistemic nub of the film. The most condensed visual signifier of this transition is the close-up of the white porcelain toilet bowl in apartment #1003 that then becomes its bloodstained counterpart in the adjacent apartment as the mise-en-scène enlarges to reveal the location of Shelly's torture and his agonized forfeiture of fingers, the fetishized and suitably ungendered body part, which condenses lesbian sex and masculine vulnerability.[12]

Viewers are adept at understanding the causality implied by such graphic devices and the ellipses in time and space these transitions indicate. Together they allow the film's plot sequence (the scenes it depicts for the duration of its screen time, and the order in which they appear) to reference another chronological order of events that we take to be the film's narrative or story line. Comprised of everything we see and some things we don't, this causal narrative is reconstructed by the viewer who interprets screen events as occurring in different places and at different times. The most sustained and complicated of these sequences is initiated after a reprise of the bound figure in the closet motif. Corky and Violet are caught in the morning light of Corky's studio apartment. Violet describes the events of the night before, cuing a flashback sequence that picks up events previously suspended as her dialogue takes on the status of voice-over narration. Her account of events is supplemented by the images now screened: Caesar irons banknotes late into the night, standing in an unreal room, a laundry of bills fluttering around him on improvised lines. A question from Corky prompts the screening of events further forward: Caesar at his laptop as an automated machine neatly rebinds the mob's money and he counts it into a briefcase. The editing foregrounds Corky's reliance on Violet's version of events and restates the issue of trust. However a subsequent return to Violet and Corky enables a change in narration. Corky, still at the window of her one-room apartment, interrogates Violet for more information, before starting to plan the heist out loud as the image track proceeds to run ahead of the moment of speech and anticipates the events her dialogue describes. The flash-forward sequence, which reveals the decoy ploys Violet will enact in order to allow Corky to enter her and Caesar's apartment and take the money, twice returns to the scene in Corky's studio (once to reveal Corky pulling a pearl-handled revolver from beneath her mattress as she counsels Violet, "Trust me") and continues to orient itself to the moment of planning until the point where Caesar opens the briefcase to find it full of newsprint. An extreme low-angle shot of Caesar's face tilts and slows his irregular movements against a stable background. The jerky out-of-focus effect, understood as a visual index to his nauseated state,

also provides a formal dislocation sufficient to terminate the flash-forward sequence. Corky is revealed in the next-door apartment, the money beside her, as screen events now mark the suspenseful coincidence of time and space, although these events are still prior to the opening scene of the film.[13] Within an overall though unreliable flashback structure, *Bound*'s technologies of narration and editing move events both ways, reversing and advancing its image track in order to assemble a compelling thriller plot. Flashbacks and establishing shots are the conventional means film employs to register these spatial and temporal shifts while tracing the causal connections that will retrospectively comprise the coherent story. *Bound*, however, deploys a further series of graphic devices (fades, wipes, visual matches in the mise-en-scène) which also cue spatial and temporal shifts, but which work against this accruing sense of a coherent story time and story space embedded in, though independent of, the film's plot. Even as it unfolds a tightly wound causally linked thriller narrative, *Bound* includes moments of formal discontinuity which, far from rescinding the more realist claims of its lesbian romance plot, actually secure them.

The film's first whiteout functions in a conventional manner, taking us forward in screen time but backward in story time to present events that precede Corky's confinement in the closet of the opening shot. The fade-in reveals Corky standing within a deep red interior as a highly distinctive offscreen voice we recognize as one of the nondiegetic voices heard over the earlier scene exhales, "Hold the elevator," which might be "Happy Birthday, Mr. President" for all the wheezy affect Jennifer Tilly breathes into Violet's voice. The comparsion with Marilyn Monroe suggests the vacancy of the acting style the Wachowskis draw from their cast, a style which allows the critical butch and femme difference of the female leads to lodge in nothing more than Tilly's voice and Gershon's pout.[14] The shots that follow establish other coordinates of character and space, though less efficiently. Caesar looks toward the front of the elevator, his back toward the two women at his rear. Behind him, as it were, a shot/counter shot sequence registers a slow exchange of looks between Violet and Corky of which he is unaware. Held in a high-angle shot, the three figures in the lift form a conspicuous triangle, the padded shoulders of Caesar's open overcoat providing a clear apex to the more graphically similar points marked by Corky and Violet's black leather jackets. As Caesar and Violet leave the elevator, we see Corky tilt her head, sideways and down, preliminary to a slow-motion tracking shot on Violet's legs as they move the length of the hallway. The sleazy camera shot, now marked as Corky's gaze, has its alibi in character motivation. Such point-of-view shots are, however, infrequent in *Bound*, and the more signature camera setup is the one which halts Violet's slow walk before a distant apartment doorway (perhaps #1001) some way beyond an exactly similar one in the closer foreground which Corky will likewise and simultaneously enter (#1003). The establishment of the spatial adjacency of the two apartments is no less important to the

film's plot than the suggestion of sexual interest between the two women. Prior to the distraction of any on-screen dialogue, the film implicitly links the possibility of same-sex sex with our perception of the synchronicity of cinematic space and time.

An undisguised cut takes us into apartment #1003. A low-level camera runs the length of some buckets on the floor before rising on Corky in the middle of an empty room. Now stripped of her leather jacket, she stands before a patterned red background, talking into a heavy black telephone. Distracted, she swivels around to listen to the more muffled noises coming from behind a wall whose red paper is now seen in detail. The mobile camera then moves through the space between the figure of Corky and the red background she appears against, carving out a depth that is foreclosed once the flat of the wall has been achieved as the exclusive focus of the frame. The sound cues signal depth and distance but also establish that the wall is paper thin, permeable to noises such as the banging bedhead and male panting that Corky and the viewer currently hear as proceeding from the bedroom of apartment #1001. The red wallpaper pattern will retain this aural link with heterosexual expenditure, and will be used again to mark the odd contiguity of the two spaces, communicating rooms as it were. These elements of the mise-en-scène, like the one-sided phone conversation that simultaneously explains Corky's presence in the building and suggests the complexities of her past, are fully integrated with the narrative form of the film, defining a coherent storyworld in which plot events can logically occur. The unambiguous delineation of the space of the scene focuses our attention on the information that is crucial to the chain of cause and effect that underwrites both action and character. In this hierarchy, cinematic space defers to narrative, providing the realist backdrop against which motivation can emerge.

In its first appearance, the red wall thus supports the cinematic illusion that apartments #1001 and #1003 are spatially distinct, neighboring each other in the imagined blueprint of the apartment building which also locates them on a tenth floor attainable by lift and, as is later necessary to the plot, vertiginous stairwell. But while the maintenance of this illusion is crucial to the development of the thriller plot (as is the suggestion that sound travels between the two apartments) the film will also include transition shots that dispel the integrity of three-dimensional space by playing against the audience's expectations concerning offscreen space. Consider the next deployment of the red wall motif, which occurs after Corky and Violet have had sex. The red Chevy having synchronized the arrival of Corky and Shelly at Violet's apartment building, they both ascend to the top floor where Corky and Shelly enter the adjacent apartments in time, as Corky and Violet have earlier done. As in the previous sequence, Corky steps through the white door into the offscreen space of the apartment undergoing renovation. A cut occurs on the white door before the frame is once again filled with the familiar red patterned wallpaper. As before, the

smothered sound of panting permeates the red wall. The noise of sex continues to be heard, gaining then falling away in intensity to be succeeded by a female voice whose equally breathy utterance bridges a visual cut from the abstract red pattern to a head and shoulders close-up of Violet, still talking, lying in a bed which abuts what we assume to be the other side of the three-dimensional wall. This 180-degree turnaround is confirmed as the camera pulls back from the bare-shouldered woman to reveal another figure dressing at the bed's edge. The new mise-en-scène is consistent with the sound cues which, having fallen away, lead us to expect the conversational aftermath of sex. However, the dark-haired figure who buttons up furtively at the left of the frame is not the anticipated Shelly but Corky, who the camera had apparently left in the offscreen space of the other apartment. The unexpected quality of the scene transition, spatially continuous but temporally elliptical is, we might note, compatible with the order of cuts so far established on white or red which denote temporal discontinuities (advances and reversals) in order to facilitate the compression of story time to plot time and screen duration.

Perhaps less wired to screen violence than I am, other critics have noted that in its final appearance the red wall signals the romantic synchronization of lesbian space and time. Merck reads the cinematic architecture of this scene, in which an aerial camera shot flies over the party wall between the two apartments, as the culmination of the film's manual eroticism:

> the anxious Violet—fearful that the scam to steal the $2 million Caesar has laundered is going wrong—enters her bedroom and dials the telephone. The camera tracks along its twisting cord to the plug in the wall and then (in an invisible edit) along the cord of the phone in the next apartment, which rings and is answered by Corky. . . . In the ensuing moment of romantic declaration, first one and then the other punctuate their terse endearments by placing their hands against the wall. Meanwhile the camera arcs above them to reveal that the two are touching the same spot.[15]

Similarly, although Kelly Oliver and Benigno Trigo go so far as to link this scene with the earlier scene of Shelly's torture, like Merck they emphasize the plot ascendance of romance despite the fact that the terrified viewer correctly anticipates that Caesar will interrupt this moment and, via the telephone redial function, finally work out that Violet is in league with whoever is in the apartment next door.[16]

The ease with which critics, normally hardened to the conventions of genre, accept *Bound*'s visual transposition of screen violence and same-sex eroticism is salutary.[17] It is as if they hadn't noticed that the film is consistent to the point of obsession in its manipulations of screen space and time, particularly as these manipulations cross-connect the sexual and thriller plots. Corky, in particular, since her first appearance at the bottom of a closet

without visibly intelligible dimensions, has a way of turning up unexpectedly in on-screen space. After Violet first floats her plan of stealing from the mob, Corky's response, "I want to see the money," provides an acoustic bridge across a visual cut away from the interior of the Chevy into Violet's apartment. The mobile camera rapidly approaches the red walls of the vestibule, meeting Ceasar head-on as he rushes through the door, his white shirtfront soaked in Shelly's blood. His momentum unchecked, Ceasar falls across the room to spill the equally stained money into the kitchen sink for the first stage of its literal laundering. Exhausted, Ceasar will shortly exit the kitchen, walking to the left and out of frame, leaving Violet standing at the bench, looking down on the bloodstained money, as Corky has earlier stood over a sink rinsing white paint through her fingers after their first sexual encounter. Once again, red replaces white, as violence replaces sex. Unannounced, Corky angles into the mise-en-scène from the left and silently takes up a position at Violet's shoulder before a whiteout returns her to the temporally unanchored closet. Such chromatic switches will be increasingly associated with not sex but violence though they finally provide the terms through which the sexual thematic will be resolved.

The substitution of figures, our discovery of Corky having vacated the position, on top of Violet, we assume to be Shelly's, or the cinematic balance of her arrival in a frame following Caesar's departure, cinches together the film's two narratives, erotic and thriller, establishing that the question of Violet's trustworthiness is indexed to two equally paranoid structures, those of sexual orientation and organized crime. Violet's bisexual capacities notwithstanding, the important information conveyed by Shelly's initial advent in the diegesis is not that Violet is cheating on Corky, but that she is cheating on Caesar with someone inside "the business." It is Shelly's insider status, not his gender or putative heterosexuality, that the film exploits. Similarly, the plot of the film is driven by Caesar's brilliant attempts to outstrip criminal knowledges and effectively terminated when the situation calls on him to second-guess Violet's sexuality. In his final scene, adrift in the synchronic time that Corky's slipping of the rope eventually sets ticking, Caesar makes a call in his own favor, judging Violet reluctant to kill him. "Caesar," warns Violet, "you don't know shit" before confirming his fatal error. Felled by bullets perforating with red the familiar contours of his white shirtfront, Caesar's mortal arc provides the graphic link *Bound* requires to close down the question of lesbian desire: his body lies in a pool of white paint now washed with a sanguinary tint. Caesar's end is purely cinematic, the bird's-eye camera frames him spread-eagle, bleeding red into a white background. In a final confidence trick, the film offers his splayed and punctured form as visual testimony to that which it could otherwise never establish: Violet's secret and sexualized integrity, the inalienability of her lesbianism.

A nondiegetic whiteout over Caesar's dead body fades in to an all-white apartment, an empty closet standing open in a rear corner. There are no other coordinates for reading this space, which could be consequently either apartment #1001 or #1003.[18] An undisguised cut presents Violet and Micky, the surviving mobster who is charged with hunting down the disappeared Caesar in whose possession the mob's money is assumed to be, standing beside a black car. Plot ends neatly tied off, the mafia limousine can then be replaced by Corky's new red Chevy. Opened by remote control, the late-model truck allows Corky and Violet, with two million dollars in hand, to climb into the cab and drive out of the retroworld of the film's diegesis and into some other, temporally unbound, space where the difference between butch and femme is no difference at all. Corky, windscreen reflections falling across her face, turns to Violet and asks, "You know the difference between you and me?" The question is doubly disingenuous: Corky and Violet are dressed as they were in the opening elevator scene but, now cropped in medium close-up, their black leather jackets and wayfarers register only their sexual similarity. "No," says Violet. "Me neither," replies Corky before the dark undercarriage of the truck passes over the low-level camera, inaugurating a blackout upon which final credits scroll, there being nothing left to say. The dialogue suggests that the erotic misunderstandings of that earlier bedside argument, which foundered on the homosexual/heterosexual difference between Corky and Violet, have been addressed and resolved; as if the question of Violet's sexual allegiance, whether she goes with men or women, were answered by homicide, by the chill expedient of having her wipe out Caesar. His pulpy, slow-motion death stands as a displaced yet unequivocal testimony to lesbian desire.[19] The same-sex coordinates of the film's closure are enabled, not simply by Caesar's removal from the plot, but by the spectacularity of that withdrawal. Violet's sexual obscurity is resolved, not by the disclosure of sexual clinch or romantic commitment, but by the visual device of mixing white and red.

Cinematic suspense has always exploited the capacity of viewers to see what isn't there but the innovation of *Bound* may well be to suggest that something like this capacity is at play in our most casual understandings of sexual difference: sexuality, or at least its demarcation as heterosexual or homosexual, is arbitrary, a scam or confidence trick that involves a knowledge augmented by ignorance. Just as the realist space of cinematic action is an illusion generated by the conventions of continuity editing so, perhaps, is sexuality a character effect elicited by the apparatus of the camera and its manipulation of the mise-en-scène. The lesbianism of *Bound*'s characters, like other elements in the mise-en-scène (phones, furniture, floor plans), is foremost and finally a function of the plot. Like *Rope*, *Bound* taps into the double valencies of the sexual thriller. Though separated by five decades and the apparent remission of the Production Code, in both films the criminal story line carries the erotic narrative,

disguising and supplementing the insufficiencies of its homosexual diegesis. In *Bound*, the proof of lesbianism is cinematically conveyed, not by the choreographed sex scenes which occur within the first twenty minutes of screen time but by the graphic violence associated with the mafia sting. The thriller plot, and its associated technical devices, generates the impression of character motivation and depth which the romantic plotline, with its reliance on dialogue and a more restricted visual economy of dress and undress, could never establish unaided. In this way *Bound* inevitably recalls, and inverts, the representational effect Miller discerns in *Rope*: its narrative approaches the subject of lesbianism head-on, yet the film's means of securing homosexual closure is formally oblique, marked less by avowal and disclosure than pictorial displacement and excess. The critical effect of watching *Bound* is not unlike that generated, more homophobically, in the wake of *Rope*. That is, we are convinced we see what is nowhere in evidence. The cinematic sleight goes unnoticed, perhaps, because of our viewerly investments in narrative outcome and closure. We can be relied on to see what we want. *Bound*'s lesbianism is generated in the vicinity of the diegesis as an effect of the film's system of spatial and temporal editing. Violet's sexuality, like Corky's, is cinematic.

# 7 The Lesbian Diegesis
## *Mulholland Drive*

As the example of *Bound* suggests, lesbianism, perhaps even more than male homosexuality, remains the ideal plot element through which to foreground the dubiousness of visual signs in cinema and the narrative connections frequently strung on them. Released as cinema enters its second century, David Lynch's *Mulholland Drive* (2001) takes the classical cinematic conflation of homosexuality and spectacle to formal extremes. In place since the Production Code era and thematically amplified in the decades thereafter, the reduction of sexuality to scene retains the potential to off side audiences more accustomed to the mimetic illusions based in character and plot, the mainstays of heterosexual execution. Given specular precedence but subjected to a complicated narrative erasure, the lesbian story line of *Mulholland Drive*—crucially split between two apartment spaces—provides the perfect analogue for a postmodern film practice that draws attention to the conditions of its own cinematic intelligibility.[1] Incapable of sustaining narrative coherence, lesbianism dissolves the ideological conventions of narrative realism, operating as the switch point for the contesting storyworlds within Lynch's elaborately plotted film, both of which are set in the same Hollywood milieu and share the Lynch-like figure of the young male director, Adam Kesher (Justin Theroux). The parallels with that other eponymous cinematic address *Sunset Boulevard* (Billy Wilder, 1950) are many, not least the way *Mulholland Drive* offers a sustained reflection on Hollywood's perverse investments in the female image irrespective of the requirements of story, which are more particularly associated with a masculine compulsion to narrate or direct.

As anyone familiar with Lynch's work knows, the everyday worlds his films depict are never as ordinary as they first appear.[2] Though frequently staged as detective stories, his films refuse straightforward teleologies of plot and are more crucially organized around metaphorical tropes of repetition and reversal. Similarly, though his protagonists occupy recognizable environments, Lynch's camera frequently abandons realist scaffolding to explore more abstract effects of cinematic mise-en-scène as if the coordinates of screen space were somewhat larger than those of the fictional storyworld through which the characters move. In *Mulholland Drive* the

tension between fictional world and screen world increases significantly with key characters giving way late in the film to other parallel characters that occupy locations that are troublingly continuous, so that the dual fictional worlds Lynch explores in other of his films no longer stand in symbolically reflective relation but keep dovetailing incoherently in ways that make narrative logic impossible to sustain.[3]

After a preliminary sequence comprised of cutouts of doo-wop dancers against a matte background field, the bleached-out face of Naomi Watts provides a visual bridge to an initially unfocused pan of an empty unmade bed, the upbeat sound of pop music having given way to panicked breathing. Following this anxiety-inducing transition, the film launches two dramatic story lines that are distinct though interleaved. One story line involves two young women brought together in the wake of a car crash on Mulholland Dr. that sets in motion a number of plotlines involving questions of identity that variously engage the women themselves, the detectives called to the incident scene, and an incompetent hit man who seems, like the police, to be on the trail of whoever the woman is that survived the wreckage and walked off dazed into the Hollywood night. The other story line concerns Adam's attempts to maintain artistic control of the film he is directing against the interference of the malevolent male figures that represent the obscure interests of Mr. Roque (Michael J. Anderson), a wizened chair-bound dwarf who manipulates events from behind the scenes through various technological prosthetics most of which have to do with sound. As the film progresses, however, it systematically multiplies the narrative connections between the two story lines while refusing to draw together conclusively the separate stories in one seamless plot. Almost two hours after it commences, instead of delivering narrative coherence and a logically consistent storyworld, *Mulholland Drive* deliberately bends the space-time continuum required to achieve these normal interpretative effects, recasting its female leads under new but familiar names and resetting the various thriller and Hollywood plotlines so that for the final half hour of the film they work against the lesbian romance they have previously assisted to visual consummation. The temporal weighting is worth noting since many interpretations of the film give the false impression that *Mulholland Drive* is more or less evenly divided between two distinct storyworlds encased within a first half and a second half. This critical thumb-on-the-scale tends to work against the lesbian story, most often reducing it to the status of a wish-fulfillment fantasy anchored in the kind of sexual psychosis Hollywood frequently makes cognate with lesbianism.[4]

Far from standing in the way of the film's critical or popular success, this combination of narrative insufficiency and narrative excess is exactly the element that captivated its audience. Although Lynch's film and television work has always cultivated the interpretative intervention of its viewers, preferring symbolic repetition and resonance to straightforward plot relations of cause and effect, perhaps none of his previous fictions place

the narrative impulse to connect under such unrelenting pressure as *Mulholland Drive*. Everything about the film, including its ancillary publicity campaign, escalates the desire for and promise of narrative closure while withdrawing any possibility of its easy satisfaction. Though categorized as a sexual thriller, the film's marketing campaign drew deeply on Lynch's cult reputation and explicitly promoted *Mulholland Drive* as an interpretative puzzle requiring solution. The official studio web site included as its introductory tease an interactive jigsaw which recomposed one image from the film with another; the visual substitution of a starlit sky with the director's face the first of several keys to understanding the meaning of *Mulholland Drive*. The quickly released DVD increased these narrative lures with Lynch providing "10 Clues to Unlocking This Thriller" at the same time he purposely withheld a chapter index to assist the returning viewer to navigate the disc.[5] Several years later "Lost on Mulholland Dr." remains an active forum for amateur interpreters of the film who, like their academic counterparts, tend to reconfigure *Mulholland Drive*'s deliberate incoherence by giving logical priority to characters and story details that occur in the final twenty-five minutes of the film and reframing the rest of the film as a retrospective fantasy sequence that takes visual precedence in screen time.[6] As thematically persuasive as many of these interpretations are, they have little or nothing to say about the film's lesbian story line despite the fact that the plot of female sexual jealousy and murderous revenge—a highly improbable lesbian hit—is exactly what their sequential reordering gives structural preeminence.[7] Lesbianism, that is, while necessary to the securing of overall narrative coherence never obtains thematic significance in its own right. At the same time the thematic significance of other elements in the film's inset story line can never be overestimated, particularly the symbolic function of the many quirky figures who populate the interstices of the two dominant story lines: the dark eyebrowed young man (Patrick Fischler) and older companion (Michael Cooke), perhaps his analyst (though he seems too disdainful and aggressive for the role), who appear at Winkie's coffee shop to restage a dream with the assistance of Lynch's subjective camerawork and atmospheric soundtrack; the derelict Terrifying Bum (Bonnie Aarons) whose frightening face is discovered behind the coffee shop and into whose possession ultimately fall the miniature figures of the old couple first glimpsed at the end of the opening dance montage; The Cowboy (Lafayette Montgomery) who cryptically portends his own unmotivated reappearances in scenes yet to come, and so on and so forth.[8]

Far from providing the answer to *Mulholland Drive*'s narrative enigma, these popular and critical responses consistently press-gang lesbianism into the service of story despite the film's repeated insistence that female homosexuality, howsoever chronologically revised, is ill-suited to sustaining the space-time continuum necessary for the logical development of plot.[9] In *Mulholland Drive* the relation between lesbianism and story is

irredeemably speculative, another turn in the Hollywood representational system that makes female homosexuality an indispensable scenic element but at the same time a diegetic impossibility. The first time we see the two female leads in *Mulholland Drive* in bed together, the action pauses long enough for the blonde, Betty Elms (Naomi Watts), to ask the brunette, who has adopted the name Rita (Laura Elena Harring), "Have you ever done this before?" The answer, "I don't know," while consistent with Rita's amnesiac state, is doubly disingenuous, encapsulating as it does the larger mystery of the film and the lesbianism to which that mystery is linked. The innovation of Lynch's film is to stage this sexual question not as a question of character—are you a lesbian?—but as a question of story. Although Watts and Harring will subsequently be shown having sex in a scene that chronologically precedes this one, insofar as the actors have assumed the roles of two new characters, Diane Selwyn and Camilla Rhodes, it is difficult to pin either psychological or plot continuity to the visual repetition. While not disputing that many elements in Lynch's film deliberately prompt us to recognize that the second sexual scene precedes the first in story time, it is hard to see this before and after relation as enough to stabilize the relation of action to fantasy, or real plot to dream sequence. Rather, the moments of lesbian spectacle are crucial to the formal suspension of the spatiotemporal coordinates upon which any realist plot might rely, even one that gives two-thirds of screen time to events ostensibly sourced to the imagination of a single character. The film's parallel sex scenes establish that the lesbian story is preeminently a matter of cinematic time and place, something extrapolated from the camera's representation of space rather than the rational (or irrational) sum of a character's prior and current actions.

Unconstrained by any obligation to realism, the dual and involuted story lines of *Mulholland Drive* go so far as to make coincidental lesbian sexuality and the space in which it happens, in this case the two cinematic apartments that provide the backdrop to the alternate sexual scenes between Watts and Harring as, first, Betty Elms and Rita, and, second, Diane Selwyn and Camilla Rhodes. The mission-style complex at 1612 Havenhurst is the apartment setting around which questions of identity first coalesce.[10] Arriving at LAX fresh from Deep River, Ontario, 1612 Havenhurst is the destination Betty gives to the cab driver, having just farewelled the elderly couple she befriended en route. Familiar from the opening sequence, these two loco-parental figures, Irene (Jeanne Bates) and her nameless bespectacled husband (Dan Birnbaum), drive off in a limousine, smiling moronically, as the cab delivers Betty to an apartment complex already familiar to the viewer. Accessed via an archway inadequately secured by cast-iron gates, the handsome residential compound Betty arrives at is home to her Aunt Ruth (Maya Bond) who has departed its precincts some hours before. Unbeknown to Betty and to Coco (Ann Miller), the live-in manager whose business it is to know the residents' comings and goings, Aunt

Ruth's ground-level apartment, supposedly empty, already shelters the still unnamed survivor of the car crash on Mulholland Drive. Somewhere inside, deep in shock, is the dark-haired woman who walked away from death, the unanticipated accident saving her from whatever fate the gun-toting limousine driver had in store for her. Given the door key by Coco, Betty takes uninhibited possession of her aunt's elegant apartment, crossing its threshold with the same unselfconscious enthusiasm she brings to all her encounters with new people and new places. With no reason to think she is not alone, Betty innocently explores the layout of the apartment but, with the viewer acutely aware that someone else is already in the house, the suspense of the scene is dramatically amplified by the mobile camera that runs along the interior walls of the hallway as if pulling her into the bedroom before following her into the expansive bathroom. Taking up a position before an oval mirror, Betty's reverie is disturbed by the sound of water behind her. Demonstrating for the first time the physical intrepidness that allows her to cross spatial and sexual thresholds as if they were the same easy obstacle, Betty turns and without hesitation pulls open the opaque glass door of the shower cabinet in which hides the unknown intruder. The sight of the naked woman momentarily embarrasses Betty, perhaps the first sign that the particular threat posed by the statuesque brunette will be a lesbian one.

Once dressed it is enough for the brunette to offer the name "Rita," taken from the framed promotional poster for *Gilda* that hangs on the bathroom wall, for her identity to be secured sufficiently enough for the two women to continue to occupy the Havenhurst apartment together. Derived from the interior fit-out, Rita's identity is no more than a matter of the time and place she finds herself in, a truth ostensibly justified by her loss of memory after the car crash that inaugurates the film's present-tense story line. Although Rita's amnesia seems to suggest that identity and, by corollary, sexuality, implies a past—"Have you ever done this before?"—the film undoes that convention by revealing that, cinematically at least, all lesbianism requires is a space and time of its own. In the sequential development of Lynch's film, sexual motivation is less about character psychology than it is about spatial determination and—as many women have discovered before them—it is enough for Betty and Rita to find themselves together in a generous double bed for sex to occur.

Though Rita's imposture as Aunt Ruth's friend is quickly exposed by Coco, the relationship between the two young woman merely deepens because of the brunette's inability to recall who she is and the blonde's confidence that she can help her find out.[11] Never questioned, female intimacy from this point forward takes the form of an investigation into identity; an amateur sleuthing in which Betty enthusiastically deploys the detective methods learned from popular culture. All Rita has taken away from the car crash is her purse, chock-full of money, and a stylized blue key, plus a vague sense of the accident's scene. With these clues the two women set

out to discover what they can "just like in the movies." Betty makes a call to the police inquiring about an incident on Mulholland Dr. but, when pressed for her details, she hangs up proving herself incapable of deception. The scene adds no new plot information but merely underscores the transparency of Betty's character as if her identity, unlike Rita's, was readable at a glance. With no mention of a car crash in the daily paper, Betty's powers of detection are momentarily exhausted. Her inquiry kick-started by the chance prompt of the nametag, "Diane," worn by the blonde waitress (Melissa Crider) in Winkie's, the diner in which she and Rita share the first of several cups of coffee that inevitably index key moments in plot development. Newly reminded of something in her past, the waitress's tag triggers in Rita not a full-blown sense of identity but its most impersonal placemarker, a name: Diane Selwyn. As with the Rita Hayworth poster in the Aunt's apartment, the brunette's slowly accumulating sense of self continues to derive from the place she finds herself in. The chance coincidence at Winkie's is more than enough to set the blonde's Nancy Drew instincts off again. Against the odds of anything but plot necessity, the specificity of the name Diane Selwyn is immediately confirmed by its singular appearance in the Los Angeles phonebook Betty consults, a circumstance which then leads the two woman—as if logically—from the Havenhurst apartment they are in to its arts and craft doppelgänger some small distance across Hollywood.[12] If the detective conceit maintained throughout the first two-thirds of *Mulholland Drive* superficially sustains the illusion that narrative chains of causality are the logical link between different story locations, the advent of the two found names, Rita and Diane, suggests other narrative conditions also apply, namely that story location determines plot, particularly the plot of lesbianism.

Continually interleaving the identity plot with the film production counterplot centered on Adam, *Mulholland Drive*'s double story lines momentarily swerve together when Betty attends the audition that is her reason for coming to Los Angeles in the first place. With her detective impulse temporarily in check, Betty presents herself in the already overcrowded office of the producer, Wally Brown (James Karen), an old friend of her aunt's, while Rita remains out of sight inside the Havenhurst apartment. Looking every inch the ingénue, the young would-be actress is put in the practiced hands of the middle-aged man already cast as the love interest in a planned miniseries that has a young woman engaging in an illicit affair with her father's best friend. As the perennially tanned soap actor Woody Katz (Chad Everett) sleazily grinds his hips into Betty's, he calls back to the director Bob Brooker (Wayne Grace) a line that is not part of the script: "Dad's best friend goes to work." As will hardly be lost on those many fans and critics practiced in finding Freudian boilerplates in Lynch narratives, Betty is being asked to try out for the thankless role of female exchange object in an oedipal triangle that is not limited to the fictional miniseries (father, daughter, male friend) or the scenario being played out

in the audition itself (director, ingénue, male star) but also takes in other masculine struggles over women including the one Adam is engaged in with the thuggish agents of the invisible Mr. Roque, who insist he cast the talent-free blonde Camilla Rhodes (Melissa George) in his musical feature and stage a shutdown of production when he resists. As the audition continues the innocent Betty doesn't recoil but, against expectation, takes Woody's hand and places it on her buttock as she repeats the lines she previously rehearsed in her aunt's kitchen. With no trace of the shrill hysterical tone she earlier adopted in response to Rita's deadpan prompts, Betty drops into a low whisper that breathes life into the wooden dialogue and the man who bears its name. "Get out," she whispers as if it were a come-on, kissing the actor's thin-lipped mahogany face until he hangs on her every word. The threat of murder, which in the Havenhurst apartment seemed laughably risible to both women, now registers as a castration anxiety literalized in the imaginary knife Betty holds to Woody's neck before she breaks out of heterosexual character and resumes the role of naïve girl. In contradistinction to the impression we have formed of her, this scene establishes that acting or deception, not detection, is Betty's real talent and Watts' ability to represent convincingly both sexual innocence and sexual experience is precisely the quality that *Mulholland Drive* exploits across its duplicitous story line, making it still harder to resolve the thematic significance of lesbianism, which seems situational in one plot context (brought on by little more than the naked presence of one woman beside another in a bed) but pathological in the other (ingrained enough to drive the same woman or, rather the same actor, to pay a hit man to kill her former lover and then kill herself when the contract is fulfilled).

Effortlessly switching from murderous sophisticate back to naïf, Betty's performance in the audition wins over the immediate circle of viewers except for the director whose churlish response, prompted by the intervention of the fawning producer, conveys that he at least is not taken in by the heterosexual act. "Very humanistic," he contributes, remaining in the folding chair that signals his status as director while everyone else perches awkwardly on the crowded sofa.[13] Quickly swept up by the more consistently slick casting agent Linney James (Rita Taggart) and her female assistant Nicki Pelazza (Michele Hicks), Betty leaves the room. The exaggerated politeness of the audition scene gives way to insider dish with the two industry women quickly dismissing the viability of Wally's miniseries project as they escort Betty across to the set where Adam's film, *The Sylvia North Story,* is being cast. Walking onto the crowded soundstage, Betty is instantly sutured into the role of female lead via nothing more than the series of crosscuts that Lynch uses to imbue the distance between her and the seated director with a romantic significance the more intense for its remaining uncomplicated by any speech, action, or backstory information connecting the two figures. At first sight, and nothing else, the young female actor and the handsome male director are destined for love, an

on-screen development that seems all the more plausible for being without motivating cause, unlike Adam's immediately prior casting of the talentless blonde he has been compelled to select by the suited deputies of the film's mysterious backer.[14]

Betty and Adam's romantically suggestive crosscut glances would conventionally serve the purpose of linking together the film's previously separate story lines preparing us for further complications that would bring the identity and movie industry plots closer together. As *Mulholland Drive* proceeds, however, the nascent heterosexual romance is passed over in favor of the subsequent homosexual encounter between Betty and Rita in Aunt Ruth's bed. Rather than delivering plot cohesion by suturing together the two story lines as the brief encounter between Adam and Betty promises to do, the lesbian romance acts as the catalyst for numerous plot switchbacks whereby the momentum of one story line is incoherently diverted into the other as when the Cowboy, who acts as an agent for Mr. Roque, materializes in the doorway of Diane Selwyn's bedroom or when Rita appears on Adam's set and is addressed as Camilla Rhodes, to whom she bears not the least physical resemblance.

Unsurprisingly this narrative incoherence, and the lesbianism with which it is associated, is precipitated by Betty and Rita's visit to the second of the film's apartment spaces, which occurs immediately after the scene on the soundstage. By the time Betty and Rita take a cab to Diane Selwyn's address, the Sierra Bonita Apartments are already staked out, if ineffectually, by two indistinguishable male figures in an unmarked car who may, or may not, be the slow-talking LAPD detectives (Robert Forster and Brent Briscoe) who preside over the earlier crash scene.[15] Since the street frontage of the Sierra Bonita complex is under surveillance, Betty and Rita approach the apartments from the rear alleyway to avoid being seen by whoever else is on the trail of the woman who survived the accident on Mulholland Dr. Although the arts and craft bungalow apartments are on a different scale and level of luxury to Aunt Ruth's building at 1612 Havenhurst, the apartments are alike in being designed around an internal garden court. Once Betty and Rita walk through an archway between two garages, they are visually protected within a central green corridor lined with subtropical plants, a less extravagant version of the Moorish courtyard onto which Aunt Ruth's apartment opens. Similarly, just as when she entered the Havenhurst complex and followed the sign to the manager's apartment, Betty's approach to the Sierra Bonita is also directed by signage, only this time the information given is misleading. The residents' directory leads the two women to Apartment #12 where they ask after Diane Selwyn only to be directed down to Apartment #17 by a sulky dark-haired woman (Johanna Stein) who explains that she and Diane have traded apartments. The conversation in the doorway of Apartment #12 provides plot information—the apartment swap, Diane's recent unexplained absence, the annoyed woman's claim to objects left in the other apartment—that will account for later

events but primarily establishes that Diane's presence in Apartment #17 is the result of a substitution—one woman for another—which is not unlike the arranged substitution between Betty and her aunt in the Havenhurst apartment, or the surreptitious substitution of Rita for Aunt Ruth in the same place. Unlike those prior substitutions of women within apartment space, however, no plot rationale is provided for the switch between Diane and the dark-haired woman, an arrangement that seems at once too casual and too intimate to bear further speculation. Rather than filling in plot details, the scene on the doorstep of #12 generates more questions than it resolves, implying that past relations between this woman and the still unseen Diane are more complicated than is usually expected of neighbors.[16] Although the film keeps returning to the morose figure of the neighbor, this implication of motivational depth is never delivered on. Rather, the distinctive facial features of the woman from #12 simply get redeployed as the most reliable indicator of screen time and place in a storyworld cut loose from causal logic. Like the benign figure of Aunt Ruth who later returns at a crucial turn in the lesbian narrative, the female neighbor is the on-screen marker of little other than narrative chronology.

Subsequent events confirm the cinematic functionality of the female face. Intent on coming with Betty and Rita in order to retrieve the last of her belongings from Apartment #17, the dark-haired woman is called away by the ringing of her phone so that the expectation of her reappearance hangs over the next scene, in which Betty breaks in to Diane's seemingly vacant apartment via an unlocked window. The offscreen deployment of the peripheral character amplifies the sense of a temporal present in which the on-screen action suspensefully unfolds. Not once but twice, the film will call upon the Sierra Bonita neighbor to fulfill a temporal function in relation to events in Apartment #17. On this occasion she never makes it inside the apartment, withdrawing along the pathway connecting apartments #12 and #17 before Betty and Rita escape through the front door after the horrible discovery of a woman's putrifying body in an inner bedroom. As they flee apartment #17, the manipulated screen image roughly superimposes Watts and Harring's shocked faces before fading to black, the visual discontinuity matched to the extra-diegetic orchestrally enhanced sound of wind that accompanied the two women stalking through the darkened interior. A visual citation of Ingmar Bergman's *Persona* (1966), the cinematic doubling of female faces here assists the emergence of a lesbian diegesis that has little interest in claiming a fully coherent storyworld but has a privileged relation to image, extra-diegetic sound, and abstract space as explored by Lynch's mobile camera.[17]

This link between the female face and the cinematic expansion of narrative space beyond the coordinates of realism has been in place since Betty first arrived at her aunt's Havenhurst address. A shot of the Hollywood sign yields to a drifting Steadicam perspective of the inside of the apartment complex that reveals the dimensions of a double-storied

colonnaded courtyard. A reverse shot unexpectedly shows Betty standing at the entrance enthralled by the architectural splendor of her temporary home, the airport cab pulling away from the West Hollywood curb behind her. Though the camera shot is consistent with her character's point of view, it precedes her arrival in the scene and the odd anticipatory quality of the shot is amplified by the soundtrack which is no longer synchronized to diegetic events but muffles the noise associated with on-screen actions and puts in their place Angelo Badalamenti's atmospheric soundtrack. The same effect is produced when Betty enters her aunt's apartment and the head-height camera slowly precedes her into the tight dimensions of the recessed hallway with its distempered yellow walls and partially glimpsed arched doorways. Not quite point-of-view shooting, the repetition of this device, both here and in the Sierra Bonita apartment scene, rather than depersonalizing the shot lends an abstract quality to the enclosed spaces Betty is associated with so that they become metonymic extensions of her subjectivity as well as physical settings she must carefully navigate. Far from omniscient, this partially subjective camera and its slowed-down exploration of abstract rather than diegetic space effortlessly carries the weight of consciousness without the burden of narrative coherence. Like the images presented in a dream, the scene unfolds without being held to the ordinary rules of rational perspective or duration. These glancingly subjective sequences have as their opposite those occasional omniscient shots that puncture the film with the illusion of spatial mastery and the directorial control with which it is aligned, namely, the shot of the Hollywood sign and the aerial flyover of downtown Los Angeles, which takes a landscape of skyscrapers and flattens it to the two-dimensional status of a mapped grid.

First associated with the bedroom seen in the first perspectively deep space revealed in the film, then amplified in the Havenhurst apartment, these nonnaturalistic spatial effects, particularly the use of nondiegetic sound, escalate in intensity when Betty and Rita investigate the oddly expansive interior of the seemingly vacant Sierra Bonita apartment.[18] In the cinematic world of *Mulholland Drive*, the discovery of the dead female cadaver on Diane Selwyn's bed, seemingly a diegetic crux, is no more or less crucial to the advancement of the film's plot than the doubled exposure of multiplying female faces that terminates the scene. Accompanied by distorting acoustic reverb, the fractured slow-motion superimposition of close-ups of Betty and Rita reinforces the link between femininity and cinematic effects that mitigate against the emergence of a transparent and fully knowable storyworld, and simultaneously ushers in the lesbian seduction scene. As this formal gesture should lead us to expect, the sex scene between Betty and Rita in the Havenhurst apartment, like the second sex scene between their doppelgängers Diane and Camilla in Sierra Bonita's #17, involves compositional and mise-en-scènic effects far more extreme than the crosscuts used in the heterosexual encounter between

Betty and Adam and the later very similar encounter between Adam and Rita as Camilla. In the first lesbian scene, Rita abandons the blonde wig she has adopted as disguise before slipping into Aunt Ruth's bed beside Betty. Once there, she responds without hesitation to the other woman's every initiative, just as she has throughout the film. "I'm in love with you," repeats Betty between kisses. In the wake of the day's many rehearsals and auditions, Betty's words sound citational, an effect increased by their being met with a silence that is then given literal voice in Rita's postcoital sleeptalking.[19] Ostensibly proceeding from Rita's subconscious, the word "Silencio" arrives as the last vestige of her unremembered past but visually she continues to be linked to the woman she lies beside in a foreshortened composition that, with the assistance of ratchet focus, places Rita's lips against Betty's in a shot setup taken, once again, from Bergman's *Persona*, another film in which the story of the female actor is necessarily crossed with the story of female sexual merging.[20]

In keeping with the Bergmanesque logic whereby lesbianism implicates the female actor in the dissolution of identity, the mouth-to-mouth shot cues in a new overtly theatrical location where female desires are ventriloquized through the invisible frequencies of playback.[21] With Rita having resumed the blonde wig that makes her a near double for Betty, the two women arrive at the exterior of Club Silencio before being overtaken by a low ground-level camera that enters the building after them to reveal its cavernous interior. Where the CinemaScope format has previously given Lynch the capacity to enlarge falsely the otherwise tight space of the Havenhurst and Sierra Bonita apartments, the telescopic, wide-angle lens he now deploys exaggerates the capacious void of the club's auditorium and, in particular, its painted ceiling mural beneath which Betty and Rita take their appointed seats among other scattered spectators, most notably the elaborately costumed Woman with Blue Hair (Cori Glazer) positioned alone in the side balcony that overlooks the shallow stage.[22]

Beneath the trompe l'oeil ceiling, the two blondes—one fake, one real—sit side by side in the dark watching a number of staged performances that play on the distinction between truth and appearance.[23] The red-suited master of ceremonies Cookie (Geno Silva) first introduces the magician Bondar (Richard Green) who is surrounded by a band of musicians. As music fills the auditorium Bandar repeats to the audience, again and again, "No hay banda. There is no band. Il n'y a pas d'orchestre." Although he administers the lesson repeatedly—"This is all a tape-recording. No hay banda and yet we hear a band"—insisting that the music which appears to proceed from the instruments on stage is nothing but playback, the real demonstration lies elsewhere in the audience's mysterious capacity to go on believing the illusion despite its exposure as false. Of course this is the lesson of cinema far more than it is the lesson of the stage, which usually involves embodied performance of some kind so that even a feigned act is at some level real: in cinema the artificial synchronicity of sound and image is

all that is required for the belief in appearances to take hold. The first act ends with Bondar orchestrating a sound and light show of blue smoke and thunder that induces an involuntary shaking in Betty. Physically wracked in her seat by the mechanical devices of cinema (recorded sound and light), Betty's response is narratively inexplicable. The master of ceremonies then returns to introduce Rebekah Del Rio (Rebekah Del Rio), the female performer who comes on to sing a Spanish version of Roy Orbison's "Crying." Rising above the authenticating reverb from the oversized microphone, Del Rio's unaccompanied singing voice raises to the second power the capacity of sound to persuade an audience of not just physical but also emotional truth, an effect increased by the strange familiarity of the translated lyrics to Anglophone ears. The single false tear painted on Del Rio's cheek cannot diminish the transformative effects of her singing, not least on her own facial features which are held in extreme close-up. Felt well beyond the diegetically circumscribed scene, Del Rio's impassioned performance draws tears from Betty and Rita who, as if to validate their own emotions, reach for each other's hands in the dark. At this point the singer collapses to the floor, reduced to a deadweight carried from the stage as the sound of her voice continues to fill the auditorium with the moving sound of human pain.

With the exposure of the illusion, Betty and Rita recompose themselves emotionally. Slipping her hand into her purse, Betty discovers the blue box that corresponds to the key that might unlock Rita's past. A cut returns the two women to the entrance of the Havenhurst apartments where they walk across the darkened courtyard into Aunt Ruth's apartment a final time. Inside, in outright defiance of the rules of continuity, the bed in which they previously had sex is now neatly made up. As Betty places the blue box on the bed, Rita takes down from the closet the hatbox in which her handbag has been concealed. In the time Rita's back is turned, Betty disappears from the frame and the apartment. Bewildered by Betty's disappearance, just as the viewer is, Rita proceeds to unlock the blue box. Contentless, the blue box functions as the culmination of the film's repeated representations of entry into new story space: the lifting of the lid creates a black vacuum that sucks the camera shot in, tearing the viewer out of the comfort zone of narrative plenitude and delivering them into a parallel diegetic world in which some other story seems already under way. The conduit between these two diegetic orders has a sexual aspect that could hardly be more obvious: the key from one woman's purse opens the box found in another's.[24]

Whatever its latent sexual symbolism, this link between the two women has as its manifest corollary a spatial link between the two apartment spaces. As the abandoned box drops to the carpet, the sound of its falling recalls to the Havenhurst bedroom Aunt Ruth whose traveling clothes inconclusively signal either her return from her trip away or the story's return to an earlier moment before either Rita or Betty crossed the threshold of the

apartment. Her ambiguous chronological function performed, Aunt Ruth leaves the apartment bedroom for good. The camera shot remains on the bedroom doorway and the deep space of the hall glimpsed through it, before an atmospheric fade cues in a similar perspective on the darkened interior of the Sierra Bonita apartment. Momentarily, the image returns to the Havenhurst apartment doorway before a second fade releases the camera into the more obscure depths of the other apartment where, through another bedroom doorway, a female figure is revealed in the same pose, the same bed as the dead woman previously discovered by Betty and Rita in Diane Selwyn's apartment. A door is heard opening to let in the figure of the Cowboy who calls across the empty space, "Hey pretty girl, time to wake up," before a fade to black prompts him to retreat from the scene closing the door behind him. Achieved by the relocation of the scene around the stable camera shot and an associated change in Peter Deming's cinematographic style from saturated reds to bleached-out tones of blue and green, the switch between the Havenhurst and Sierra Bonita apartments is compounded by a switch in female identity as, roused by a knocking, the woman on the bed (now played by Watts) gets up, dresses in an old gray gown, and blearily answers the door where she is addressed as Diane by the dark-haired woman from Apartment #12. Now indistinguishable from the apartment she finds herself in, the only characteristic Watts takes from one space to the other is the lesbian desire she centers on Harring, who is forthwith addressed as Camilla. In cinematic terms, at least, the peculiar quality of Apartment #17 is that it secures lesbian continuity at the expense of all other rational claims on story.

A rapid series of present tense and assorted flashback scenes subsequently occur inside the apartment, all of which assist the claims of lesbian continuity but continue to test the viewer's apprehension of a consistent storyworld.[25] Crucially, the second appearance of the dark-haired female neighbor in the doorway of #17 resets the clock of the action inside. Unfazed by Watts' doubling identities, the neighbor proceeds to remove certain objects from the apartment, including an ashtray that will shortly reappear in the same spot on the coffee table in order to fix the chronological priority of screened events in story time. But if the relatively late deployment of the ashtray reasserts the formalist assumption that narrative takes precedence over image, Lynch's film more regularly confounds that assumption via repeated returns to other inanimate objects—a red lampshade, a bedside table, an unmade bed—that challenge the viewer's capacity to understand causality across time and space. Puncturing the rhythm of character interactions and events these mise-en-scènic interludes, overloaded with significance as they are, are insufficient to the demands of a rational story line so that narrative intelligibility keeps being overwhelmed by more and more plot elements that fail to coalesce in a single time-space continuum or storyworld. In Apartment #17, for instance, simultaneous assertions and withholdings of continuity are vested in nothing more than a gray gown and coffee cup, visual mnemonics augmented by alterations in

the cinematographic wash of the scene which is at some points grey-blue, at others filled with intensely chromatic reds.

As the disordered events in Apartment #17 unfold, this tension between image and story, particularly sexual image and sexual story, becomes the basis for the film's final romantic switchback between lesbian and straight scenarios. Depressed and sallow, Diane stands in her gray gown at the kitchen bench making coffee, before carrying the cup towards the overstuffed sofa that dominates the apartment's living room. As the camera approaches the sofa the high back falls out of sight to reveal Camilla lying along its length naked from the waist up, saturated primaries and flesh tones briefly restored. Relieved of the coffee cup, an equally luminescent Diane, now dressed only in denim cutoffs, climbs on top of her girlfriend. Initially responsive, Camilla checks Diane's advances by saying, "We shouldn't do this anymore." This precipitates a jealous frenzy where Diane aggressively attempts to get her hand inside her resisting girlfriend's pants before asking "It's him, isn't it?"[26] At these words the scene cuts to Adam's studio set and reveals the director as Diane's rival for Camilla in cinematic and therefore sexual terms. Although Adam has been reduced to a puppet director by the behind-the-scene machinations of Mr. Roque, on set he retains the sexual entitlements associated with the role of director. When, in order to demonstrate how the male lead is to hold and kiss the female lead, he climbs inside a chrome-fendered fifties convertible that sits against a painted starlit sky, he is merely engaging privileges he has never had to relinquish despite the changes in the women temporarily cast opposite him. Having dispensed with the encumbrance of his cheating wife (Lori Heuring), Adam is, as we have earlier seen, initially situated as the romantic lead against Betty by a series of crosscut glances that occur across the empty space of the soundstage she visits after her television audition. Now, for a second time, Watts takes up a position on *The Sylvia North Story* set in order for her new character, Diane Selwyn, to observe the director moving into place against yet another female lead. The role of Sylvia North is now played by Harring as Camilla, although the specificities of identity are less relevant than each actors' ability to hit their mark in a triangulated stage plan that now makes—via the same device of crosscut eyeline matches—the brunette, not the director, the object of the blonde's sexual attention. Effectively positioned as the threat to the lesbian relationship, Adam proceeds to put his female lead through her paces. Settling in to the kiss owed him as director of the scene, Adam kills the lights on the heterosexual action, plunging both set and screen into blackness.[27]

With the new lovers left discreetly in the dark, Diane is returned to the dull interior of the Sierra Bonita apartment where a panning camera shot picks her up lying along the sofa, still in her cutoffs, effortfully masturbating in tears. As in the Club Silencio sequence, a woman's face is once again depicted in emotional extremity but unlike the heavily made-up face of Del Rio, Watts' lusterless face, having lost all the luminescence formerly

bestowed on it by makeup and lighting, seems the visual index of abject distress not its aesthetic citation.[28] The image track, which moves between objective and subjective points of view as the apartment room's stone fireplace blurs in and out of focus as if seen through a film of tears, is accompanied by the continuous sound of a wet slapping that asks to be taken as the noise of masturbation.[29] Instead of relying on the established mainstream convention of having the actor vocalize female arousal, the audio track continues to broadcast this supposedly diegetic sound until another scenically anchored noise breaks in, the shrill ring of a telephone that goes unanswered, its story purpose served by the sexual interruption it makes. The phone continues to ring, however, as the shot shifts to a black receiver that sits beside a full ashtray beneath a red lamp, which is picked up by Diane, who is now clad in a black evening dress. Unlocatable except via a previous series of calls that trace back to the mobster plot, these scenic details establish only that Diane has been temporarily ejected from the lesbian apartment and the plot of female intimacy with which it is associated. Out of time, out of place, Diane stands in the nowhere space of the scenic interlude, blankly taking in the information that Camilla conveys down the line, that a car is coming to drive her to 6980 Mulholland Dr., the story place of heterosexuality.

In order to challenge the narrative dominance of the lesbian story, the film deploys a domestic location at odds with the apartment space that has proven so conducive to sex between women, be they Betty and Rita or Diane and Camilla. At her former girlfriend's instigation, Diane reenacts the limousine journey that inaugurates the film. For a second time the black limousine comes to a halt at the switchback turn where the unnamed brunette's life was first threatened by the gun-wielding driver. The blonde repeats the dialogue initially assigned the brunette before the accident occurred, "We don't stop here," but this time the car door opens onto the desired sight of Camilla who then assists Diane out of the car and into the mise-en-scène of romance. Composed of exactly the same atmospheric elements as the post-crash scene in which Harring, as the traumatized survivor, blindly made her way through the roadside vegetation down to Sunset Boulevard and Aunt Ruth's apartment, the glittering nightscape now provides the backdrop for a more deliberate ascent to Adam's hilltop residence. The woman now known as Camilla takes Diane by the hand and leads her through a moonlit garden into the heterosexual precincts of Adam's property. The two women climb towards a landscaped terrace, its visual centerpiece an illuminated swimming pool around which dinner guests stand.[30] Among them Ann Miller appears as Adam's mother, an identity not in the least contradicted by her being the manager of the Havenhurst apartment and a friend of Aunt Ruth. As if to confirm the consistency of her character and the inconsistency of those played by Watts and Harring, the scene requires Miller to introduce herself to Watts, now playing Diane, with exactly the same line as she earlier introduced herself

to Betty: "Just call me Coco, everybody does." Coco, like her son Adam, remains unchanged across both of the film's key story lines. Impossibly youthful, Miller's surgically enhanced visage, stretched so thin as to be almost incapable of expression, stands as an eloquent testimony to both her glorious Hollywood past and the terms by which its female stars achieve and maintain success.[31] A pulled-focus shot moves the party inside, where Lynch's camera is less mesmerized by the beautiful ruin of Miller's face than the shock of her aged hand making its way into the finger food. As in the masturbation scene and the Del Rio performance at Club Silencio, the female face is asked to carry the contradictions of narrative cinema and its illusionist appeal, which are then linked—here, as in those two previous scenes, by a woman's hand—with lesbianism as Hollywood's best means of heightening the tension between narrative and image.

Just how far Lynch is prepared to torque the relation between narrative and image becomes clear in the dinner party scene where Diane sits uncomfortably at the table fielding questions from Coco about her friendship with Camilla. As the industry-wise Coco draws Diane out, the suggestion of lesbian sexual enthrallment and jealousy becomes indistinguishable from the story of female professional rivalry always assumed to play out around the figure of the male director. Subject to a complicated social erasure, the lesbian story segues into an industry story that even the most obtuse dinner guest already knows by heart although Coco, it seems, understands everything, reaching across to pat Diane's youthful hand in an ambivalent gesture of female complicity. As the dinner party progresses, Diane is exposed to a double rejection in being supplanted both by Adam and the blonde starlet, previously introduced as Camilla Rhodes, who claims a kiss on the lips from her namesake. After the two Camillas—one brunette, one blonde—kiss in close-up, an act that literalizes the connection between lesbianism and diegetic impossibility, the diminutive Cowboy is seen walking into shot from behind a partition wall, which the blonde Camilla Rhodes has just disappeared behind. Still costumed for the corral, the male figure walks left to right across the elegant modernist interior then exits to the outside terrace without a glance toward the camera that refuses to follow him, anchored as it is to the interior space of Diane's sexual humiliation.

As if to assert the full rights of heterosexuality, Adam silences the room to make a speech but, just as he seems about to announce his and Camilla's intention to marry, a declaration that would complete the heterosexual story chain, the scene is interrupted by the sound of breaking crockery, a metonymic bridge to a new scene at Winkie's where a washed-out Diane sits across from the leather-clad hit man (Mark Pellegrino), her coffee cup refilled by the familiar blonde waitress who now wears the nametag "Betty."[32] By arranging the hit against her former girlfriend, Diane circumvents the heterosexual closure of the industry story but only by going over to its storyworld, an act that proves fatal for both women, the cause and effect relations of the thriller being fundamentally incompatible with

the plot of lesbianism as the film presents it. The contract hit secures the lesbian ending, as even the most amateur of interpretations recognizes, but it also wipes out the lesbian and the alternative diegetic space she occupies. Out of her depth in story, Diane's last look across the internal space of the diner is returned from the middle distance by the heavily eyebrowed young man who has resumed his position at the counter formerly assigned him by his companion. The eyeline match between dark man and blonde woman is all that is required to make his frightening dreamworld hers: a fade cues in an outside nocturnal scene lit by the flashing red neon Winkie's sign, as if all the world were a photographic developing lab bathed in red. The mobile camera, unaided by any subjective point of view, rediscovers out back the derelict, who is holding the familiar blue box, which he places in a crumpled brown bag. Dropping both at his feet, a long-held close-up shows that the blue box is now joined by a padlock the significance of which is eclipsed by the appearance from deep within the bag of the lilliputian figures of the laughing old couple who farewelled Betty at LAX, a jarring process shot in a film otherwise devoted to classical techniques of cinematic illusionism and suspense.

Having abandoned any sense of proportion or balance, the multiple story lines of the film accelerate towards each other with headlong force, their impact staved off only until the scene returns to the Sierra Bonita apartment and the moment we see Diane in possession of the key that signals the hit has been executed. From this moment forward, everything in Apartment #17 starts to make sense in new terms: the promised key sits on the coffee table, which no longer holds the ashtray that it did through the sex and masturbation scenes; the coffee mug and gray robe that Diane wears synchronize this moment as present-tense action occurring further on in the day Diane's heavy sleep was interrupted first by the dreamlike figure of the cowboy and then the cranky female neighbor. With the story clock set to now, another knock is heard before the camera shot drops to floor level to capture the miniscule old couple entering under the apartment door. Suddenly enlarged, the two figures, who have lost any relation of depth to the filmed space in which they appear, rush at Diane who is forced back into the bedroom where she takes a gun from the bedside drawer and kills herself, falling into the overexposed position formerly taken by the female cadaver on the red-sheeted bed in the fatal gesture that cinches tight the parallel story lines.[33]

With its substantive story over, *Mulholland Drive*, still mortgaged to the afterlife of images, continues to unreel a final sound and light show disengaged from the requirements of narrative. Dry ice vapor fills the bedroom of Apartment #17. The derelict's dark silhouette appears over a nighttime cityscape before yielding to the overlit face of Betty, as ecstatically translucent as on her arrival in Los Angeles. Against the sound of celebratory applause and the acknowledging flash of camera lights, she is joined by an equally rapturous Rita costumed in the blonde wig she adopted before the

film's inaugural lesbian scene in the Havenhurst apartment bedroom. The film's final image is not, however, the close-up vision of the two lesbian stars, a concept barely conceivable within a Hollywood matrix dependent on stories of female sexual rivalry, but a long shot of the nameless female spectator who still sits inside the Club Silencio elaborately coiffed and costumed in eighteenth-century garb. A visual anachronism, the female spectator's curtained private box forms a miniature stage on which to display, all washed in blue, the illusionism at the heart of the cinematic image. But as Lynch's allegory of Hollywood makes clear, this illusionism favors certain tropes and subjects over others. The trope of lesbianism, for instance, acts as an incentive to interpretation in ways that heterosexuality does not. Unable to secure romantic closure in the terms so easily granted heterosexuality, lesbianism, even as it grandstands as visual spectacle, also stands for the limitless possibilities of story itself. Although the male director ultimately forfeits artistic control of the film he directs, he retains the status of protagonist in his own story line. Similarly, whatever the plot sends his way, a mob enforcer or a cheating wife, Adam keeps the property on Mulholland Dr. that signals his success in the Hollywood system. Residing high in the hills, the straight director is not subjected to the diegetic switchbacks achieved at the expense of female characters within the two apartments located below. These twin lesbian apartments, however, are integral to the representational system over which the director can only pretend control and, insofar as they are the place where story and space can no longer be kept separate, they are the apotheosis of a cinematic chronotope whose screen presence shows no sign of abating.

# 8 Conclusion
## The Sexual Life of Apartments

> Space is the ongoing possibility of a different inhabitation.
> Elizabeth Grosz, *Architecture from the Outside*

Homosexuality has always had a fraught relation to both story and image in Hollywood cinema. Under the long order of the Production Code, the representation of sex perversion was necessarily oblique, a matter of subtextual innuendo and visual stereotype. Conclusively demonstrated in Vito Russo's now classic *Celluloid Closet*, this argument has undergone substantial theoretical refinement although its basic tenet remains unchanged: precluded from claiming narrative story line and so forced to occupy the connotative margins of Hollywood films, male and female homosexuality developed a correspondingly heightened relation to cinematic spectacle, particularly the spectacle of gender.[1] Considering the film noir canon, for instance, Richard Dyer argues that, while there are no gay characters as such within these films, there is a prevalence of effete male or butch female figures whose iconic gender deviance complicates the plot trajectory towards heterosexual closure otherwise encoded in the interactions of the immaculate femme fatale and tough masculine hero.[2] According to Dyer, sex perversion's narratively understated but visually exaggerated presence serves either to amplify the erotic potential of scenes that do not directly address sexual complication, or suggestively entangles the heterosexual leads in homosexual possibility in excess of the requirements of plot. Similarly, in Brett Farmer's more recent account of gay spectatorship and classical Hollywood cinema, same-sex sexuality has a less than obvious relation to narrative action. In Farmer's reading of the musical in particular, a genre that has magnetized gay spectatorship, homosexuality releases its claim on plot in favor of a process of "textual disruption and refiguration" in which its desires are sated neither in the resolutions of romantic event nor the complications of character development (all of which are "coded as heterosexual") but in the visual and symbolic excess of the musical number, dance routine, or the female star image.[3]

The invisibility once assumed to be paradigmatic of homosexuality within heteronormative scopic regimes such as that comprised by classical Hollywood cinema has been thoroughly challenged by these counterarguments that stress homosexuality's tangential relation to story and its privileged relation to display. Epitomized in Patricia White's account of the

women's film, it is now recognized that the Production Code ban, rather than suppressing knowledge of variant sexualities, effectively and energetically produced that knowledge in popular cultural forms that remain distinct from the generic narrative forms available for the representation of heterosexual romance.[4] Unable to lay hold of the filmic diegesis, gay or lesbian affiliation is classically a matter of speculation rather than action, the result of an interpretative investment in the ancillary details of plot or mise-en-scène against the heterosexual story lines those details are supposed to expedite, or a by-product of the fan's spectatorial investment in the star image, which exceeds the narrative constraints of the single film text. As the readings that comprise this book have demonstrated, some of the most compelling lesbian-themed films of the post–Production Code era, rather than producing gay versions of generic stories, press this narrative paradox into new service, establishing that the unreliability of the sexual image remains at the heart of both homosexual representation and cinema more generally. If this statement stands as an accurate gloss on William Wyler's *The Children's Hour* (1961) and Robert Aldrich's *The Killing of Sister George* (1968), both films which deliberately engage the conditions of sexual censorship, its is hardly less relevant to Rainer Werner Fassbinder's *The Bitter Tears of Petra Von Kant* (1972), Barbet Schroeder's *Single White Female* (1992), the Wachowski brothers' *Bound* (1996), or Lynch's *Mulholland Drive* (2001), all films in which the representation of a lesbian encounter likewise entangles problems of mimesis endemic to narrative cinema and the forms of spectatorship it traditionally supports.

My primarily formalist engagements with specific film texts have demonstrated that this tension between sexual narrative and sexual image is frequently mediated by a third term: space. All of the films considered take an apartment as their privileged setting or chronotope. More than simply the effect of textual selection, this combination of lesbian content and apartment setting is symptomatic of a wider cultural impasse concerning female sexuality and spatiality as it is more generally understood. I began this book by arguing for the salience of the apartment chronotope to new post-Stonewall figurations of lesbian possibility, suggesting that the spatial motifs which had previously organized the narratives of lesbian existence across the twentieth century—the bar and prison, schoolroom and college—are less well fitted for the transformations in gay and lesbian culture attendant on sexual liberalization. Historically annexed to narratives of subcultural secrecy and homosexual passing, the earlier lesbian chronotopes persist into the post-Stonewall era as increasingly camp or nostalgic formulations that continue to serve the identificatory requirements of homosexual culture. At the same time, other spatial motifs with little or no previous association with homosexuality, such as the apartment, gain narrative credence insofar as they support less dualistic understandings of the relation between sexual publicity and sexual privacy. It is precisely its capacity to convey what Susan Gal, borrowing from geometry, terms the

"fractal distinctions" of public and private life that makes the apartment motif narratively adaptable to the emergent conditions of an out lesbian culture and the structural contradictions endemic to it. Rather than stabilizing a hard and fast distinction between public and private, here and there, in and out, the apartment stories I have traced in the preceding chapters all reveal the fractal logic whereby such indexical distinctions are recursively projected onto different contexts and experiences. Whether projected onto larger or smaller cultural formations—the expansive reach of the television broadcast in *Sister George*, say, or the transmission of sound via the building infrastructure in *Single White Female* and *Bound*—these nested repetitions engage ever more roughly or ever more finely calibrated distinctions until the original terms (public/private, here/there, in/out) lose their categorical status and are sustainable only as "relative positions and not properties laminated onto the persons, objects, or spaces concerned."[5]

The fractal quality of the apartment chronotope or its ability to sustain repetitions of key indices almost indefinitely, perhaps evidenced most fully in the vertiginously nested storyworlds of *Mulholland Drive*, is also what makes it a useful critical resource for intervening in a number of current debates around homosexuality and the social geography of gay and lesbian life. As my discussion of *Single White Female* demonstrates, the apartment has been of interest to social historians because of the way it confounds neat distinctions between public and private space, homelife and social interaction. Structured to ensure degrees of personal privacy, the modern apartment house also retains in its architectural layout the potential for random encounters and contaminations across spatial thresholds that other sole-occupant building forms more successfully maintain. Although not typically associated with lesbian history or cultural representation (unlike the schoolroom, bar, or prison, say, all of which sustain veritable subgenres of lesbian pulp), the lesbian apartment has the capacity to refocus the implicit critical standoff evident in gay and lesbian historiographies between public and private, urban and domestic sexual cultures, and also allows a rethinking of the relation between lesbianism and the architectural environment as a productive rather than a necessarily hostile encounter. This book commenced with a brief spatial history of lesbian culture in the twentieth century and by way of conclusion I now offer the lesbian apartment as a trope for rethinking the relation of homosexuality, both female and male, to private and public space.[6]

In the decades since Laud Humphries published *Tearoom Trade: Impersonal Sex in Public Places*, his anthropological study of homosexual practices in public toilets, a significant amount of gay-inflected cultural criticism has considered the relation between specific forms of urban space and the constitution of modern homosexualities.[7] As likely to be concerned with tracing the sociology of gay migration patterns from small towns to metropolitan centers, or the role of homosexual residency in the revitalization and renewal of the inner cities, as with the underground subcultures

of homosexual sex, this work continues to pursue the idea that in some sense homosexuality—in both its masculine and feminine declensions—is a condition of the modern city.[8] Explicitly or implicitly, these studies of urban homosexual culture draw on a longer critical interest in the way the practices associated with the historical rise of the metropolis and the newly evolving forms of commodity capitalism its urban architecture supports structure the gendered experience of modern life. Seemingly attuned to the distinctions between masculine and feminine spatial practices within urban settings, these studies have nonetheless produced male same-sex culture as the paradigmatic form of homosexual urbanity.

Far from being a perverse development, this bias toward forms of homosexual street life against, say, the more institutionalized forms of lesbian networking associated with urban concentration can seem the almost inevitable outcome of Walter Benjamin's original formulation of urban subjectivity and its strictly gendered coordinates. In a number of essays that have become foundational texts for contemporary cultural studies, Benjamin argues that the urban spaces that originated with the nineteenth-century city—Paris being the exemplar—generated a new kind of sensibility for male bourgeois citizens who developed an ambulatory relation to their environment and its scenes of daily life.[9] This utterly modern figure, the *flâneur*, is free to walk the streets, parks, and new commercial arcades of the city taking his melancholic pleasure in the observation of crowds and commodities. Through the embodied practice of purposeless strolling, the *flâneur*—by definition a solo, unidentifiable, middle-class male—maintains an aesthetic distance from the modes of consumption capitalism makes available to him. Licensed to look in shop windows, perhaps, but also at the women and men engaged in the distractions and tasks associated with city life, this masculine agent takes a voyeuristic pleasure in the spectacle generated by modern urban culture. Benjamin suggests that women are an essential component of the spectacle the *flâneur* takes in, particularly the prostitutes or streetwalkers whose trade is plied on the same boulevards and arcades the *flâneur* strolls. As much subsequent literature suggests, there is no female figure equivalent to the anonymous *flâneur*, whose gendered counterpoints are either sexually available *filles de joie* or married bourgeois women whose occupancy of public space is legitimated by the novel activity of shopping for leisure. Less obviously sexualized than the prostitute, the female shopper lacks the aestheticizing distance that is the preserve of the *flâneur* and so is sutured more fully into the forms of commodity culture. Typically, she is associated not with the arcades or streetscapes of the modern city but with the rise of the department store, that middle-class oasis of consumer capitalism from which lowly sectors of the public are discreetly barred entry.

Philip Fisher argues, via a reading of Theodore Dreiser's *Sister Carrie* (1900), that at the historical juncture Benjamin describes the more culturally numinous female figure is neither the prostitute who sells herself

nor the wife who shops but the department store's shop assistant whose future could go either way.[10] Fisher's positing of these narrative alternatives for young women adrift in the modern city reminds us that the spaces of female occupancy are not limited to the terminal sexual destinations of brothel and home but include those sometimes transitory, sometimes permanent, spaces adopted along the way, which also support sexual possibilities in their own right though far more obscurely. While these frequently institutional spaces—women's hostels, philanthropic societies, colleges, gymnasiums, and clubs—have featured in histories of feminism they go underrepresented in histories of lesbianism, not least because their relation to sexual privacy and publicity is more difficult to gauge than the clandestine sexual encounters afforded men in the city streets and byways.[11]

According to Benjamin a street-borne male subjectivity associated with the pleasures of watching is one of the new forms of masculine identity that modernity makes available at the end of the nineteenth century. This development, and the anonymity and social dispensation that comes with it, should make less surprising the recognition that modernity also accelerates forms of homosexual activity, frequently indexed to the male gaze, in combination with everyday perambulations through the spaces of a city.[12] The rest is history. Tracking the male sexual cultures that have arisen across the twentieth century, gay historians have demonstrated that the peculiar spatial environment of the metropolis—streets and alleyways, parks and piers, bathhouses and movie theaters, public conveniences and subway systems—has engendered a subcultural practice that engages sex in public places, sometimes on the basis of the exchange of cash but equally often on nothing more than the exchange of a glance.[13]

Historian George Chauncey's work on the changing sexual geography of New York City in the century before gay liberation is exemplary in the way it traces a complex but nonetheless stable relation between sexual publicity and sexual privacy as evidenced in the spatial practices of a developing homosexual subculture. Chauncey carefully reconstructs the way that men drew and passed into shared knowledge a finely calibrated counter-map of the city with certain streets, parks, and public washrooms marked out as places where one could go in the expectation of sex with other men. Used by men to meet similarly inclined friends and potential sexual partners, the public spaces of Manhattan were also used for sex itself, partly because there were few alternatives. As Chauncey points out, most men, like most women, had little access to private spaces and were forced to carve out semiprivate spaces for sexual encounters within the public domain. In the first half of the twentieth century, Chauncey argues, most single men in New York lived in shared boardinghouses and so were unable to take other men home. As the police records of men arrested on morals misdemeanors indicate, many of those who engaged in these sexual activities in public space were married men for whom this sex occurred in the interstices of heterosexual private and working lives. The itinerant and secretive nature

of this public sex might be thought obligatory in the long decades in which it was criminal to engage in same-sex acts but Chauncey's work also reveals that the appeal of public sex is not confined to its strategic or tactical aspect. Many of the sources he compiles (oral histories, gay biographies, literary representations, popular slang) demonstrate that the semipublic and anonymous aspect of this sex is knitted into its erotic profile, becoming a component part of the sexual experience that is not willingly abandoned even when the social conditions that make such sex necessary move on.[14]

In what has become the model for gay urban historiography, Chauncey's study of New York thus includes both a functionalist or pragmatic account of the relation between sexuality and space whereby men inclined to have sex with other men improvise sexual networks within the physical and commercial environment of the modern city and a more organic or structural account of the relation between sexuality and space that sees the practices and spectacles of urban life shaping the very forms of erotic life. The recognition that urban spatial practices generate forms of interior life is squarely in keeping with Benjamin's account of modern subjectivity. It is also squarely in keeping with an understanding of the distinction between sexual publicity and sexual privacy as dangerous or risky but ultimately negotiable by individual agents who become highly practiced in public/private boundary keeping, a process that carries its own erotic charge.

Against this emphasis lesbian culture can hardly compete. From one perspective it could be argued that the phenomenon of cruising and the twentieth-century forms of male sexuality articulated around it—from beat sex to commercialized sex-on-site venues—is an historical development akin, though different, to the equally modern phenomenon of women shopping for leisure.[15] From another perspective it could be acknowledged that this historical genealogy of urban space and male homosexuality arguably explains why there is no parallel tradition for women contracting same-sex sex in public places.[16] Within lesbian historiography, however, the recognition that modernity did not give rise to a public-sex culture for women is both accepted as a knowledge that scarcely needs critical support and simultaneously swept aside in the drive to claim an equivalently rich sexual history for modern lesbians. Although the public-sex model serves well the project of gay male history, it critically distorts the lesbian historical project by turning it against those private spaces, institutional or domestic, traditionally associated with femininity. The historiographic inclination toward public sexual practices over private ones has been compounded by the desire, writ large in contemporary lesbian studies, to make lesbian history a history of sex rather than, say, a history of female friendship or domestic cohabitation, all of which stymies our capacity to reconceptualize our baseline understanding of public/private dichotomies and their impact on sexuality and space.

Let me make this argument in stages. Lillian Faderman's widely respected work on female friendship in the nineteenth century can be taken as representative of one end of a lesbian-feminist debate that continues to animate much theorizing of lesbian sexual identity.[17] Faderman's placing of lesbianism on a continuum of female-female relations that extends from companionate friendship to mother-daughter love initiated a counterswing toward lesbian histories that insisted on the sexual aspect of relations between women and, with increasing emphasis, the public expression of that sexual identification. Like a classic reaction formation, the ease with which lesbian relationships merge with a background scene of nonsexual female intimacy has generated a lesbian historiography and related theoretical agenda that doubly valorizes not only the highly visible figure of the butch lesbian but also the bar culture in which her sexual affiliation is publicly demonstrated. Thus while Faderman's more recent work takes the women's college as the institutional site for the nurturing of a lesbian subculture undetectable to all but the initiated or sympathetic, other lesbian historians have preferred to focus on those underground sites whose relation to sexuality is both more explicit and less tethered to cultural privilege.[18]

In 1993, for instance, Esther Newton embarked upon a more inclusive recovery project. "Twentieth-century lesbian history," she announced, "will be the story of settlement houses, women's colleges, and literary salons *and* speakeasies, nightclubs, and the demimonde—the marginal subculture that services the publicly unacknowledged desires of respectable society."[19] In practice, however, Newton's historical recovery project is not as distinct from Faderman's as it initially appears. In her history of the gay resort Cherry Grove, Newton meticulously reconstructs how a lesbian culture developed on Fire Island in the lee of a male homosexual culture that was centered on house parties and commercial bars. The social geography of Cherry Grove, she argues, allowed these women the "public enjoyment of their sexual preference," by which she means the public recognition of their lesbian status rather than their participation in the "casual sex scene" and "camp culture" for which Fire Island was notorious.[20] Despite the rhetorical emphasis given to public expressions of sexual identity within Newton's study, the idea that lesbian sex might take other than a private form or be transacted anywhere but in a private space is acknowledged to be implausible, although that recognition is not argued but everywhere passed off as common sense or an unspoken understanding between peers.[21]

Unsurprisingly, Newton's argument about a "public identity" for lesbian women relies heavily on the 1950s moment in which "butch/femme identities became important aspects of the social scene."[22] The lesbian setting of Cherry Grove can thus segue, as it does across the wider field of lesbian historiography, to other public sites where lesbians also present in butch/femme configurations, the gay bars of Greenwich Village, or most keenly the working-class bars in 1950s Buffalo that are the focus of Elizabeth Kennedy and Madeline Davis's contemporaneous research.[23] Notwithstanding

their polemical distance from notions of female companionate love, these exhaustively researched lesbian histories provide an account of subcultural identity that unwittingly reproduces the same sexual blind spot they were intended to remedy. However openly paraded the socially remarked identities of these butch and femme women were, whether they were restricted to the semiprivate underworld of working-class bars or extended into the public world of jobs and daily transactions with straight culture, the lesbian sex occurs, if it occurs at all, off the public premises in, one guesses, primarily domestic locations in which few of these historians have any analytical interest except as they provide the backdrop for private sexual activities they presume already to have by heart. In this way an insistence on public-sex culture and lesbian sexual visibility continues to produce lesbian sex as a private activity about which, as a spatial practice at least, there remains next to nothing to say.

This historiographical and ethnographic emphasis on public homosexual practice and corresponding bias against the history of sexual privacy—as well as the public/private binary that undergirds it—has strong support from queer theory, which continues to link a politically radical sexuality with claims on public space.[24] In her work on public cultures of intimacy, for instance, Lauren Berlant frequently invokes a sexual politics of space that focuses less on the built environment than the unspoken civil ideologies that simultaneously consider sexuality a private matter and elevate heteronormative values to a public or national concern. Gay public-sex culture has, she argues, always posed a challenge to the long-standing assumption that sex is, and ought to be, excluded from the public sphere and confined to the realm of private or affective life, an assumption that continues to color most contemporary discussion of same-sex sexuality even within sexually liberal regimes that pride themselves on being antidiscriminatory. Taking this argument to its logical extreme, Berlant provocatively insists that any sex that is considered a private affair, a matter of "personal consent, intention, and will" taking place beyond the realm of politics, comprises a form of "straight sex."[25] Preserving as it does a model of separate spheres of public and private life, straight sex is the only kind of sex that can be accommodated in contemporary political discourse. To the extent that it supports the idea that the personal is cordoned off from the ideological, straight sex promotes a model of dead or inactive citizenship that mistakes spatial privilege—access to the sanctioned space of private life—for freedom. Any sex, including same-sex sex, can be straight in this sense as long as its actants (or commentators) refuse to allow that history and relations of power have anything to do with it. As a consequence of this observation, Berlant revivifies the sex-strip phrase "live sex acts" for any contrary action that maintains that sex and politics are inevitably linked and that emotions, desires, and sexual identities are always public concerns that cannot be absented from political culture.[26] Although Berlant is arguing against an understanding of public and private as separate spheres,

focusing on the way that sexual privacy is invoked to forestall any dissident sexual claims for cultural representation, the opposition between straight and live sex maintains a spatial character within a hierarchy of value that presupposes private sexual space is inherently conservative, public sexual space inherently radical.

This spatial valuation of public sex over private sex is more evident in Berlant's later work with Michael Warner. In an extremely influential essay, Berlant and Warner argue that public discourse frequently rejects the messy political claims of sexuality by calling into play an institutional heterosexuality in which the idealized configuration of the married couple is taken as the measure of all social, economic, and cultural value.[27] The frequent and hysterical invocation of family values in US political and editorial culture is, they argue, symptomatic of the need to exclude from the frame of reference any sexuality that falls short of or exceeds the normative organization of the procreative heterosexual couple and the wider conservative culture for which they are the ideological prop. Again and again, they argue, public and political claims of sexuality will be closed down via the insistence on the sanctity of private sexual life transacted in its proper location, namely the marital home and the everyday transactions and affiliations that radiate out from it:

> The sex act shielded by the zone of privacy is the affectional nimbus that heterosexual culture protects and from which it abstracts its model of ethics, but this utopia of social belonging is also supported and extended by acts less commonly recognized as part of sexual culture: paying taxes, being disgusted, philandering, bequeathing, celebrating a holiday, investing for the future, teaching, disposing of a corpse, carrying wallet photos, buying economy size, being nepotistic, running for president, divorcing, or owning anything "His" and "Hers."[28]

Warner elsewhere argues that marriage law confers respectability and social and legal legitimacy on some people's sexuality but withholds it from other kinds of consensual sex, a discriminatory effect that is in no way lessened when those laws are extended to include same-sex domestic partnerships. Far more than the exchange of affective vows, marriage, including gay marriage, has an inescapably punitive aspect because as a social institution it "is designed both to reward those inside it and to discipline those outside it: adulterers, prostitutes, divorcees, the promiscuous, single people, unwed parents, those below the age of consent—in short, all those who become, for the purposes of marriage law, queer."[29] As Warner's reliance on the metaphor of inside and outside reveals, this question of sexual legitimacy is frequently played out in spatial terms. While sexual outsiders are constantly called to order and compelled to disclose and justify themselves, the discretionary privilege bestowed on sexual insiders—married heterosexual couples or the homosexual couples lobbying for the same status—

makes them disappear into those institutional spaces from which they are finally indistinguishable: the home and the nation. The domestic home is considered the logical shelter for personal intimacy, appropriately veiled against all public speculation, and conjugal sex, whether straight or gay, a private affair cordoned off from undue state invasion. At the same time, the state continues to exercise the public right to know about other kinds of sex, revealing that whereas normative practices and spaces of a legally domesticated hetero- or homosexuality are assumed to be naturally continuous with the future commonweal, outsider or nondomesticated sexualities—and the structures of emotional, cultural, and economic support they build—are the manifestation of social ruptures that must be remedied in order for the political state to thrive.

Certainly, both the home and the nation are ideological configurations of sexual space that promote certain sexualities over others without ever having to say why. Further, the dovetailing relations that Warner maps between these two imaginary structures might even be thought to evidence the fractal recursiveness endemic to public/private dichotomies. Though analytically astute about the internal incoherence of public and private spheres, Warner's polemical argument ultimately relies on a more conventional understanding of the opposition between these two spatial sectors, particularly in his arguments against gay marriage and his concomitant advocacy of a queer counterpublic. The discourse of sexual domestication, he argues, takes long-term sexually exclusive relationships as the benchmark of sexual, social, and financial maturity. This discourse dictates not just the ideal sexual shape of proper relationships but also their ideal location: the single-family dwelling and the conjugal bedroom neatly recessed inside it. Consequently, it is incapable of attributing anything but negative value to other consensual sexual practices that engage other spatialities and emotional economies such as relationships outside marriage, sexual encounters off domestic premises, or sexual modalities that are mediated rather than face-to-face like those that transpire in virtual space rather than behind the closed doors of the master bedroom. As a corollary of this any sexual practices that publicly engage different spaces for affective life are considered by Warner to challenge both accepted sexual culture (both private and privatized in economic terms) and the politically innocent space that is its rightful home.

While Warner's argument does not explicitly exclude the possibility of alternative domestic arrangements that likewise contest the ideology of privatized sexuality, the terms on which his argument is presented favor public sexual practices as more readily splitting open the assumed coherence of private sexual culture and acknowledging the political cast of all sex acts. Homosexual domesticity, if it appears at all, is as advocated by the gay marriage movement and thus firmly on the side of corporate citizenship and concerned with the accumulation and protection of private wealth. Indeed, gay domestic relationships can be cited as instances of queer spatial

occupancy as Warner conceives it only to the extent that they prove capable of recursively harboring an ongoing affiliation to public-sex culture.[30]

Christopher Castiglia has similarly noted that in their jointly authored "manifesto on queer 'world making,'" Berlant and Warner "use the word *space* as often as *queer* and *sex*, until the terms come to seem synonymous."[31] Further, if heteronormative culture claims two particular forms of space, the sanitized space of intimacy and sentiment (most closely associated with the home or family) and the abstract space of ideal citizenship (most closely associated with the nation or state) it is equally true that queer counterculture operates from public sex sites (sex clubs, porn theaters, tearooms) that are, as Castiglia points out, similarly subject to spatial idealization and abstraction. Castiglia cites Berlant and Warner at their most Deleuzian—"The queer world is a space of entrances, exits, unsystematized lines of acquaintance, projected horizons, typifying examples, alternate routes, blockages, incommensurate geographies"—to demonstrate that rhetorically "varieties of space—zones, havens, spheres, habitations, property, architecture—predominate, until the program for queer 'world making' sounds eerily like the rhetoric of the real-estate development it challenges, moving seamlessly between the architectural and the utopian."[32] Castiglia argues that queer space, so conceived, can be as removed from the affective and memorializing practices of everyday gay and lesbian life as the fantasized zone of heterosexual privacy that is the object of their critique. I would add that, for all its rhetorical evasiveness, this Deleuzian grammar effectively reassembles the public/private divide initially broken down or complicated by the analysis of actual spaces and political contradictions brought into focus by liberal initiatives like the push for gay domestic-partner benefits.

This subtle reassertion of the spatial binary public/private allows the parallel assertion of a form of queer politics that is, in spatial terms at least, a mirror image of the political discourse it seeks to displace. Just as a sexually conservative culture is devoted to the ritual enactments of a familial heterosexuality that is always conceived as under threat of disappearance or endangered by the very existence of other sexual and spatial possibilities, the utopian invocation of queer space as a projected sight line of sexual mobility and physical encounter is turbo-powered by a "spatialized panic," to use Castiglia's term, in which activist constituencies can be mobilized around sites that are considered to be under extraordinary threat.[33] For Berlant and Warner, for instance, queer space is considered threatened in particular by the 1995 New York City Zoning Test Amendment that restricts the locations in which adult businesses can operate, as if the relation between adult businesses and sexual citizenship were as self-evident as that between heterosexual monogamy and social maturity claimed by the proponents of family values.

Established examples of gay spatial occupancy suggest that neither of these spatio-political equivalencies is certain and that the public advent of

homosexual spaces tends to repeat the public/private incoherencies they at first appear to resolve.[34] The municipal incorporation of West Hollywood in 1984, for instance, could be cited as an example of how the public manifestation of homosexual space produces effects that do not radically transform either civic life or private life but simply ensure their mutual enfolding on a different more remote scale. The City of West Hollywood, as Benjamin Forest has pointed out, did not pose any threat to the US mainstream since the gay male identity it publicly promoted was strategically based on seven easily accommodated elements, all of which were consistent with notions of privatized citizenship: creativity, aesthetic sensibility, an orientation toward entertainment or consumption, progressiveness, responsibility, maturity, and centrality. At the same time, however, the symbolic consolidation of West Hollywood as a gay ethnic enclave had imaginative repercussions that were not dependent on either the local civic economy, which simply transformed itself in line with developments across Los Angeles, contracting out some municipal services while maintaining others, or the physical concentration of an identifiably gay residential population and the businesses, including sex businesses, that served it.[35] As Kath Weston argues in her discussion of the constitutive role played by urban/rural contrasts in the acquisition of gay and lesbian identity, private and shared "participation in a gay *imaginary*" is a key factor in gay, lesbian, or queer social identification far more so than having same-sex sexual encounters, which can always be interpreted in multiple ways. Significantly, in terms of this project at least, Weston's examples of gay and lesbian symbolic identity work are not limited to urban narratives or sex sites but include "descriptions of college crushes, military escapades, and summer camp adventures," the full repertoire of gay and lesbian chronotopes as they have developed across the twentieth century.[36]

The example of lesbian space also suggests, contra Warner, that there is no necessary correspondence between public space and sexual occupancy since lesbian communities frequently manifest on a social network model and lack the economic infrastructure associated with gay enterprise that is needed to sustain a territorial model of spatial occupancy. This distinction between gay and lesbian forms of spatial occupancy—roughly speaking, the distinction between gay territories and lesbian networks—has been in place for so long we have become numb to its critical significance. Certainly the recognition of the difference between gay and lesbian social models has raised debates about the appropriate empirical methods for mapping lesbian space, since lesbian community patterns do not yield to the methods developed for mapping gay space, but it has yet to impact on our conceiving of sexual space as such.[37]

If, as Castiglia suggests, one of the problems with the Berlant and Warner argument is the way in which it "threatens to divorce space from memory as linked technologies of communal intimacy in queer public culture," then perhaps a less abstract and idealizing account of public-sex sites and

the sexual practices their architectures support would generate a different account of the relation between sexuality and space.[38] This, it seems to me, is where the notion of the sexual chronotope is particularly valuable since it crosses a material account of place with the temporal sense required to sustain narrative or, in Castiglia's term, memory.[39]

There is, after all, nothing innate about the valence or value of particular spaces or sex acts. Rather, it is the embodied practice of space (and sex) across time that needs recollection and protection. In this respect, Samuel R. Delany's recent work speaks directly to the temporal blank in Berlant and Warner's thesis, marrying their understanding of public sphere politics with an ethnographic account of the sexual streetscape of New York's Times Square. Arguing against the redevelopment of Times Square and a commercial improvement scheme that would eradicate the last vestiges of a male public-sex culture already under siege through zoning redesignations applied in the name of family values and personal safety, Delany provides a detailed first-person account of the bodily encounters and social networks established in and around the interiors of the pornographic movie houses of 42nd Street from the 1960s to the 1990s.

A model of thick description, Delany's critical history evokes a sexual practice that has no necessary relation to homosexual identity or queer politics but whose profile is inseparable from the physical layout, visual texture, smell and sound of the environment in which it occurs, including the projected spectacle of heterosexual pornography that is its frequent technological accompaniment:

> The movies presented a world in which a variety of heterosexual and lesbian acts were depicted regularly, even endlessly, in close-up detail. The only perversion that did not exist in their particular version of pornotopia, save for the *most* occasional comic touches (and even these would still get a groan from the audience as late as '86 or'87), was male homosexuality. But its absence from the narrative space on the screen proper is what allowed it to go on rampantly among the observing audience, now in this theater, now in that one.[40]

Intimately indexed to the built environment in which it occurs, this movie-house sexuality is as much a representational system as the pornographic narratives that are one of its component parts. The environment of the theater provides a space in which sexual discriminations can be made between and among those "guys in drag and makeup" who "did it for a few bucks" and those in "jeans and work shirts" who "did it for fun," and the men they serviced: "Some men moved back and forth, but generally the ones who wanted to pay, the ones who didn't, and the ones who just wanted to be left alone made three pretty distinct groups."[41] These distinct groups customarily territorialize different internal spaces within the theater (the balcony, the stalls, the aisles), although Delany's own interest is

in cataloguing far more idiosyncratic differences in male sexual behavior that are also part of the embodied practice of space, though less likely to form the basis of a subcultural style. Recalling those men who come noisily, those who wash, those who kiss, those who chat first or afterwards or not at all, those who see him outside the theaters, and so forth, Delany celebrates the microforms of sexual culture and the unanticipated social exchanges that ride on the back of these sexual alliances. In particular, he links the clampdowns against the movie theaters to late capitalism's more general eradication from the space of everyday life of opportunities for interclass contact and communication and gives analytical emphasis to those sexual encounters that reveal a socially transformative aspect.[42] Thus Delany challenges the idea that the male-male sex contracted in the space of the movie house is ephemeral and anonymous in nature and offers as an exemplary model the relationship he maintains with a young man, Jonathan, whom he has sex with in the Capri movie house across a fifteen-year period. Across that time, Jonathan tells Delany, the sexual alliances formed in the porn houses have been the means by which he has been inducted into Broadway theater, Lincoln Center concerts, Community College classes, and AIDS prevention.[43] The sexual space of the movie house thereby implies a narrative of cultural expansion and improvement, much of it consistent with wider liberal social aspiration, and it is the loss of this narrative possibility, as much as the sex that initiates it, which Delany laments in the closing of these venues.

Delany's account of the male-male sexual culture of Times Square demonstrates that the link between sexual space and social narrative cannot be known in advance. Indeed, the line of argument that space makes certain kinds of sexuality and not others, or that sexuality can be reliably predicated from space, is more likely to be mobilized by the conservative agencies that wish to close public-sex venues in the name of public health, for instance, than by the users of such space.[44] Rather than the reliable result of architectural determinism, sexuality is a spatial narrative that plays out open-endedly in site-specific practices that unfold over time. This chronotopical formulation of sexual space, which insists on the temporal aspect of place and the indeterminacy of the sexual actions, subjectivities, or narratives it supports, puts critical pressure on those, frequently gay-friendly, sociological accounts of cultural space as comprised of locations that are either positively or negatively disposed towards manifestations of homosexuality.[45]

Domestic space, for instance, is often assumed to be heterosexual in cast by both its queer critics and straight defenders, just as feminist criticism has often assumed it to be patriarchal, a site for the culturally sanctioned oppression of women.[46] More recently however, the heterosexual cast of domestic space is seen to extend to those gay and lesbian couples who also define themselves chiefly in relation to practices of cohabitation and the mutual planning of life pathways. Take as an example of this tendency

John Paul Ricco's celebration of back rooms, which, in a now familiar gesture, takes its theoretical and rhetorical inspiration from Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's work on deterritorialization:

> Jack-off rooms-as-minor-architecture disrupt the heterosexist, bourgeois, marital, familial, domesticating, and interiorizing models, imperatives, logics, politics, and spaces, which constitute *major* architecture(s).
>
> As minor architectures, jack-off rooms are spaces of exile . . . and escape routes from the institutionalized intimacy, interiority, and domesticity of hetero-sexism, or major sexuality—which is to say the same thing. . . . As sites of *deterritorialized* (radically dislocated through space) bodies, practices, spaces and identities, jack-off rooms de-domesticate sexuality, without necessarily being spaces of absolute liberty, privilege or refuge.[47]

Simultaneously protecting and advancing the aspirations of the couple, the domestic home spatially enshrines the sexuality of its inhabitants whether straight or gay ("which is to say the same thing") while effectively sublimating the erotic aspect of this relationship into a "major" system of social continuity and conformity. Critics of gay marriage likewise contend that the extension of heterosexual privilege to homosexual couples leaves intact a hierarchy in which certain contractual forms of sexual intimacy, and the spaces they make their own, are valued more than others.[48] Yet, as interpretative work in the humanities is beginning to reveal, when the intimate inhabitants of domestic space are no longer assumed to be straight, things can seem very different from the sanctioned ideals of straight culture. As Kenneth E. Silver argues, for instance, the photography of Robert Mapplethorpe is challenging to an American public partly because it records not the pathology of homosexuality but its ardent domestication. Mapplethorpe's portraits of sadomasochistic couples staring straight to camera from within their exquisitely furnished apartments, like many of David Hockney's Californian paintings, are attempts to depict "gay conjugal" space, an all but invisible cultural formation.[49] According to Silver, this representational project is challenging to the orthodoxies of both high modernism, which repudiates the feminine and domestic claims of ornamentation, and institutional heterosexuality, which ordinarily holds exclusive property rights over the spaces of private life.[50] Crucially, for my argument, such images are equally challenging to a queer politics that assumes that the private domestication of gay sexual relationships is necessarily socially conservative.

Unable to be second-guessed, the connection between forms of domestic space and homosexuality needs careful and specific explication, as in the formal readings of fictional film narratives that comprise this book or, in the field of architectural studies, via a case-study approach as adopted by architectural theorist and historian Aaron Betsky, who has recently argued

for a rich countertradition of gay architecture that inscribes homosexual possibility into its built and imagined spatial projects. Betsky's examples include both communal spaces (bathhouses, piano bars, sex clubs, and gyms) and private houses, such as the postmodern domestic dwellings designed by Charles Moore, whose first house placed a sunken roman bath in the center of the living room, and Philip Johnson, whose Mies van der Rohe-inspired Glass House (1955) was augmented by a windowless guest room sunk almost invisibly into the surrounding Connecticut landscape.[51] In Betsky's understanding the signature trait of homosexual space is its utopian orientation towards sexual pleasure. "The goal of queer space is orgasm," he writes, and it is evident that this goal can be achieved in either public or private habitations.[52] This interest in the pre- and post-Stonewall history of domestic space, however, runs against most contemporary conceptualizations of gay space, which continue to tilt towards communal spaces as the apotheosis of erotic possibility, both achieved and projected. The historical antecedents for this valorization of public space over private space are not hard to discover. In Chauncey's essay on gay uses of the street, for instance, a photographic postscript mutely demonstrates that in the post-Stonewall period the continuity between erotic identity and political identity is secured by publicity itself. Coming after Chauncey's meticulously argued discussion of "the tactics used by gay men in early twentieth-century New York City to claim space for themselves in the face of a battery of laws and informal practices designed to exclude them from urban space altogether," a series of Leonard Fink photographs of 1970s Greenwich Village street culture serves to imply that the visual occupancy of public space by clone culture is a politically defiant gesture; to be out on the streets as a homosexual is sufficient to a gay praxis that needs no other articulation.[53] As public space becomes the space of gay pride and an aggressively asserted sexuality, domestic space becomes associated more and more with a tendency to reclusiveness and discretion that is no longer considered necessary to the preservation and erotic extension of homosexual life.[54]

In an article noting the failure of geographers and cultural theorists to attend to the visual aspects of queer space, Christopher Reed has also drawn attention to the way current conceptualizations of homosexual patterns of habitation tend to display ambivalence toward the gay tenure of domestic space.[55] Disappearing behind closed doors, gay and lesbian identity is thought to blend with the private heterosexual culture that surrounds it, and this state of invisibility has traditionally been associated with various forms of cultural assimilation. Reed rightly questions this "assimilationist" assumption, suggesting that it does not allow that queer space might result from patterns of domestic habitation that may not be apparent to the outsider.[56] He points out, for instance, that the political presumption against domestic space takes no interest in the long tradition of homosexual participation in interior design in both professional

and vernacular idioms.[57] Referring to the well-documented phenomenon of gay gentrification and the takeover of inner-city real estate by gay-oriented businesses (patterns of homosexualization that lend themselves to the demographic approach of the social sciences), Reed also suggests that it might be true to say "queer space is renovated space" in a more expansive sense.[58] The gay modification of existing spaces for both commercial and domestic use, he argues, involves both a necessary "engagement with the past" and the aesthetic transformation of the physical environment of the "dominant culture."[59] This process of remaking places for gay habitation is not confined to queer public sites but is equally apparent in the claiming of domestic territory by gays and lesbians. Unlike Betsky, Reed emphasizes less the utopian impulse behind gay space than its almost inevitable borrowing or dependence on other spatial regimes, a quality that is paradoxically even more apparent in communal gay space than its domestic counterpart: "Architecture is an expensive business and queer organizations tend to be thriftily encamped in facilities designed for previous users. Designed-to-be-queer space—appropriately enough for an identity rooted in the 'private' sphere of sexuality—is overwhelmingly domestic space, yet the documentation and theorization of queer space have neglected the home."[60]

Ubiquitous and invisible, the everywhere and nowhere nature of gay and lesbian domestic space presents an ongoing problem to queer theorization which, as Castiglia points out, is more comfortable identifying spatial panics in which certain locations are targeted for sexual regulation. Conceived as always on the point of homophobic eradication, these locations—sex clubs, say, or adult entertainment venues—then provide a rallying point around which structures of political identification and activism can be constructed. Manifested in relation to actual spaces, buildings, and enterprises, this panic logic is much more reassuring to a queer politics than the idea of homosexual space as elusive to sexual politics of this, or any, order. Reassuring, too, is the way the explicit sexualization of these sites forestalls the propensity of homosexuality to evaporate socially into a visual style or aesthetic with no necessary relation to sexual acts or activism, as the inevitable heterosexualization of everything from gay fashion and music tastes to queer neighborhoods would seem to suggest. That these sites are sexualized almost exclusively by the activities of gay and heterosexual men makes this critical impulse doubly problematic for the history of lesbian space, which invariably gets domesticated and desexualized at the same stroke.

The sexual and political hyperbole that attaches to gay public-sex culture produces corollary effects in lesbian culture, which to the degree it is domesticated risks being considered asexual.[61] Hence the need for lesbian culture to keep reanimating popular chronotopes that keep live, at least fictionally, sexual possibilities between women that are not those of companionate love. A similar point has been made by Amy Villarejo in the context of a discussion of the documentary *Forbidden Love* and its

invocation of lesbian pulp as the fantasy template for white lesbian history. Villarejo convincingly argues that the retrospective animation of pulp tropes—among which I would include two of the well-worn chronotopes discussed in my introduction: the bar and the prison—bestows on "lesbian bourgeois culture" an outlaw status that depends on sexual constituencies it doesn't wish to own in any material way, such as incarcerated women and those who engage "the labor of the streets, particularly sex work, [which] is often performed by lesbians."[62] Successfully mainstreamed in most liberal democracies, middle-class lesbian culture continues to access imaginary lines of inheritance and connection to marginal sexual populations whose lives are socially and economically incommensurate with their own. "Lesbian bar culture," as Villarejo describes it, is a highly ambivalent fantasy formation that "has been and is involved in the production of racist enclaves, hallucinations of urban life which depend for their existence on street culture (drinks, drugs, sex work, and pornography), which provide a sense of outlawry, but yet that very culture is frequently denied or disdained by white lesbians seeking 'community.'"[63]

Racked up in the post-Stonewall decades, this tension between lesbian cultural aspiration and the desire to maintain a sexually dissident status is one of the reasons the apartment emerged alongside other more long-standing pulp chronotopes primed for the telling of the lesbian story. Precisely because it is highly flexible in relation to publicity and privacy, the apartment chronotope is well suited to refitting the contradictions between aspiration and dissidence and thus can provide the fictional setting for lesbian narratives that are simultaneously socially smooth and sexually rough. That the lesbian apartment story is alive and well and still functioning as the theoretical limit point for conceptualizations of lesbian narrative representation is confirmed by Villarejo's discussion of Jacques Derrida's *Right of Inspection*, his introduction to a book of photographs by Marie-Françoise Plissart. Reproduced in Villarejo's book are eleven of the original photographs, which depict from an ever-increasing distance two naked women lying together on a white-sheeted mattress in a near empty room. "As Derrida will remind his community of readers," writes Villarejo, "it is impossible *not* to tell ourselves stories the more we describe what we see; it is impossible *not* to make the causal connections that produce narrative. These women, these lesbians (they *are* making love) we tell ourselves, these are our characters." Reading the still photographs cinematically, Villarejo continues, "we supply the connections upon which continuity editing depends," reconstructing the scene of lesbian sex and the place in which it occurs. Although Villarejo, as "modernist detective" and lesbian continuity girl, describes this sexual sequence as occurring in a "house" there is no visual clue to the self-contained status of the dwelling the two women occupy in the photographs she has selected for reproduction.[64] With its totally white walls and moldings, and no-less ubiquitous Frenchness, the spatial coordinates of Plissart's photographs as they appear in Villarejo's

edit indicate to my eye at least an apartment mise-en-scène. Two other examples of apartment images reeled in to stand for lesbian representational logics more generally: Silver's discussion of Diane Arbus's photograph of a butch and femme couple, frequently mistaken for mother and son, beside an unmade double bed in a one-room tenement and Annamarie Jagose's reading of the lesbian narrative implied by an uncredited sequence of photographs inserted in a 1971 Australian edition of Frank Caprio's pulp sexology classic *Female Homosexuality: A Psychodynamic Study of Lesbianism* (1954).[65]

These lesbian narrative effects are not limited to fictional or staged apartments but extend to real-world spaces such as the proximate apartments of the late Susan Sontag and Annie Leibovitz. When journalists wish to specify the nature of the relationship between Sontag and Leibovitz, they frequently describe them as having lived separately but in the same apartment building. "It is largely accepted," reports David Usborne in an article originally published in the *Independent on Sunday*, "that Leibovitz and Sontag, 68, are a couple. They live in separate penthouse flats in the same building in the Chelsea neighbourhood of Manhattan, with shared storage space."[66] That the Sontag/Leibovitz domestic arrangement evades the link between lesbianism and apartment space by such a small degree is utterly in keeping with their relation to sexual disclosure in other spheres as well, but it also suggests the cross-configuration of professional and intimate lives consistent with the recursive relations of sexual publicity and sexual privacy.[67] More recently, architect John Lindell's renovation of the East Village apartment of film producer Christine Vachon and her partner artist Marlene McCarty has been featured in the style section of the *New York Times*, although the journalist's tone suggests more than a little skepticism about the material "overlay and subtext" the architect and clients considered essential to a lesbian floor plan that "works closeted" and "works outed."[68] The Vachon/McCarty dwelling is symbolically elastic and, one imagines, physically expansive enough to include both a homage wall to Andy Warhol's Factory and a young daughter, pushing the parameters of lesbian domestic space to include gay aesthetic practice without resolving their practical incompatibility, as when infant Guthrie asks her mother to open a glass jar that turns out to be a Tony Feher sculpture.

Far from new, these innovations in lesbian domesticity are the continuation of a twentieth-century tradition of experiments in sexually nonconformist shared living, the most famous of which is probably that associated with the Bloomsbury Group. Reed's recent book-length study of the Bloomsbury Group's domestic aesthetic makes an important re-evaluation of the role of interior design in imagining new forms of social and sexual habitation that included homosexual and bisexual alignments.[69] Specifically lesbian domestic arrangements available for similar critical investigation would include the private households of Gertrude Stein and Alice B. Toklas, Claude Cahun and Marcel Moore, Elsie de Wolfe and Elisabeth

Marbury, Florence Yoch and Lucile Council, Dorothy Arzner and Marion Morgan, all of which map the cross-coordinates of intimate relationships and wider histories, including architectural history, as well as the domestic architecture of Eileen Gray.[70]

As I hope is now apparent, the archive of lesbian domesticity should also include the film texts discussed in this book and others like them that nest public and private sexualities in increasingly complicated ways.[71] For better or worse, the classical Hollywood system with its ambivalent relation to homosexuality—which was everywhere displayed in sophisticated visual conventions while simultaneously prevented from registering in story or character—perfected the production of lesbian space. With the devolution of the Production Code and the aftermath of the classical system, the structural incoherence around sexual publicity and sexual secrecy did not disappear so much as manifest in the thematic content of a series of films that used the lesbian story to reflect on the formal nature of cinematic representation and its irrevocably spatial aspect. If in *Sister George* there is still a residual threshold between seemingly straight and lesbian characters and the stories they inhabit, a line held within the film by the distinction between television and film diegeses, by the moment of *Mulholland Drive* there is no threshold left, just the endlessly enfolded relations of character and narrative, a recursive indenting factored not by chance on two apartment spaces.

At the outset of this book I drew attention to the four cornerstone tropes of lesbian spatial identity in the twentieth century and the multiple relations that exist between them. The bar, prison, schoolroom, and college, I argued, provide the motivating backdrop for the story of lesbianism in a variety of pulp, middlebrow, and high-tone genres, some fictional, others not, particularly in the pre-Stonewall decades when the disclosure of homosexuality needed careful management. After Stonewall, when the possibilities for gay and lesbian life increase dramatically, these four counterpoised sites continue to map out the various poles of lesbian existence from the culturally legitimate to the criminal, the socially assimilated to the renegade, the innocently juvenile to the corruptly deviant, although these are increasingly less practices of living than fantasy formations retroactively accessed in the form of subcultural identifications. Rather than being discarded as no longer relevant to lesbian culture, these familiar oppositions, in place since the beginning of the twentieth century, take on a second lease of life in generalist and specialized accounts of lesbian culture. Through lesbian oral history projects and ethnographic inquiry, the bar and college are consolidated as historical settings for the emergence of lesbian identity, just as their evident counterparts, the prison and schoolroom, come to dominate the fictionalization of lesbianism within mainstream popular culture.

At the same time as the old chronotopes are retrofitted to serve the lesbian story, a fresh chronotope—the lesbian apartment—emerges that is no more nor less authentic than the other narrative settings but has the benefit

of regauging the oppositional structures that underwrite them. Specifically, the lesbian apartment builds into its architectural blueprint highly adaptable notions of sexual privacy and sexual publicity, domesticity and urbanity, innocence and corruption, work and leisure, whereas the spatial assemblage comprised by bar, prison, schoolroom, and college tends to distribute these qualities across its four cornerstone sites. If we are predisposed to think of the bar as more urban than the residential college, the schoolroom as more innocent than the prison, the bar and prison as more wasteful of time than the sites of education, the lesbian apartment establishes that none of these distinctions can be maintained except through processes of fractal projection or subdivision that are endlessly reversible and open to interpretation. Ostensibly a single site, the lesbian apartment is a location whose spatial and sexual coherence is utterly dependent on perspective and use. In apartment space the threshold held between street and home, interior and exterior, public and private, is constantly negotiated through architectural elements such as foyers, atriums, stairwells, elevators, party walls, and shared utilities, all of which have the capacity to bring together people and practices usually kept apart or at least considered institutionally separable. As a site in which discretionary conduct rather than architectural function sets the public or private character of specific locations, apartment space accurately reflects the conditions of gay and lesbian life after gay liberation makes being out, not being closeted, the primary indicator of the socially well-adjusted homosexual, whether or not lesbians and gay men lived in actual apartments or not. In this respect the fictional apartments explored in the preceding chapters—despite their obvious hyperbole and stylization—are models of verisimilitude, just as their occupants—their exaggerated pathologies and visual glamorization notwithstanding—are recognizably lesbian in the ways they negotiate the ordinary boundaries of public and intimate life. Neither role models nor stereotypes, the fictional lesbians who inhabit these apartments cannot be divorced from the cinematic locations and spatialized frameworks that make sexual sense of them. Debating the authenticity or historical veracity of the lesbian apartment story would perhaps only obscure the ongoing validity of the apartment chronotope as an extravagant reflection of the materially changing conditions of the contemporary social and sexual field and the persistence within it of logics that date to earlier representational regimes.

# Notes

## NOTES TO CHAPTER 1

1. Katherine Shonfield, *Walls Have Feelings: Architecture, Film and the City* (London: Routledge, 2000).
2. The most widely disseminated account of Hollywood's facility at representing homosexuality while refusing to do so is Vito Russo's, *The Celluloid Closet: Homosexuality in the Movies* (New York: Harper and Row, 1981).
3. For clarification of the idea that sexuality and space are outcomes of the encounter between body and place, see the introduction to Beatriz Colomina and Jennifer Bloomer, eds., *Sexuality and Space* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1996). Clare Hemmings has recently advanced "a spatial approach to bisexual meaning" that likewise emphasizes not the sexual transcendence of space but the role of sexuality, specifically "bisexuality, in fashioning contemporary sexual and gendered spaces, as well as the moments and places at which precise meanings of bisexuality circulate and gain new meaning." Clare Hemmings, *Bisexual Spaces: A Geography of Sexuality and Gender* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 2.
4. Mikhail Bakhtin, "Forms of Time and Chronotope in the Novel: Notes Toward a Historical Poetics," in *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays by M. M. Bakhtin*, ed. Michael Holquist, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist, 250 (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981).
5. Vivian Sobchack, "Lounge Time: Postwar Crises and the Chronotope of Film Noir," in *Refiguring American Film Genres: Theory and History*, ed. Nick Brown, 149 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).
6. The question of contextualization remains unanswered—even unasked—in many early discussions of gay and lesbian images on screen. In the 1990s, however, a number of critics took up genre as a tool for thinking about the evolution of lesbian representation within a cinematic system tuned to the requirements of both audience and industry. See, in particular, Chris Holmlund, "When is a Lesbian not a Lesbian? The Lesbian Continuum and the Mainstream Femme Film," *Camera Obscura* 25–26 (1991): 145–178; Mandy Merck, "Dessert Hearts," in *Queer Looks: Perspectives on Lesbian and Gay Film and Video*, ed. Martha Gever, Pratibha Parmar, and John Greyson, 377–382 (New York: Routledge, 1993); Jackie Stacey, "'If You Don't Play, You Can't Win': *Desert Hearts* and the Lesbian Romance Film," in *Immortal Invisible: Lesbians and the Moving Image*, ed. Tamsin Wilton, 92–114 London: Routledge, 1995); and Rhona J. Berenstein, "Where the Girls Are: Riding the New Wave of Lesbian Feature Films," *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 3, no. 1 (1996): 125–137.

7. Sobchack, "Lounge Time," 130.
8. Ibid., 159.
9. Ibid., 166–167.
10. Ibid., 130.
11. The literature on lesbians in the military, in religious orders, and in organized sport is extensive but no more so than popular culture's representational archive of the same.
12. The conceiving of homosexual retirement space has been underway for some time. See, for example, A. J. Lucco, "Planned Retirement Housing Preferences of Older Homosexuals," *Journal of Homosexuality* 13, no. 4 (Summer 1987): 13–42. If this example suggests an overall narrative of homosexual cultural improvement, the innovations in the spatial organization of gay life that resulted from the AIDS crisis (and which are without lesbian parallel) remind us that the evolution of queer chronotopes is a complex process that mediates both gay-positive and homophobic impulses. See Helen Schietinger, "Housing for People with AIDS," *Death Studies* 12, no. 5–6 (1988): 481–499.
13. The critical urtext for the lesbian bar chronotope remains Elizabeth Lapovsky Kennedy and Madeleine D. Davis, *Boots of Leather, Slippers of Gold: The History of a Lesbian Community* (New York: Routledge, 1993), an ethnographic account of lesbian bar culture in Buffalo, New York, from the mid-1930s to the early 1960s.
14. A connecting line might be drawn, that is, between the Parisian bars frequented by Stephen Gordon in Radclyffe Hall's *The Well of Loneliness* (1928; repr., New York: Anchor Books, 1990) and the drag king bar culture profiled in Judith Halberstam's "Mackdaddy, Superfly, Rapper: Gender, Race, and Masculinity in the Drag King Scene," in "Queer Transexions of Race, Nation, and Gender," ed. Phillip Brian Harper, Ann McClintock, José Esteban Munoz, and Trish Rosen, special issue, *Social Text* 52–53 (Fall 1997): 104–131.
15. Lillian Faderman writes that the first lesbian organization in the United States, the Daughters of Bilitis (DOB), was created in the mid-1950s "to give middle-class lesbians an alternative to the gay bar scene." Lillian Faderman, *Odd Girls and Twilight Lovers: A History of Lesbian Life in Twentieth-Century America* (New York: Penguin, 1991), 149. This is confirmed by an anonymous article in *The Ladder*, the organization's magazine, which appeared in 1963: "The original idea came into being in the fall of 1955 when eight women got together to organize a social club which was to provide a means for Lesbians to meet one another without resorting to the gay bar." "The Philosophy of DOB: The Evolution of an Idea," in *We Are Everywhere: A Historical Sourcebook of Gay and Lesbian Politics*, ed. Mark Blasius and Shane Phelan, 332 (New York: Routledge, 1997). The perceived distance between middle-class lesbian culture and working-class bar culture in the postwar/pre-Stonewall decades of the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s, is well documented in Katie Gilmartin, "'We Weren't Bar People': Middle-Class Lesbian Identities and Cultural Spaces," *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 3, no. 1 (1996): 1–51.
16. Readers will hardly require a reference to the life story they in all probability instantiate but if an academic source were needed then Lillian Faderman's *Odd Girls and Twilight Lovers* would serve the purpose.
17. Counterpoint literary exemplars of these alternative narratives might be Leslie Feinburg, *Stone Butch Blues* (Ithaca: Firebrand Books, 1987) and Dorothy Strachey's *Olivia by Olivia* (London: Hogarth Press, 1949).
18. Thus Agnes Moorehead's career as a supporting character actress will include roles as both unmarried teacher and prison warden. See Patricia White, "Supporting Character: The Queer Career of Agnes Moorehead," in *Out in Culture:*

*Gay, Lesbian and Queer Essays on Popular Culture*, ed. Corey K. Creekmur and Alexander Doty, 91–114 (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995).

19. Kennedy and Davis, *Boots of Leather, Slippers of Gold*; Esther Newton, *Cherry Grove, Fire Island: Sixty Years in America's Gay and Lesbian Town* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1993). More recent ethnographic work includes: Deborah P. Armory, "Club Q: Dancing with (a) Difference," in *Inventing Lesbian Cultures in America*, ed. Ellen Lewin, 145–160 (Boston: Beacon, 1998); and Rochella [Roey] Thorpe, "'A House Where Queers Go': African-American Lesbian Nightlife in Detroit, 1940–1975," in *Inventing Lesbian Cultures*, 40–61, and "The Changing Face of Lesbian Bars in Detroit, 1938–1965," in *Creating a Place for Ourselves: Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Community Histories*, ed. Brett Beemyn, 165–182 (New York: Routledge, 1997).
20. Kelly Hankin, *The Girls in the Backroom: Looking at the Lesbian Bar* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002). Hankin's subsequent work on lesbian documentary seems the logical development of her critical interest in sexuality and the authenticity of space. See, Hankin, "'Wish We Didn't Have to Meet Secretly?': Negotiating Contemporary Space in the Lesbian-Bar Documentary," *Camera Obscura* 45, no. 15.3 (2001): 35–69. As Hankin figures it, this progression is part of a turn away from those "questions of representation and spectatorship" that have dominated discussion of "lesbian feature filmmaking" towards "issues relative to production, distribution, and exhibition." Hankin, "Lesbian 'Making-of' Documentaries and the Production of Lesbian Sex," *The Velvet Light Trap* 53 (Spring 2004): 27.
21. See, for instance, Diana Fuss's discussion of Strachey's *Olivia* in *Identification Papers* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 107–140.
22. Retitled *Prisoner: Cell Block H* and launched on UK television in 1987, the 692 episodes of the Australian women-in-prison soap still excite a large fan base as can be seen from the current web-based campaign to have it reinstated in the British free-to-air viewing schedule. A number of recent critics argue that the women-in-prison genre no longer acts as the filter for a lesbian subtext but is the setting against which lesbianism appears as both normal and desirable. See Didi Herman, "'*Bad Girls* Changed My Life': Homonormativity in a Women's Prison Drama," *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 20, no. 2 (2003): 141–159; and Jenni Millbank, "It's About This: Lesbians, Prison, Desire," *Social and Legal Studies* 13, no. 2 (2004): 155–190.
23. Judith Mayne provides an excellent argument for the importance of the women-in-prison film to the enabling of forms of female spectatorship that are not mortgaged to heteronormative pleasures, in *Framed: Lesbians, Feminists, and Media Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 115–145. A good introduction to the early, often homophobic, work on lesbian practices in prison contexts is provided by Ruth G. Kunzel, "Situating Sex: Prison Sexual Culture in the Mid-Twentieth-Century United States," *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 8, no. 3 (2002): 253–270.
24. Lesbian presses seemed, at least in my undergraduate years, to specialize in campus fictions of one stripe or another with the study of literature almost a prerequisite to the learning of lesbianism. This lesson is most famously reversed in Donna Deitch's film *Desert Hearts* (1985), an adaptation of Jane Rule's *Desert of the Heart* (Tallahassee: Naiad, 1964), where the female professor of English is sexually retrained by the cowgirl whose cultural canon begins and ends with Patsy Cline. This lesbian college tradition also includes Mary McCarthy's *The Group* (1954; repr., Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1964) and John Sayle's independent film *Lianna* (1983) in which the female professor seems less implausible once she is relieved of the burden of teaching and placed in the lesbian bar.

25. I refer to Faderman's highly influential *Surpassing the Love of Men: Romantic Friendship and Love between Women from the Renaissance to the Present* (New York: William Morrow, 1981).
26. This fantasy is not limited to fiction, but is evident in mid-twentieth-century sexological and criminological studies concerned with the prevalence of same-sex sexual conduct in male and female prison culture. As Kunzel argues in "Situating Sex," these studies demonstrate the persistence of environmental or situational theories of homosexuality well into the twentieth century.
27. The lesbian continuum model whereby all same-sex relationships between women, including relationships between mothers and daughters, are likened to lesbianism is most strongly associated with the lesbian-feminist writings of Adrienne Rich. See Adrienne Rich, "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 5, no. 4 (1980): 631–660.
28. In an afterword to the reprinted lesbian pulp *Women's Barracks*, Judith Mayne has similarly noted the narrative connection between these apparently culturally distant sites:

    > The boarding school and the women's prison offer obvious opportunities for the exploration of same-sex desire. Girls in boarding school fictions often develop crushes on their teachers and on each other, and sometimes the teachers are themselves lesbian (as in *Claudine at School*). The all-female setting encourages experimentation among the girls and a way of life among the adults, and often the "passing phase" motif is central to the genre. While the women-in-prison story contrasts in obvious ways with the setting of the girls' school, it too has a "passing through" quality, since the story of the woman who is heterosexual on the outside but who becomes lesbian on the inside (whether through choice or coercion) is also a staple of the genre.

    Judith Mayne, "Afterword" to *Women's Barracks*, by Tereska Torres, 219 (New York: Feminist Press, 2005).
29. Readers will recognize that this map owes much to the one provided in Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's *Epistemology of the Closet* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 88. Representing the relation between universalist and minoritist, gender transient and gender integrative accounts of homosexuality, Sedgwick's "misleadingly symmetrical map" describes "a field of intractable, highly structured discursive incoherence." These highly elastic connections between seemingly opposed points comprise "the indisseverable girdle of incongruities under whose discomforting span, for most of a century, have unfolded both the most generative and the most murderous plots of our culture" (90). The lesbian plot has been enabled by the internally mobile bar/schoolroom chronotope in a similarly generative way.
30. Sally R. Munt discusses the ongoing lesbian "enchantment with the outlaw metaphor" in *Heroic Desire: Lesbian Identity and Cultural Space* (London: Cassell, 1998), 102.
31. As I discuss in the conclusion, this tendency is registered most vividly in Michael Warner's polemic against gay marriage, *The Trouble with Normal: Sex, Politics, and the Ethics of Queer Life* (New York: The Free Press, 1999).
32. Julie A. Podmore has, for instance, recently produced a "long-range historical geography" that traces the development of Montréal's lesbian bars from their origins in 1950s red-light districts to their subsequent consolidation and dispersal across the changing political and commercial domains of feminist and queer culture in the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s. Julie A. Podmore, "Gone 'Underground'? Lesbian Visibility and the Consolidation of Queer Space

in Montréal," *Social and Cultural Geography* 7, no. 4 (2006): 619. On the ephemeral spatial cast of contemporary lesbian bars, which are often temporarily sited within more permanent gay enterprises, see Maxine Wolfe, "Invisible Women in Invisible Places: The Production of Social Space in Lesbian Bars," in *Queers in Space: Communities, Public Places, Sites of Resistance*, ed. Gordon Brent Ingram, Anne-Marie Bouthillette, and Yolanda Retter, 301–324 (Seattle: Bay Press, 1997). On the forms of lesbian public space created through health centers, political activism, therapeutic networks, and performance venues, see Yvonne Retter, "Lesbian Spaces in Los Angeles, 1970–1990," in *Queers in Space*, 325–337. Hankin argues that the nostalgic emergence of the "lesbian-bar documentary" in the 1990s "articulates contemporary lesbian anxieties regarding the continuously vexed relationship of lesbians to public space . . . especially as this anxiety crystallizes around the current waning and transformation of lesbian-bar space." Hankin, "Wish We Didn't Have to Meet Secretly?" 36–37. While it is tempting to set the decline of lesbian bar culture against the equally extreme transformations wrought in lesbian academic culture in the post-Stonewall decades (from Women's Studies to Queer Theory) at least one recent account represents the space of the university and that of the lesbian bar as both socially and intellectually continuous. See Amy Villarejo, *Lesbian Rule: Cultural Criticism and the Value of Desire* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), viii and 1–4.

33. For a critically compelling discussion of the nineteenth-century apartment house and the peculiar narratives it facilitates within French and English literature, see Sharon Marcus, *Apartment Stories: City and Home in Nineteenth-Century Paris and London* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999). On the historical relationship between bachelors and apartment houses, see Katherine Snyder, "A Paradise of Bachelors: Remodeling Domesticity and Masculinity in the Turn-of-the-Century New York Bachelor Apartment," *Prospects: An Annual Journal of American Cultural Studies* 23 (1998): 247–284. A more wide-ranging discussion of bachelordom and bourgeois domesticity can be found in Snyder's *Bachelors, Manhood and the Novel, 1850–1925* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 18–63. In a compelling discussion of masculinity, femininity, and apartment space, George Wagner considers the interior design advice meted out to women in Helen Gurley Brown's *Sex and the Single Girl* (New York: Bernard Geis Associates, 1962) against the masculine fantasy apartments commissioned by *Playboy* as machines for seduction. See George Wagner, "The Lair of the Bachelor," in *Architecture and Feminism: Yale Publications on Architecture*, ed. Debra Coleman, Elizabeth Danze, and Carol Henderson, 183–220 (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1996).
34. This imagining of lesbian work reaches its pulp zenith in the mob film *Bound* which resonates with any number of elements in the lesbian cultural matrix as it has emerged from the 1970s, particularly its fetishization of those blue-collar trades traditionally reserved for men. Corky's butch competence in plumbing and painting, abetted by several slow-motion close-ups of her hands, indicate that her character would be just as skillful in the bed the diegesis soon enough leads her to, but these seemingly incidental actions also help transform the scuzzy run-down apartment in the upwardly mobile direction of the apartment next door. The wallpaper stripping and painting that is an unimportant detail in the film's story line is, however, precisely what many socially aspirant lesbians were doing throughout the 1990s. It is legitimate, therefore, to link the appearance of *Bound* to other social phenomenon with which it is contemporary, such as the rise of lesbian neighborhoods and the increase in lesbian home ownership. On this phenomenon, see

Tamar Rothenburg's study of Park Slope, Brooklyn, a lesbian neighborhood that thrives without benefit of "any lesbian cafés, bookstores, bars or other centres that could function as a community unifier." Tamar Rothenburg, "'And She Told Two Friends': Lesbians Creating Urban Social Space," in *Mapping Desire: Geographies of Sexualities*, ed. David Bell and Gill Valentine, 172 (London: Routledge, 1995).

35. The inaugural episodes of recent television dramas *Queer As Folk* (Channel Four, 1999–2000), *Queer As Folk* (Showtime, 2000–2005), and *The L Word* (Showtime, 2004–present) emphatically foreground the link between lesbian maternity, sexual monogamy, and suburban home ownership. Judging by these popular culture texts alone, the average homosexual sperm donor prefers the converted industrial loft or open-plan studio and the unrestricted sexuality with which those spaces are associated. For a brilliant discussion of the historical tension between apartment space and the maternal body, see Sharon Marcus, "Placing *Rosemary's Baby*," *differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 5, no. 3 (1993): 121–153.

## NOTES TO CHAPTER 2

1. See, for instance, David Bell and Gill Valentine, eds., *Mapping Desire: Geographies of Sexualities* (London: Routledge, 1995), which deploys primarily sociological frameworks for thinking about sexuality and space and pursues specific case studies from a range of contexts: urban, subcultural, metropolitan, and postcolonial. A counterpoint anthology is Joel Sanders, ed., *Stud: Architectures of Masculinity* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1996), which is more informed by architectural and poststructural theory and maintains a welcome emphasis on the representational aspects of space, both built and fictional.
2. Despite the apparent social and geographical breadth of these sites, the governing spatial trope for homosexual emergence remains the closet. See Michael P. Brown, *Closet Space: Geographies of Metaphor from the Body to the Globe* (London: Routledge, 2000).
3. This scholarly tradition can be traced to Laud Humphreys' *Tearoom Trade: Impersonal Sex in Public Places* (Chicago: Aldine, 1970), which comprises a structural analysis of cottaging based on data collected via participant observation and interview.
4. See, for example, the essays collected in Dangerous Bedfellows, ed., *Policing Public Sex: Queer Politics and the Future of AIDS* (Boston: South End Press, 1996).
5. The fact that Lillian Faderman has long been the fall girl for this particular version of lesbian domestic asexuality makes doubly enjoyable her recent disclosure that, in the late 1950s and early 1960s, she supported herself through college as a burlesque stripper. Lillian Faderman, *Naked in the Promised Land: A Memoir* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2003), 247–266.
6. See Vito Russo, *The Celluloid Closet: Homosexuality in the Movies* (New York: Harper and Row, 1981), 120–122.
7. D. A. Miller, "Anal *Rope*," *Representations* 32 (Fall 1990): 114–133. Like many other received texts, Miller's foundational essay is overcited and underread in equal measure and its central argument is now so commonly diluted that it is sometimes hard to distinguish it in its critical reiterations from more long-standing recognitions of homosexual innuendo in classical film such as that most fully traced by Russo in *The Celluloid Closet*.

8. These conditions include the tension between Hitchcock's developing auteurship and the Hollywood studio system in which the film was made, the formal traces of the original stage script retained in Arthur Laurent's adaptation of the play as a chamber piece unfolding in continuous time and space, as well as the casting of, on the one hand, the homosexual actor Farley Granger as one of the Leopold and Loeb–inspired characters and, on the other, the morally irreproachable star Jimmy Stewart in a dramatic role without real-life precedent. When Miller does depart from close analysis of *Rope* it is only to launch an authoritative attack on the critical commonplaces that circulate around the text. His particular targets are those discussions of Hitchcock's attempt to make a film without cuts that are as technically incorrect about *Rope*'s method as they are well-grounded in the sexual hermeneutics the film promotes, namely the fulsome acknowledgment of a homosexuality nowhere in evidence in order to attest to its fundamental insignificance.
9. See, for example, Novid Parsi's reading of *Gilda*, "Projecting Heterosexuality, or What Do You Mean by 'It'?" *Camera Obscura: Feminism, Culture, and Media Studies* 38 (May 1996): 163–186. One of the few critics to follow through the implications of Miller's engagement with psychoanalytic film theory is Lee Edelman, who pursues the specificity of homosexual representation through a reading of Hitchcock's *North by Northwest* (1959). See Lee Edelman, "Compassion's Compulsion," in *Compassion: The Culture and Politics of an Emotion*, ed. Lauren Berlant, 159–186 (New York: Routledge, 2004).
10. Patricia White, *Uninvited: Classical Hollywood Cinema and Lesbian Representability* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), 110.
11. Ibid., 1.
12. White, *Uninvited*, 20–28. Lillian Hellman, *Four Plays by Lillian Hellman* (New York: Modern Library, 1942).
13. The decision to develop *The Children's Hour* and the related decision to heterosexualize the story was made by the playwright Lillian Hellman, then under contract to Samuel Goldwyn. See William Wright, *Lillian Hellman: The Image, The Woman* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1986), 109. The MPPDA Production Code Administration case files relating to the script development of *These Three* and those relating to Wyler's second filmed version of the play, *The Children's Hour* (United Artists, 1961) are held in the Special Collections Department of the Margaret Herrick Library, Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, Los Angeles. Other material relating to both films is held in the William Wyler Papers, 1925–1975, Arts Special Collections, University of California, Los Angeles.
14. Crucial to this heterosexual beard, it seems to me, is the elaborate prologue Hellman introduces in the *These Three* screenplay, which locates the two women as graduating roommates in order to sufficiently contextualize their decision to live together. Three decades later, Wyler's *The Children's Hour* cites this prologue via a graduation photograph of Karen and Martha that is now seen to capture the incipient perversity of their college relationship.
15. White, *Uninvited,* xviii.
16. See, in particular, Richard Dyer, *Heavenly Bodies: Film Stars and Society* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1986); Jackie Stacey, *Star-Gazing: Hollywood Cinema and Female Spectatorship* (London: Routledge, 1994); Judith Mayne, *Cinema and Spectatorship* (New York: Routledge, 1993); and Brett Farmer, *Spectacular Passions: Cinema, Fantasy, Gay Spectatorships* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000). The distinction invoked here between sexual specification and sexual spectatorship is displayed with allegorical force in two readings of Joseph Mankiewicz's *All About Eve* both of which

regard the film as the urtext for lesbian representation on screen. For Robert Corber the film's specification of Eve Harrington as a femme lesbian who passes as straight epitomizes Cold War paranoia about the unseen threat of homosexuality whereas Blakey Vermeule argues that *All About Eve* locates lesbianism in the allure of spectatorship itself, an allure the cinematic apparatus is as incapable of guarding against as the female spectator herself. See Robert Corber, "Cold War Femme: Lesbian Visibility in Joseph L. Mankiewicz's *All About Eve*," *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 11, no. 1 (2005): 1–22; and Blakey Vermeule, "Is There a Sedgwick School for Girls?" *Qui Parle* 5, no. 1 (Fall–Winter 1991): 53–72. For an overview of theoretical accounts of lesbian spectatorship and their applicability to the heterosexual female audience, see Karen Hollinger, "Theorizing Mainstream Female Spectatorship: The Case of the Popular Lesbian Film," *Cinema Journal* 37, no. 2 (Winter 1998): 3–17.

17. Hellman was engaged for the remake but due to the death of her partner Dashiell Hammett in 1961 withdrew after providing the screen treatment that became the basis of John Michael Hayes' script. For a detailed comparison of the treatment of alleged lesbianism in Hellman's original play with that in Wyler's 1961 version, see Joanna E. Rapf, "'A Larger Thing': John Michael Hayes and *The Children's Hour*," *Post Script* IX, no. 1–2 (Fall–Winter 1989–1990): 38–52. Other discussions of the play which center on its representation of lesbianism include Anne Fleche, "The Lesbian Rule: Lillian Hellman and the Measures of Realism," *Modern Drama* 39, no. 1 (Spring 1996): 16–30; Mary Titus, "Murdering the Lesbian: Lillian Hellman's *The Children's Hour*," *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature* 10, no. 2 (Fall 1991): 215–232; and Mikko Tuhkanen, "Breeding (and) Reading: Lesbian Knowledge, Eugenic Discipline, and *The Children's Hour*," *Modern Fiction Studies* 48, no. 4 (Winter 2002): 1001–1040. More recently, the performance history of the play, which is seldom reprised on the professional stage but remains a mainstay of community and college theaters, has been reassessed in terms of the questions it raises about historical theater research and social context. See Jenny S. Spencer, "Sex, Lies, and Revisions: Historicizing Hellman's *The Children's Hour*," *Modern Drama* 47, no. 1 (Spring 2004): 44–65. Central to Spencer's argument is Hellman's revision of *The Children's Hour* for a Broadway revival in 1952 which recenters the play on the psychological consequences rather than social injustice of the lie. This reorientation was fully achieved ten years later by Hayes' screen adaptation, though still resisted by Wyler who, recounts Hayes, was less scared of lesbianism than of off-siding Hellman who had, by 1961, come to see the play as a reflection on McCarthyism. Rapf, "'A Larger Thing,'" 43–46.
18. Quoted in Russo, *Celluloid Closet*, 121–122.
19. Russo, *Celluloid Closet*, 163.
20. For a thoroughgoing account of the original scandal and the court case that failed to determine whether the two schoolteachers were the victims of libel or not, see Lillian Faderman, *Scotch Verdict: Dame Gordon vs. Pirie and Woods* (New York: William Morrow, 1983), revised edition, with a new introduction by Leila J. Rupp (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993).
21. Michael Anderegg argues that Wyler lessens the melodramatic weight of his remake by casting Hepburn and MacLaine, who were "primarily light actresses" or "comediennes." Michael A. Anderegg, *William Wyler* (Boston: Twayne, 1979), 53. As I will go on to argue, the melodramatic effects of *The Children's Hour* are less invested in character and acting style than in scene.
22. See, in particular, Fleche, "The Lesbian Rule," who, in discussing Hellman's play, links "the absence of an adequate or commensurate language" for

articulating lesbian sexuality to a more generic problem in realist representation: "Another way to respond to the play's negativity, however, would be to say that it *abstracts* the lesbian—cuts her out, abbreviates her, conceives her as a problem of representation. *The Children's Hour* implicates the lesbian in questions of truth, of ultimate terms of knowing—thereby raising the stakes of Hellman's 'realism,' putting lesbianism in the domain of large questions of meaning and identity" (Fleche, "The Lesbian Rule," 21 and 26). In a discussion of Michael Hayes' screen adaptation, Joanna Rapf notes that, far from marking the limits of sexual understanding, Lily Mortar's "idiosyncratic babbling about 'unnaturalness' makes sense in context." Rapf, "'A Larger Thing,'" 47.

23. In an oddly literal gesture, and one entirely out of keeping with the rest of her argument about the film's articulation of lesbian fantasy, Julia Erhart reaches outside the film text to Hellman's original play to identify Mary's secret book as Theophile Gautier's *Mademoiselle de Maupin*, "a novel about female homosexuality." Julia Erhart, "'She Could Hardly Invent Them!' From Epistemological Uncertainty to Discursive Production: Lesbianism in *The Children's Hour*," *Camera Obscura* 35 (1995): 99. Tuhkanen points out that the film's "refusal to name Gautier's novel has some unexpected results: the elusiveness of explanations appears unsettling because a certain undecidability and openness remains in our knowledge of the knowledge." But if the knowledge of lesbianism cannot be sourced to a single book, it is more successfully annexed to the generic practice of reading and the "exclusively same-sex environment" in which it occurs, the all-female boarding school where the "dangerous proximity of pupils" is thought to facilitate the "knowledge and practice of sexual perversions." Tuhkanen, "Breeding (and) Reading," 1009–1010.
24. A departure from the playscript, the courtroom scene in which a judge dismisses the case against the schoolgirl's grandmother was something Wyler and Hayes fought greatly about. For an account of the scene's inception, see Rapf, "'A Larger Thing,'" 47–48; for a production still from the dropped scene, see Russo, *Celluloid Closet*, 137.
25. Bosley Crowther, review of *The Children's Hour*, directed by William Wyler, *New York Times*, March 15, 1962, 28.
26. Other titles considered were *Infamous* and, to my mind more in keeping with the chronotope of the lesbian schoolroom, *Classmates*. See Wyler Papers, Box 8, Folder 9.
27. Erhart, "Lesbianism in *The Children's Hour*," 98.
28. Ibid., 99.
29. Ibid., 95.
30. Ibid., 88.
31. Ibid., 91.
32. Ibid., 92–93.
33. Ibid., 100.
34. Jennifer A. Rich, "'(W)right in the Faultlines': The Problematic of Identity in William Wyler's *The Children's Hour*," in *The Queer Sixties*, ed. Patricia Juliana Smith, 190 (New York: Routledge, 1999).
35. Ibid., 193.
36. Ibid., 197.
37. Ibid., 198.
38. Ibid., 195.
39. As if to make the connection between school relationships and perverse relationships indelible, Wyler's remake requires young Mary Tilford to induct her vulnerable schoolfriend into a "sorority" of two. Ellen Rooney makes a similar point far more rigorously in her discussion of the "semiprivate"

aspect of the classroom and its relation to "disciplines," among which we can include sexual disciplines such as systems of orientation which have a peculiarly charged relation to publicity and privacy:

> The classroom is a semiprivate room. As such, it is a site of the peculiar intimacies and coercions, the self-revelations and decisive constraints, that characterize a space neither public nor private, both exclusionary (perhaps even exclusive) and impersonal. As a workspace, the classroom necessarily entails a relation to the unfamiliar, the as-yet-unknown, the potentially difficult. Its very existence testifies that common sense is not enough and that ordinary language is what we speak at home. In other words, the semiprivate room is one site of the disciplines.

Ellen Rooney, "A Semiprivate Room," *differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 15, no. 1 (2002): 128–129.

40. Rich, "'(W)right in the Faultlines,'" 192.
41. Although Hollywood's wholesale adoption of color film stock is usually dated to the midsixties when separate Academy Awards for black-and-white and color cinematography were eliminated, Wyler's decision to present *The Children's Hour* in a vintage medium stands precursor to the nostalgic deployment of black and white usually associated with 1970s films such as *The Last Picture Show* (Peter Bogdanovich, 1971).
42. Wyler Papers, Box 8, Folder 10.
43. Anderegg, *William Wyler*, 53. Cinephiles will no doubt recognize in those "low ceilings" and much else beside a nod to Gregg Toland, the cinematographer on *These Three*, who is frequently credited with developing deep focus in American classical cinema. For a full investigation of this claim, see David Bordwell, Janet Staiger, and Kristin Thompson, *The Classical Hollywood Cinema: Film Style and Mode of Production to 1960* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1985), 341–352, reprinted as David Bordwell, "Deep-Focus Cinematography," in *The Studio System*, ed. Janet Staiger, 93–124 (New Brunswick: Rutgers, 1994).
44. Other than the final scene in the cemetery, the only permitted departures from the school grounds are the interior of Joe's car, Mrs. Tilford's mansion, the bedroom of Rosalie Wells (Veronica Cartwright) the fellow schoolgirl Mary has blackmailed into lying, and a hospital office in which a white-coated Joe is advised by a colleague to take leave.
45. "Decorated with as much Weiner kitsch as the studio could muster," the final scene, Patricia White agrees, inadvertently reveals the heterosexual mandate under which *These Three* was produced: "[Karen and Joe's] reunion and kiss are applauded by a number of older male 'Austrians' who resemble nothing so much as Hollywood executives—rarely has heterosexual consensus looked so manufactured." White, *Uninvited*, 27.
46. Earlier framed as his drive to paternity, Joe's heterosexual interest in Karen is ideologically amplified though sexually neutralized by the pediatric and obstetric profession assigned him in the film.
47. Discussions of Hellman's play tend to rely heavily on Martha's confession. Titus regards it as a conflicted scene designed to expose Martha's tragic flaw but more successful in betraying its heterosexual author's unresolved relation to lesbianism, whereas Fleche argues that Martha's speech reveals the incapacity of language to convey lesbianism except under erasure. See Titus, "Murdering the Lesbian," and Fleche, "The Lesbian Rule." More recently, David Kennedy Sauer has used Martha's confession to make an argument about modernist theatrical realism and its deployment of ambivalence to secure the illusion of subjective depth and interpretative closure in contradistinction to postmodern practices that do not indent subtextual significance

within dialogue or character. David Kennedy Sauer, "*Oleanna* and *The Children's Hour*: Misreading Sexuality on the Post/Modern Realistic Stage," *Modern Drama* 43, no. 3 (Fall 2000): 421–441. In contrast, discussions of Wyler's film version tend to give less emphasis to Martha's confession than her suicide in large part because of John Michael Hayes' resequencing of these scenes around Mrs. Tilford's apology. In Hellman's play Martha's suicide directly follows her confession but in Wyler's film, which is otherwise doggedly faithful to the original playscript, these two scenes are interrupted by Mrs. Tilford's arrival at the schoolhouse to offer financial reparation. This shift, as many commentators spell out, clarifies that Martha's suicide is a consequence of her new self-knowledge and Karen's compassionate response to it. See, Rich, "'(W)right in the Faultlines,'" 194–196; Rapf, "'A Larger Thing,'" 49–50; and Spencer, "Sex, Lies, and Revisions," 58–59.

48. Anderegg interprets Wyler's manipulation of mise-en-scène somewhat differently, placing the emphasis on the close-up that precedes the compositional rearrangement of the two women as lesbians: "When Martha tells Karen, 'I have loved you the way they said,' Wyler cuts to an extreme close-up to register Karen's shock, but he holds this shot very briefly, cutting almost immediately to a long shot of the two women, one on each side of the frame. The close-up here functions as cinematic punctuation, an exclamation mark which contributes to the syntax of the whole." Perhaps tellingly, where I see a phallic fire iron compositionally linking the two women, Anderegg sees them separated by a "rocking chair." Anderegg, *William Wyler*, 54.
49. This photograph could have been taken from the opening sequence of *These Three* where an open-air graduation ceremony gives way to a scene between Karen and Martha inside the college room they share. Oddly, the very ubiquity of schoolgirl crushes attests to, if not their innocence then their inconsequence to a larger developmental narrative of female heterosexuality whose only requirement is the young girl's advancement outside the single-sex precincts of the school. The immature relations of the boarding school, whose intensity no one questions, are ultimately abandoned in favor of the heterosexual relationships they mimic except, of course, in the case of matriculation to the women's college or sorority house where full-blown lesbianism takes hold. Consider, for instance, Vin Packer's best-selling popular novel of 1952, *Spring Fire* (reprinted with a new introduction, San Francisco: Cleis Press, 2004), which investigates love among sorority sisters and has its literary antecedent in a short story set in a girl's boarding school that was first published in *Ladies Home Journal* under her real name: Marijane Meaker (also known as Ann Aldrich). In the case of lesbianism, the moral and aesthetic gap between hearthside reading and pulp can seem no distance at all. See Judith Mayne, "Afterword" in *Women's Barracks*, by Tereska Torres (New York: Feminist Press, 2005), 215.
50. I can find no reference in the secondary literature to Wyler's unexpected deployment of six jump cuts in this scene, though they did not escape the notice of at least one contemporary reviewer: "He is still inventive in the creation of cinematic effects, as in the sense of panic he evokes with a rapid series of shots of Audrey Hepburn racing across a lawn to the locked room of Shirley MacLaine." Unsourced review of *The Children's Hour*, Production Code Files, Special Collections, Margaret Herrick Library. Contained in the same file, the *Variety* review of December 7, 1961, simply comments that Robert Swink's editing is "notable for its cumulative impact and stability."
51. I am not alone in seeing the sexual implications of this set property. "In what now seems a humorously pathetic scene," writes Spencer, "Audrey Hepburn hears Mrs. Mortar's call, races back to the house, and breaks through Martha's

locked door wielding a heavy, phallic-shaped piece of sculpture." Spencer, "Sex, Lies, and Revisions," 58. Comparing the sets of *The Children's Hour* with those of its predecessor text, *These Three*, one notes that while structural elements such as doorways, windows, fireplaces, and staircases are retained, furnishings are completely stripped back in order to indicate the failure of Karen and Martha to make an adequately domestic interior. The antiques, family portraits, paintings, and chintz that abound in the earlier film are all removed except for those implements that are necessary to the plot.

52. This particular cinematic gesture owes everything to Alfred Hitchcock's *Rope* (1948), which, as I argue in Chapter 6 in my discussion of the Wachowski brothers' *Bound,* remains the urtext for experiments in the editing of homosexuality on screen.
53. Readers familiar with his oeuvre will know that the disinclination to rack focus is a signature gesture of Wyler's directorial style, which he learned in tandem with Toland on *These Three* (1936), *Dead End* (1937), *Wuthering Heights* (1939), *The Westerner* (1940), *The Little Foxes* (1941), and *The Best Years of Our Lives* (1946). Considering *These Three*, Anderegg notes that Wyler consistently favors depth-of-field staging, which allows "dramatic space to have its weight and volume" and where "background action, though out of focus, remains central to the viewer's consciousness." Wyler, Anderegg concludes, "maintains the integrity of his composition and therefore the integrity of the dramatic moment, though he may be slightly disconcerting his audience in the process." Anderegg, *William Wyler*, 48–49.
54. At least one unnamed reviewer takes exception to Wyler's orchestration of Karen's departure from the cemetery by calling it "a steal from *The Third Man*." *Films in Review* (April 1962): 237. Wyler Papers, Box 8, Folder 13.
55. I remind those still resistant to Wyler's film that this passing femme is Audrey Hepburn and, in 1961, hers is the "gamin" look every woman is trying to achieve. This conjunction of lesbianism and female cultural style hadn't been seen on screen since the 1930s when Marlene Dietrich and Greta Garbo were helping test the limits of the newly implemented and hardening Production Code. For an account of Hepburn as a woman's star and the wide appeal of the Hepburn look, see Rachel Moseley, *Growing Up with Audrey Hepburn: Text, Audience, Resonance* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002). At least one critic would disagree with my reading of Hepburn's femme style, seeing in her walk "a very determined, indeed almost masculine stride" (Rapf, "'A Larger Thing,'" 50).
56. See, in particular, Russo, *Celluloid Closet*, 138–141; and Boze Hadleigh, *The Lavender Screen. The Gay and Lesbian Films: Their Stars, Makers, Characters, and Critics* (New York: Citadel, 2001), 34–37.
57. For those that require proof, see Russo who, with the pleasured efficiency of a Barton Keyes, tabulates in a "Necrology" the subcategories of suicide and murder (death by drowning, by electrocution, by stake through the heart) Hollywood reels in to exterminate queer characters once they have served their purpose of sexually invigorating an otherwise tame heterosexual story. Russo, *Celluloid Closet*, 347–349.
58. If on a number of occasions *The Children's Hour* represents the transfer of sexual knowledge via the engagement of spatial mechanisms none is as significant as that which figured in the historical libel case the two Scots schoolteachers brought to clear their names. When asked to describe the nocturnal events she had been witness to, their young student and roommate described one woman lying on top of another producing a noise like "putting one's finger into the neck of a wet bottle" (Faderman, *Scotch Verdict*, 147). In the proceedings of the court case, the young girl's recollection of a sound does not have to

obey the rationalizing logics of cross-examination since her figurative use of language enacts a metonymy (in and out) that hardly requires symbolic unraveling. While the sound she describes was lost on the Edinburgh judges, who busily disputed the idea that one British woman might penetrate another with the enlarged clitoris required for tribadic intercourse, it has become the point of contention between two lesbian rereadings of the case. Lillian Faderman assumes that the schoolgirl, in ascribing these noisy mechanics to the two women, is remembering the sound of heterosexual intercourse she must have witnessed in her childhood in India. Judith Halberstam argues that Faderman thus "rehearses the same manipulations of race and sexuality as the original judges of the case did," placing the burden of sexual knowledge on an alien other in order to erase the sexual aspect from the relationship between the two British women and restore it to the realm of female friendship. Judith Halberstam, *Female Masculinity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998), 64. I am more interested, however, in Halberstam's preliminary point that Faderman seems entirely incapable of linking the sound described in the nineteenth-century courtroom with digital penetration since it gives a new perspective on both the digital sex repeatedly invoked in the Wachowski Brothers' *Bound* and, more significantly, the scene of a woman masturbating in David Lynch's *Mulholland Drive*, which I turn to in Chapter 7. In Lynch's film, in particular, the slapping wet sounds the image track asks us to hear as labial manipulation do the job of authenticating the sexual scene in which Naomi Watts' hand works away unseen beneath her denim cutoffs. The fact that not a single critic of the film, many of them in awe of Lynch's feted command of cinematic sound, mentions this sound effect seems to me further evidence of our capacity to read over the specifically cinematic signs of lesbianism in our hurry to lodge them in character and story.

## NOTES TO CHAPTER 3

1. See Edwin T. Arnold and Eugene L. Miller, Jr., *The Films and Career of Robert Aldrich* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1986), 140–144.
2. Robert Aldrich, quoted in Arnold and Miller, *The Films and Career of Robert Aldrich*, 144.
3. The cramped scene of lesbian domesticity also recalls a third, more obscure, use of the term. In the eighteenth century, according to historian Rictor Norton, the "Game of Flatts" alluded to "the rubbing together of two 'flat' female pudenda," and, by the next century, "flatfuck" operated as "a colloquial term for lesbian activity." Rictor Norton, *Mother Clap's Molly House: The Gay Subculture in England 1700–1830* (London: GMP, 1992), 233.
4. For a summary of the film's censorship history and a discussion of Aldrich's legal challenging of *Sister George*'s X-certificate in terms of the film's mature handling of lesbianism as a serious psychological and social problem, see Sally Hussey, "Scene 176: Recasting the Lesbian in Robert Aldrich's *The Killing of Sister George*," *Screening the Past* 10 (2002), http://www.latrobe.edu.au/www/screeningthepast (accessed March 17, 2008).
5. For a compendium of gay and lesbian content within Code-sanctioned films, see Vito Russo, *The Celluloid Closet: Homosexuality in the Movies* (New York: Harper and Row, 1981).
6. "While lesbians historically required bar space for the creation of a public sexual identity and as a respite from a hostile heterosexual world, heterosexuals came to rely on the bar to identify and define a figure both newly public and increasingly pronounced by popular science to be indiscernible

to the heterosexual eye," argues Hankin. "Aldrich's on-location shooting plan can be read as a response to the tacit cultural desire to locate and probe clandestine lesbian space." Kelly Hankin, "Lesbian Locations: The Production of Lesbian Bar Space in *The Killing of Sister George*," *Cinema Journal* 41, no. 1(2001): 5 and 7. Amounting to a production history of Aldrich's film, Hankin's essay comprises a chapter in her extended study of the lesbian bar *The Girls in the Back Room: Looking at the Lesbian Bar* (Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 2002), 54–80.

7. This is confirmed by Reid's memoir account, which also foregrounds the relation assumed between sexuality and space: "We had some locations on Hampstead Heath. I had a lot of walking to do over the titles, I remember. I looked round when we got to the Heath and there was Archie, the tattooed chucker-out at the Gateways. I said, 'Oh, Archie, I didn't expect you to be up here.' She said, 'No, well, I come, Beryl, in case any of them bent birds was after you!' Beryl Reid, *The Cat's Whiskers* (London: Ebury Press, 1986), 46–47.
8. Box 69, Special Collection #34 DGA/Robert Aldrich Collection, Louis B. Mayer Library, American Film Institute, Los Angeles (hereafter, Robert Aldrich Collection).
9. Box 71, Robert Aldrich Collection.
10. Lizzie Thynne points out that Reid's larger-than-life persona and her performative tendency to the vaudevillian conveys a distinctly British version of lesbianism that is somewhat at odds with Aldrich's cinematic vision of female sadomasochistic perversity:

    > Yet the performance of Beryl Reid as "Sister George" brings to the film a different set of pleasures, derived from her long history as one of the first British woman stand-up comedians and variety artists in a tradition which in many ways resists the characterisation of queer as essentially tragic, marginal and abnormal and in which female disorderliness, camp innuendo, inauthenticity and homoeroticism are indeed the norm.

    Lizzie Thynne, "'A Comic Monster of Revue': Beryl Reid, *Sister George* and the Performance of Dykery," in *British Queer Cinema*, ed. Robin Griffiths, 91 (Abingdon: Routledge, 2006).
11. The address of the exterior is 10 Rutland Mews South. Next to number 10 stands the three-story house Aldrich rented, while across the cul-de-sac number 20 provides the exterior used for Betty Thaxter's homely brothel. Production files indicate the usual constraints of location shooting including permissions obtained from Rutland Mews South property owners to remove cobblestones from the street and allow a cameraman to set up on a roof. Box 74, Robert Aldrich Collection. In contrast to this strict adherence to the legal requirements of location work, when Aldrich filmed in the Gateways he was conveniently unimpeded by the normal industry protocols, especially those relating to the use of extras. See Hankin, "Lesbian Locations," 11–19.
12. The publicity notes for the film confirm the cantilevering is fake: "Once again showing his penchant for the whimsically grotesque, Bob Aldrich outfitted tall (5 feet 11) ex-Las Vegas showgirl Rosalie Williams in a padded suit to create her eye-stopping comedy and characterization of a 250-pound Amazon as a TV director's Girl Friday." Box 74, Robert Aldrich Collection. More appealing from the perspective of an Auckland-based researcher is the clipping from the Christchurch Press of December 28, 1968, which proclaims "New Zealand Actress in Hollywood Role." No longer a Vegas showgirl, Rosalie Williams, a "former Christchurch nurse," finds her "big

break" playing a "very bitchy and bossy Australian in the controversial film *The Killing of Sister George*." Box 79, Robert Aldrich Collection.

13. Patricia White, "Supporting Character: The Queer Career of Agnes Moorehead," in *Out in Culture: Gay, Lesbian and Queer Essays on Popular Culture,* ed. Corey Creekmuir and Alex Doty, 91 (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995).
14. In the charged vicinity of *Sister George* sexual illusion can even give way to reality. The morning after ITV premiered Aldrich's film on UK television, an article in the *Guardian*, September 30, 1975, informed its readers that "eleven pupils in an exclusive girls' school were missing last night after staging a walkout in protest against a ban on their watching the film, *The Killing of Sister George*." Sparking a police search across two counties, the girls "were reported to be hitch-hiking along the A3" making "their way toward London or the Isle of Wight," a geographical uncertainty that might have been removed had they been allowed to watch the film. Later that day the *Dorset Evening Echo* reported that the girls had been found safe in a ditch less than five miles from their school. While repeating the connection to Aldrich's film, the *Echo* suggested that the girls' disappearance may have been a protest at the new headmistress's school ban on platform shoes, which would be easier to believe if the headmistress's name wasn't Bickerdyke. Both clippings are held in the *Killing of Sister George* file included in the Lesbian and Gay Newsmedia Archive, a subsection of the Hall Carpenter Archives, Middlesex University.
15. See White's expanded discussion of Agnes Moorehead and other lesbian character actors whose on- and offscreen personae frequently bled from one role into the next. Patricia White, *Uninvited: Classical Hollywood Cinema and Lesbian Representability* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), 136–193.
16. According to the fact sheet prepared by the film's publicity director "a spot in the road junction 23 feet outside the gates of St. Nicholas Church, Remenham, near the regatta town of Henley-on-Thames, marked the scene of the TV 'death' of 'Sister George.'" The geographically locatable traffic roundabout at which a fake George appears to ride her Raleigh moped beneath the wheels of a truck presented less logistical trouble to the crew than the London scene involving a simulated crash between a taxicab and sports car. Filmed near the Guildhall, the unusually heavy Saturday traffic was "already thrown out of balance by the dismantling of London Bridge and its shipment to Havasu City, Arizona." Box 74, Robert Aldrich Collection. Incessantly shuttling between fake and real sites that seem equally inauthentic, it seems only apt that Aldrich's filming should be inconvenienced by the transportation of a historic London monument to a new US location where it continues to function as a tourist destination.
17. Aldrich's experiments with the layering of film sound for thematic effect are well documented. See, in particular, J. P. Telotte's discussion of voice and other technologies of sound communication in *Kiss Me Deadly*, "Talk and Trouble: *Kiss Me Deadly*'s Apocalyptic Discourse," *Journal of Popular Film and Television* 13, no. 2 (1985): 69–79.
18. George's vocal impression might also be thought to give voice to the man trapped inside the body of the butch lesbian. For many decades of the twentieth century such gender inversion was thought to be an accurate diagnostic of gay and lesbian psychology. Judith Halberstam has reclaimed masculinity as an attribute of women in a discussion that touches on Reid's depiction of the butch lesbian. Judith Halberstam, *Female Masculinity* (Durham: Duke University, 1998), 198–199.

19. Patricia White, "Supporting Character," 91.
20. According to Hankin, "Aldrich's use of authentic lesbian bar space was neither insignificant nor innocent. Rather, Aldrich's need for an authentic lesbian space was motivated by a collective heterosexual desire to know and master real lesbian space ethnographically." Hankin, "Lesbian Locations," 19.
21. The London call sheets indicate the Granby is actually the Hollybush public house, Holly Mount, NW3. While in London Aldrich also sent a second crew to several rural locations to capture black-and-white footage of Applehurst village exteriors necessary to the television serial plot, such as the yard of a farmhouse in Hertfordshire where Sister George is mobbed by children as she goes to attend their ailing grandmother. Box 70, Robert Aldrich Collection.
22. Box 70, Robert Aldrich Collection.
23. The film's location notes are now augmented by Jill Gardiner's oral history account of the Gateways, which includes a chapter-length reconstruction of the filming of *Sister George* based on interviews with participants and the retrieval of contemporary mainstream and gay press accounts. Jill Gardiner, *From the Closet to the Screen: Women at the Gateways Club 1945–1985* (London: Pandora, 2003), 132–155. More recently, Rebecca Jennings, drawing on lesbian oral history interviews archived in the Hall Carpenter Oral History Archive at the National Sound Archive (hereafter NSA), British Library, has used the example of the Gateways club to analyze the developing tension between an essentially enclosed and invisible bar culture and the political preoccupations of the gay and lesbian liberation movement in the 1960s and early 1970s. As Jennings documents, these tensions came to a head on Saturday, February 20, 1971, when the Gay Liberation Front (GLF) leafleted the Gateways. An action intended to address the core issue of gay and lesbian visibility, the text of the pamphlet unsurprisingly points to the club's participation in Aldrich's film as evidence of false consciousness in relation to sexual oppression. Rebecca Jennings, "The Gateways Club and the Emergence of a Post-Second World War Lesbian Subculture," *Social History* 31, no. 2 (2006): 206–225. At least one of the interviews held at the NSA suggest that the GLF action was an attack on the butch/femme culture evidenced by the Gateway's regulars. Interview with Angela Chilton, Hall Carpenter Oral History Archive, NSA (C456/092/05), F1622–F1624.
24. Box 74, Robert Aldrich Collection.
25. The architectural features emphasized by Aldrich's camerawork tend to be those that are mentioned by former members or visitors to the club: the unmarked door on Bramerton Street, the immediate descent down the steep set of steps, the decorative murals around the club walls that depict a collage of members and scenes from the Gateways plus a portrait of the owner Ted Ware, and the long narrow bar which ran the length of the main room. All these elements are detailed in the interview with Sandy Martin, Hall Carpenter Oral History Archive, NSA (C456/075/01–05), F2483–F2487.
26. The extent of Aldrich's architectural license is evident from Martin's recollection of the actual Gateways which featured only a small anteroom that functioned as a cloakroom beside which was an "opening, which was actually a fire exit, which took you into the open air but then again out into a little extension which is where the toilets were." Interview with Sandy Martin, Hall Carpenter Oral History Archive, NSA (C456/075/01–05), F2483–F2487.

27. Russo captures well "the cartoon treachery of the sleek and sophisticated Mercy Croft" and "the loveless opportunism of Susannah York's Childie," beside which George, for all her bluffness and aggression, can seem positively attractive. Russo, *The Celluloid Closet*, 172.
28. A similar effect occurs in a later scene when a cut to the flat reveals George hidden in a wingback chair, her presence given away only by the cigar smoke that rises from the furniture.
29. If Aldrich's bar scene thus divides its lesbian affects between different cinematic techniques, D. A. Miller has recently identified how the visually magnetizing bar scenes in William Friedkin's *Cruising* (1980) succeed in sexualizing the homosexual to the degree that they combine professional and amateur actors, free-range tracking shots and subjective close ups, against a backdrop that keeps fouling the distinction between incidental and narratively crucial details:

    > For all their manifest aesthetic enhancement, these shots also carry documentary power. To the brave new world being imagined, Friedkin brought the authenticating procedures of neo-realism, using actual locations and mixing non-professionals in with his actors. These extras, not merely culled from the scene, were filmed actually performing the acts suggested. . . . Though it lacks pornography's explicitness, the film shares in pornography's Bazinian embrace of the "ontology of the photographic image." The real places aren't simply like these; they *are* those places; the men in the background aren't simply got up to resemble the men in the places; they *are* those men. Their nipple-play isn't just play—or to put it differently, it's *just* play, not the demanding "work" that it would be for the union extras. *Cruising*'s [leather bar] dioramas convince us that *gay sex happens* and this, in a culture vitally concerned with destroying every trace of homosexual desire, is by no means a universally self-evident proposition.

    D. A. Miller, "*Cruising*," *Film Quarterly* 61, no. 2 (2007): 70–71.
30. Richard Dyer was the first to note the way in which *Sister George*'s lesbian sex scene deploys the style and techniques of film noir. Richard Dyer, "Homosexuality and Film Noir," *Jump Cut: A Review of Contemporary Media* 16 (1977): 18. More specifically, Aldrich's filming of the encounter between Browne and York reprises several of the visual and sexual motifs first articulated in his earlier *Kiss Me Deadly* (1955). York lies upon a bed framed by cast-iron bedsteads as have both Gaby Rodgers and Ralph Meeker before her. In those previous scenes, sexual invitation and violence are indistinguishable, the one involving female aggression, the other male vulnerability to physical assault. In both the sexual threat is displaced, in the one scene onto the revolver Rodgers points at the level of Meeker's crotch, in the other onto the hypodermic needle that the mysterious Dr. Soberin (Albert Dekker) administers to the captive private eye who lies tied facedown on the bed. Throughout the scene between Meeker and Dekker, Aldrich's camerawork repeatedly frames one man's hand between the other man's legs, a perspectival effect he is strangely reluctant to engage in the *Sister George* sex scene, which, despite the director's braggadocio, keeps most of the action above the waist.
31. Arnold and Miller suggest that the sex scene may have been shot "largely in one take" so that it could easily be dropped from the film if needed, a decision they clearly wish Aldrich had taken: "it has a different, cruder *look* than the rest of the film, almost as if it were an insert from another, cheaper, less 'respectable' picture. It seems tacked on, not as essential to the film as Aldrich insisted." Arnold and Miller, *The Films and Career of Robert*

*Aldrich*, 148. According to Russo, Aldrich originally agreed to cut over a minute from the scene in the mistaken belief the film would avoid an X-rating. Six years later, the film was released with the footage restored. Russo, *Celluloid Closet*, 173.

32. As a precursor to her seduction of Childie, Mercy Croft refers to the residence in which she can offer her sanctuary from George as a "pied-à-terre" but neglects to specify the location. In couture terms alone, York's character would be more at home in the Holland Park studio given to David Hemmings in Michelangelo Antonioni's *Blow-Up* (1966), a film similarly invested in the linking of sex and real estate. As the photographer drives around a swinging London he notes the presence of poodle-walking homosexuals on the street as the indicator that yet another neighborhood is about to boom property-wise. *Blow-Up*'s sexual A to Z of London would be of no help to George who, in her mind at least, still navigates the boardinghouses of a postwar Notting Hill Gate. Nor could Antonioni have predicted that the sexual and spatial license his male protagonist enjoys would give way to the bland romantic urbanscape Hugh Grant and Julia Roberts map out thirty years later on exactly the same turf.
33. In the figure of Mercy Croft, *Sister George* revisits elements of John Schlesinger's *Darling* (1965), another film in which the architectural spaces of the City of London exist in some tension with television recording studios.
34. This effect of depthlessness is only increased with the knowledge that the modernist exterior is not the building it purports to be. In a letter dated April 26, 1968, Leslie Page, Assistant Controller of Television Administration, writes to Theo Cowan denying Aldrich permission to film outside Television Centre. Box 72, Robert Aldrich Collection. Aldrich's solution was to suggest a US stand-in: "The San Fernando Valley State College's administrative building could double nicely, the words, 'Television Centre,' spelled in the English way, popped up on the roof." Box 74, Robert Aldrich Collection.

## NOTES TO CHAPTER 4

1. Andrew Klevan, *Disclosure of the Everyday: Undramatic Achievement in Narrative Film* (Trowbridge, Wiltshire: Flicks Books, 2000), 56–60. Mise-en-scène directing, on the other hand, has long been strongly associated with auteurship, or the notion of a stylistic signature that is its own rationale. For a discussion of the mutual imbrication of these two equally vague terms across many forms of film criticism, see Barrett Hodson, "The Mystique of *Mise en Scene* revisited," *Continuum: The Australian Journal of Media and Culture* 5, no. 2 (1992): 68–86; and Adrian Martin, "*Mise en Scene* Is Dead, or The Expressive, The Excessive, The Technical and The Stylish," *Continuum: The Australian Journal of Media and Culture* 5, no. 2 (1992): 87–140.
2. Frederic Jameson, "Spatial Systems in *North by Northwest*," in *Everything You Always Wanted to Know about Lacan (But Were Afraid to Ask Hitchcock)*, ed. Slavoj Zizek, 50 (London: Verso, 1992).
3. Ibid., 51.
4. Jack Babuscio, "Camp and the Gay Sensibility," in *Gays and Film*, ed. Richard Dyer, 49 (London: British Film Institute, 1977).
5. Fassbinder's enthrallment by the melodramas of Douglas Sirk, which he had seen at a German film festival in 1969, has long been credited as the source of *Bitter Tears*' idiosyncratic style. The most influential account of melodramatic style remains Thomas Elsaesser's "Tales of Sound and Fury: Observations on the Family Melodrama," *Monogram* 4 (1972): 2–15.

6. For a compelling account of how Fassbinder both deploys and undermines Hollywood continuity within the film and the implications of this in relation to Christian Metz's notion of the cinematic Imaginary, see Catherine Johnson, "The Imaginary and *The Bitter Tears of Petra von Kant*," *Wide Angle* 3, no. 4 (1980): 20–25.
7. Carrie Rickey has also commented on Fassbinder's deployment of the physical contrast between the "antebellum voluptuousness" of Schygulla and the "postwar efficiency (thin lips, streamlined bod[y], less stylish hair" of Margit Carstensen. Carrie Rickey, "Fassbinder and Altman: Approaches to Filmmaking," *Performing Arts Journal* 2, no. 2 (1977): 40. Discussing the seduction scene, Lynne Kirby has commented that the "top and side lighting bathes Petra and Karin in a harsh, glaring chiaroscuro that accentuates the distorted facial and bodily features. Petra's body is an emaciated specimen from a Dix painting or a German Expressionist film, a bony repository of sunken shadows decked out in a Salome strip-tease dress." The "fascination and repulsion" with lesbian seduction evidenced in Fassbinder's control of the scene and "Karin's own hesitation" within it, are linked by Kirby to the film's "oblique" connotation of fascism via the costuming of the (lesbian) body: "Petra's body carries on it the signs of a libidinal economy redolent with Fascist overtones, as well as late-Weimar 'decadence and perversion.' Through an often elaborate lighting system, Margit Carstensen's skinny frame comes to resemble nothing so much as a decorated corpse, both the living breathing corpse of a Fascism that hasn't yet died, and the literal corpses of Fascism's victims." Lynne Kirby, "Fassbinder's Debt to Poussin," *Camera Obscura: A Journal of Feminism and Film Theory* 13–14 (1985): 19. Critical commentary on Schygulla's star image is extensive. For a discussion of her capacity to embody the ambivalences of German history see, in particular, Johannes von Moltke, "Camping in the Art Closet: The Politics of Camp and Nation in German Film," *New German Critique* 63 (1994): 76–106.
8. Timothy Corrigan, *New German Film: The Displaced Image* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1983; revised edition, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 42.
9. Ibid.
10. Ibid., 37.
11. See, for instance, Ruth Perlmutter, "Real Feelings, Hollywood Melodrama and the Bitter Tears of Fassbinder's Petra von Kant," *Minnesota Review* 33 (1989): 79–98. Perlmutter approaches *Bitter Tears* as a reconfiguration of "antagonisms and attachments" first mapped out in Douglas Sirk's *Imitation of Life*, now placed "within a fierce heterosexless arena of non-nurturant mothers, absent fathers, contemptuous daughters, competitive lovers." Although this augurs well for an analysis of the film's lesbian dynamics, Perlmutter quickly invokes a macroeconomic system indifferent to the microeconomies of sexual orientation: "Instead of the economics of heterosexual love that dominate the classical text, the characters in *Petra* are bound by an economically [*sic*] based on an unresolved lesbian relationship, evidencing Fassbinder's belief in the economic oppression of *all* relations." Perlmutter, "Real Feelings," 81. Writing from a gay perspective, Richard Dyer has earlier objected to the way in which critics appropriate Fassbinder's films "treating the sexual representations as unproblematic metaphors for class relations." Richard Dyer, "Reading Fassbinder's Sexual Politics," in *Fassbinder*, ed. Tony Rayns, 61 (London: British Film Institute, 1980).
12. Wallace Steadman Watson, *Understanding Rainer Werner Fassbinder: Film as Private and Public Art* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1996), 134 and 135. Perlmutter also confidently assumes that Petra and Marlene have

previously been lovers although she is careful to base the assumption on cues that link the diegetic scenario with the real-world relations of Fassbinder's crew, which include a failed affair between the director and Irm Hermann, the actor playing Marlene. Perlmutter, "Real Feelings," 87.

13. Watson, *Understanding Rainer Werner Fassbinder*, 135–136.
14. Christian Braad Thomsen links this seemingly peripheral detail to the lesbian slant of Fassbinder's "woman's film" in a way that further evidences my argument that lesbianism adheres to those elements that puncture the illusionist frame of the storyworld: "The first scene contains a homage to Hollywood: Petra von Kant dictates a letter to someone to whom she owes money, asking for an extension of the loan. His name is Joseph Mankiewicz, like the director of *All About Eve* (1950). This film, in which the constellation of characters is similar to that in Fassbinder's film, deals with a shy young girl who is introduced to a grand lady of the theatre and, with a curious mixture of innocence and ruthlessness, gradually takes over the star's position. Fassbinder can portray explicitly what was not possible for Mankiewicz in a 1950 Hollywood film: the lesbian undertones of the drama." Christian Braad Thomsen, *Fassbinder: The Life and Works of a Provocative Genius* (London: Faber and Faber, 1997), 110.
15. Perlmutter identifies the "duplicated image" as a "production still showing Petra and Fassbinder admiring their shared star, Karin/Schygulla. As another kind of discourse, this insertion of composed 'reality' hybridises the highly theatricalised text" and functions as the director's "profilmic" authorization of Karin's attempt to extract herself from Petra's sexual clutches, a heterosexist intervention Perlmutter seems willing to support. Perlmutter, "Real Feelings," 88.
16. John White and Ann White also register their critical distance from preceding readings of *Bitter Tears* (including Corrigan's) which ignore indeterminate or mystifying elements in the film, such as the appearance of the gun or transfer of the doll, in favor of overly schematic interpretations: "One irony attaching to so many of these enigmatic details is that while the film presents us on occasions with elements of indeterminacy and ambiguity, its interpreters often seem to experience no qualms about decoding them, even to the point of allegorising cryptic images and actions." The Whites relate this tendency to Fassbinder's own preparedness to give accounts of his films that stress their ideological schema. Mandated by Fassbinder's own brand of analysis, critical discourse sees no obstacle in the "teasing absence of convincing motivation or plot causality" ignoring it or imposing "an over-schematic meaning on it, either by injecting a heavy dose of psychological rationalisation not underwritten by the film's images or by taking Petra's words too trustingly at their face value." John White and Ann White, "Marlene's Pistol and Brady's Rule: Elements of Mystification and Indeterminacy in Rainer Werner Fassbinder's Film *Die Bitteren Tränen Der Petra Von Kant*," *German Life and Letters* 53, no. 3 (2000): 418 and 425.
17. See Johnson, "The Imaginary," 24.
18. Kirby, "Fassbinder's Debt to Poussin," 5.
19. Ibid., 13.
20. Ibid., 15 and 14.
21. Ibid., 8.
22. See Raymond Murray, *Images in the Dark: An Encyclopedia of Gay and Lesbian Film and Video* (New York: Plume, 1996), 51.
23. Caroline Sheldon, "Lesbians and Film: Some Thoughts," in *Gays and Film*, ed. Richard Dyer (London: British Film Institute, 1977; revised edition, New York: New York Zoetrope, 1984), 13 and 11.

24. D. A. Miller's discussion of Alfred Hitchcock's attempt to make a film without a cut remains the most concerted attempt to deploy psychoanalytic theory against its own heterosexual presumptions. D. A. Miller, "Anal *Rope*," *Representations* 32 (Fall 1990): 114–133. Paul Thomas is the only critic to have made the connection between *Bitter Tears* and *Rope*: "the camera, unusually mobile for Fassbinder, roams around in long, lateral movements, settling upon and picking out positions, shapes, angles, and textures. By its long takes it becomes a participant in the action, in a manner that recalls Hitchcock's *Rope*." Paul Thomas, "Fassbinder: The Poetry of the Inarticulate," *Film Quarterly* 30, no. 2 (1976): 12.
25. In this context it is worth recalling D. A. Miller's discussion of Joseph Manckiewicz's *Suddenly Last Summer* (1959), "Visual Pleasure in 1959," *October* 81 (1997): 35–58. Via a sustained close analysis of the beach bathing scene, Miller demonstrates how the deployment of mise-en-scène, specifically crosscut editing and deepening depth of field, recruits Elizabeth Taylor's busty corporeality to a gay representational economy that simultaneously upholds the full-frontal cover story of heterosexual interest. A stunning examination of the open-secret structure by which Hollywood film extravagantly displays gay awareness while maintaining the steadfast denial of such knowledge, Miller's essay is also a renewed attack on a film theory enchanted by phallic lack and its necessary disavowal in femininity, a line of argument first advanced in "Anal *Rope*." In Miller's account of *Suddenly Last Summer*, film theory's inability to give any positive account of male homosexuality, or even acknowledge its departure from a sexual economy grounded in the presumption of feminine visual objectification and masculine invisibility, is specifically represented by the work of Laura Mulvey, in comparison to whom Francois Truffaut (the theoretical fall guy in the discussion of *Rope*) could be said to get off lightly. See Miller, "Visual Pleasure," 46, n. 6.
26. Anat Pick notes that "*High Art*'s slowed-down theatricals and its zonked-out milieu evoke the high camp aesthetic of Rainer Werner Fassbinder by way of a queer homage," whereas Susan Pelle and Catherine Fox draw attention to the fact that, like Cholodenko's film, *Bitter Tears* "plots a lesbian triangle drawn together through ambition, power, desire, sexuality, exploitation and pleasure." Anat Pick, "New Queer Cinema and Lesbian Films," in *New Queer Cinema: A Critical Reader*, ed. Michele Aaron. 113 (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004); and Susan Pelle and Catherine Fox, "Queering Desire/Querying Consumption: Rereading Visual Images of 'Lesbian' Desire in Lisa Cholodenko's *High Art*," *Thirdspace* 6, no. 1 (2006), http://www.thirdspace.ca/vol6/6_1_Fox-Pelle.htm (accessed February 22, 2008). More recently, Laura Nix's *The Politics of Fur* (2003)—set in a Los Angelian music industry that trades sex for stardom—has been described as a "perfectly stylised update of Fassbinder's dyke classic *The Bitter Tears of Petra von Kant*." "Out Takes 2003," (program notes, Gay and Lesbian Film Festival, Auckland, May 22–June 2, 2003), 21.
27. Further confirmation of Greta's star quality is lodged in her every close-up, her beautifully ravaged face a visual mnemonic to a 1970s aesthetic culture that exacts its purity at costs unreckoned by a 1990s industry such as *Frame* represents. Compare the unfledged luminescence of Radha Mitchell's youthful face, which retains, even in the murky interior of the upstairs apartment, all the reflectivity and depthlessness that edge lighting can bestow.
28. Prior even to this conversation, the film's title sequence has already overinvested Germany as a representationally and historically dense site: the

blonde Radha Mitchell is seen bent forward, in a posture not unlike that next assumed by Clarkson over the toilet bowl, intently examining slides subsequently associated with a young artist named Dieter, which appear to be of uniformed officers consorting with women.

29. Although Pick reads "a specifically lesbian perspective" into the offsetting of still and motion photography within the film, the terms in which this tension signifies are familiar from forms of lesbian criticism based firmly in character typology. "*High Art* lingers between the deathly passivity of photographs, and the life-like motion of cinema," she writes, before asserting that in the "oscillation between movement and stasis, passion and exhaustion" represented by Lucy's falling in love with Syd, Cholodenko's film "rewrites the male/female, butch/femme dichotomies." Pick, "New Queer Cinema and Lesbian Films," 114.
30. The cinematic close-up on the face of the drowning Greta recalls, of course, the underwater portraits we know to hang in the same room. Stitching together seemingly disparate filmic orders, these are the still photographs rejected by the editors of *Frame* in the plot event needed to compel Syd and Lucy toward a collaboration in which artistic and sexual outcomes are finally inseparable.

## NOTES TO CHAPTER 5

1. See, in particular, Ellen Brinks, "Who's Been in My Closet? Mimetic Identification and the Psychosis of Class Transvestism in *Single White Female*," in *Cruising the Performative: Interventions into the Representation of Ethnicity, Nationality, and Sexuality*, ed. Sue-Ellen Case, Phillip Brett, and Susan Leigh Foster, 3–12 (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995); and Scott D. Paulin, "Sex and the Singled Girl: Queer Representation and Containment in *Single White Female*," *Camera Obscura: Feminism, Culture, and Media Studies* 37 (Jan. 1996): 33–68. Clare Whatling and Deborah Jermyn are almost alone in insisting on the generic qualities of Schroeder's film. Clare Whatling, *Screen Dreams: Fantasising Lesbians in Film* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), 94–96; and Deborah Jermyn, "Rereading the Bitches from Hell: A Feminist Appropriation of the Female Psychopath," *Screen* 37, no. 3 (1996): 251–267.
2. In the DVD liner notes, Schroeder describes the film as a "psychological thriller" whose "references are far more to other movies than to a certain milieu." *Single White Female*, DVD, directed by Barbet Schroeder (Columbia Tristar Home Video, 1992). Adapted from John Lutz's 1990 pulp novel, *SWF Seeks Same* (London: Signet, 1992), the film's other sources are indeed those named by Schroeder: *Vertigo* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1958), *Persona* (Ingmar Bergman, 1966), and *Rosemary's Baby*. In all of these films sexual and spatial crises are conflated. In their domestic honeymoon period, before the thriller format kicks in, the two female leads lie together in their shared apartment with Nicholas Ray's *In a Lonely Place* (1950) playing in the background, the hard-boiled noir title cinching tight the spatial imperative of Schroeder's film.
3. Such stories are not confined to fiction. In an article first published in the *Guardian*, the conviction of former Wimbledon player turned professional tennis coach, Claire Lyte, for sexual molestation of a female minor was reported in exactly these terms: "Within months of meeting, the pair were spending time together in isolated parts of the [Lawn Tennis Training Academy] campus and in the child's room. They wore similar clothes and tied their hair with three bands in the same distinctive way." This manifest doubling, which to the

untrained eye might seem to extend across the ranks of women's tennis, both signals and conceals less uniform activities: sharing a bed, wearing each other's underwear, engaging in oral sex. Karen McVeigh, "Female Tennis Coach Guilty of Sex Charges," reprinted in *Sunday Star Times*, October 21, 2007, A16.

4. Readings which explicitly foreground the significance of the pre-title sequence include Paulin, "Sex and the Singled Girl," 47–48, and Jermyn, "Rereading the Bitches from Hell," 263. Catherine Spooner's essay is more ambiguous insofar as it first insists on the significance of the apartment setting to the film's "Gothic" story of female doubles but then gives authority to the pre-credit sequence as the visual mechanism that invokes the female *Doppelgänger*. Catherine Spooner, "*Cosmo*-Gothic: The Double and the Single Woman," *Women: A Cultural Review* 12, no. 3 (2001): 298–299.
5. For the femininity as masquerade argument see Stella Bruzzi, *Undressing Cinema: Clothing and Identity in the Movies* (London: Routledge, 1997), 141–144. For the pathological lesbian argument see Lynda Hart, *Fatal Women: Lesbian Sexuality and the Mark of Aggression* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 113–117; and Karen Hollinger, *In the Company of Women: Contemporary Female Friendship Films* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1998), 219–229. For an intelligent intervention in both lines of argument that takes seriously the role of emulation and aggression in female psychology and collectivity building, see Sianne Ngai, "Jealous Schoolgirls, Single White Females, and Other Bad Examples: Rethinking Gender and Envy," *Camera Obscura: Feminism, Culture, and Media Studies* 47, no. 16.2 (2001): 177–229.
6. For a discussion of *Rebecca*'s many fictional and critical iterations, see Annamarie Jagose, "First Wife, Second Wife: Sexual Perversion and the Problem of Precedence in *Rebecca*," in *Intimacy*, ed. Lauren Berlant, 352–377 (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2000).
7. The Dakota features only in the exterior shots of *Rosemary's Baby*. Despite their "miraculous sense of verisimilitude," the interior apartment spaces were all built to scale on the Paramount lot in Los Angeles, as Joe McElhaney points out in his discussion of Polanski's highly formalist representation of New York urban space. Joe McElhaney, "Urban Irrational: *Rosemary's Baby*, Polanski, New York," in *City That Never Sleeps: New York and the Filmic Imagination*, ed. Murray Pomerance, 204 (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2007).
8. First expressed in the late eighteenth century over the advent of tenement housing for working-class families, which usually involved shared outside lavatories or, later, water closets located on interior landings, a situation thought to erode the usual boundaries of public and private space epitomized in the single-family dwelling, public anxiety about multiple-occupant dwellings increased across the nineteenth century as property developers met the rising demand for affordable middle-class housing by designing purpose-built apartments on the Parisian model. See Elizabeth Collins Cromley, *Alone Together: A History of New York's Early Apartments* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990), 52–61.
9. Cromley, *Alone Together*, 198.
10. See Cromley, *Alone Together*, 196, and Betsy Klimasmith, *At Home in the City: Urban Domesticity in American Literature and Culture, 1850–1930* (Durham, New Hampshire: University of New Hampshire Press, 2005), 132. The apartment hotel thus extends many of the technological advances and social contradictions built into the functional template of the modern metropolitan grand hotel, an architectural form that will find its most subtle observer in Siegfried Kracauer. For a discussion of Kracauer's analysis of the

urban hotel as a space replete with narrative possibility and a site for the promiscuous exchange of information, services, and identities, see Marc Katz, "The Hotel Kracauer," *differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 11, no. 2 (1999): 134–152.

11. For a list of tenants and an account of William Earl Dodge Stokes, the real estate speculator behind the Ansonia, plus a thumbnail sketch of the building's twentieth-century fortunes, see Andrew Alpern, *Luxury Apartment Houses of Manhattan: An Illustrated History* (New York: Dover, 1992), 33–37. Stephen Birmingham's *Life at the Dakota: New York's Most Unusual Address* (New York: Random House, 1979) provides a similar popular history of the Dakota Apartments.
12. Cromley, *Alone Together*, 198.
13. Derek Jarman, *At Your Own Risk: A Saint's Testament* (Woodstock, New York: Overlook Press, 1993), 81. The Baths' reputation in non-gay circles tends to revolve around the role it played in launching the performance careers of Bette Midler and her musical accompanist Barry Manilow.
14. Plato's Retreat continued at 509 West 34th Street until New Year's Eve 1985, when it was closed down after New York State, as a response to the AIDS epidemic, introduced health regulations banning oral and anal sex in public places. See Suzanne Golubski and Bob Kappstatter, "Swinging Doors Shut: City Probes KOs Plato's," *New York Daily News*, January 1, 1986. For a discussion of the inadequacy of this response to AIDS and its demonization of public sex cultures see Dangerous Bedfellows, ed., *Policing Public Sex: Queer Politics and the Future of AIDS* (Boston: South End Press, 1996).
15. The historical accuracy of this aspect of the film might be challenged on the grounds that by the 1990s the existence on the open market of a rent-controlled apartment such as the one Allie holds the lease on partakes of the urban myth. "It might be plausibly argued," writes Ellen Brinks, "that the real tragedy of *SWF* is the loss of this beautiful, rent-controlled apartment." Brinks, "Who's Been in My Closet?" 5. In this context it is also worth noting that Hart's argument that Allie's advertisement for a roommate ("SWF seeks female to share apartment in the west 70s") rings false since it announces "herself in terms of both marital status and race" but leaves "her desired roommate unspecified in these two respects" when "in fact, the rhetoric of advertising for roommates is more likely to read 'seeks same,'" ignores the US Fair Housing Act which, since its adoption in 1968, makes illegal the factoring of race into rental arrangements. It is clearly the rhetoric of personal advertisements for sexual partners, which regularly specify marital status and race, which Hart, if not Allie, has in mind. Hart, *Fatal Women*, 113.
16. Like another of its film referents, *Last Tango in Paris* (Bernardo Bertolucci, 1972), *Single White Female* plays apartment against hotel in a sexual competition neither space can win. In *Last Tango*, the apartment in which Paul (Marlon Brando) and Jeanne (Maria Schneider) meet is associated with a male anality that marks a regressive retreat from the conjugal humiliation of the residential hotel kept by his wife, who has been having a loveless affair with one of the tenants. Unseen except as an indistinct figure lying in a casket, Paul's wife's suicide is the pre-diegetic action that triggers the film's narrative of sexual escape. The crisis of the film comes, however, with Paul's avowal of love for Jeanne, the aggression of which is signaled by his claiming neither apartment nor hotel but full rights to an expanded cityscape encompassing bridge, ballroom, and the narrow streets along which the couple run. Spatially uncontainable, Paul's end will come not in a room but on a high balcony, cantilevered into the airspace above Paris, the distinctive outline of

the Eiffel tower all that is needed to anchor heterosexual romance in the city of love.

Preparing to shoot *Last Tango*, Bertolucci scouted for apartment locations that would allow his crew the mobility required to film on site. In this he was assisted by the conventional architecture of Parisian apartment suites with their wide entrance foyers and double internal doors through which one room seamlessly opens into another promoting internal circulation without the intervening corridor space Americans consider necessary for the maintenance of privacy within the home. For a discussion of nineteenth-century American objections to French apartment floor plans, see Cromley, *Alone Together,* 96. Rather than strictly dividing domestic space into intimate and social zones with strictly categorized functions, the Parisian model, argues Cromley, suggests different "potential uses" of space defined along "a continuum of privacy"(98). The spatial continuum of the Parisian apartment is fully exploited by Bertolucci's protagonists who have sex first against the wall and then, on a second meeting, on the floor which doubles as both bed and table. The subsequent shift from female to male penetration, however, locates Paul and Jeanne inside a completely internal bathroom in a scene filmed through an architecturally implausible glass partition that seems designed to preserve sexual frontality and allow Bertolucci's camera to keep a clear sight line on Brando's face from a position guaranteed to obscure his ass.

17. Schroeder's Ansonia is not unlike the hotel in which Jack Nicholson takes up residence in Stanley Kubrick's *The Shining* (1980) insofar as within the film character psychosis is aided and abetted, if not finally indistinguishable, from the space in which it unfolds. The spatial foundations of Kubrick's hotel—which derive variously from Stephen King's novel, sets built at Elstree Studios London and the exterior façade of the actual Timberline Lodge on Mt. Hood, Oregon—are consistent in fatally contradicting the claims of the nuclear family residing within its walls. For a discussion of Kubrick's film and its meta-generic qualities, many of which are amplified by its spatializing discourse, see Fredric Jameson, "Historicism in *The Shining*," in *Signatures of the Visible* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 82–98.
18. As Sharon Marcus points out cultural anxieties about apartment living persist into the twentieth century where, in the 1970s, they can be conflated with anxieties about the rise of feminism and its transformation of traditional gender roles. Marcus thus contextualizes Ira Levin's 1967 apartment novel *Rosemary's Baby* (New York: Signet, 1997), in which the pregnant young wife is vulnerable to the satanic approaches of her neighbors, in relation to contemporary debates about abortion and legal rights over a woman's body. Sharon Marcus, "Placing *Rosemary's Baby*," *differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 5, no. 3 (1993): 121–153.
19. Sharon Marcus, *Apartment Stories: City and Home in Nineteenth-Century Paris and London* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 1–8.
20. Since the improved tenement law of 1879, all purpose-built multiple-dwelling buildings in New York included light shafts, light courts, or interior courtyards to ensure that all rooms received adequate light and ventilation. Duboy's light courts are novel in that they are recessed into the exterior envelope of the building. For a discussion of this innovation plus a floor plan and exterior photograph of the Ansonia in 1907, see Cromley, *Alone Together*, 195–197. For a brief overview of legal tenement reforms as they pertained to design issues, see Cromley, *Alone Together*, 52–55.
21. The floor plan included in Cromley's *Alone Together* reveals that there are numerous positions on the Ansonia landing from which Hedy's sight line could be achieved.

22. For a discussion of how films set in New York routinely exploit the aural infiltration of apartment space to "set up a tension between the isolation of the protagonist in an apartment and the impingement of the outside world," see Elisabeth Weis and Randy Thom, "The City That Never Shuts Up: Aural Intrusion in New York Apartment Films," in *City That Never Sleeps*, ed. Pomerance, 215.
23. The constricted feel of the hotel room registers against the expansiveness of Allie's turn-of-the-century luxury apartment. Accessed via the generous stairwells and corridors of the actual Ansonia building, Allie's apartment is in fact a production set. As the DVD liner notes point out, and other commentators have noted to thematic end, the set abounds with the reflective surfaces of ordinary objects ("mirrors, glass doors, stainless steel utensils") all of which increase light, an effect sought by the cinematographer Luciano Tovoli who wanted to create the sense that "light comes from far away, as in real life, and not two feet outside the camera's frame." As Tovoli's comments reveal, the entire artificial construction is designed to support not psychoanalytical symbolism but architectural realism: "If the light is supposed to come through the window, that is where I place it, not above the set. All my sets purposely have ceilings."
24. The television broadcast, though fake, recalls that used by Polanski in *Rosemary's Baby* (live footage of the arrival of the Pope at Yankee Stadium in 1965) to establish the contemporary time of events outside the apartment as opposed to the layered historical time represented by the material decay of the building and its decrepit tenants. See McElhaney, "Urban Irrational," 208.
25. For a discussion of how traveling coital noise frequently registers as an invasion of personal space in shared houses, multiple dwellings, and terrace row houses, see Craig Gurney, "Transgressing Public/Private Boundaries in the Home: A Sociological Analysis of the Coital Noise Taboo," *Venereology* 13 (2000): 39–46. For discussion of how Hedy's masturbation threatens Allie's psychic identity, a routine interpretative loop in the secondary literature, see Jermyn, "Rereading the Bitches from Hell," 265; Paulin, "Sex and the Singled Girl," 60; Jennifer Beth Simmons, "Visions of Feminist (Pom(o)nanism): Masturbating Female Postmodern Subjectivity in American Television and Film," (MA Thesis, University of Florida, 2004), 41–54; and Whatling, *Screen Dreams*, 94–95.
26. As Paulin notes, once Allie has discovered her roommate masturbating the subjective tracking shot is replaced with a shot that "cannot simply be taken as Alli's [sic] point of view." Shot from above the bed, the figure of Hedy, argues Paulin, "bears a striking resemblance to Edvard Munch's rendering of an ecstatic and solipsistic *Madonna* (1895/1902)," into which can be read the "phallic power" of the "autoerotically engaged." Paulin, "Sex and the Singled Girl," 60.

## NOTES TO CHAPTER 6

1. D. A. Miller, "Anal Rope," *Representations* 32 (Fall 1990): 114–133.
2. Ellis Hanson, "Introduction: Out Takes," in *Out Takes: Essays on Queer Theory and Film*, ed. Ellis Hanson, 3 (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999).
3. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990).
4. Hanson, "Introduction: Out Takes," 1.
5. See Miller, "Anal Rope," 116–117.
6. Miller, "Anal Rope," 118–126.

7. Equally suggestive for my thinking about *Bound* are two discussions of Otto Preminger's *Laura* (1944) that also align the representational problem of homosexual visualization with contestations between narrative and spectacle in classical cinema. See Robert J. Corber's, "Resisting the Lure of the Commodity: *Laura* and the Spectacle of the Gay Male Body," in *Homosexuality in Cold War America: Resistance and the Crisis of Masculinity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997), 55–78; and Lee Edelman's "Imagining the Homosexual: *Laura* and the Other Face of Gender," in *Homographesis: Essays in Gay Literary and Cultural Theory* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 192–241.
8. See, for example, Mladen Dolar's "Hitchcock's Objects," in *Everything You always Wanted to Know about Lacan (But Were Afraid to ask Hitchcock)*, ed. Slavoj Zizek, 31–46 (London: Verso, 1992). More recently, Murray Pomerance has identified Hitchcock's topographic characterization or the way in which the director brings "the settings of his stories" to "the foreground with as much dramaturgical meaning as was afforded the protagonists who moved in them" (106–107). Unlike other critics of *Rope*, Pomerance understands that the homosexuality of *Rope*'s young murderers derives directly from the apartment space they jointly inhabit, and is virtually unsustainable outside it:

   > In *Rope* (1948), the apartment dwellers set out to take a sort of exciting voyage, as they would have it; and in the finale they learn that they are to be confined to their (philosophically) limited state forever. For this confinement to seem dramatic, the apartment must first suggest exactly the fluidity and boundlessness that makes all things possible, that makes the actually determining and morally limiting spaces of the city seem to open up endlessly in a panorama of vivid Technicolor.

   Murray Pomerance, "A Clean, Well-Lighted Place: Hitchcock's New York," in *City That Never Sleeps: New York and the Filmic Imagination*, ed. Murray Pomerance, 109 (New Brunswick: Rutgers, 2007). For an account of how Hitchcock faked the New York skyline that appears through the windows of *Rope*'s fictional apartment, which, by evidence of view, can be located facing west on 54th and Second, see James Sanders, *Celluloid Skyline: New York and the Movies* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2003), 75.
9. While the authenticity and audience appeal of the sex scene has been debated in several academic discussions of *Bound*, few have mentioned that it is a continuous take beside Kelly Kessler, who insists that the film knits together "strategies of heterosexual pornography and lesbian erotica to draw in both [straight and lesbian] audiences"(24). Unfortunately Kessler's argument seems to lose all filmic bearing when it attempts to loop in the single take:

   > The [continuous] shot does not force one single type of visual identification. It affords the spectator a voyeuristic pleasure, allowing him/her to gauge the scene from various vantage points to satisfy different tastes. It further invites the spectator to act as a voyeur or, by following the action in one fluid shot and changing the closeness, to focus on different body parts and activities. It also allows the spectator to relate to the scene as being a third participant in it. However, unlike ménage à trois in heterosexual male pornography, it excludes phallocentrism, providing for inclusion of non-phallocentric lesbian viewers.

   Kelly Kessler, "*Bound* Together: Audience Unification in Image Diversification," *Text, Practice, Performance* 3 (2001): 25. In an odd turnaround lesbian lifestyle magazines have been more interested in the significance of this technical detail. In an interview in *DIVA*, Jennifer Tilly admits she and her costar Gina Gershon were intensely aware of the camera's path: "We also

made the make-up person run all the way around the bed before the cameras could go, to make sure we looked attractive from every possible angle." Victoria Stagg Elliot, "Bound to Please," *DIVA* 18 (February–March 1997), 19. Elsewhere Tilly explains that the directors' decision to film the scene in "one continuous shot" was "to keep the studio from tampering with the sex scene." Rebecca Alber, "*Bound* for Fame: An Interview with Jennifer Tilly," *Curve: The Lesbian Magazine* (October–November 1996): 22. According to Larry Wachowski the lesbian make-out scene, which was not shot continuously, was subject to post-production editing in order to jump a NC-17 rating from the MPAA: "We had to use an alternate take where the camera did not see everything that we wanted it to see. We had to cut [Corky's] hand going between her [Violet's] leg on the couch." Kennette Crockett, "Gina Gershon, Jennifer Tilly and the Making of *Bound*," *Girlfriends: The Magazine of Lesbian Enjoyment* (January–February 1997): 29. The preferred take was restored in the subsequent video and DVD release.

10. Miller, "Anal Rope," 114.
11. Even critics who place much thematic emphasis on the film's use of temporal devices can seem confused about its story chronology. Ignoring the temporal status of the opening scene, Chris Straayer, for instance, confidently asserts that the film's flashback structure "originates from midway in the story." Chris Straayer, "*Femme Fatale* or Lesbian Femme: *Bound* in Sexual Difference," in *Women in Film Noir*, new edition, ed. E. Ann Kaplan, 151 (London: British Film Institute, 1998).
12. Mandy Merck's compelling discussion of *Bound* and the cultural history of the lesbian hand strangely stops short of linking Violet and Corky's digital-genital manipulations with the severing of Shelly's fingers, a lesbian castration scene in which metaphorical and literal codes keep transposing each other: the male finger represents the phallus whose place is taken by the female finger in lesbian sex. This seems to me consistent with Merck's insistence on the self-referentiality of the "lesbian hand," which as a hand rather than a penis substitute, "might present the male spectator with the daunting prospect of erotic rivalry or phallic obsolescence." See, Mandy Merck, *In Your Face: 9 Sexual Studies* (New York: New York University Press, 2000), 132.
13. Though scarcely interested in the carefully tuned mechanics of this switch from Violet's to Corky's voice, from retrospective to proleptic narration, other critics are quick to place a lot of thematic weight on it particularly in the context of the film's revision of noir motifs. Straayer argues that the film's flashback structure is "supplemented by a flash forward that liberates the narrative's conclusion from film noir destiny," and Kelly Oliver and Benigno Trigo endorse this interpretation arguing that, "with its flash-forwards and prophetic voice-over, *Bound* uses the conventions of film noir against the fatalism of traditional noir." Straayer, "*Femme Fatale* or Lesbian Femme," 151; and Kelly Oliver and Benigno Trigo, *Noir Anxiety* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 204.
14. In a discussion of the 1990s phenomenon of lesbian chic, Ann M. Ciasullo has recently disputed Corky's butchness arguing that Gershon's "pouty, Julia Roberts lips" are simultaneously marked as feminine within a wider filmic order that also references her performance as a stripper in *Showgirls* (Paul Verhoeven, 1995) immediately prior to her appearance in *Bound*. Ann M. Ciasullo, "Making Her (In)visible: Cultural Representations of Lesbianism and the Lesbian Body in the 1990s," *Feminist Studies* 27, no. 3 (2001): 589.
15. Merck, *In Your Face*, 142–143.
16. There are several factual errors in Oliver and Trigo's account of these scenes:

> Just as the water on the plumbing connects two bathrooms, so the camera connects the two spaces. It takes the viewer on a submarine journey through the toilet's plumbing from the bathroom, where a character is being tortured, to Corky's bathroom, where we see her listening to the torture. The toilet water stained with blood is doubly abject and works like the conductor of pain and suffering. In two other scenes, the camera similarly breaks down visual boundaries that construct space in film. In one scene, Violet and Corky touch each other through a wall. The camera floats above both characters in an impossible third space showing us the inside of the thin wall that unites them. In another scene, the camera again brings Violet and Corky together through another conversation used in film to separate space. Corky and Violet are shown on the phone with each other, but instead of showing us Corky, then Violet, then Corky, then Violet, as called for by a typical phone conversation, here the camera follows the conversation between them as if it were their voices itself; the camera is transformed into the energy running through the telephone wires that connect them.

Oliver and Trigo, *Noir Anxiety*, 235. In the scene involving the torture of Shelly a sound bridge first links the two apartment spaces in preparation for the more extreme visual bridge enacted on the white porcelain toilet bowls. If a "submarine journey" can be said to occur, it commences in Corky's apartment and ends in Caesar's, not the other way around. Their account of the two telephone scenes is similarly inaccurate. I point these errors out since the founding premise of Oliver and Trigo's discussion of the film is that "questions of seeing or not seeing and knowing or not knowing are central to *Bound*." Oliver and Trigo, *Noir Anxiety*, 190.

17. As a critical corrective I recommend Ellis Hanson's discussion of the cinematic telephone's long-standing ability to hook up homosexuality with the requirements of genre affiliation. See Ellis Hanson, "The Telephone and its Queerness," in *Cruising the Performative: Interventions into the Representation of Ethnicity, Nationality, and Sexuality*, ed. Sue-Ellen Case, Philip Brett, and Susan Leigh Foster, 34–58 (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995).
18. Jean Noble is nonetheless confident that "the camera returns us to Caesar's former apartment, only now, empty and lit for daytime." Jean Noble, "*Bound* and Invested: Lesbian Desire and Hollywood Ethnography," *Film Criticism* 22, no. 3 (Spring 1998): 13.
19. The equation assumed between homosexuality and homicide recalls not only *Rope* but far less classical precedents such as *Black Widow* (Bob Rafelson, 1987), *Single White Female* (Barbet Schroeder, 1992), and *Basic Instinct* (Paul Verhoeven, 1992). For attempts to theorize this tendency to depict lesbianism as a violence against men, see, Lynda Hart, *Fatal Women: Lesbian Sexuality and the Mark of Aggression* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994); and Christine Coffman, *Insane Passions: Lesbianism and Psychosis in Literature and Film* (Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 2006).

## NOTES TO CHAPTER 7

1. For an account of the complicated production and editing history of the film, which was initially commissioned by ABC as a pilot for a projected TV series and then sold on to a French production company who provided a budget

to allow Lynch to reassemble the original cast and shoot more footage, see Warren Buckland, "'A Sad, Bad Traffic Accident': The Televisual Prehistory of David Lynch's Film *Mulholland Dr.*," *New Review of Film and Television Studies* 1, no. 1 (2003): 131–147.

2. Anyone unfamiliar with Lynch's work can quickly bring themselves up to speed with Michel Chion's *David Lynch*, translated by Robert Julian (London: British Film Institute, 1995), 161–198, which includes an encyclopedic summary of the director's thematic and stylistic trademarks, or David Hughes' *The Complete Lynch* (London: Virgin, 2001), two volumes that reflect the cinephilic cult that surrounds the director. In keeping with his cult status, a book-length iconoclastic assault on Lynch's reputation has also appeared: Jeff Johnson's *Pervert in the Pulpit: Morality in the Work of David Lynch* (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland, 2004). More orthodox monographs include, Kenneth C. Kaleta, *David Lynch* (New York: Twayne, 1993); Martha P. Nochimson, *The Passion of David Lynch: Wild at Heart in Hollywood* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1997); and Todd McGowan, *The Impossible David Lynch* (New York: Columbia, 2007).
3. Replacement characters feature most notably in Lynch's *Lost Highway* (1997), where the same male character is played by different actors (Bill Pullman, Balthazar Getty) and different female characters are played by the same actor (Patricia Arquette). Parallel worlds, such as those in *Fire Walk with Me* (1992), have been present since his early short films and *Eraserhead* (1977). The secondary literature on Lynch is highly adept at exploring the significance of these perennial doublings. See, in particular, Nochimson and McGowan.
4. This retrospective tendency to recast the film can be seen even in readings that otherwise promote feminist accounts of lesbian desire, such as Kelly McDowell's:

   > Midway through the film, the nonlinear plot takes an abrupt turn that reveals that, until now, we have been inside the dream of Diane, whom, until this moment, we have known as Betty. The anonymous woman is revealed as Camilla. We discover that the women have been involved in an unstable sexual relationship for some time; Diane is the "jilted lover." She has been abandoned by Camilla for Adam, the director of the film in which Camilla is the star. Diane and Camilla engage in a clandestine affair until Camilla breaks it off. The scorned Diane becomes neurotic and plots to murder Camilla.

   Kelly McDowell, "Unleashing the Feminine Unconscious: Female Oedipal Desires and Lesbian Sadomasochism in *Mulholland Dr.*," *Journal of Popular Culture* 38, no. 6 (2005): 1037–1038. More insightfully, Heather K. Love asserts that "lesbianism operates in the film as a site for the exploration of fantasy—it occupies a strange twilight realm, somewhere between a dream and a cliché." Heather K. Love, "Spectacular Failure: The Figure of the Lesbian in *Mulholland Drive*," *New Literary History* 35, no. 1 (2004): 122.
5. *Mulholland Drive*, DVD, directed by David Lynch (2001; Universal Studios Home Video, 2002).
6. See http://www.mulholland-drive.net/ (accessed April 3, 2008). David Andrews usefully maps out the film's dovetailing of oneiric (dream) and ontic (real) sequences, which hinge on an early shot of Diane sleeping and seemingly deliver narrative plenitude only to be complicated by formal elements of repetition unnecessary to a "psycho-naturalistic account" of the film. David Andrews, "An Oneiric Fugue: The Various Logics of *Mulholland Drive*," *Journal of Film and Video* 56, no. 1 (2004): 37. The "latent content" of Diane's dream and its fragmented recasting of her "day-residue" has been subjected to full psychoanalytic retrieval in Jay R. Lentzner and Donald R.

Ross, "The Dreams That Blister Sleep: Latent Content and Cinematic Form in *Mulholland Drive*," *American Imago* 62, no. 1 (2005): 103.

7. See, for example, N. Katherine Hayles and Nicholas Gessler's "The Slipstream of Mixed Reality: Unstable Ontologies and Semiotic Markers in *The Thirteenth Floor*, *Dark City*, and *Mulholland Drive*," *PMLA* 119, no. 3 (2004): 482–499, which goes so far as to pin to the retrospectively pieced together murder plot an argument about ethical consequentialism, as if jilted lesbians regularly took out contracts on ex-lovers.
8. As with all Lynch films, the cast list credits encourage this kind of interpretative ferreting. Although *Mulholland Drive* goes so far as to credit the actor or stunt double (Lyssie Powell) who plays the rotting cadaver discovered on Diane Selwyn's bed, it is noticeable how many academic discussions of the film feel unobliged to name anyone other than lead actors as if background players were interchangeable in the way the film imagines them to be. George Toles provides the most extreme example of this star-struck tendency in his detailed discussion of the audition scene, where he names only Naomi Watts and her eclipsed costar Laura Elena Harring, thus confirming his own argument about the "boundary-shattering" effect of the star performance. George Toles, "Auditioning Betty in *Mulholland Drive*," *Film Quarterly* 58, no. 1 (2004): 2.
9. Consider, for instance, how often supremely confident readings of the film's diegetic involutions nonetheless recall events out of sequence, even events usually beyond temporal dispute such as the opening image of the film. Nochimson inaccurately bestows temporal precedence on the bedroom scene and goes so far as to place a body in the bed in a gesture that emphasizes the solipsistic nature of the *Mulholland* universe:

   > Lynch signals us immediately that life and death, defeat and hope, are fused in his tale of Hollywood, as the crucial main title sequence establishes a tone of simultaneous aspiration and angst. The initial black screen yields to a scene of dread, an anonymous figure trembling underneath a blanket in a dismal bedroom desaturated of color; later we will learn that this is the scene of Betty's [sic] suicide. We then cut to the inversion of this image, a saturated color visualization of a crowded dance floor populated by leaping, smiling teenagers; later we will learn this is the dance contest that brought Betty to Hollywood.

   Martha P. Nochimson, "*Mulholland Drive*," *Film Quarterly* 56, no. 1 (2002): 39.
10. According to Buckland, this apartment complex, actually located at 490 North Sycamore, was to have been the dominant location of the planned television series. Buckland, "The Televisual Prehistory of David Lynch's Film *Mulholland Dr.*," 139.
11. As David Roche points out in his discussion of the film's elevation of narration over diegesis, "those who are driven by the desire to solve the mystery are not the characters suffering from amnesia which, by making it impossible for them to tell their own story, destroys their 'narrative identities,' but characters like Betty who seem to have fixed identities," which ultimately collapse under the indeterminacies of narration. David Roche, "The Death of the Subject in David Lynch's *Lost Highway* and *Mulholland Drive*," *EREA: Revue d'Études Anglophones* 2, no. 2 (2004): 45–46.
12. The storybook-style apartments that feature in the film as Diane Selwyn's domicile are actually located at 2900 Griffith Park Boulevard, Silver Lake. Designed by Ben Sherwood in 1931, they are commonly referred to as "The House of the Seven Dwarves" due to their proximity to the original Walt Disney Studio on Hyperion Avenue. http://www.thesilverlakenews.com/index.php?pageId=47730 (accessed March 25, 2008).

13. Toles notes that Betty's one-on-one audition performance is framed from a medium-shot vantage point through which Lynch effectively displaces Bob Brooker as the directorial presence within the scene. "Until this subtle transfer of directorial authority, the whole office space had felt disproportionate and off-kilter as a cinematic setting," a spatial effect achieved by the use of a fish-eye lens. As Toles goes on to argue, "Not until Betty speaks her first 'within the script' line ('You're still here') do film space and time, in Walter Benjamin's phrase, 'come into their own [within the scene] and find each other.' The previously inhospitable audition room and its erratic 'clock' are effortlessly adjusted to the performers' advantage." Parenthesis in original. Toles, "Auditioning Betty," 5–6.
14. An old Lynch hand, Nochimson reveals no cynicism about the heterosexual contract secured on the basis of a look:

    > As Betty and Adam graze each other's narrative trajectories, they intersect momentarily in a mutual gaze when Adam turns to see Betty for the first time. A sequence unlike any other in *Mulholland*, this interlocking gaze is a part of a long history of similar gazes in the films of David Lynch that goes all the way back to *Eraserhead*. It is the shock of authentic contact, the Lynchian site of what is most precious in human life, and one of the few interactions in his filmic universes endowed with the power to pierce hollow social forms. For most of Lynch's career, he has celebrated the power of this gaze, and here in *Mulholland*, it is the one rush of authentic energy in a world of dry husks and violent manipulation. . . . When Betty leaves the set, when Adam does not call her back, it is the end of Betty's life, although her suicide does not take place until much later.

    Nochimson, "*Mulholland Drive*," 41–42. The heterosexism of Nochimson's account is almost refreshing: for all intents and purposes, Betty is as good as dead the moment she walks out on the cinematically authentic heterosexual setup and heads toward the lesbian scene.
15. Since the only clue the detectives turn up from the wreckage is a pearl earring, there is nothing to connect them with this address. As Buckland points out, when Lynch took "the unusual step of shortening the pilot to make the feature film" he downplayed the role of the two detectives and, we might add, the chains of cause and effect with which they are generically associated. Buckland, "The Televisual Prehistory of David Lynch's Film *Mulholland Dr.*," 138.
16. At least one critic assumes this woman to be a former live-in girlfriend of Diane's: "Diane's former roommate (and, it seems, lover) retrieves her belongings, including an ashtray shaped like a miniature piano, from Diane's apartment." Todd McGowan, "Lost on Mulholland Drive: Navigating David Lynch's Panegyric to Hollywood," *Cinema Journal* 43, no. 2 (2004): 73.
17. While acknowledging that the opening and closing montages of the two films "are similar formally and perhaps oneirically," Andrews goes on to identify with *Mulholland Drive* three highly specific "visual allusions" to *Persona* and its theme of doubling: "first, the shot of Betty and Rita rushing from Diane Selwyn's apartment; second, the shot of the couple in the mirror admiring Rita's wig; and third, the shot of Rita and Betty awakening after sex." Andrews, "An Oneiric Fugue," 35.
18. Like Aunt Ruth's Havenhurst apartment, the interior dimensions of #17 are oddly stretched out by Lynch's camerawork, an effect also evident in the Deep River apartment that Dorothy Vallens calls home in *Blue Velvet* (1986). Vallens' apartment is, of course, recalled in the name of Betty's hometown.
19. Similarly, Love has commented on the "volatility" of the lesbian clichés engaged in the sex scene:

> We find Betty musing in bed, modestly attired in pink pajamas. Rita appears in the doorway, wearing a towel and the blond wig that they have fashioned for her. Though the opening of the scene is played like an outtake from a college dormitory, Rita's dark eyes smoldering beneath her platinum hair suggest she may have wandered in from a different picture. The generic dissonance of this scene is the source of its comic effect as well as the reason for the constant misunderstandings between the two characters. Both the schoolgirl and the femme fatale are stock lesbian characters, but they are not supposed to end up in bed together. Betty's opening invitation to have Rita join her in the bed recalls a tradition of boarding school romances that walk a fine line between innocence and experience, between cuddling and depravity. Rita nearly passes for a character in such a drama at the beginning of this scene, though by the time she drops the towel it is clear where the scene is heading. Before climbing into bed, Rita pauses, striking a classic pin-up pose: we see almost her entire body, centered in the frame, lit from behind, and punishingly voluptuous.

Love, "Spectacular Failure," 126–127.

20. Whether their allegiance is to psychoanalytic or formalist critique, most readings of the film do not question this connection between lesbianism and female merging but accept that sex between women is the literal sign of a metaphorical relation that has no diegetic status: "In *Mulholland Drive*, the mirror scene [like the one in *Persona*] also involves an embrace, one followed up by a lesbian scene in which the mergings and doublings of the previous two shots are literalized through physical coupling." Andrews, "An Oneiric Fugue," 36. Although she makes no mention of *Persona*, Jennifer Hudson's Kristevan reading of the lesbian sex scene ("Then, per Betty's invitation into bed, Rita takes off her wig and then her towel, completely exposing and opening her physically and psychically bare self to Betty. As Betty and Rita playfully kiss and caress, each gesture a reaction to the previous one, the women connect, opening themselves to and blurring conceptual borders between each other") and its "postcoital" aftermath is merely the most extreme version of this argument:

> The positioning of the figures is such that the silhouette of Rita's face bisects Betty's, so that the two seem to merge. Betty's face is out of focus while Rita's remains distinct. However, once the amnesiac begins chanting "*no hay banda*," (there is no band), Betty's face comes into focus and Rita's blurs. This camera technique, in addition to the physical positioning of the two characters, suggests that while Betty and Rita have merged, or their boundaries have blurred, they also remain distinct: they are both dichotomous and heterogeneous, a contradiction at which they arrive through the flowing pulsations of their emotional responses to each other.

Jennifer Hudson, "*No Hay Banda*, and yet We Hear a Band": David Lynch's Reversal of Coherence in *Mulholland Drive*," *Journal of Film and Video* 56, no. 1 (2004): 22.

21. As Robin Wood has remarked in his revised interpretation of *Persona*, it is all but impossible to imagine this sexual allegory played out with male actors. Robin Wood, *Sexual Politics and Narrative Film: Hollywood and Beyond* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 249. Lesbianism, that is, is as necessary to Bergman's modernist assault on traditional narrative and characterological structures as it is to Lynch's postmodernist turn. Though abandoned, one alternative title for Bergman's film, *Cinematography*, suggests how this filmic investment in lesbianism primarily occurs at the level of

image. For a chapter-length discussion of *Persona* as a film that represents the epitome of modernist filmmaking, see Laura Huber, *The Films of Ingmar Bergman: Illusions of Light and Darkness* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 70–91, from which the information about the film's title also comes. Although Andrews uses the visual parallels between *Mulholland Drive* and *Persona* to conclude his argument about the fugue-like structure of Lynch's film, he drops from his summation any reference to the role—continuous across both films—lesbianism plays in supporting this complicated narrative structure. See Andrews, "An Oneiric Fugue," 36.

22. Writing of *Wild at Heart* (1990), Chion notes Lynch's predilection for exaggerated changes of scale "between vast wide-angle shots and extreme, microscopic close-ups," such as those that punctuate events throughout *Mulholland Drive*. Chion, *David Lynch*, 190. In the scenic transition to the Club Silencio, Lynch uses this combination—a speeding close-up over the paved street into the distant entrance of the club, followed by an exaggerated wide-angle shot of the curved painted ceiling—to defy the cinematic convention of anchoring new location with an establishment shot that assists the viewer to adjust the rational coordinates of the action.
23. The Club Silencio is located in the Tower Theater, 802 South Broadway, Los Angeles, which lends itself to Lynch's thematic on both ornamental and technical grounds. Designed by S. Charles Lee, the Tower was the first downtown theater purpose-built for motion pictures with sound.
24. As if more symbolism were needed, the blue reticule also recalls Adam's wife's jewelry box which, when he discovers her in bed with the pool man (Billy Ray Cyrus), he aggressively fills with pink paint.
25. In his analysis of the production history of the film, Buckland draws attention to the tension between two differing narration styles associated with film and television respectively:

    > One of the most noticeable differences between film and television programs is that film segments are typically organized syntagmatically, and television segments are organized paradigmatically. . . . A syntagmatic structure is one based on the linear continuity of characters, actions, and events from one segment to the next, facilitating a development of the same story across segments. A paradigmatic structure presents several different stories one after the other. This means there is no continuity from one segment to the next, because each story line interrupts the development of the others.

    Buckland, "The Televisual Prehistory of David Lynch's Film *Mulholland Dr.*," 136. Although Buckland does not extend his analysis beyond comparing Lynch's ninety-five-page shooting script (which originally generated a 125-minute pilot) and the edited-down pilot required and then rejected by ABC (which came in at eighty-eight minutes), the distinction between syntagmatic and paradigmatic sequencing is key to the 140-minute film. A paradigmatic structure pertains across the first two hours of run time, with limited syntagmatic development occurring within parallel story lines (the identity plot, the film industry/mob plot) which otherwise perpetually interrupt each other. Once the camera falls into the Sierra Bonita apartment via the portal of the blue box, stronger syntagmatic relations begin to emerge between consecutive segments and other past segments now retrospectively retrieved for the purposes of continuity. These syntagmatic effects can be dated to the new feature film footage shot by Lynch in September 2000, a year and half after the original television footage was shot. See Buckland, "The Televisual Prehistory of David Lynch's Film *Mulholland Dr.*," 135.

26. Somewhat oddly, McDowell naturalizes this gesture as part of an overall scenario of "rough sex" and simultaneously pathologizes it as the sign of Diane's sadomasochistic tendencies, which can be satisfied either by hurting Camilla or recalling "the mental and emotional suffering she endures at the hands of her sexual object." As an example of this McDowell cites the scene where "Diane masturbates as tears stream down her face at the recollection of painful memories of Camilla. These memories have an erotogenic effect for Diane, despite (or because of) the intense pain they have caused" McDowell, "Unleashing the Feminine Unconscious," 1044.
27. Love also argues for the significance of Adam in the undoing of the lesbian romance plot:

    > In *Mulholland Drive*, Lynch draws on not one lesbian cliché but two, as he juxtaposes the two most familiar lesbian plots of the twentieth century. In the romance between Betty and Rita, Lynch presents lesbianism in its innocent and expansive form: lesbian desire appears as one big adventure, an entrée into a glamorous and unknown territory. This fantasy both compensates for and functions as a screen for the story's other lesbian narrative. In the story of Diane and Camilla, Lynch offers us a classic lesbian triangle, in which an attractive but unavailable woman dumps a less attractive woman who is figured as exclusively lesbian. Just as it is necessary that there should be no man in the first, positive scenario, it is crucial that the betrayal in this second story should come in the form of the inaccessible woman's "ending up" with a man. Within such a narrative, the woman who discards a woman for a man stands in for the glamour of mobile desire, while the "committed lesbian" represents the horror of a fixed but impossible object choice. The continuing resonance of this plot of triangulation is legible in the fact that lesbianism is popularly understood as both the hottest thing on earth and, at the same time, as something fundamentally sad and not at all erotic. The lesbian is at once the sexiest possible woman and at the same time an abject and unwanted creature.

    Love, "Spectacular Failure," 123.
28. There is, it seems to me, no narratively sanctioned position from which to view this scene of female masturbation, the obtuse commentary of psychoanalysts Lentzner and Ross notwithstanding: "With the police knocking on her outer door, she appears trapped in her dreary apartment, haunted by Camilla's death, as confirmed by the blue key lying on her table. A series of flashbacks of sexual abandon with Camilla overtake her. This joyful reverie quickly gives way to images of abandonment and loneliness that Diane seeks to counteract by self-soothing through masturbation." Lentzer and Ross, "The Dreams That Blister Sleep," 106. With orgasm unobtained, the masturbation scene is the critical counterpoint to the audition scene in which we witness Betty's successful accession to sexual assuredness. In the earlier scene of female performance, Toles argues, "we watch, with a prurient, volatile blend of queasiness and excitement as an unseasoned girl, lacking every protection sophistication offers, advances by means of a solitary squeeze of the hand to the farthest reaches of sexual knowing." Toles, "Auditioning Betty," 9. The same hand with which Betty guides Woody's leathery mitt onto her grey-suited ass, an action caught in close-up the better to emphasize her taking control of the heterosexual scene, is in the masturbation scene hidden beneath Diane's cutoff jeans. An extension of the lesbian story, Watts' right hand should now be added to the roster of appendages compiled in Mandy Merck's discussion of the lesbian hand. Mandy Merck, *In Your Face: 9 Sexual Studies* (New York: New York University Press, 2000), 124–147.

29. According to Nochimson, Lynch's use of sound—"hums, rumbles, throbs, pulsations, and the sound of wind in addition to typical sound effects, such as doors opening and footsteps, and a musical score that make the track sound as fully occupied as the film frame looks"—has always been associated with "the pleasure of what exists beyond ordinary mimetic images." Nochimson, *The Passion of David Lynch*, 36. Diegetically indexed though they are, the slapping sounds heard throughout the scene of female masturbation do indeed seem beyond mimesis, unlike the scenes of lesbian sex which, although they have trouble registering as story events, play within the visual codes of mainstream representation.
30. Adam's pool—like his Mulholland Dr. address, the material sign of his Hollywood success—recalls the pool belonging to faded idol Norma Desmond (Gloria Swanson), in which would-be screenwriter Joe Gillis (William Holden) floats facedown at the beginning of Billy Wilder's *Sunset Boulevard*, his voice cynically directing the scene from without his own dead body. The posthumous voice-over famously sets story against image, a hierarchy exactly reversed in Lynch's *Mulholland Drive* where image frequently upsets the requirements of narrative continuity. As Andrew Ross has identified, the narrative of *Sunset Boulevard* requires the male protagonist to choose between these two elements, image and story, in the persons of the two female leads. The film, that is, stages the epistemic contest between story and image as a sexual contest between two women: Betty Schaefer (Nancy Olson), the young studio script developer committed to social interest themes, versus Norma, the former silent-era star who maintains movies are made with faces not dialogue. Andrew Ross, "Uses of Camp," in *No Respect: Intellectuals and Popular Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1989), 135–170. Hardly conflicted in romantic terms, Joe, and the generations of viewers he represents, continues to be stumped by this long-standing contradiction between plot and spectacle in narrative cinema. Like Wilder before him, Lynch is also interested in whether or not the image has the last word. For a discussion of how this tension between image and story has always been concentrated in the cinematic close-up of the female face, see Mary Ann Doane, "The Close-Up: Scale and Detail in the Cinema," *differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 14, no. 3 (2003): 89–111.
31. Miller's presence in *Mulholland Drive* extends the parallel with *Sunset Boulevard* as a reflection on Hollywood's perverse investments in the female image, particularly the female face. In preparation for what she thinks is her comeback role, Norma Desmond undergoes the concentrated labor of a cosmetic overhaul, as if a face alone could defy the inroads of time that celluloid arrests.
32. While McGowan is confident he hears Adam announce his and Camilla's engagement, Love points out that within the dinner party scene, and across culture more generally, the phrase "We are going to be married" is "a kind of super-performative utterance, a phrase that is so authorized that it does not even have to be spoken." McGowan, "Lost on Mulholland Drive," 84; Love, "Spectacular Failure," 132, note 14. Adam's announcement, therefore, is the semantic opposite of the declaration of love that Betty makes to Rita as they begin to have sex, a lesbian utterance that gets no traction on the story no matter how many times it gets repeated.
33. In her compelling reading of the film, Love argues that one of Lynch's achievements in *Mulholland Drive* is to make Diane's "suicide count as tragic action. Her rotting corpse is at the center of the film, the 'content,' if there is any, of the blue box." Far from being a homosexual suicide of the kind familiar from an earlier time—the time of *The Children's Hour* (William Wyler, 1961), lets say—the innovation of *Mulholland Drive*, argues Love, is that it

> depicts lesbian fantasy as inextricably bound up with lesbian tragedy. While Betty and Rita's unscripted antics gesture towards an escape route, the film keeps circling back to a dead end. . . . It is for this reason that we cannot blame Diane's death on a lack of optimism or a lack of nerve. As long as lesbianism is socially denigrated, her corpse will continue to turn up in the midst of even the dreamiest lesbian fantasy. Diane Selwyn is a *structural effect* of homophobia, one of the tragic others that modernity produces with such alarming regularity.

Love, "Spectacular Failure," 129–130.

## NOTES TO CHAPTER 8

1. Vito Russo, *The Celluloid Closet: Homosexuality in the Movies* (New York: Harper and Row, 1981).
2. Richard Dyer, *The Matter of Images: Essays on Representation* (London: Routledge, 1993), 50–70.
3. Brett Farmer, *Spectacular Passions: Cinema, Fantasy, Gay Spectatorships* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000), 79.
4. Patricia White, *Uninvited: Classical Hollywood Cinema and Lesbian Representability* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999).
5. Susan Gal, "A Semiotics of the Public/Private Distinction," *differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 13, no. 1 (2001): 81. According to Mathworld, "A fractal is an object or quantity that displays self-similarity, in a somewhat technical sense, on all scales. The object need not exhibit exactly the same structure at all scales, but the same 'type' of structures must appear on all scales." http://mathworld.wolfram.com/Fractal.html (accessed February 25, 2008). As Gal points out, the self-similar and perspectival quality of these recursive relations is missed by analyses of public and private space that continue to conceive of these spheres as bounded in any way:

   > No matter how labile or "shifty" we imagine boundaries to be, the idea of boundaries does not do justice to this semiotic and communicative process. On the contrary, discussions of public and private spaces with unstable boundaries assume a single dichotomy, thereby collapsing the nested distinctions into each other, making the nesting processes and indexical recursions hard to notice.

   Gal, "A Semiotics of the Public/Private Distinction," 82.
6. The next seven paragraphs derive from an earlier essay of mine first published as "Queer, Here: Sexuality and Space" in *Cultural Studies in Aotearoa New Zealand: Identity, Space, and Place*, ed. Claudia Bell and Steve Matthewman, 72–74 (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 2004).
7. Laud Humphries, *Tearoom Trade: Impersonal Sex in Public Places* (Chicago: Aldine, 1970).
8. Recent representative anthologies include *Mapping Desire: Geographies of Sexualities*, ed. David Bell and Gill Valentine (London: Routledge, 1995); *Queers in Space: Communities, Public Places, Sites of Resistance*, ed. Gordon Brent Ingram, Anne-Marie Bouthillette, and Yolanda Retter (Seattle: Bay Press, 1997); *Creating a Place for Ourselves: Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Community Histories*, ed. Brett Beemyn (New York: Routledge, 1997); *Homo Economics: Capitalism, Community, and Lesbian and Gay Life*, ed. Amy Gluckman and Betsy Reed (New York: Routledge, 1997); *Inventing Lesbian Cultures in America*, ed. Ellen Lewin (Boston: Beacon, 1998); *Public Sex/Gay Space*, ed. William L. Leap (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999); *Queer Sites: Gay Urban Histories since 1660*, ed. David Higgs (New York: Routledge,

1999); and *Cities of Pleasure: Sex and the Urban Socialscape*, ed. Allan Collins (London: Routledge, 2006).

9. The influence of Benjamin's writing on the city on twentieth-century thinking about space and subjectivity cannot be overestimated. See, in particular, Walter Benjamin, "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire," in *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn, 155–200 (New York: Schocken Books, 1969) and "Paris, Capital of the Nineteenth Century," in *Reflections: Essays, Aphorisms, Autobiographical Writings*, ed. Peter Demetz, trans. Edmund Jephcott, 146–163 (New York: Schocken Books, 1978).
10. Philip Fisher, *Hard Facts: Setting and Form in the American Novel* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 128–178.
11. Consider, for instance, the institutional architecture of Julia Morgan in which spaces defined for exclusively female occupancy structurally reconfigure the opposition between private and public, domestic and professional spheres. Across her career, the unmarried Morgan, about whose sexuality there is inevitable speculation, was commissioned to design women's hostels, college gymnasiums and swimming pools, theaters and auditoriums, sorority houses and other mixed-use spaces that give mutual shape to female endeavor and companionship. Designed for intellectual pursuit and physical recreation as well as eating and sleeping, frequently including performance venues and other threshold spaces such as open-air interior courtyards and screened loggias which are neither entirely inside nor outside, Morgan's institutional architecture gives shape to the aspirations of a generation of newly independent young women in the urban centers of prewar America. For an overview of how Morgan's architectural career was supported by a feminist network of philanthropic and professional women, many of whom were affiliated to women's clubs and organizations and thus in a position to commission institutional buildings designed to assist feminist objectives, see Sara Holmes Boutelle, *Julia Morgan, Architect* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1988; revised and updated, 1995), 83–127. Of Morgan's domestic architecture, two same-sex dwellings are of interest: the purpose-built redwood-shingle cottage she designed for Clara Williams and Elsa Mitchell on a Berkeley hillside (Boutelle, 139–140), and her own house which was the result of remodeling adjacent Victorian houses on Divisadero Street in San Francisco, so that one became three apartments, one for herself and two others which she rented out to other single professional women, and the other, with its second story removed, an Italianate villa, also for rent (Boutelle, 160–161). For further discussion of Morgan's career and its place in the spatial history of homosexuality, see Aaron Betsky, *Queer Space: Architecture and Same-Sex Desire* (New York: William Morrow, 1997), 102–104.
12. See Henning Bech, *When Men Meet: Homosexuality and Modernity* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1999).
13. A good place to start for anyone interested in gay history and the methodological and theoretical challenges it presents, is *Hidden from History: Reclaiming the Gay and Lesbian Past*, ed. Martin Bauml Duberman, Martha Vicinus, and George Chauncey, Jr. (New York: New American Library, 1989). Diane Chisholm has recently brought this tradition of gay historiography into productive alignment with more theoretical accounts of modern urbanity, such as those that derive from Benjamin. See Diane Chisholm, *Queer Constellations: Subcultural Space in the Wake of the City* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005).
14. George Chauncey, Jr., *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of the Gay World, 1890–1940* (New York: Basic Books, 1994).

Since Chauncey's work on New York appeared other queer cultural histories have followed, including Charles Kaiser, *The Gay Metropolis, 1940–1996* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1997), which focuses on the city's gay intelligentsia; Hugh David, *On Queer Street: A Social History of British Homosexuality, 1895–1995* (London: Harper Collins, 1997); and Matt Houlbrook, *Queer London: Perils and Pleasures in the Sexual Metropolis, 1918–1957* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2005). For readers interested in the historical development of male public-sex culture beyond the metropolitan centers of New York and London two antipodean counterpoints are *Gay Perspectives: Essays in Australian Gay Culture*, ed. Robert Aldrich and Garry Wotherspoon (Sydney: Department of Economic History, University of Sydney, 1992); and Garry Wotherspoon, *"City of the Plain": A History of a Gay Subculture* (Sydney: Hale and Iremonger, 1991). On the significance of this decentering gesture for sexuality studies, see *Decentering Sexualities: Politics and Representations Beyond the Metropolis*, ed. Richard Phillips, Diane Watt, and David Shuttleton (London: Routledge, 2000); and John Howard, *Men Like That: A Southern Queer History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), which argues for the importance of non-urban sexual cultures.

15. Interesting in this context is Diana Fuss's argument that the forms of visual consumption necessary to the modern fashion industry, an industry all but exclusively geared to heterosexual women, nonetheless rely on women's voyeuristic interest in other women's bodies: "To look straight *at* women, it appears, straight women must look *as* lesbians." Diana Fuss, "Fashion and the Homospectorial Look," *Critical Inquiry* 18, no. 4 (1992): 714. In *Between Women: Friendship, Desire, and Marriage in Victorian England* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), Sharon Marcus provides an historical account of Victorian marriage culture that suggests that female-female erotic training and expenditure were aggressively pursued through such everyday activities as maternal discipline, looking at fashion plates, and playing with dolls, all mainstream activities that did not need protective screening since they were consistent with dominant codes of femininity that "considered a woman's erotic interest in other women compatible with her roles as wife and mother" (112–113).
16. Suggestively, Catherine Russell has recently argued for the importance of the "conceptual paradigm" of the *flâneuse* as a "means of prefiguring the sexualised, fetishized inhabitant of the city as an agent of spectatorial activity, whose power rests not only in her eye, but in her mobility as well." Russell sees these qualities supported by early consumer culture and the parallel development of cinema, both of which offered women access to public space. Catherine Russell, "Parallax Historiography: The Flâneuse as Cyberfeminist," in *A Feminist Reader in Early Cinema*, ed. Jennifer M. Bean and Diane Negra, 562 (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002).
17. Lillian Faderman, *Surpassing the Love of Men: Romantic Friendship and Love Between Women from the Renaissance to the Present* (New York: William Morrow, 1981). Martha Vicinus's recent *Intimate Friends: Women Who Loved Women, 1778–1928* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2004), continues Faderman's project of exploring the full range of intimate relationships established between women from the explicitly sexual to the elusively erotic, such as mother-daughter love.
18. Lillian Faderman, *Odd Girls and Twilight Lovers: A History of Lesbian Life in Twentieth-Century America* (New York: Penguin, 1991).
19. Esther Newton, *Cherry Grove, Fire Island: Sixty Years in America's Gay and Lesbian Town* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1993), 205.

20. Ibid., 203.
21. See, for example, the discussion of the "Doughnut Rack," an anecdotal counterpart to the "Rack," an established site for gay male cruising on the ocean side of Fire Island. Newton, *Cherry Grove*, 231–232.
22. Ibid., 213.
23. Elizabeth Lapovsky Kennedy and Madeline D. Davis, *Boots of Leather, Slippers of Gold: The History of a Lesbian Community* (New York: Routledge, 1993).
24. The following four paragraphs derive from "Queer, Here: Sexuality and Space," 75–78.
25. Lauren Berlant, *The Queen of America Goes to Washington: Essays on Sex and Citizenship* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997), 79–80.
26. Berlant, *The Queen of America*, 55. For a discussion of Berlant's assault on the privatization of citizenship, which locates it in wider debates about intimate citizenship as they have differently emerged in the US and UK, see David Bell and Jon Binnie, *The Sexual Citizen: Queer Theory and Beyond* (Malden, Mass.: Polity Press, 2000), 1–34.
27. Lauren Berlant and Michael Warner, "Sex in Public," in *Intimacy*, ed. Lauren Berlant, 311–330 (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2000).
28. Berlant and Warner, "Sex in Public," 319.
29. Michael Warner, *The Trouble With Normal: Sex, Politics, and the Ethics of Queer Life* (New York: The Free Press, 1999), 89.
30. Consider, for instance, Warner's response to an interview question from Annamarie Jagose about the gendering of "queer counterpublics." Noting that his book identifies the way "the imagined sexual organization of lesbians—cosily domestic and serially monogamous—has been used in the same-sex marriage debates as a rhetorical counter to the fantasized sexual organization of gay men—emotionally uncommitted and recklessly promiscuous," Jagose's invitation that Warner sketch out how lesbians engage in public-sex culture as he understands it draws a response that suggests that the only kinds of female sexual publicity that critically engage with his own conception of public sphere politics are those that resemble gay sexual publicity:

    > Well, there's no question that the occupation of public space has meant different things for men and for women, for many reasons, and there are feminists who are very eloquent about this. I have tried to be alert to the full range of meanings of publicness, many of which are less aligned with masculinity—for example, the shared culture of the body that is made possible through talk—but I am also impressed by the much more confidently public sexual culture being developed by lesbians, mostly of the younger generation. I don't know if this is true outside of New York and Seattle, but these girls rock.

    Michael Warner interviewed by Annamarie Jagose, "Queer World Building," *Genders* 31 (2000), http://www.genders.org/g31/g31_jagose.html (accessed February 12, 2008).
31. Christopher Castiglia, "Sex Panics, Sex Publics, Sex Memories," *Boundary 2* 27, no. 2 (2000): 155.
32. Castiglia, "Sex Panics," 156. Citation from Berlant and Warner, "Sex in Public," 558.
33. Castiglia, "Sex Panics," 156.
34. In this context it is worth briefly considering the work of Elizabeth Grosz who is unusual among theorists of gay space in arguing for the sexual closet and its ongoing role in defining homosexuality's relation to straight culture. For Grosz the compelling thing about the "architectural metaphor" of the closet is that "it is *both* a prison and a safe space. This is its appeal for both the gay community and heterocentric social structure. The closet allows

people not to be seen as gay but to feel safe as gay." Rather than attach a positive or negative value to the closet per se, Grosz stresses that homosexuals "aren't 'imprisoned' in or by space, because space (unless we are talking about a literal prison) is never fixed or contained, and thus is always open to various uses in the future." If this seems a now familiar temporalization of place, what is completely unexpected is the way in which Grosz figures gay public space as reproducing the peculiar qualities of closeted space: "What gay communities have done is to invent a very large closet, enclosing a whole nightlife scene, a bar scene, probably a whole capitalist, consumer scene as well, as spaces of both heterocentric containment and gay freedom." Contained by the dominant culture, "these spaces are precisely the spaces inhabited and defined by sexual pleasure." Elizabeth Grosz, *Architecture from the Outside: Essays on Virtual and Real Space* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2001), 9. Implied if not directly stated by Grosz is the idea that the eroticism of these spaces is in part a result of this sense of closeted enclosure:

> The gay community, nightclubs, gay-oriented shops and cafes, offer a different, more explicitly sexualized and eroticized use of space—a space paved with images and representations produced by and for that community that helps to make clear and explicit the disavowal of a certain sexual pleasure in the heterosexual community. This sense of the erotic potential of spaces is partly what is being celebrated in the gay community.

Grosz, *Architecture from the Outside*, 9–10. As this quotation makes clear, it is the ongoing interplay between the avowal of homosexuality and its disavowal elsewhere that makes gay public space sexually charged space, just as public-sex culture remains dependent on straight culture for its political cast.

35. Benjamin Forest, "West Hollywood as Symbol: The Significance of Place in the Construction of a Gay Identity," *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 13 no. 2 (1995): 133–157.
36. Kath Weston, "Get Thee to a Big City: Sexual Imaginary and the Great Gay Migration," *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 2, no. 3 (1995): 257.
37. For a discussion of empirical methods for the charting of lesbian space, see Hans Almgren, "Community With/Out Pro-Pink-Uity," in *The Margins of the City: Gay Men's Urban Lives*, ed. Stephen Whittle, 45–63 (Aldershot: Arena, 1994); and Ann Forsyth, "'Out' in the Valley," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 21, no. 1 (1997): 38–62.
38. Castiglia, "Sex Panics," 156.
39. My notion of the sexual chronotope as a way of thinking about lived relations to space is thus related to both Kathleen Stewart's discussion of the storied sensibility of culture and Patricia Yaegar's account of themed space. See Kathleen Stewart, *A Space at the Side of the Road: Cultural Poetics in an "Other" America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996); and Patricia Yaegar, "Introduction: Narrating Space," which introduces the collection of essays that comprise *The Geography of Identity*, ed. Patricia Yaegar, 1–38 (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996). For other theoretical reflections on the lesbian public sphere and its inclusion of intimate histories see Ann Cvetkovich, *An Archive of Feelings: Trauma, Sexuality, and Lesbian Public Cultures* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003); and Judith Halberstam's discussion of queer temporality and postmodern geographies, *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives* (New York: New York University Press, 2005), 1–21.
40. Samuel R. Delany, *Times Square Red, Times Square Blue* (New York: New York University Press, 1999), 78–79.
41. Ibid., 79.

42. Ibid., 111.
43. Ibid., 80–83.
44. For a discussion of this homophobic spatial impulse see the essays collected in *Policing Public Sex: Queer Politics and the Future of AIDS Activism*, ed. Dangerous Bedfellows (Boston: South End Press, 1996). In his contribution to this volume, Allan Bérubé argues that the eradication of these spaces would simple drive the practice of gay public sex into other, more underground, locations, and advocates instead turning them into sites for the dissemination of safe-sex information. Allan Bérubé, "The History of Gay Bathhouses," 187–220. For a futuristic account of the spatial possibilities of the bathhouse, see Ira Tattelman, "Presenting a Queer (Bath)House," in *Queer Frontiers: Millennial Geographies, Genders and Generations*, ed. Joseph Boone, Martin Dupuis, Martin Meeker, Karin Quimby, Cindy Sarver, Debra Silverman, and Rosemary Weatherston, 222–258 (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2000).
45. The determinist model of gay and lesbian spatial occupancy can be found in Gill Valentine's influential essays: "(Hetero)sexing Space: Lesbian Perceptions and Experiences of Everyday Spaces," *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 11 (1993): 395–413, and "(Re)negotiating the 'Heterosexual Street': Lesbian Productions of Space," *Bodyspace: Destabilizing Geographies of Gender and Sexuality*, ed. Nancy Duncan, 146–155 (London: Routledge, 1996). Arguments against this critical imagining of heterosexist space have appeared from a number of perspectives within geography. See, for instance, Phil Hubbard, "Sex Zones: Intimacy, Citizenship and Public Space," *Sexualities* 4, no. 1 (2001): 51–71; Larry Knopp and Michael Brown, "Queer Diffusions," *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 21, no. 4 (2003): 409–424; and Natalie Oswin, "Critical Geographies and the Uses of Sexuality: Deconstructing Queer Space," *Progress in Human Geography* 32, no. 1 (2008): 89–103.
46. Martin Dines has noted the "suburban lacuna in much of the recent pioneering work on sexual geographies," which has little to say about the homosexual experiences negotiated within streetscapes and interiors that unfailingly connote heterosexual familialism. Martin Dines, "Sacrilege in the Sitting Room: Contesting Suburban Domesticity in Contemporary Gay Literature," *Home Cultures* 2, no. 2 (2005): 179. Similarly, Rebecca Jennings has argued that the historical retrieval of lesbian culture through feminist-oriented oral history interviews is predetermined to edit out the theme of domesticity since it is presumed to evidence the oppression of women. Rebecca Jennings, "Lesbian Voices: The Hall Carpenter Oral History Archive and Post-war British Lesbian History," *Sexualities* 7, no. 4 (2004): 441–442. Elsie Jay detects the same inability to engage the domestic in accounts of contemporary queer life. See Elsie Jay, "Domestic Dykes: The Politics of 'In-Difference,'" in *Queers in Space*, ed. Ingram et al., 163–168.
47. John Paul Ricco, "Jacking Off: A Minor Architecture," *Steam: A Quarterly Journal for Men* 1, no. 4 (1994): 237. See, also, Henry Urbach's "Spatial Rubbing: The Zone," *Sites* 25 (1993): 90–95, for a not dissimilar account of an actual sex club near Santa Monica Boulevard and the tribal forms of belonging it engages as opposed to the territorial forms of gay community otherwise prevalent in the area. For my purposes perhaps the most interesting aspect of The Zone is its redeployment of "fragments of a demolished theater and gymnasium from USC," which suggests that even the nomadic members of urban tribes have an ongoing relationship with the chronotopes of an earlier gay culture. Urbach, "Spatial Rubbing," 95.
48. For a bracing overview of critiques of gay marriage that makes a persuasive case for the unacknowledged ordinariness of queer lives, see Heather K.

Love, "Wedding Crashers," review of Leo Bersani and Ulysse Dutoit, *Forms of Being: Cinema, Aesthetics, Subjectivity* (2004), Lee Edelman, *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive* (2004), and Laura Kipnis, *Against Love: A Polemic* (2003), *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 13, no. 1 (2007): 125–139.

49. Kenneth E. Silver, "Master Bedrooms, Master Narratives: Home, Homosexuality and Post-War Art," in *Not at Home: The Suppression of Domesticity in Modern Art and Architecture*, ed. Christopher Reed, 209 (London: Thames and Hudson, 1996).
50. Christopher Reed makes a related point in discussing the queerness of 1920s British *Vogue*, which similarly destabilized established hierarchies around art and fashion, design and decoration. Christopher Reed, "Design for (Queer) Living: Sexual Identity, Performance, and Decor in British *Vogue*, 1922–1926," *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 12, no. 3 (2006): 377–403.
51. See Aaron Betsky, *Building Sex: Men, Women, Architecture, and the Construction of Sexuality* (New York: William Morrow, 1995) and *Queer Space*. A more nuanced discussion of Johnson's experiment in gay architecture is found in Alice T. Friedman, *Women and the Making of the Modern House: A Social and Architectural History* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1998), which reads Johnson's Glass House, with its functional separation of socially performative queer space from the adjacent guest closet, against the house on which it was modeled, Ludwig Mies van der Rohe's Farnsworth House (1945–1951). Rather than the ironic alignment of sexual identity and architectural form, as she considers Johnson's house to register, Friedman documents how Mies's vision of a wall-less house was achieved against the wishes of his female client, Edith Farnsworth, who whenever she was in residence felt as if she was being stared at by unseen men hidden in the surrounding shrubbery. See Friedman, *Women and the Making of the Modern House,* 126–159.
52. Betsky, *Queer Space*, 17. Betsky's thinking about homosexuality's relation to space is enabled by the sheer range of sources he accepts as contributions to the queer spatial archive: architectural drawings, paintings and frescoes, personal diaries and literary fictions are all studied as records of lived practices and imaginary relations to the built environment. Highly animated by photographic reproductions of space, Betsky is strangely indifferent to film as a technology peculiarly suited to the recording of space, despite his account of the multiple sight lines enabled in, for instance, Charles Moore's domestic interiors.
53. George Chauncey, Jr., "'Privacy Could Only Be Had in Public': Gay Uses of the Streets," in *Stud: Architectures of Masculinity*, ed. Joel Sanders, 224 (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1996).
54. Like Chauncey, Betsky argues for the ongoing importance of public spaces for the evolution of gay identity in the twentieth century and the changing role of the street in helping define gay communal practices but he also notes the continued pertinence of interiorization in gay forms of spatial habitation: "By decorating that world, you can create a technology of comfort that can form a buffer between you and the world, while creating another, fantasy-full environment that you can construct within the world." Betsky, *Queer Space,* 139. More explicitly than Grosz, Betsky links the eroticism of gay space with secrecy, either decorative or structural. According to Betsky, the recessive relation of secret interiors without necessary logic or end is not merely a strategic response to a homophobic environment but an imaginative capacity with a sexual value in its own right. When taken to the architectural extreme, that is, privacy starts to take on some of the qualities and effects associated with publicity in other accounts of queer spatiality. Indeed, in relation to Betsky's

historical overview of a homosexual tradition, it is possible to identify the transition from gay to queer space as that moment when the experience or creation of private or, strictly speaking, closeted space seems volitional rather than a compulsory requirement of straight codes of habitation. Part of what is being retained in this volitional closetedness is the experiential knowledge of space as a representational system, not simply a neutral backdrop or setting for social or sexual acts. In a similar way, too, gay space is always narratively oriented, engaging—often secretly or obscurely—a past and a future in which things may be different than they now seem. For a beguiling account of these relationalities and the emotional structures we attach to them, see David M. Halperin, "Out of Australia," *UTS Review* 7, no. 2 (2001): 3–8.

55. Christopher Reed, "Imminent Domain: Queer Space in the Built Environment," *Art Journal* 55, no. 4 (Winter 1996): 64–70. Reed's essay is, in part, a response to two 1994 exhibitions which explored architecture and sexuality: Queer Space, at the Store Front for Art and Architecture in New York, and House Rules, at the Wexner Center in Columbus, in which architects Benjamin Gianni and Scott Weir presented Queers in (Single-Family) Space. Though Reed does not mention it, one of the ancillary spin-offs of the latter exhibition was a clutch of essays that included Eve Sedgwick and Michael Moon writing about lived relations to space in which queerness is an outcome. Far from being a site of compulsory assimilation, the straight home nurtures the proto-gays in its midst, who—in the autobiographical examples given by Sedgwick and Moon—find in its recesses, particularly the adolescent bedroom and the antisocial activities it encourages such as reading and collage-making, the means to sculpt alternative imaginative spaces. This everyday capacity of children to vacate or refurbish the family space they are forced to occupy is a good reminder that the tactical use of space is not confined to public streets but includes less overtly sexual "strategies for 'coping.'" Benjamin Gianni, Scott Weir, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, and Michael Moon, "Queers in (Single-Family) Space," *Assemblage* 24 (August 1994): 30–37; and "Queerying (Single Family) Space," *Sites* 26 (1995): 57. See, too, Ernest Pascucci's account of the capacity of broadcast television to beam into the domestic living room sexual possibilities undetectable to the parental eye, which includes Mark Bennett's floor plans of the queer homes of Darrin and Samantha Stevens, Lucy and Ricky Ricardo, Archie and Edith Bunker, Laverne DiFazio and Shirley Finney, Oscar Madison and Felix Unger, Dr Robert and Emily Hartley, and Mary Richards's one-room apartment. Ernest Pascucci, "Intimate (Tele)visions," *Architecture of the Everyday*, ed. Steven Harris and Deborah Berke, 38–54 (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1997). Pascucci elaborates his suburban fantasy identification with Marlo Thomas, Mary Richards, Rhoda Morgenstein, and Phyllis Lindstrom and through them the cities they dwell in at greater length in "This City Belongs to That Girl," *ANY: Architecture New York* 12 (1995): 50–59.

56. Reed takes the term "assimilationist" from Frederick R. Lynch, "Non-Ghetto Gays: A Sociological Study of Suburban Gays," *Journal of Homosexuality* 13, no. 4 (1987): 13–42, which equates a suburban address with the withdrawal from the political contestation of urban space. Reed, "Imminent Domain," 64. Operating with a more flexible understanding of gay identity making, Wayne H. Brekhus's *Peacocks, Chameleons, Centaurs: Gay Suburbia and the Grammar of Social Identity* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2003) investigates the different ways in which gay men negotiate their relation to suburban life.

57. The career of William Haines immediately comes to mind, not least because of his uncredited collaboration with Dorothy Arzner on the sets of her domestic melodrama *Craig's Wife* (Columbia Pictures, 1936). See Peter Schifando

and Jean H. Mathison, *Class Act: William Haines, Legendary Hollywood Decorator* (New York: Pointed Leaf, 1995).

58. Reed, "Imminent Domain," 67.
59. Ibid., 67, 68.
60. Ibid., 68.
61. This conflation of lesbian domesticity with asexuality was most efficiently executed in *American Couples: Money, Work, Sex* (New York: William Morrow, 1983) when sex researchers Philip Blumstein and Pepper Schwartz applied the term lesbian bed death to the apparent diminishment of sexual activity between women in long-term relationships. Debate around lesbian bed death has centered on the problem of defining sexual activity, whereas I'm more interested in the locational profile of the supposed syndrome.
62. Amy Villarejo, *Lesbian Rule: Cultural Criticism and the Value of Desire* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 188.
63. Ibid.
64. Villarejo, *Lesbian Rule*, 71. Readers can view the entire black-and-white photo-novel in Jacques Derrida, *Right of Inspection*, translated by David Wills, photographs by Marie-Françoise Plissart (New York, The Monacelli Press, 1998).
65. Silver, "Master Bedrooms, Master Narratives," 209–210; and Annamarie Jagose, *Inconsequence: Lesbian Representation and the Logic of Sexual Sequence* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002), 122–145.
66. David Usborne, "Power Couple," *Independent on Sunday*, reprinted in *Weekend Herald*, January 19–20, 2002, E5.
67. For a compelling discussion of Sontag's relation to the sexual closet, see Terry Castle, "Desperately Seeking Susan," *London Review of Books* 27, no. 6 (March 17, 2005): 17–20. My own interest in the lesbian convergence of professional and intimate relations dates to "Academic Recognition: Margaret Mead, Ruth Benedict and Sexual Secrecy," *History and Anthropology* 11, no. 4 (1999): 417–435, though my most recent experience of the phenomenon was the media interest taken in my partner's public-funded research into orgasm. General outrage at the idea of orgasm research was allayed partly by the publication of an in-depth magazine profile in which the interior of our private house featured largely, the photographically more accessible spare bedroom restyled by the photographer to signify as the master bedroom. Sara Lang, "Dr. Orgasm. Face To Face: Annamarie Jagose," *North and South* 249 (December 2006): 72–77. Writing in the early nineties, Henry Urbach notes that "interior design magazines have begun to portray lesbian and gay male couples *chez eux*. Offering their readers a glance at gay domesticity," these journals still draw the line at representing homosexual sleeping space. Henry Urbach, "Peeking at Gay Interiors," *Design Book Review* 25 (Summer 1992): 38. Although the images accompanying the *North and South* article suggest this is no longer the case, it is hard to determine the significance of yet another enfolding of publicity and privacy around the trope of the lesbian.
68. John Leland, "At Home With Christine Vachon: Producing Rooms with Plot Twists," *New York Times*, July 18, 2002.
69. Christopher Reed, *Bloomsbury Rooms: Modernism, Subculture, and Domesticity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004).
70. The first of these lesbian households has recently found an interrogator in Janet Malcolm whose *Two Lives: Gertrude and Alice* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007) approaches head-on the awkward question of how two Jewish lesbians thrived in Vichy France, while the second, which put up a batty resistance to the Nazi occupation of Jersey, awaits sustained critical recovery, a point made by Terry Castle in her review of *Two Lives* and *Don't Kiss Me:*

*The Art of Claude Cahun and Marcel Moore*, ed. Louise Downie (London: Tate, 2006). Terry Castle, "Husbands and Wives," *London Review of Books* 29, no. 24 (December 13, 2007): 10–16. Via a now substantial series of articles in the *London Review of Books*, Castle is hilariously documenting the vanities, loyalties, and resentments that comprise both celebrity and ordinary lesbian life. Castle confesses an identificatory relation to de Wolfe's interior design obsessions, and the childhood traumas motivating them, in "Home Alone: The Dark Heart of Shelter-Lit Addiction," *The Atlantic Monthly* (March 2006): 117–129. For a more sober account of de Wolfe and Marbury's sapphic circle, see Alfred Allan Lewis, *Ladies and Not-So-Gentle Women* (New York: Penguin, 2000); for Yoch and Council readers need to read between the lines of James J. Yoch, *Landscaping the American Dream: The Gardens and Film Sets of Florence Yoch, 1890–1972* (Sagaponack, N.Y.: Sagapress, 1989); and for a critical reconstruction of the Arzner-Morgan domestic partnership, see Judith Mayne, *Directed by Dorothy Arzner* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994). Like many, I was introduced to Eileen Gray's domestic architecture via Beatriz Colomina's brilliant essay "Battle Lines: E.1027," in *The Sex of Architecture*, ed. Diana Agrest, Patricia Conway, and Leslie Kanes Weisman, 167–190 (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1996). More recently Gray's Cap Martin house has undergone a queer makeover by Katarina Bonnevier, "A Queer Analysis of Eileen Gray's E.1027," in *Negotiating Domesticity: Spatial Productions of Gender in Modern Architecture*, ed. Hilde Heyneb and Gülsüm Baydar, 162–180 (London: Routledge, 2005).

71. Reed also remarks that popular culture has been one of the sites in which understandings of a gay domestic aesthetic have been put into mass circulation. Hollywood, he notes, deployed "extravagant interior décor" to signify "gay space" in films like *Pillow Talk* (Michael Gordon, 1959) and *The Gay Deceivers* (Bruce Kessler, 1969). Although this "look" undoubtedly "reflected stereotypes of homosexuality as artificial, impractical, and nonprocreative (unsuitable for children)," the Hollywood "spectacle" of gay space also conferred a "roster of recognizable signs on gay identity" and "unwittingly concretized what had been unimaginable." Reed, "Imminent Domain," 69. The critical beneficiaries of those stereotypes, if such a thing can be allowed, might be New York's Organization of Lesbian and Gay Architects and Designers (OLGAD), who in 1994 sponsored Design Pride at The Cooper Union. For a review of this international conference for homosexual practitioners of design and architecture, see Philip Arcidi, "Defining Gay Design," *Progressive Architecture* 75, no. 8 (1994): 36. For those who continue to think of lesbians, particularly butch lesbians, as indifferent to the pull of domestic interiors see Susan Fraiman's discussion of Leslie Feinberg's 1993 novel *Stone Butch Blues* (Ithaca: Firebrand Books, 1987) in "Shelter Writing: Desperate Housekeeping from *Crusoe* to *Queer Eye*," *New Literary History* 37, no. 2 (2006): 341–359; as well as Laura Doan, "'Woman's Place *Is* the Home': Conservative Sapphic Modernity" and Bridget Elliot, "Art Deco Hybridity, Interior Design, and Sexuality between the Wars: Two Double Acts: Phyllis Barron and Dorothy Larcher/Eyre de Lanux and Evelyn Wyld," both in *Sapphic Modernities: Sexuality, Women and National Culture*, ed. Laura Doan and Jane Garrity, 91–108 and 109–132 (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006).

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Endnotes are indexed only when they include a substantive discussion