

Hollywood's (m)Other Aperture

Hollywood's (m)Other Aperture:

*Pre-Oedipal Mothers,
FEMININITY,
and the Movies*

By

Jaime Bihlmeyer

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Dedicated to my mother, Mary Marjorie

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Campion's *The Piano*: A Case Study in Intertextuality as an Enunciation of FEMININITY in Mainstream Movies. *The International Journal of the Humanities*, 9, (1) 17 (2010). Alien: The Pre-Oedipal Horror of (m)Other. Published in December 2013 in *The International Journal of Literary Humanities* (Vol. 10 Issue 4, 2013).

PROLEGOMENON

...gynesis--the putting into discourse of "woman" as the process diagnosed in France as intrinsic to the condition of modernity; indeed, the valorization of the feminine, woman, and her obligatory, that is, historical connotations, as somehow intrinsic to new and necessary modes of thinking, writing, speaking. The object produced by this process is neither a person nor a thing, but a horizon, that toward which the process is tending: a gynema. This gynema is a reading effect, a woman-in-effect that is never stable and has no identity.

—Alice Jardine 1985

Hollywood's (m)Other Aperture: Pre-Oedipal Mothers, FEMININITY and the Movies is a project and a process both of which address the bold plurality of FEMININITY and the maternal semiotic in mainstream movies. As well as addressing specifically the maternal semiotic in the *bodies* of work from significant Hollywood filmmakers. The designation for 'Hollywood filmmakers' has broad interpretation these days and generally refers to filmmakers who have developed projects connected to the Hollywood system in some manner—usually involving contractual commitments to Hollywood studios, distribution networks, and/or Hollywood actors. That is why the films analyzed in this book include movies authored by a broad spectrum of directors ranging from the relatively independent filmmaker Jane Campion, to Hollywood blockbuster filmmakers the caliber of Steven Spielberg and James Cameron.

In place of a more conventional introduction, I have decided to write an introductory prologue to my project/process, which, consists of the analysis of the pre-lingual experience¹ as it manifests in mainstream cinematic works. As you will see, my Prologue is pre-verbally influenced and, consequently, rhythm-infused;² it amounts to an overture of syncopated, poststructuralist-inspired *breakdowns* of the principal terms and concepts underpinning my analyses. Following each of these punctuated demarcations, which are enunciated, *au esprit d'écriture feminine*,³ that is, in the spirit of polysemy and *signifiance(s)*,⁴ I dissect a brief exemplary scene from one of the films that I fully analyze later in this tome. After each dissected sampling, or

description from the selected film, I provide a preliminary analysis that sheds light on the selected scene.

In the Prologue below, I address these specific terms and concepts integral to my project in preliminary demarcations, dissections and analyses: first on the list is FEMININITY, an all-encompassing ‘word-figure⁵,’ followed by components of Julia Kristeva’s maternal ‘*ordonnancement*’ (order). Kristeva’s concept serves as both the umbrella-term and sliding-signifier for the *chora*, which incorporates the maternal semiotic, abjection and jouissance—all three of which I separate out and define. Then, I continue with a descriptive condensation of the word-configuration, or ‘word-figure,’ that is ‘(m)Other.’ Finally, to complete the Prologue, I instantiate the *uncannily*⁶ symmetrical tropes: doubles, doppelgängers and the opening and endings of movies.

PROLOGUE

FEMININITY: 'NAVEL-GAZING' AS PRIMAL SELF-REFLEXIVITY

FEMININITY in all uppercase letters advances an *arche*-assault on the a priori prohibitions of the Law of the Father by (re)presenting a figural disruption to the phallo-alphabetic structure of culture. In this configuration, this *unspeakable* word-figure refers to an always already pre-lingual, primal FEMININITY¹ that modulates out concentrically from the *originary* masochistic² influence of the maternal dyad in rippling permutations of extimacy.³ Further, FEMININITY, in part, describes a universal proto-sexuality.⁴ The Law reduces and relegates FEMININITY to a narrow signifier, *femininity*, that defines a passive, genderized construct for females upon their submission to the only recognized Name in town: the Name of the Father. FEMININITY is a primal plurality of sexuality and survives in both genders regardless of genital appearance and Symbolic (*in*)visibility.⁵ Moreover, in its English spelling, this always already dark-continent-of-a-word, FEMININITY, distances itself from the male in '(fem)ale' while still retaining a residual, oblique phallo-alphabetic trace of '(fem)ale-ness.' FEMININITY also features, introspectively, a kind of 'navel-gazing'⁶ self-reflexivity in a play of inner commentary: 'ININ,' a self-contained connotation indexing doubling, dyadic primacy, and, by association to dyadic dissolution, abjection (including convulsive dyadic purging, and afterbirth) that is intrinsic to the maternal cycles. In addition, FEMININITY suggests a disposition subversively independent of, but nevertheless symbiotic to, the *naming* of 'woman' as a binary construct: a disposition consisting of an extra-logical plurality of beingness(es) and universal libidinal investments.⁷ Specifically, (m)Other and Woman form singular and dyadic disposition(s) in one body, mind and soul all of which connote epistemological, phenomenological and ontological conundrums of the Symbolic, that is/are FEMININITY. Furthermore, FEMININITY overlaps (with) the Real—that is, human self-identity annihilation—despite and

because FEMININITY, this fragmentary, polysemic disposition, undergoes sporadic coalescence(s) in the human psyche. These pluralistic coalescences foment a life-long revisiting of repressed dreams and other condensations from the primal morass that is the effect of maternal materiality in the bio-psyche. These soma-psyche re-visitations include the *originary* fantasies of phallic (m)Otherness as well as, ultimately, the loss of self-identity in spasmodic surges of *jouissance*, among other recurrences.

In sum, as a word re-configured to graphically and organically disrupt the Name of the Father; and as a re-configuration which doubly distances itself from ‘woman’ by indexing both the *play of differance*⁸ as well as the human continuum of the pre-lingual proto-sexual plurality, FEMININITY—in all uppercase letters—remains positioned polysemically outside of the binary oppositions of gender constructs and so, paradoxically and extra-logically opens space for critical analysis with(out) essentialist impediments⁹.

AN EXEMPLAR SCENE OF FEMININITY: Two blue xenomorphs kneel before each other. They reach around behind each other’s waist and grab one another’s long ponytail-entwined neural appendages that emerge from the back of their craniums. One of the xenomorphs is a hybrid, a male human-xenomorph (the depiction of which communicates a salute to ethnographic imaging in the movies as a science-fictionalized kind of ‘half-breed’). The other is a full-blooded native female xenomorph. Curiously, the overt signs of sexual difference between them are ambiguously designed (other than offering an oblique hint: visible navels which signal human-like reproductive systems in all their viscosity and, by association, these navels also signal the accompanying psychology and *ur-phantasien*¹⁰). In a spontaneous ritual, the seemingly aroused blue duo hold their serpentine, hair-insulated cranial-protruding, umbilical-like organs up to each other like floral offerings, and the hairs auto-separate revealing the moist neural worm-like tentacles which intertwine sinuously, softly. Both the blue xenomorphs sigh with the gush of *jouissance*. They come together, body to body, in the primal niche of lush foliage, clinging and consummating, seemingly a/sexually, as if entwined newly born indigo twins.

PRELIMINARY ANALYSIS: This is a scene from the recent film that as of the publication date of this book holds the box office record for highest grossing movie. This is a scene from a film, among the several analyzed in this volume, that serves as an index to the traces of FEMININITY in mainstream movies. The film downplays gender distinction in the scene and the emphasized display of an equally active, equally passive a/sexuality indicated by a doubling of the same cranial-umbilical organ in the two

xenomorphs: their homogeneous neural ponytails that appear to provide mutually intimate and gratifying intercourse. The two blue humanoids, in a mirror composition kneeling before each other, join their neuron tentacles that are the multi-faceted organs of pre-lingual, extra-lingual, and psychosomatic¹¹ gratification. Significantly, their pan-sexual appearing, non-sexuated mingling takes place in the *chora*-space below the Tree of Life, the main manifestation of Mother Gaia, the ideal *primal Object* referred to as Eywa by the aboriginal xenomorphs. (See Chapter 10)

Maternal *Ordonnancement*

Julia Kristeva's ideas bring to light the maternal semiotic and other pre-lingual residue always already oozing in through the porosity of the Symbolic order and attest to the extra-logical reach as well as the repression of FEMININITY.¹² My project in film analysis is founded to a large degree on her elucidations and the research that has been stimulated by her innovations and reformulations. The sum of Kristeva's project furthers the workings of the ontological compass that is FEMININITY in a symbiotic relation with the Symbolic—the prohibitions and *jouissance* of which have already developed proto-symbolically and originally from the prelingual maternal 'order,' Kristeva's maternal *ordonnancement*¹³. The prelingual entity gleans the maternal *ordonnancement* from the rhythmic motility and stases, restrictions and plenitudes of the primary mutual stimulation of the mother/child dyad.¹⁴ The primal dyad, in turn, establishes a phenomenological and epistemological exchange in the Imaginary bleeding over into the Symbolic that expands extra-logically the awareness in the topological nuances of the psychic registers.¹⁵ The Lacanian triad of registers (the Real, the Imaginary and the Symbolic) in conjunction with Kristeva's maternal semiotic cryptically enunciate the pre-lingual maternal authority (*ordonnancement*) and FEMININITY both (*in*)visible to the simultaneous narrowing and expansion of the human condition, like the beating of a topological heart, that culture tends to disavow and sublimate.

Kristeva's maternal '*ordonnancement*' processes incorporate and consist of, in part, her concepts of the *chora*, the maternal semiotic, abjection and *jouissance*. These we will discuss below.

Chora

Kristeva's concept of the *chora*¹⁶ is an attempt at coming to terms with the bio-psychical site of, as well as the psychic markings generated from the maternal receptacle in relation to the pre-natal as well as the post-natal pre-

lingual entity, the embryo/fetus/infant—an entity that as yet has no concept of objectivity or subjectivity; there is only the maternal *ordonnancement*. As such the *chora* is slippery in terms of signification and yet replete with *signifiance*,¹⁷ that is, the preconscious/proto-conscious awareness of paralogical process(es) and pre-verbal pre-meaning(s) that manifest in the pre-born and the new born as a plurality of dispositions remaining accessible extra-lingually throughout life. These sparks of energy and psychic accents—including their intermittent stases—serve as a prototypical ordering, associated with the maternal authority, that initiates a proto-symbolic regulatory pattern in the *chora*. The most incisive aspect of Kristeva's borrowing from Plato's term *chora* cited in his *Timaeus*, is that Kristeva singles out certain Symbolic facets of Plato's use of *chora* that indicate the maternal. She addresses specifically the maternal inspiration and the correlation between Plato's use of the term and her own in referring to the *chora* as: "receptacle, unnamable, improbable, hybrid, anterior to naming, to the One, to the father, and consequently, maternally connoted to such an extent that it merits 'not even the rank of syllable'" (Kristeva 1980, 133). From this extremely philosophical, extra-lingual description parts of which were gleaned from Plato and parts that Kristeva extrapolates from her own insights, we grasp a sense of the maternal *receptacle* that Kristeva encourages: a maternal receptacle anterior to the Father. But then Kristeva leaves the *chora* suspended like a drifting preternatural kite in the massive cage-like infrastructure of the Symbolic, early on in the development of her *chora* concept¹⁸. Nonetheless, Kristeva's articulation of the *chora* with its positing of the maternal as the biological source of *signifiance* along with its oblique linkage to an enclosed space,¹⁹ can't help but embrace the spectrum of psychosomatic materiality that is the womb experience. In the *naming* of her concept the *chora*, derived tangentially from Plato, the original 'spelunker' (cavernous association(s) and pun(s) intended), Kristeva gathers (a)historicity into her newly discovered sliding-signifier, *chora*, and leaves her *naming* open to 'hybrid' pre-Symbolic/Symbolic *signifiance/significance* as well as open to the maternal precedence 'anterior to naming.' In other words, the *chora* is ineffable and yet named and so, is a party to the extra-logical breadth and scope of the maternal semiotic and primal FEMININITY.

AN EXEMPLAR CHORA SCENE: The pre-cog detective leads the cocky FBI agent down into the *gut* of the pre-cog police unit headquarters, an expansive *spelunca*, which is cone-shaped like an ancient, yet curiously Sci-Fi-looking, temple. This cavernous space houses the omphalos, the Delphic shrine,²⁰ but in lieu of a Greek stone monument representing Gaia's

navel, there is a large shallow pool of “photon-*milk*.” In this pool rest three oracles—one female and two males—floating on their backs with tentacle circuits attached to their heads through which they transmit their pre-cognitive visions of future murders on to three screens embedded in the dome ceiling directly above them. Like antagonistic twins, the dark-haired Pre-cog detective protagonist, and the FBI agent, both resembling Black-Irish doppelgänger s, spar verbally standing over the milky lagoon as the oracles quietly spasm in agitation. Their geeky caretaker, a minor character, settles the agitated pre-cogs and the room clears of all but the protagonist who bends over the female oracle. She suddenly springs up and grabs him crying out “Can you see?” as she directs her gaze to the ceiling screens. He looks up to the screens and sees the vision of a woman being murdered by a masked figure all in black.

PRELIMINARY ANALYSIS: This is a scene from an award-winning Sci-Fi film, one of the several films analyzed in this volume that serves as an index to the imaging of the *chora* in mainstream movies. This scene (re)presents the return to the originary *womb*-space; as well as the vision of the murder of (m)Other—a necessary event for dyad separation—projected from the mind of the female oracle onto the temple ceiling screens purposefully for the trembling, spooked male detective who is caught in her desperate grasp. Thusly, the speaking-subject that is the detective who is now suddenly a *subject-on-trial*,²¹ gets his first *uncanny* glimpse of the persistence of the *chora* and (*in*)*visibility*.²² (See Chapter 7)

The Maternal Semiotic and the Cinematic Apparatus

Kristeva's semiotic (*le semiotique*), not to be confused with semiotics (*la semiotique*),²³ is so enmeshed with her concept of the *chora* and its maternal connotations, that a common naming of the nuanced enunciations from her pre-Symbolic semiotic has produced the compound word the ‘maternal semiotic.’²⁴ Kristeva defines her pre-verbal, semiotic as “a disposition that is definitely heterogeneous to meaning but always in sight of it or in either a negative or surplus relationship to it.” (Kristeva, 1980, 133) Her maternal semiotic is the extra-lingual experiential phenomena in the human condition, which consist of the *chora*'s primal energies and the accompanying stases acknowledged and absorbed by the pre-lingual entity that in turn leave in their wake markings and other traces—‘heterogeneous to meaning but always in sight of it’—that are etched on the infantile psyche during the pre-lingual stage. These traces and echoes of the maternal pulsations and absences are generated during the pre-Symbolic period by means of the maternal biological functions and the maternal psychosomatic

processes—as well as similar functions and proto-processes generated by the new pre-entity. This is the period when the pre-entity does not yet distinguish itself from the not-yet-Object, the not-yet-(m)Other, adding to the unspeakable topological register of the semiotic. Given the implied scope of Kristeva's semiotic, we can infer that her discovery consists of the psychic residual effects reverberating from the *music* of the intrauterine and extra-uterine sounds and rhythms, along with all fetal and newborn eye-stimuli, in further conjunction with the smells, touches and psychic *ur-phantasien*²⁵ emanating from both parts of the dyad—and including all the synchronic and diachronic *signifiances* derived from these processes and effects. All of these pre-verbal residues amorphously *formulate* the maternal semiotic—of which the concept of the chora and its relation to womb serves as a proto-imagining and proto-depiction of the not-yet objectified maternal mirror-screen²⁶ 'receptacle,' like an Imaginary, originary proto-theater, with its stimulations, suspensions, projections and primal simulations—to which the cinematic apparatus is analogous.

The prelingual sensory stimuli, their periodic suspensions, as well as the primal fantasies germinating in the phenomenological folds of the maternal semiotic and the maternal chora during the pre-verbal stage as well as the effects of the cross-over traces of these coalescing (a kind of secondary elaboration) in the unconscious, the pre-conscious, and daydreams, lend themselves to a comparison to cinema: they form a prototypical cinematic machine in and of themselves without the need for the film industry and its external extensions of the semiotic capabilities of the human mind.²⁷ Plus Kristeva's '*le semiotique*' and the cinema share what W. R. Bion refers to as 'alpha elements' and unconscious projective identification²⁸ that form (proto-)signifying chains and offshoots of links and attachments, condensations and displacements, metaphor and metonymy, that eventually subvert language as much as they validate the Symbolic. Further, the cinema answers and attends to the howling and whispering solicitations of the wistful, ever-present repetition compulsion²⁹ associated with the pre-lingual derived 'alpha elements' of the maternal semiotic. Mainstream film provides this recursive fixation an outlet on a mass scale. Moreover, the effects of the repetition compulsion in life as well as in the movies offer a catharsis along with a recurrent and masochistic gush of the Imaginary plenitude³⁰—and very occasionally a touch of the Real.³¹ The cathartic releases that one experiences from the cinema manifest particularly well when the effects are processed through the therapeutic cinema narrative experience—serendipitous and little-recognized examples of which are the telltale sublimating effects that are the self-effacing seams, a form of suture, inherent to all discourse.³² These imperfect, and yet barely visible discursive

seams that all but succeed in sublimating the maternal semiotic, always already index a *pre-verbalizing*, extra-lingual topology in the various registers of the mind—see the gory reveal of the ‘maternal semiotic scene’ below that struggles between narrative suture and a pre-lingual inspired sadism. Further, cinema creates a conciliating venue for the masochistic repetition compulsion, a kind of safe re-visitation apparatus for the maternal semiotic re-pulsating sporadically on the liminal threshold of the pre-conscious. The cinematic apparatus becomes a filter that *screens* (m)Otherness vis-à-vis the spectator subject like the tain in the machinations of the mirror. Ultimately, these cinematic and pre-conscious projections and operations semiotically (re)filter, (re)screen the pre-history, the pre-Oedipal and the post-Oedipal affectations of alienation³³ within the human condition; and (re)present at a safe distance, perhaps even therapeutically,³⁴ the images of self-reflexive alienation for the spectator subject-on-trial.

AN EXEMPLAR MATERNAL SEMIOTIC SCENE: Two men, one has blond hair, the other has dark hair. They look off screen at a beautiful young woman in front of them. Nervously she says: “No, don’t. Such a fucking waste of talent.” She parts her kimono showing her bare left breast. Despite her supplications, the blond man raises a phallic object, slams it from behind with his hand and a bullet hole enters the woman above the right breast. Another muted gunshot occurs from off screen sending a second bullet through the woman’s chest near the neck. She looks down and grimaces as her robe falls off her shoulders to her waist revealing both her breasts. The two men watch as she stumbles between them to her cat on a nearby counter. She weakly picks the cat up and leaves the screen as the two men follow her while reloading their homemade phallic firearms disguised as bicycle pumps. She sits in her wicker chair and chokes on the blood flooding her lungs from the bullet holes in her upper torso and then the blood pumps out from the tiny wounds in a stream down between her breasts. She gasps for breath as a third man enters between the other two and slams his cylindrical weapon shooting a bullet into her forehead and ending her life definitively. Her robe is now open showing her raw bloody nakedness as if a pornographic crime scene. One of the men pulls her kimono over her. The last man to shoot steps forward and perversely pulls the kimono back from her body as the blood streams down her torso into her pubic hair. All three men slink away still staring at her naked and dead.

PRELIMINARY ANALYSIS: This is a scene from the film directed by one of the top filmmakers in Hollywood who made his career specializing in family blockbusters. This is a scene from a film, among the several analyzed in this volume, that serves as an index to abject aspects of a much

more expansive topology of the maternal semiotic in mainstream movies. The maternal semiotic imagery includes: a woman's breasts—suggesting gratification and deprivation (primal *ordonnancement*); the (m)Other-murder implications necessary for separating from the maternal Object; and the display of woman as lacking a penis amidst males brandishing phallicized objects. All these images are graphically, sadistically rendered like an *ur-phantasien* of anxiety, jealousy and infantile gratification vis-à-vis the maternal Object. All these impulses and intensities linger on in the pre-conscious liminality of the viewer. (See Chapter 8.)

Abjection

Abjection is human afterbirth, waste and the gaping (m)Other.³⁵ Abjection is placental horror and primal screams. It is the failure to purge, that is, the primal desire not to be purged, the *Thanatos* elements³⁶ of the maternal semiotic. Abjection overlaps topologically with the *receptacle*: the archaic *chora* with its contradictions of being and annihilation. Further, abjection is everything borderless and body-centered—disease, vomit, corpse—that strikes a chord with the repressed birth trauma and Real psychosis (non-identity).³⁷ The effect of abjection is the pale, pox-ridden underbelly of the repetition compulsion that is, essentially, a realized attempt at (re)purging, that (re)presents a cleansing: but one that never materializes and must be repeated. The abject as effect never surrenders but only retreats to the morass of the repressed unconscious to wait another appearance cycle. Just as does the maternal monster, the Phallic (m)Other,³⁸ that is, the impossibility of the Real associated obliquely with the maternal.³⁹ In reference to the abject Real, Slavoj Žizek with his vast understanding of Lacan and pop culture refers to the Real in graphic, and maternally abject terms: "...the Real in its most terrifying dimension, as the primordial abyss which swallows everything, dissolving all identities—a figure well known in literature in its multiple guises, from E.A. Poe's maelstrom and Kurtz's "horror" at the end of Conrad's *The Heart of Darkness*..." (Žizek 2006, 64)

AN EXEMPLAR ABJECTION SCENE: The lone survivor on a spaceship pushes a button to set in motion a process that the computer monitor in front of her *names* in large digital letters: "PURGE." She rushes to the escape shuttle and closes the door behind her. The shuttle launches from the *mother* ship just in time to escape the latter exploding behind her like a supernova. The relieved lone survivor takes off her clothes and displays for the first time her naturally muted, albeit explicitly (re)presented,

female body signs—she is finally safe and free of the virulent monster with the oozing maw (*vagina dentata*): a ‘weapons grade’ alien that just won’t die. Or is she really free of the virulent fanged vagina? That is, is she really safe from its abject horror? Of course not: she nearly stumbles into the tubular-headed alien creature who is surprisingly lethargic tucked into the tubular folds on the far side of the small escape shuttle. The lone survivor slowly backs away. The Alien hasn’t been aroused. The lone survivor has time to dart into a tiny closet and struggles to put on a space suit—a boundary against the Real menace rising up before her. She then leaves the confines of the closet and fearfully crosses to sit cautiously in the pilot’s seat—halfway to the monster’s hiding place—carrying with her a telltale harpoon-like weapon. She puts on her seat belt nervously singing “You are my lucky star” over and over. Now, just as the tubular head of the creature reaches her from behind, the lone survivor smashes down on the button to open the exterior door of the ship and the vacuum of space sucks the creature out the opening. But, at the last minute, the preternaturally strong monster grabs the doorframe and struggles to re-enter. The lone survivor shoots the monster with her phallic harpoon and this launches the monster into space. Unfortunately, the harpoon gun is yanked from the lone survivor’s hands still attached to the harpoon by a cable and gets stuck in the closing door of the ship providing the monster an ersatz umbilical cord as a way back in. The lone survivor quickly closes the door, but the monster climbs up the cable and into one of the dormant rocket engines. Seeing this, the lone survivor starts the engine and finally, definitively *purges* herself of the abject monster which is jettisoned into space. The lone survivor, after once more disrobing, crawls into an incubator sleep pod that forms a transparent womb around her, and sleeps in suspended animation.

PRELIMINARY ANALYSIS: This is a scene from a blockbuster film, among the several analyzed in this volume, that serves as an index to the imaging of the abject in mainstream movies. The abject images include the shuttle purged from the mother ship like a projectile turd, the abject depiction of the insatiable, irrepressible and visceral monster; the ad hoc umbilical cord attached to the harpoon; the purging of the Alien like voiding excrement/afterbirth; and finally, the therapeutic catharsis (a *purging* in and of itself) of the lone survivor’s salvation from the Real Object/object. That is, until the next episode; the next regressive urge in the spirit of Thanatos, the death drive. In this film’s case, the sequel that will prove to be one of several. (See Chapter 9.)

Jouissance

Jouissance is the orgasmic pulsation—pulsation is derived from the Latin, and most significantly for this project, by way of the French (*im*)pulsion (meaning *drive*, throb, instinct)—the pulsating from the liminal and oscillating human beingness enveloping biology and culture. *Jouissance* is also the vibrating dissonance between mysticism and logos, as well as the percussive tension between the *visible* and the *invisible*. Further, *jouissance* is the spark of the heterogeneities of ‘I’.⁴⁰ In order to experience *jouissance*—the French signifier that has no trans-lingual equivalent in the Real sense that it is used by Kristeva and Lacan—one must intimately *touch* and be *touched* by primal FEMININITY as it (re)produces the (re)surgence of the near-maternal, the near-death, the near-Real, as well as the originary pansexuality—not that you are consciously aware of these⁴¹ during the absolute *coup de foudre*⁴² of *jouissance*.

Kristeva, speaking of Bellini’s work, attaches *jouissance* to motherhood: “...motherhood is nothing more than such a luminous spatialization, the ultimate language of a *jouissance* at the far limits of repression, whence bodies, identities, and signs are begotten.” (Kristeva 1984, 269) As such, *jouissance* attaches itself to FEMININITY and the materiality of the body in a pulsating, bio-rhythmic (*im*)pulsion—urge, instinct, pre-lingual ordering—of psychic spasms, at the germinating margins of the Object and the sign. However, *jouissance* is feared and *named*, marginalized and institutionalized away from the (m)Other in order to speak a *visible* motherhood into salacious, disparaging and phallogocentric subjectivity,⁴³ that is, to speak a semblance of *jouissance* into culture.

The language of art, too, follows (but differently and more closely) the other aspect of maternal *jouissance*, the sublimation taking place at the very moment of primal repression within the mother’s body, arising perhaps unwittingly out of her marginal position. At the intersection of sign and rhythm, of representation and light, of the symbolic and the semiotic, the artist speaks from a place where she is not, where she knows not. He delineates what, in her, is a body rejoicing [*jouissant*]. The very existence of aesthetic practice makes clear that the Mother as subject is a delusion, just as the negation of the so-called poetic dimension of language leads one to believe in the existence of the Mother, and consequently, of transcendence.” (Kristeva 1980, 242)

The artist continually channels the *invisible* and conjures the originary *jouissance* at the “intersection of sign and rhythm, of representation and light, of the symbolic and the semiotic.” Kristeva cites the work of Mallarmé and Bellini—the latter, a painter in the realm of the visual arts, as

differentiated from the literary arts that comprises the *écriture* of the poets like Mallarmé. Bellini's work that sublimates and "delineates" *jouissance*, pre-dates and foreshadows painting's motion-derivative: the equally *sublime* art of filmmaking—where the 'body rejoicing' is also delineated, (re)germinated, and (re)presented. In regards to Kristeva's characterization of the "luminous spatialization," the intersection between "representation and light" "whence bodies, identities and signs are begotten," the cinema, as much as the poetics of painting and *écriture*, channels and transposes the maternal *jouissance*, forever re-releasing (m)Other from subjectivity and the Symbolic narcissism of transcendence, of ideal-ego; always already in a subversive and symbiotic manner.

Ultimately, the artist's channeling and creation of sublimating and subversive artifacts as well as the artist's transubstantiation of *jouissance* into its annihilating maternal effect of the "body rejoicing," is yet another (re)appearance of the repetition *compulsion*.

AN EXEMPLAR JOUISSANCE SCENE: The 19th Century Englishman in the jungles of New Zealand has 'gone native' with thin blue tattoo lines covering his weathered face. He drops to his knees and crawls under the protagonist's elaborate and proper whalebone harness skirt support, a kind of chastity-inspiring frame below the waist of the young English woman, a single mother, who remains excited and yet speechless—selectively mute as she has compulsively remained since an early age. He is searching in her nether world for the return to the originary space, but he is unaware consciously of that drive. She is preparing for *jouissance*, and she is vitally aware of that because she is a (m)Other. They entwine in a gush as outside in the blue forest her husband spies on them through the irregular planks that make up the clandestine lover's miserable shack. The peeping husband hears the echoes and sees the images of *jouissance* but shies away as much as he stares. The couple copulates—becoming a doubled singularity—experiencing one of the thresholds to non-identity, *jouissance*. The voyeuristic husband gushes in turn and absorbs the *uncanny* heat and reverberations of the close encounter.

PRELIMINARY ANALYSIS: This is a scene from a multiple Oscar Award-winning film, among the several other films analyzed in this volume, that serves as an index to the potential for the imaging of *jouissance* in mainstream movies. This scene (re)presents: the return to the originary ur-fantasy in erotic detail; as well as the explicit and subversive display of the maternal passion; and, finally, the scene depicts the exemplary husband/keeper-of-the-Symbolic, keeper of the Name, spying on the female *jouissance* and

turning away—but then turning back unable to look away, unable to disavow the *compulsion*, and the ‘body rejoicing.’ (See Chapter 1)

(m)Other in Three Acts

Note: in tribute to the bio-psychological scope of motherness and the range of the collective unconscious and the social Symbolic embedded in the movies, plus an added nod to ecriture feminine, I have decided to detour from the above structure of this prologue for this one section. I have formatted the following explanation of my reconfiguring of “(m)Other” to (re)produce an imagined movie treatment in three acts, each with an accompanying doubling of “subtitles:” one subtitle that is less extra-logically oriented than the Act it deciphers, and the other, a more Symbolically constrained “subtitle.”

Scenario Title: *The Origins of (m)Other*

ACT ONE: (m)Other is the O1: the *chora*, *das Ding*, and the Real.⁴⁴ The originary dyad is with the $\Theta 2$ (barred two): that is, the Imaginary Plenitude of the fetus and the (m)Other, forming a nurturing and phallic sameness, a consubstantiality-in-process. After material separation from the (m)Other, the potential bi-products, the abject subjects-to-be: one such birth product with an “ini” and one with an “outy”—the former a Sapien-cum-womb (O\$), the latter a Sapien (\$), that is, the womb-lacking-Sapien—go on to (re)present to one another, in pubescence, the potential for a reciprocally intimate relationship, a kind of an “object *a*” reunion,⁴⁵ a kind of fetishized, psychosomatic and emotional stand-in for the imagined wholeness of (m)Other⁴⁶.

SUBTITLES: (m)Other is the Originary One. Child is ~~Two~~ (in One) before submitting to the Symbolic. Woman and man come from that plenitude and they are pan-sexual Sapiens first and then gender constructed secondly—both have lost the Thing (*das Ding*), which is the (m)Other, via the processes of entering subjectivity. And later, through the pubescent realization of each other’s inter-subjective sexual and melancholic biologies, whether desiring homogenously or heterogeneously, they sublimate their loss in a (m)Otherless ritual accepted by the Law and submit to arcane and Symbolic prohibitions in order to avoid being sucked back into the melancholic murk and wholeness of the loss of identity, of primary narcissism and the annihilating plenitude of the (m)Other.

SUBTITLES DECIPHERED: Mother is the primal plenitude constituted in both the materiality and the Symbol of the womb, that is, before she is depicted as the visually apparent spatiality of *lack* as well as the Symbolic excuse for the fear of castration: the (m)Other. The maturing humans orphaned from the womb use *love* with a partner in order to reproduce, to grieve and to surmount the loss of the wholeness of the mother/child dyad.

ACT TWO: The polyvalent, truncated reductions—often in parentheses—that hover, like hummingbird jargon, *(in)visibly* in and around the phenomena that are *named* womb, birth, dyad and primary separation, instantiate my inspiration for altering the grammatically normative signifier ‘mother’ to the *signifiante*-based *écriture féminine* that is ‘(m)Other.’

SUBTITLES: The dyadic figures: O1, and $\Theta 2$ from Act One make up the (m)Other which is inscribed ‘mother’ in the Symbolic order. *She/it* is *visible* in the Symbolic order written as ‘mother’ and *(in)visible* configured as (m)Other. So that is why I *figuratively* transcribe mother as (m)Other in this project.

SUBTITLES DECIPHERED: I use ‘(m)Other’ instead of mother when I write, *think* and *speak* of my research. This is in order to acknowledge her explicit, implicit and disavowed influence on the human condition.

ACT THREE: The phylogenetically constituted, tertiary element, the prehistoric Father⁴⁷, amounts to the co-opted Other, the $\bar{3}$ (barred 3), lurking just offshore at the marginal environs of the primal dyad. He completes the myth of Symbolic separation from the newly *named*, the institutionalized *lack*, the mother [(m)Other]. The contingency of the tertiary influence, posterior to the infant’s fragmenting encounter with the Mirror, culminates in (re)splitting the psyche of the infant (soon to be \$ or O\$) on his or her way to the Symbolic.⁴⁸ A shard of the infant’s psyche is lost in the processes and this is the shard (*objet petit a*⁴⁹) that (re)presents the dyad within the (m)Other’s separating sphere. By means of the paternal signifier the infant ventures on through alienated sublimation, and melancholy, towards wish fulfillment, death.

SUBTITLES: The father (re)presents pre-ego-apartness from the (m)Other. The child eventually *speaks* the Symbolic order that

speaks *him/her* into selfhood, thereby achieving identity and following in the footsteps of the Father (♂). The infant relinquishes the alleged dreams of killing the father and fucking the (m)Other in order to sublimate loss and to make Symbolic sense of primal separation and social structure.

SUBTITLES DECIPHERED: The father image is the antediluvian third party who takes Freudian phylogenetic credit for the breakup of the dyad between the (m)Other and child. The child follows the father's institutionalized prohibitions in order to survive, to assume a mis-identity—better than no-identity—and to assuage the loss of the mother [(m)Other].

The happy ending: The Hero(ine) wanders off into the sunset over Gotham, that is, the Subject (\$ or O\$) wanders off into his or her presence in the construct of the patriarchal, Symbolic culmination of phylogenesis.

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Note: I now resume the structure of the prologue before the above variation reserved for (m)Other.

Doubles, Doppelgängers, Symmetry

Cells fuse, split, and proliferate; volumes grow, tissues stretch, and body fluids change rhythm, speeding up or slowing down. Within the body, growing as a graft, indomitable, there is an other. And no one is present, within that simultaneously dual and alien space, to signify what is going on. (Kristeva 1980, 237)

The doppelgänger, or double (albeit a much more expansive term), is a narrative trope that germinates from the earthy, extra-cultural relationship that is the originary non-signifying dyad.⁵⁰ A German word, doppelgänger⁵¹ describes, in conventional psychoanalytic-literary channels, the *uncanny* manifestation of a 'look-alike' who affects the host's life usually in a pathological manner within the story-telling machine and who implies, if not instantiates, self-destructive behavior of some sort.⁵² In 1914, Otto Rank, Freud's protégé, dedicated a book on the subject: *The Double: A Psychoanalytic Study*. This was the same year in which Freud cites Rank in his paper *On Narcissism* that speaks of the early childhood doppelgänger - like 'ego-ideal' and the self-observing imperative he associated with it.⁵³ Rank's extensive study, on the other hand, embarks on a comprehensive

psychoanalytical analysis of the doppelgänger in literature, anthropology and even in psychoanalysis by linking narcissism to the phenomenon. Freud further corroborated Rank's doppelgänger insights in 1919, by exploring the narcissistic doppelgänger effect in his publication, *The Uncanny*.⁵⁴ Crediting his protégé Rank, Freud commented specifically and positively on Rank's doppelgänger study. In this 1919 study, Freud connects the double effect not only with the narrative tropes, but also, in an innovative and crucial stroke of vision, he links the doppelgänger with the *uncanny* psychic residue from the initial split in the human psyche when the infant adapts to socialization by means of distancing itself from the earliest 'phases' of primal narcissism.⁵⁵ This insight opens critical space for the pre-Oedipal influence on the psyche and for mapping in literature in general and the cinema specifically, the pre-lingual maternal influence on the recursive doppelgänger(in) symptom.

In contrast to the abundant male counterparts, examples of the female double, the doppelgängerin are extraordinarily limited in narrative convention,⁵⁶ and were ignored in classical psychoanalytic theory (Rank and Freud et al).⁵⁷ By extension, the more *unspeakable* primal connection between the doppelgänger trope and the maternal factor is tellingly obscured or lacking in both narrative and psychoanalytical arenas.⁵⁸ And yet, the primal dyad stage is arguably the psychical wellspring of the doubling symptom recursively revisited in psychoanalysis (i.e., the Mirror Stage, the ego-ideal, and so on) and in literary texts—including the movies as a dreamlike extension of the written narrative text. Susan Yi Sencindiver succinctly explains the doubling effect and its relationship to the maternal body in the primal dyad: "We were all once doppelgängers, more specifically our mother's doppelgänger. (...) we have all been intimately connected yet simultaneously disconnected to and teetering on the brink of an/other's body." (Sencindiver 2011, 66) Sencindiver's exegesis forefronts not only the mother's influential precedence in the doppelgänger syndrome, but also emphasizes the importance of the (m)Other's body, which initiates and informs our pre-lingual, pre-cultural experience and its repetitive effects. Sencindiver further argues that because "object relations theory which assumes the mother's presence, rather than her absence, [is] indispensable for generating the individuation/separation process, (...) oedipal narratives of ego formation and the doppelgänger must be re-written and re-read respectively so as to include the mother." (Ibid., p. 66) I concur. The dearth of the (m)Other in narrative and psychoanalytic inquiry and her continuing interrelation with, and subversion of, subjectivity—including the recursive doppelgänger trope/syndrome—has created an *unspeakable* vacuum, a disavowed blind spot in the human condition.

The observations by both Susan Yi Sencindiver and Lucy Fischer, among others,⁵⁹ on the maternal connection to the doppelgänger compulsion create a potential line of inquiry that expands as its effects come to light. An instance of this expansion occurs to me from Fischer's gynocentric position that "... in the possibility of pregnancy (whether realized or not)—of growth of a second self within the primary being—every woman comes closer to a lived sense of the double than do most men." (Fischer 1983, 39) And further, Sencindiver's ideas stress the importance of the woman's physical connection to the origination of a 'second self' in the womb and its relation to the doppelgänger phenomenon: "...although we were all once our mother's doppelgänger – only one sex can physically become a hostess to a double; in other words, it is only the female body that is capable of generating a potential second self within the womb." (Sencindiver 2011, 79) Rising from these insights on biological specificity, it occurs to me that the source for the neglect of the female doppelgänger(in) in narrative expression and in classical psychoanalysis is the phenomenon of womb envy,⁶⁰ and the effects on culture of the *ur*-pallic, *ur*-signifying, *ur*-bio-logical (m)Other.

Marcia Ian, in an allusion to the *ur*-phallus in relation to the womb signals the importance of the phallic-appearing extension, the umbilical cord, thereby creating a precedence for the concept of the phallus as signifier: "If we psychoanalyze psychoanalysis, we begin to suspect that the phallus might be (...) a phobic substitute for something else. That something else would be the umbilical cord; for it is the umbilical cord after all, and not the penis, which constitutes the historic "locution and link of exchange" from which the subject must be "missing" if he is to be a subject and not a permanent appendage of the mother." (Ian 1993, 21) This "phobic" substituting of the overt signifier of lack, the phallus/penis, for the abject umbilical cord, in conjunction with the umbilical conduit's importance in constituting the pre-subject in the pre-lingual, biological context—that is, the cutting of the cord to separate materially the infant from the dyad—relays a significance and *signifiance* that constitutes a fixation with the primal trauma of birth.⁶¹ The effects of the latter consist of symptomatic doppelgänger (re)presentations in the arts (among other affectations that go beyond the scope of this particular analysis). In short, primal trauma and its effects—primarily womb envy and womb fear—spark a *misrecognition* of the phallic signifier,⁶² which in turn, spurs a life-long series of phallogocentric-oriented and inadequate attempts at sublimation. Birth trauma symptoms include, among a multitude of other signs, the compulsion to (re)present as producers and to consume as readers and viewers, the varied doubling tropes in literary/cinematic artifacts. If the womb (including its abject extensions, the placenta and the umbilical cord) is the biological

space that only woman [(m)Other] possesses—after all, practically speaking, most everything else biologically related is shared between sexes including the penis/clitoris—then it is little wonder that the womb reverberates through the human psyche manifesting phobic denial and compulsive doubling and revisiting.⁶³

AN EXEMPLAR DOPPELGÄNGER SCENARIO: The beautiful android boy, disheveled from exhaustive travels, enters the half-submerged building in a dystopian and flooded Manhattan. He enters the doorway of a private library in a penthouse and approaches a swivel chair hiding the identity of an entity sitting there. To the hidden presence, he asks hopefully: “Is this the place they make you real?” The chair swivels around revealing the beautiful, albeit haggard, android-boy’s double who, in contrast, is shiny clean and smiling in brilliant white clothes. The dapper doppelgänger crosses to a table as the disheveled boy follows all aghast and blurts out another question: “Are you me?” Finally, the stunned ‘original’ boy, cries out: “You can’t have her. She’s mine. And I’m the only one.” Then he, the original android boy, reaches for a table lamp, grabs it up and batters his doppelgänger until his circuitry-filled, head falls off and rolls across the floor. Still swinging his lamp, the original cyborg-boy shouts: “I’m special. I’m unique. You can’t have her.” Delirious, he keeps swinging his ad hoc battle-ax in the empty air. Later, he walks all forlorn through a room full of non-activated replicas. Then, despairingly, the disheveled boy-android finds his way to the ledge of the skyscraper overlooking the flooding oceans. Finally, he murmurs, “Mommy,” and falls over the ledge dropping a hundred floors to splash into the waters of the inundating sea. He sinks into the abyss.

PRELIMINARY ANALYSIS: This is a scene from a Sci-Fi film that took 20 years and two moviemaking geniuses to complete. It is among the several analyzed in this volume and serves to demonstrate the doppelgänger *syndrome* as a trope in mainstream movies. This doppelgänger manifestation consists of the several levels of doubling including: the android-boy as a human ‘replicant’ or ‘mecca,’ and his first meeting with one of his doubles, followed by the display of an inventory of replicated ‘mecca’ boys all boxed up and ready to ship—not to mention that the original android-boy is the replication of an original human model that is the dead son of his maker; and finally, the association of the doppelgänger with the maternal—in this case the cyborg-boy’s reference to ‘You can’t have her,’ ‘She’s mine,’ and ‘Mommy,’ in his deliberations—as well as, ultimately what appears from the stark images of this scene to be his final word, “Mommy” as he leans

forward off the skyscraper falling into the now maternal-associated morass of the sea. (See Chapter 6)

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Beginnings and Endings of Films: Bookends of the Maternal Semiotic

The symptom of doubling, beyond simply instantiating doppelgängers, indexes the primal dyad as does symmetry: the doubling of phenomenological elements around an axis point or series of loci. In the case of the doppelgänger the axis is linked psychically to the extra-logical boundaries between extimacy and intimacy,⁶⁴ between (m)Other and infant, between superego and ideal-ego. Sometimes the symmetrical axis is the film itself separating the *uncanny* similarities of its beginning and ending that form a dyad; an axis that inadvertently emphasizes the *doubling* effect that constructs a movie conceit: a pair of matching visual bookends that start and end the film. The implementation of *doppelgänger*-like beginnings and endings of movies, this overtly self-evident, self-reflexive symmetry draws attention to authorship, storytelling contrivance and, subliminally, the recursive (re)call of the repressed maternal dyad as the primal agency for doubling.

More conventional than the dyadic doubling at the beginning and ending of a film, in terms of repetition in the movies, is the trope of multiple repetitions, for example, leitmotifs or other recurring elements. These offer pleasure to spectators when we perceive the conceit—usually occurring several times throughout the film. These more customary repetitive design elements in the movies generate a link to the *uncanny* reverberations echoing from the repetitive maternal fixations of infancy. That is, in contrast to the overt symmetry in cinema that indelibly marks the beginning and the end of specific movies, and which creates a distinct one-to-one doubling that cannot be so easily sublimated as a recurring motif. So, although the conventional repetitive design that manifests three or more times in a movie does recall tangentially the pre-lingual maternal, this leitmotif type repetition is in excess of the one-to-one symmetrical doubling found at the beginning and the end of some films. And so, the more common multiple repetitions of movie elements generate diluted *uncanny* allusions in comparison to the more overt *uncanny* effects of the one-to-one repetition in movies that have specific doubling of the beginning at the end of the film. In sum, the doubling of the beginning of a film that occurs only at the end separated by the axis of the film, forms a dyad that figuratively mimics the