Romanticism with Teeth: Surrealism in British Film

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PhD

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Theatre, Film and Television

February 2016

Abstract

This thesis explores the idea of Surrealism in relation to British films. Films often classified as Realism, Gothic, Satire or Artists' Film and Video are revealed to contain substantial collective themes and techniques when looked at through the lens of Surrealism, while films that have not previously been associated with Surrealism are found to be significant. Detailed case studies of Neil Jordan's *The Company of Wolves* (1984) and *Mona Lisa* (1986) reveal that these two films embody these themes and techniques and straddle the perceived polarity of realism and fantasy in British film.

Central to the discussion is Viktor Schlovsky's idea of de-familiarization whereby that which is so familiar as to go unquestioned is made shockingly unfamiliar or strange. The thesis challenges the idea of mutually exclusive genres in British cinema, particularly Realism and its perceived opposites, ideas that have long-defined British Cinema studies. Conversely, Surrealism's ultimate aim is the convergence of reality and fantasy or the imagination, and this thesis demonstrates that convergence within British Cinema.

The thesis also builds bridges between British Cinema studies and disciplines such as Literature and Art History, as well as other European Cinemas. A major finding is that Surrealism's roots in Romanticism are often played out in British films, and subversive narrational techniques are traced from eighteenth and nineteenth century Gothic novels to Lewis Carroll and the films of Luis Buñuel and British Cinema. There is however an important difference between Romanticism and Surrealism: the first is characterised by self-expression, which can often be controversial, without concern for consequences. Surrealism on the other hand is very much concerned with consequences, as in its hands self-expression becomes a means of protest, aimed squarely at shattering oppressive socio-political circumstances.

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Acknowledgements

Firstly I want to thank my parents. They gave me a passion for learning and a taste for the thrill of expanding one's own intellect. Not to mention a love of writing and intellectual conversation. They are also bloody-minded, a quality I inherited and which certainly got me through to the end of this thesis.

Secondly I want to thank Professor Andrew Higson, my PhD my supervisor. Possibly the most valuable thing he brought me was to tell me in no uncertain terms when I was going wrong. But he also gave me enough free-rein and more than enough encouragement to develop my own voice, as a thinker and as a writer, all the while asking the important questions. What he produced in my mind is something I will treasure for the rest of my life.

Other people in my life, my friends, my extended family and my work colleagues, have, thankfully, not always had a blind understanding of what a PhD is all about. They have, however, embraced and encouraged my madness. They have also helped me to see that there is a whole world outside of my own intellect, British cinema and Surrealism. Not least responsible for this are their beautiful children, amongst whom my research means nothing, and to whom I am eternally grateful.

I dedicate this thesis to my sister Bronya Marie Middleton who, as always, has been with me every step of the way.

Author's declaration

I, Francesca Middleton, declare that the contents of this thesis are original and all my own work. This work has not been submitted for any other award at this or any other institution.

Some elements of Chapter One: 'Romanticism and English literature: the tradition of the marvellous', Chapter Two: 'Surrealism, storytelling and film', Chapter Seven: 'Introduction to Part Two', Chapter Eight: *'Surrealism in Neil Jordan's The Company of Wolves'* and Chapter Nine: 'Surrealism in Neil Jordan's *Mona Lisa'* have been published in a journal article, the details of which are given below. The material published therein is derived from my discussion of Lewis Carroll's Alice stories, storytelling methods in Romanticism and Surrealism and to the characters of Simone (Cathy Tyson) and George (Bob Hoskins) in Neil Jordan's *Mona Lisa* (1986).

Middleton, F. (2014) 'A Queen of Hearts and a White Rabbit: Storytelling traditions, lacunae and otherness in Neil Jordan's Mona Lisa', *Studies in European Cinema*, 11 (3): 181-190.

'The simplest Surrealist act [is] dashing down into the street, pistol in hand, and firing blindly, as fast as you can pull the trigger'.

(André Breton, 1930: 125)

Introduction

In the past few decades the academic community has worked hard to revise our view of British cinema. In overturning the idea that it is un-cinematic, flooded with realism and thereby not worthy of extensive study, many previously unexplored avenues for researching this topic have opened up. One of these is to look at British film as an artistic endeavour.

So far, writing about British film and/as art has focussed mostly on the artists' or experimental film category (O'Pray, 1996; Rees, 2001; Curtis, 2008; Cubitt, 2012), the influence of modernism (Jennings, 1982; Wollen, 1993; Street, 1997; Remy 1999; Aitkens, 2000; Roberts, 2007; Spicer, 2007; Walker, 2008; Orr, 2010) and studies of production design (Carrick, 1948; Christie 2010; Cook, 1996; and Ede, 2010). These are important places to start when addressing the relationship of art to British cinema. Design is often allied to art as a visual practice; modernism represents the most influential set of literary, art and design concepts in global culture since the mid-nineteenth century; while it would seem beyond neglectful not to look at films made by artists. But there are also many other possibilities for exploring British film in relation to art that are not yet thoroughly investigated, such as the influence of other art movements (an avenue pursued by Stella Hockenhull in her books about Romantic landscape painting and British cinema (2008 and

2013)), or the impact of art school teaching on filmmaking, or the filmic representation of art and artists.

There is also plenty of scope for refining those areas of study that are already established, an option I pursue in this research project by looking at cinema's relationship with Surrealism, which is, of course, a kind of modernism. There have been survey chapters about modernism and the cinema by Peter Wollen (1993) and Sarah Street (1997) which discuss the movement in general terms; in 1973 David Pirie published his book, *A Heritage of Horror: English Gothic Cinema 1946-1972*, in which he identifies the affinity between Hammer Horror films and Surrealism (Pirie, 1973); Ian Aitken's *Alberto Cavalcanti: Realism, Surrealism and National Cinemas*, published in 2000, acknowledges Cavalcanti's interest in Surrealism; Graham Roberts wrote about Surrealism and the GPO film units (2007) and Andrew Spicer crafted a short survey of Surrealism in British film (2007) in the same edited collection (Harper and Stone, 2007); Ian Walker discusses Patrick Keiller's films in his book about Englishness, photography and Surrealism, *So Exotic, So Homemade* (2008); then there is Humphrey Jennings, whose films have been discussed in terms of Surrealism by a number of writers (Jennings, 1982; Remy, 1999; Roberts, 2007; Spicer, 2007) and about whom there are at least two research projects currently in progress (Owen Evans is researching a book about Humphrey Jennings as a Surrealist artist, including a study of his films, and Neil Coombs a doctoral thesis on Surrealism in Jennings' films).

To date, however, there is no book length study of Surrealism in British film, an imbalance this thesis is designed to address. My primary research question thus asks 'What can an engagement with Surrealism bring to the study of British film?'. Or to put it another way, 'To what extent does British cinema draw upon Surrealism, or upon themes seen as central to the Surrealist movement?'.

Surrealism has its roots in a desire to experience, and express, an intense truth (Alexandriane, 1995: 27). André Breton, the leader of the Paris group and lynch pin to the inception of Surrealism, called this process the 'marvellous', a term which stems from Romanticism and which I will examine in detail in Chapter One. Unlike most art, design or literature movements, Surrealism has no specific style or medium and is instead a set of themes, ideas and methods for producing works or achieving the 'sur-real'. Many of these approaches are derived from the work of Sigmund Freud, including the use of fictional or actual dreams, the confusion of reality with fiction or fantasy, the revelation of difficult

realities which have hitherto remained hidden, and the use of fictional or actual chance happenings.

Underpinning the Surrealist use of these Freudian-inspired themes and strategies is a socio-political agenda which owes much to the anarchist movement and communism. Surrealism is often used, to a greater or lesser degree, to critique perceived restrictions and repressions imposed by materialism or capitalism; this usually happens in a way that challenges our expectations of Western culture and is characterised by aggressive disruption or protest. As it affirms in the quotation that opens this introduction, Breton famously declared the 'simplest Surrealist act' to be 'dashing down into the street, pistol in hand, and firing blindly, as fast as you can pull the trigger' (Breton, 1930: 125). He continued, stating that 'anyone who has not dreamed of thus putting an end to the petty system of debasement and cretinization in effect has a well-defined place in that crowd, with his belly at barrel level' (Breton, 1930: 125). Hence my second research question: 'To what extent is the Surrealist penchant for protest manifest in British films?'.

Rebellion, if not protest, is, similarly, perhaps the single most important feature of Surrealism's direct forbear, Romanticism. Romanticism was, like Surrealism, diverse, and also like Surrealism, it prioritised experience over both rationalism and religious beliefs and dogmatic practices, such as those derived from class position and other status-led hierarchies. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, these impulses were, of course, deeply controversial and often even criminal, despite the fact that, if considered in a modern day context, they can seem merely emotionally expressive.

In the earliest days of the Surrealist movement during the 1920s and 1930s, central figures such as Breton cited Romanticism as the model upon which Surrealism should advance itself. In the first Surrealist manifesto, he cited the English Gothic novel, Matthew Lewis' *The Monk* (1796), as a perfect Surrealist work and an example for all Surrealists to follow (Breton, 1924: 14-15). As I will explain in Chapter One, numerous other texts of this eighteenth and nineteenth century arts movement were credited by the Surrealists as important to their practice. Later on, in 1934, Breton described Surrealism as 'the prehensile tale of Romanticism' (Breton, 1934: 177) (that is, a tale that grips firmly, acting as a highly articulate and strong fifth limb, like that of a monkey). Breton's declaration was taken up by the English Surrealist group, who used it to confirm the affinity of English culture and Surrealism (Sykes Davies, 1936: 124) and his words remain important to the

Surrealist movement in England, inspiring the title of the Leeds Surrealist Group news bulletin (Leeds Surrealist Group, 1997-present).

The interweaving relationship of Romanticism and Surrealism was also noted by the influential French/Greek film commentator and member of the Paris group, Ado Kyrou. He celebrated what he saw as the close relationship between the two movements in British film in his 1951 article 'Romanticisme et Surréalism'. It is interesting to consider how his discussion of British film might have continued after his death in the 1960s, a proposition that leads to my third research question: 'To what extent does the Surrealist tendency in British film draw upon traditions of Romanticism?'.

Surrealism and Romanticism are both characterised by a motivation to push the boundaries of our understanding of reality. As such, an engagement with these concepts also encourages an engagement with the debates about realism and the fantastic therein. A fourth research question thus asks, 'If we look at British cinema through the lens of Surrealism, what can this tell us about the dynamic of realism and the fantastic in British film?'. In answering this question, I will argue that the concepts of realism and the fantastic are not always opposites, or even static, and that looking through the lens of Surrealism illuminates a flexible correlation between the two in British cinema.

My thesis is divided into two parts. The first concerns historical developments and is made up of two chapters that identify key elements of Romanticism, Surrealism and Surrealism on film, and four chapters which survey Surrealist tendencies in British films. Chapters One and Two identify key themes and storytelling methods of Romanticism and Surrealism, and Surrealism on film, respectively. In them, I identify connecting threads between the three with Lewis Carroll's Alice stories as bridging texts. The latter four chapters are designed to illustrate principal trends and tendencies identified in British cinema from the earliest days to the present. For the purpose of this thesis I have defined British films as those that have been funded by predominantly British sources and that have been made in Britain, regardless of whether they actually represent Britain and British characters, or are made by British nationals.

The second part of my thesis is titled, 'Super-realism with Teeth: Filmic Essays on Surrealism in British film'. It is dedicated to two films made in the UK in the 1980s by Neil Jordan, *The Company of Wolves* and *Mona Lisa*, which I read as a complementary pair of filmic essays about Surrealism in British film. I chose these two films for these detailed case studies

because they best represent the themes and ideas that run through my survey of British cinema. Reading them as filmic essays allows for a closer study of the way Surrealist strategies and ideas are mobilised in British film.

In the first two chapters of my thesis, I explain those means of remonstration. Chapter One traces their origins in Romanticism, looking at the way in which the mere contemplation of personal truth, as opposed to religiously or politically imposed ideology, was an act of profound rebellion during the late 1700s to the 1830s, the high Romantic period. I identify specific storytelling methods as integral to this, looking at the Gothic novel as an arena in which that which was forbidden, or difficult, could be explored. I argue that there is a direct evolution from these styles to later Romantic literature and to Surrealism on film, defining what I mean by the terms Romanticism and Surrealism. I posit Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (first published in 1865) and *Alice Through the Looking Glass* (first published in 1871) as important transitional texts in this development, exploring key aspects of their narrational method.

In Chapter Two I initially survey existing literature about film in relation to Surrealism, Romanticism and narration. I then look at the narrational styles already identified in Chapter One, but this time, as defining factors of Surrealist activity in films, using the work of Luis Buñuel as a case study. Buñuel protested against oppressive religious and social directives not only in the content of his films but also in their form. As such I pay particular attention to his methods for overturning the storytelling conventions of Western commercial cinema. I also define my terms for discussing film narration in this chapter, drawing upon the established canon of writing and vocabulary already in use in this area.

I begin my historical survey of British film by reviewing the small amount of existing writing that deals with art in British film. I then divide the Surrealist influences in British film into genres which are loosely based on the categories of Surrealism in British film established by Andrew Spicer in his 2007 essay, 'An Occasional Eccentricity: The Strange Course of Surrealism in British Cinema'. Each genre is given a chapter. In Chapter Three, 'Super-realism in British film', I consider those strands of British filmmaking, including documentary, that draw upon Surrealist methods to represent actuality. Chapter Four, 'Gothic elements, Surrealism and British film', considers a category for which Freudian notions of the return of the repressed and the Gothic novel are particularly significant. Chapter Five, 'Satire, Surrealism and British film', considers films from the earliest years to

the present, and also includes a discussion of television. Finally, Chapter Six, 'Surrealism and Artists' Film and Video in British Film', looks at the more experimental side of British filmmaking, and as such is an entirely new addition to Spicer's categories. The study of Jordan's *The Company…* and *Mona Lisa* in the second part of my thesis is inspired by Spicer's suggestion that we might usefully identify a category of British Surrealist films by focusing on particular auteurs. I open this discussion with sign-posts to further possibilities for the study of Surrealism and the British auteur, many of which will already have been touched upon in my survey chapters.

My historical survey chapters are framed as a series of genres because, to date, most British cinema studies have been dominated by an interest in two genres that are constructed as opposites, namely realism and fantasy (see e.g. Hill, 2010 and Murphy, 2009). My thesis problematizes that approach, and responds to John Hill's call to move beyond this increasingly static scenario in his 2010 appraisal of British cinema studies. It also replies to a much earlier but very similar call from Andrew Higson, in his 1983 essay, 'Critical Theory and British Cinema'.

The first two historical survey chapters, about super-realism and Gothic elements in British film respectively, allow me to address directly my core question about the dynamic of realism and fantasy in British film. In those, I aim to make what is familiar (realism and fantasy as two opposing factions) seem unfamiliar (whereby super-realist and Gothic approaches often overlap and merge). My purpose is to destabilize any idea of realism and fantasy as fixed states, instead, presenting them as fluid and often interchange-able. I thus draw attention to the correlation and often coalescence of realism and fantasy in British film.

In the process I will look at a selection of films and television, most of which are already well known in British cinema studies. In my chapter about realism, for instance, I will of course focus on Jennings, who is best known for his work as a documentary filmmaker but who was also a self-proclaimed Surrealist artists and instigator of Surrealist activity in Britain.

I take a similar approach in my chapter about Gothic elements in British film, which are so often positioned as the opposite of realism. I instead draw attention to ways in which the Gothic and the realist work together or even become one and the same. *Dead of Night* (1945) fits this bill perfectly, because it is associated with fantasy/horror, while one of its

directors, Cavalcanti was a Surrealist. Likewise, the films of Terence Fisher, along with the rest of the Hammer Horror oeuvre, were identified as a kind of un-self-conscious Surrealism by David Pirie (1973). Exploring Gothic elements also allows me to focus directly on Romanticism in British film; hence I can begin to address its relationship with Surrealism.

Building on this context of super-realism and Romanticism, my next genre survey, about satire, allows me to focus more directly on protest. I do this by looking at both the content of key films, and indeed television programmes, and at the way they are narrated. Themes, strategies and motifs from Carroll's Alice stories are also brought to the fore in this chapter as they have a particularly strong presence in British Surrealist-influenced satire. Carroll's ideas are often drawn upon to undermine perceptions of realism and fantasy, sometimes in shocking ways that often register dissent. Hence this chapter brings together the themes of Romanticism through references to Carroll, the reality/fantasy dynamic, and protest. In my final survey chapter I continue to explore these paths when looking at artists' film and video in Britain. Of course, Surrealism has a strong association with fine art and it is useful to see how that plays out in British film. Fine art is often, by its nature, concerned with personal expression, a central concern of Surrealism, and that emerges as one of the key themes of this chapter. My survey of British films concludes with the finding that the second half of the twentieth century is richest in Surrealist impulses; while the key motivation of that movement, protest, is also stronger during this time than at any other.

In the final two chapters of my thesis, I focus on *The Company…* and *Mona Lisa* as films in which the themes, ideas and influences of Surrealism in British cinema identified in the previous historical survey chapters are incomparably abundant. They are selected, in part, as a response to the increasingly independent production circumstances of the period in which they were made. The British studio system had dissipated from the 1960s onwards, allowing a more individualistic mode of film production. Alongside this, television became increasingly relevant both on its own terms, and in relation to film production. This meant that a greater number of films were being made in an independent context, with relatively freer production methods, facilitated by funding bodies such as BBC Films, Film Four, the BFI and the UK Film Council. These circumstances are well documented (Barber, 2013; Harper and Smith, 2012; Higson 1994 and 2011; Murphy, 2000 and 2009; Newland, 2010; Shail, 2008; Street 2009; Walker, 1985) and I do not propose to discuss them in any detail in this thesis. Rather, I am interested in how far these circumstances allowed for a different sort of engagement with Surrealism to that found in earlier British films. As my historical

overview of Surrealism in British cinema demonstrates, there were certainly moments of Surrealist influence on British cinema prior to the 1970s, but they are few and far between, and either occur outside of the studio system (in early cinema, for instance, or in the documentary movement) or they burst out in some of the more low-brow or critically disreputable genres (such as the Crazy Gang comedies and the horror film).

The development of a freer production context for the British film industry and the increasing involvement of television coincided with protest coming to the fore in British film. It is this quality that makes the period since the 1960s so important to my study because Surrealism is, at its roots and first and foremost, a form of protest. My readings of the two filmic essays in the final two chapters draw attention to the way in which techniques of dissent are borrowed from Surrealism and re-deployed in the context of late twentieth-century British film.

It may perhaps seem perverse to give over such a large part of my thesis to case studies of just two films, both from the 1980s and by the same director, especially since one of them, *Mona Lisa*, has not been at the forefront of previous discussions of the Surrealist influence in British cinema. But there are in fact good and important reasons for proceeding this way. It was tempting to focus on the work of Monty Python and Terry Gilliam, which certainly provide examples of strong Surrealist influence. It is also impossible to ignore the contribution of Derek Jarman, who is arguably the most authentically Surrealist of all the directors I have looked at. Identifying the most Surrealist British filmmaker is not however the main aim of this thesis, although it is certainly a useful, if secondary, purpose.

The primary purpose is to address debates in British cinema studies by looking at British films (and related television) through the lens of Surrealism and identifying an over-arching map of those findings. Neil Jordan could not have come up with two films that better exemplify what I want to discuss here and no other filmmakers address the themes of this thesis in such a comprehensive way. In fact, on viewing the films, it seems almost as if Jordan, an Irishman, came to Britain and decided to make characteristically British films. This combined with his fascination for Romanticism and Surrealism means that, like a magnet, he has pulled together the key themes and ideas associated with Surrealism across British film and poured them into these two films. Along with his fascination for subverting genre, this makes these examples of his work, when placed together, an eloquent channel for the state of play in British cinema and Surrealism.

Choosing to study *The Company...* and *Mona Lisa* in such a thorough manner provides a foundation for the study of Surrealism in British film in two main ways. My readings of Neil Jordan's films offer a conceptual foundation for studying Surrealism in British film which is almost completely absent from current debates about British cinema. Studying them so closely offers the chance to provide a well-equipped tool box with which to continue explorations of this subject. This task is just as important, if not more important, than extending Spicer's mapping of films from the whole of British cinema that are relevant to studies of this topic.

The Company... and *Mona Lisa* also echo the concerns of my first two historical survey chapters about the relation between realism and fantasy in British films, acting as a microcosm of the debate about those genres. They seem, on first viewing, to be polar opposites. *The Company...* is highly fantastical, and perhaps the most obviously Surrealist-inspired film included in my study. Conversely, *Mona Lisa* seems to belong in the realist tradition of British film and is, of all the films I discuss in this thesis, the least obviously associated with Surrealism. This fact makes the film an even more important choice when considering my primary research question about what an engagement with Surrealism can bring to the study of British film. Like British cinema as a whole, *Mona Lisa's* connection to Surrealism has been overlooked, and for similar reason – it seems too closely allied to realism. Through my analysis of the film, I provide a case for why British cinema's association with realism makes Surrealism more relevant to its study, not less so. I will argue that my close readings of Jordan's films, in fact, dispel any notion of realism and the fantastic as mutually exclusive polar opposites, thus answering the question about what we can learn about the realism/fantastic dynamic if we look at British cinema through the lens of Surrealism.

Framing my discussion with just two closely related, but superficially different, films smoothes the progress of my exploration of an exceptionally complex and broad range of artistic concepts associated with Romanticism and Surrealism. These ideas have been little discussed in the context of British cinema before, so their introduction must flow with as much ease as possible. Jordan has a fascination for Surrealism, Romanticism, the shifting boundaries between the real and the fantastic, and the storytelling process which he often plays out in a self-conscious manner. His engagement with these areas is far too intellectualised to be credited as anything approaching an orthodox version of Surrealism in the way that the work of a freer film maker such as Derek Jarman could. However,

together, *The Company...* and *Mona Lisa* represent an incomparably rich framework for an explanation of the artistic and literary concepts and practices that might arise for anyone attempting to look at British film through the lens of Surrealism. Such an unfamiliar topic would only be further complicated and distracted if I were to present it using an entirely survey-lead approach with only brief accounts of many different films.

Even so, in the context of current studies of art in British cinema it will seem to some that my choice to include two chapters about *The Company...* and *Mona Lisa* is an eccentric one. This is in part because mention of Surrealism in the context of British film has so far been dominated by Jennings and his government film unit cohorts because of their involvement with the official Surrealist group in London. But also because the popular understanding of Surrealism is allied closely to a sense of the visually perverse, a sense that is perhaps better encapsulated by the films of the Monty Python team, and especially Terry Gilliam. I would argue however that this reading depends upon an overly superficial idea of Surrealism as a set of strange visual motifs, which possibly stems from the fact that, on first glance, that is what much of the art of the Surrealists looks like. Visual strangeness is however only a frequent, but not always present, symptom of Surrealism, and it is often present when the more substantial and meaningful ideas and methods associated with the movement are minimal, or even absent. If we adopt a less superficial understanding of Surrealism it makes much more sense to discuss Jordan's films in depth as case studies for my thesis, as I will hope to demonstrate.

Surrealism itself, cannot, in fact, be considered a visual style at all. To define it as such would be a disservice to studies of British film and of Surrealism. Rather, Surrealism is driven by a desire to change personal and political experiences, usually in the face of oppressive circumstances. That motivation has resulted in many different manifestations which are all characterised by contrariness, disobedience and rebellion. These methods are designed to shock, on the deepest cultural, personal and political levels. They are also, of course, new to discussions of British film. It follows, therefore, that this thesis addressing the relationship between Surrealism and British film should surprise, and even challenge the expectations of some readers.

In considering the extent to which the Surrealist penchant for protest is manifest in British films, I focus my case study chapters on the second half of the twentieth century. I argue that, like the Surrealists themselves, Jordan sends a signal of dissent against contemporary

life. He does this both through subject matter, by addressing issues current to the films' making, and with narrative strategies which tear down, or agitate, up-to-date (at their time of making - and often beyond) expectations of cinematic storytelling. My readings of *The Company...* and *Mona Lisa* I thus write with an appeal made by Jennings' in mind, for Surrealism in Britain to fulminate in its reaction to it contemporary society (Jennings, 1936: 167), something which Jennings himself was not able to do in his films.

In this thesis I continue the initiation of British cinema studies in the ways of modernism that was begun by Street, Spicer and Wollen by unpacking the term modernism to look closely at Surrealism. This process reveals traditions stemming from Romanticism of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries that Surrealism in British film has not yet been allied with (at least in English language studies). The Romantic movement of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (beyond the idea of Romanticism as being merely emotionally expressive) is, itself, only just beginning to be explored in relation to British film (Hockenhull, 2008 and 2013). As such, these ideas require a comprehensive explanation. By undertaking a general survey of British cinema and detailed case studies of two key films, *The Company...* and *Mona Lisa*, I am able to do this in a coherent and thorough manner.

The purpose of my thesis is to bring together films that are relevant to debates about Surrealism. The chapters surveying Surrealism in British film identify several important, interweaving threads. These are, the significance of Romanticism to Surrealism in British film, thematically and in direct references; narrational strategies drawn from Surrealism (often with roots in Romanticism) on film; and the confluence - or clash - of the real and the imaginary. I also identify the tendency to protest in the second half of the twentieth century, an impulse that was nowhere near as frequent in other periods, but a crucial Surrealist motivation.

Filmmakers such as Jarman, Jordan, Issaac Julien, Jonathan Maybury and even Spike Milligan and the Monty Python team, often deconstruct authorial and narrational identity, in much the same way that Virginia Woolf did in novels such as *The Waves* (2000, first published 1931), dispelling the idea of some super-human, super-organised implied author, and encouraging the idea that fiction is an expression of genuine human emotion and experience. Just as Buñuel and Salvador Dali did in *Un Chien Andalou*, they let us know that beneath the carefully constructed cinematic craft and convention lies an unpredictable and often irrational human being or group of human beings.

The Carrollian impulse to fuse the actual with the imaginary and to collapse different spheres of time and space is revealed to be part of the authorial process. Some of the filmmakers I look at, such as Jordan and Keiller, are self-conscious in their appropriation of this and other Romantic notions and include direct references to significant texts from this period and to Surrealism. Others achieve this in a less self-conscious and referential manner, but their work is still rich with themes and techniques that have their origins in Romantic/Surrealist impulses.

It is important then to establish a frame of reference on which to draw when discussing British cinema in relation to Romanticism, Surrealism and Surrealism on film. In the following historical context chapters I do just that by linking important pre-Surrealist impulses in Romantic art and literature, such as themes and storytelling methods, and then tracing them through Surrealism. Following on from this, in Chapter Two, I trace how those same themes and methods are played out in Surrealism on film, using the work of Buñuel and Dali as case studies. Perhaps most importantly, though, I begin in Chapter One by explaining what I mean when I use the word Surrealism.

Part one: Historical Developments

Chapter One: Surrealism and English literature: Traditions of the Marvellous.

In Plato's dialogue *Ion,* the central character, and the drama's names-sake, is a prize winning 'rhapsode', a professional reciter of poems. Ion reads with wild abandon, his hair standing on end and heart thumping with each performance as he enters a state akin to madness (Plato, 380 BC: 7-17). He represents the irrational and, in a debate with Plato's teacher Socrates, defends his role in the arts, placing passionate fervour and the ability to carry his audience into emotional intensity above rational understanding. Plato's dialogue finds no resolution to this debate, but Ion and Socrates' conversation remains a fascinating and timeless exploration of the dynamic relationship between the irrational and the rational.

Like Plato's Ion, André Breton, the leader of the first Surrealist group and author of its manifestos, advocated an intensification of emotional experience, a kind of liberated madness termed 'the marvellous'. And, like Plato, he championed a questioning of notions of the rational and the irrational, stating in his second manifesto that

> Surrealism's] function is to examine with a critical eye the notions of reality and unreality, reason and irrationality, reflection and impulse, knowledge and "fatal" ignorance and usefulness and uselessness'. (Breton, 1930: 140)

Breton's polemic is even more extreme than Ion's, as the Surrealist advocated complete immersion in the marvellous as a philosophy for all of life, not just as a way of producing art. For Breton and his Surrealist followers, the marvellous equated to an absolute escape from cultural conventions and restrictions. It represented pockets of complete freedom which had been reached by the practitioners and their audiences. These marvellous moments provided the viewer or reader with a strange rapture combined with unease and represented times when what had seemed safe or predictable was over-turned. The task of the early Surrealist was to unlock this freedom in a deliberate and self-conscious manner.

For Breton and his compatriots, making the entire world marvellous became an evangelical cause which they pursued with the intensity of religious prophets.

In this chapter I will briefly trace the marvellous through Surrealism and its roots in the Romanticism of the late eighteenth and early to mid nineteenth centuries, exploring these concepts and establishing my terms in readiness for my later chapters. Firstly, and most importantly, I will define what I mean by Surrealism, but I will also give a short definition of the term Romanticism. I will then draw upon Lewis Carroll's Alice stories as case studies with which to illustrate some of the core themes of the thesis and of the relationship between Romanticism and Surrealism: the dynamic between actuality, realism and the fantastic, and the way in which this dynamic can be manifest in storytelling.

Definitions of Surrealism

Most academics and historians find it tricky coming to a satisfactory definition of Surrealism. This is especially true for studies of works produced since the mid-twentieth century because Surrealism has become viral-like, constantly evolving, with elements of it passing from one medium to another and seemingly mutating with each transition. Subsequently, the terms 'Surrealism' and 'Surrealist' can be applied to elements of a vast range works across practically all media. To confuse matters further the term 'surreal' has passed into common use in the English language to mean 'strange', bizarre' or 'unnerving', a usage which has only a passing resemblance to Surrealism itself.

In order to paint a picture of the range of approaches to Surrealism and provide a context for my own definition of Surrealism I will present an overview of selected general surveys. Key writings by the most prominent scholars specialising in Surrealism, including Sarane Alexandrian's *Surrealist Art* (1985); Dawn Ades' *Dada and Surrealism* (1974) and *An Outline of Dada and Surrealism* (1978); Matthew Gale's *Dada and Surrealism* (1997); J.H. Matthews' *An Introduction to Surrealism* (1965); Robert Short's *Dada and Surrealism* (1980); Patrick Waldberg's *Surrealism* (1965) and David Hopkin's *Dada and Surrealism: A Very Short Introduction* (2004).

Most of these studies follow a chronological pattern which traces Surrealism from its pre-cursors, which always include Dada, but sometimes (Alexandrian and Walderberg) also include a discussion of earlier works such as the paintings of Bosch or the art and writing of the Romantics. All of the studies trace Surrealism through its engagement as an official

movement, with most featuring a final chapter about the legacy of Surrealism since the dissipation of most official activity. This is usually marked by the end of the Second World War, although it is sometimes identified as coinciding with the death of André Breton in 1966 (Alexandrian, 1985). As such, all of these surveys begin by explaining an idea or spirit of Surrealism which existed before the official movement began, while they also see the official activities of the Paris group, initiated in 1924 as the events which crystallized the methods and ideas of the movement.

Scholars who address Surrealism seem to agree that, unlike most art, design or literature movements, Surrealism is not an aesthetic movement and it has no specific style or medium. It is instead a set of themes, ideas, and methods which are mobilised when producing works (Ades, 1975 and 1978; Alexandrian, 1970; Gale, 1997; Hopkins, 2004; Matthews, 1965; Short, 1980; Waldberg, 1965). Another point on which scholars seem to be in agreement is that passionate creative endeavour in which the practitioner becomes completely lost in the creative process is key to Surrealism. This impetus is underpinned by Freudian methods and often has a left-leaning or liberal political agenda (Ades, 1975 and 1978; Alexandrian, 1970; Gale, 1997; Hopkins, 2004; Matthews, 1965; Short, 1980; Waldberg, 1965).

Within this shared broad understanding of Surrealism, the breadth of topics addressed in scholarly studies of the subject is vast, including gender, politics, architecture, fashion, and the Surrealism of various nationalities. Each writer will place their own emphasis on a different area of Surrealism depending on their particular subject matter, or in the case of generic surveys, whichever emphasis the writer chooses to make. For example a study that focuses on Surrealism and painting would, of course, take a more visual emphasis than a study of Surrealism and the novel; while a study that emphasises Surrealism in Belgium might focus far more on communism (because of the Belgian Surrealist group's allegiance to Stalin) than a study of Surrealism in France where, although communism (and anarchism) were important, they were not as fervently or militantly followed as in Belgium.

Amongst these writers there is a general consensus that Surrealism is concerned with breaking through the boundaries of what we *perceive* to be real because of our attachment to rationalism, in order to access a heightened perception of what actually *is* real. Key writers on Surrealism also agree that Freudian methods are central to this process. Walderberg illustrates the process of breaking free of accepted reality as follows:

> The Surrealists had two passwords: 'To change life' (Rimbaud) and 'To transform the world' (Marx). To change life meant to modify feeling, to guide the spirit in new directions, to wean the individual away from a rational view of the world. (Walderberg, 1965: 18)

Walderberg then explains that the second password of the Surrealists, 'to transform the world', instigated the involvement of organised politics. However, this is an area in which many of the surveys of Surrealism I list above differ. Some, like Alexandrian, Ades and Gale, see Surrealism as being concerned with a personal awakening, placing political motivations and involvement as secondary. Some, such as Matthews and Short, emphasize the importance of politics to Surrealism by exploring the subversive nature of Surrealist practice and tracing its roots in the anarchist and communist parties. And some, such as Hopkins, draw attention to the political motivations of Surrealism throughout their surveys, with Hopkins dedicating one of his six chapters to the political involvements of the movement.

Central to most definitions of Surrealism is the nature of the dynamic relationship between reality and the imagination. Short has described this dynamic thus:

> Like the Romantics before them, they [the early Surrealists] credited language with the power to change life, believing the quality of what we recognise as reality to be a function of our expressive, linguistic structures. (Short, 1980: 70)

Much of Surrealism is concerned with over-turning linguistic structures or their equivalents in whatever form they may exist. This is never more apparent than in the strand of Surrealist painting identified by Walderberg as 'descriptive', which relies on the language of realism, if only to reveal its artifice (Walderberg, 1965: 7). Examples include the work of Salvador Dali (see figure 1. 12) and René Magritte (see figure 1. 1). Francis Picabia, meanwhile, made art that was loosely figurative but which used objects such as matches and coins, another way of merging the actual with the imaginative (see figure 1. 2). On film, realist conventions of the cinema are undermined in a similar fashion, something I will explore in more detail in Chapter Two.

Figure 1. 1 René Magritte, *The Treachery of Images*, 1928-29, oil on canvas, 63.5 x 93.98cm. Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles. US. Magritte uses a realist style only to undermine it.

Figure 1. 2 Francis Picabia, *Match Woman*, 1924-5, matches, coins and oil on canvas, 90 x 70cm. Private collection. Picabia merges a semi-figurative fantastical image with real objects.

Very few films made in Britain have a direct association with the Surrealist movement, notable exceptions being the films of Humphrey Jennings, Alberto Cavalcanti (Aitken, 2000 and Remy, 1999), which I will discuss in Chapter Three, so it is useful for me to establish looser categories of films that include Surrealist ideas and motivations. These classifications provide a context for the films I discuss in the survey and case study chapters, while they also tell a story about the way in which Surrealism has evolved during the 90 years or so since its inception.

My Own Definition of Surrealism

Drawing on the work identified above, I will now present my own definition of Surrealism, by identifying a set of frequently recurring themes and ideas in works which are usually described as Surrealist. These ideas usually have some connection to Freudianism or Marxism, and/or are borrowed from earlier works, mostly from the Romantic period, which often pre-empted or mirrored Freud and in some cases Marx. Pertinent themes in such works include the representation of labyrinths, dreams, random journeying, chance happenings, automatic writing (whereby a person writes without conscious concern for convention or with any specific aim other than to reveal the workings of the sub-conscious), the eruption of repressed emotion or desire and rebellion or protest in the face of oppression, with class and religion being frequent pre-occupations. All of these themes relate to, or are an expression of, the Freudian notion of the return of the repressed, whereby that which has been suppressed – emotions, culture or ideas – erupts onto the surface of a person's life, or for the purposes of this thesis, into the content or form of a film. For example, both *Un Chien Andalou* (Buñuel and Dali, 1929) and *L'Age d'or* (Buñuel and Dali, 1930) address the emergence of repressed emotion in relation to personal relationships and religious, economic and political infrastructures.

These Freudian inspired methods and approaches are underpinned, in my understanding of Surrealism, by a socio-political agenda. Breton and, subsequently, the other core Surrealists, saw political change as a key agenda in Surrealism, identifying a combination of Marxist theory and Freudian theory the best tools for realising their aim. As Short pointed out the first aim of the Surrealists was 'the reconciliation of a generalized spirit of revolt with revolutionary action', with Marx's ideas their means of bringing these aims together

(Short, 1966: 3). Pre-established political agendas, then, seemed to be a way of aiming the Surrealists' random gun-shot in the street in the direction of socio-political change.

I have identified three different categories of Surrealist works which I present here according to degrees of orthodoxy. I will begin with work produced under the umbrella of the official Surrealist movement, then progress to works made with some association with the Surrealist movement, with the final category of works including those made independently of any official Surrealist group, but in which the ideas and methods of Surrealism are clearly identifiable. This final category is the most relevant to my discussion of British film, particularly the case studies of the two films by Neil Jordan.

My first category embraces a clearly defined group of revolutionary artists and writers who were guided by a coherent set of principles which were outlined in various manifestos. Members were committed completely, ideally living all aspects of their lives as Surrealists. The influential writer, Guillaume Apollinaire, first coined the term sur-realism in 1917 when describing his ballet *Parade* (Alexandrian, 1978: 27) – the sets and costumes of which were designed by Pablo Picasso and Jean Cocteau (figure 1. 3). However, the Surrealist movement did not gather real momentum until 1924 in Paris when Breton gathered together the ideas and intentions of a group of like-minded writers and artists in the first Surrealist manifesto. This, the first official Surrealist group, was mostly populated by former members of the Dada movement, including Breton. Membership of the group had to be solicited and earned through the approval of core members, particularly Breton.

Figure 1. 3 Stage curtain for Ballet Russes performance of *Parade*, Jean Cocteau and Pablo Picasso, 1917, tempera on canvas. National Museum of Modern Art, Paris.

Breton acquired his insight into the methods of Freud as a medical student and as an assistant at the neuro-psychiatric centre of Saint-Dizier in 1916, a hospital for soldiers returning from the battlefields of World War One (Short, 1980: 66). Freud's ideas were used on a grand scale during this period to attempt to deal with the immense psychological damage experienced by survivors of the Great War, so processes such as automatic writing and word association became much more widely known amongst the general public. Breton and Soupault embraced Freud's methods of automatism, writing the landmark literary passage 'Magnetic Fields' (Breton and Soupault, 1919) using Freud's methods of free association. 'Magnetic Fields' was an early experiment in what were to become essential Surrealist approaches (Alexandrian, 1970: 47 and Short, 1980: 66).

Freud's methods were to become the Surrealist way of life; they were not just a means for producing art. For example, when Breton and his disciples moved into the Paris studio which would become the 'holy place of Surrealism' (Alexandrian, 1970: 47) they dedicated themselves to what was termed the 'sleep period'. They immersed themselves in activities such as word association, dream analysis and automatic writing, whereby the writer sought a trance-like state which would unlock his/her mind from the constraints of language and convention. Through this process, the methodology and ethos which could form a new socio-political movement, which used the arts as a means of transformation was formulated.

The following poem by Robert Desnos, first published in 1924, is an example of the way in which the Surrealists drew upon conventions of language and literary form to frame nonsensical content drawn from dreams, word games and automatic writing.

'Good day Good evening'

Its night be the flame
And the red that colours the clouds
Good day sir
Good evening madam
You don't look your age

What does it matter if your embraces
Make the twin stars bleed

What does it matter if your face is painted
if hoarfrost glitters on the branches

Of granite or marble
Your age will show
And the shade of the great trees
will walk on your graves.

(Desnos, 1930 in Levine, 1981: 11)

Conventions such as language, sentence structure and verse form are clearly in place. However, they are sometimes misused or confused, as for example in the use of lower case letters to open the last lines of verses two and three. Any sense of verisimilitude suggested by the conventions of poetry and language are disrupted by the poem's non-linear narrative and nonsensical content.

Max Ernst represents the Surrealist process of finding a 'truer' reality through the exploration of dreams and other Surrealist methods of accessing the subconscious in his painting, *Revolution by Night* (1923) (figure 1. 4), another work that fuses conventional form with the irrational.

Figure 1. 4 Max Ernst, *Revolution by Night, 1923,* oil on canvas, 116.2cm x 88.9cm. Tate Gallery, London.

Breton and his fellow Surrealists' appropriation of dream analysis and other Freudian methods for accessing the subconscious became the bedrock of Surrealist methods. However, their activity cannot be equated with Freud's techniques precisely because the Surrealists pursued the sub-conscious so *self-consciously.* Where Freud could observe his patients by definition unknowingly making a Freudian slip, the early Paris Surrealists were too self-aware to allow most of their pursuits of the sub-conscious to qualify as slips, Freudian or otherwise. However, the *intention* to break through a barrier of what we conventionally presume to be real in order to expose a more acute truth remains integral to Surrealism.

My second category of activity that might be described as Surrealist is a step removed from the most orthodox works described above. It includes works which have been produced with a set of coherent principles and methods derived from the Surrealist movement as the core motivation of their creators. These creators were not, however, members of an official Surrealist group, and are not necessarily committed to the movement's ideas outside of a particular work. Although this kind of activity, which has been described by some as Surrealist, has occurred since the movement began in 1924, it has been more prevalent since the dissipation of the official Surrealist groups after the Second World War and when Surrealism, somewhat ironically, became part of the canon of artistic practices of Western culture.

Figure 1. 5 Paul Delvaux, *The Tunnel*, 1978, oil on canvas, 150 x 240cm, Fondation Paul Delvaux, St-Idesbald-Koksijde.

Paul Delvaux is a good example of this. He drew heavily on Surrealism for his paintings and has been celebrated as Surrealist (Alley, 1981: 164), but he was never accepted as a member of any official Surrealist group. His 1978 paining, 'The Tunnel', is typical of his style and is illustrative of the importance of Surrealism to his work.

My final category of Surrealism is the most directly relevant to my thesis. It includes works which mobilise ideas and themes borrowed from Surrealism alongside other, non-Surrealist methods and ideas. This is the way in which Surrealism is most frequently mobilised in the cinema. A completely Surrealist film on the other hand is very rare. The creators of these works are not members of any official Surrealist group, and draw upon Surrealism in varying degrees in their practice, while sometimes also adopting it in their personal lives and sometimes not. For example, Frida Kahlo adopted Surrealist ideas in her practice and in her personal and political activities (see figure 1. 6); whereas, the fashion photographer Tim Walker is only known for adopting aspects of Surrealism in his creative work (see figure 1. 7).

Figure 1. 6 Frida Khalo, *Self Portrait with Thorn Necklace and Hummingbirds*, 1940, oil on canvas, 62.2 x 48.3cm, Nicholas Murray Collection, Austin.

Figure 1. 7 Tim Walker, 2009, fashion editorial photograph from 'Tales of the Unexpected', *Harpers Baazar*, October 2009.

The definition of Surrealism I described above still applies. Just as with more orthodox Surrealist activity, these works are characterised by their impulse 'to find, over and beyond appearances, a truer reality, a kind of synthesis of the exterior world and of the interior model' (Walderberg, 1965: 8). Similarly, this impulse often results in a tension or struggle between actuality, realism and the fantastic, a dynamic which is of course particularly interesting in terms of British cinema studies.

There are two important strands of filmmaking that relate to this third category. Firstly, there are works in which practitioners have made use of a loose set of methods which are drawn from Surrealism, such as chance, the use of actual dream analysis or altered states in the filmmaking process. This first strand is often associated with fine art practices. It features works in which practitioners might, for example, represent their own dream-like inner lives – as it may be argued Derek Jarman does in *The Last of England* and *The Garden*. It also includes film makers who incorporate random encounters experienced by a film crew into the narrative of the final film, as Andrew Kötting and again Derek Jarman sometimes do.

The second strand of filmmaking that I have identified in this third category includes works made by practitioners who create fictional versions of an equally loose set of themes and ideas that are associated with Surrealism. These works include representations of chance

happenings, altered mental states and dreams, as well as films in which the boundaries between imagination and reality are blurred, as occurs in Jordan's *The Company of Wolves* (1984) and, rather less obviously, in his *Mona Lisa* (1986). Such films also include references to key texts of Surrealism, either thematically or in the form of motifs. Again, *The Company…* and *Mona Lisa* are useful examples of this. As I will discuss in part two of this thesis, they are both replete with references to works which have a strong association with Surrealism, notably, Carroll's Alice stories.

These various categories of Surrealist artworks illustrate the way in which the movement has evolved. It began as an unselfconscious phenomenon, the marvellous, which was originally detached from any art movement and was only identified retrospectively, in the first Surrealist manifesto. It then became a set of psychological and politically-derived methods which were practiced by a clearly defined and carefully selected group of people who were consciously seeking to create the marvellous in every area of their lives. From this point Surrealist ideas and methods spread, like a virus, to be used and adapted by practitioners working in an infinite range of contexts and media, some knowingly and others unknowingly.

Surrealism and English Culture

Surrealism is not often associated with English culture; however, the Surrealists' fascination for the marvellous has fostered strong links between Surrealism and Romanticism since Breton's first manifesto. Breton's famous declaration that Surrealism is the 'prehensile tail' of Romanticism, meaning, like a monkey's tail, illustrates the importance of Romanticism generally to Surrealism. Breton goes on to say:

> [F]or Romanticism to be a hundred years old is for it to be young, and … what has wrongly been called its heroic period can pass no longer for anything but the wailings of a being who is only now beginning to make known its wants through us. (Breton, 1934: 177)

Romanticism of the eighteenth and early to mid-nineteenth centuries was Breton's main reference point for his pursuit of the marvellous (Watson, 172: 1992), an age of revolutions when individual experience and expression was at the forefront of the arts (Day, 1996: 87). In his first manifesto of Surrealism, written in 1924, Breton cited an early English Gothic

novel, Matthew Lewis' *The Monk* (1796), as an archetypal proto-Surrealist work because of its representation of sexual liberty through dream-like experience (Breton, 1924: 15). Ever since then there have been strong connections have been made between Romanticism and Surrealism. This connection has remained important to Surrealists in Britain until the present day.

When Breton attempted to export Surrealism to England in the mid-1930s the strong affiliation between Romanticism and Surrealism was used as a selling point to a reluctant English public and arts establishment. Members of the English Surrealist group, Herbert Read and Hugh Sykes Davies, published chapters in the book *Surrealism*, which accompanied the 1936 International Surrealism Exhibition in London, in which they posited English Romanticism as being almost identical to Surrealism, with Breton citing Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* (1764) as an example of a complete Surrealist text, mostly because its author claims it to be a transcript of an actual dream. As Breton did before them, Read and Sykes Davies give particular emphasis to eighteenth and nineteenth century literature, but also mention art and design practitioners such as William Morris and William Blake as pre-cursors of Surrealism. Sykes Davies, drawing upon Breton's earlier words, wrote:

> Our [the Surrealists'] most immediate critical path, then, is intensified study of the nineteenth century, with its chief movement, Romanticism – the movement of which we are not a limp offshoot, but a vigorous continuation, a most prehensile tail... To become a Surrealist no violent act of conversion is necessary. It is enough to examine and understand the historical facts and to accept their implications. (Sykes Davies, 1936:124)

Ironically, Sykes Davies' call for an intense study of the nineteenth century and an appreciation of historical facts with no violent conversion necessary is in direct opposition to Breton's sentiments, since he rallied against the intense historical study of Romanticism inspired by its centenary celebrations; like Ion in Plato's dialogue, he championed the passionate immersion in pure emotion that was a frequent characteristic of Romanticism; he was not, like Sykes Davies, calling for Surrealists to study its texts.

Humphrey Jennings, artist, poet, film maker and core member of the first English Surrealist group (most famous for his work for the GPO and other government-sponsored

documentary film making bodies during the 1930s and 40s) attacked Sykes Davies and Read's view of Surrealism in his review of the 1936 exhibition catalogue. Jennings berated what he saw as their nostalgic vision for Surrealism in England as 'looking for ghosts on battlements and on battlements only for ghosts' and 'so protesting a number of English statements and so stiffly a pathetic representation of French statements' (Jennings, 1936: 167). For him, the vision of Surrealism for England which was put forward in the catalogue was no comparison to the 'passion, terror and excitement dictated by absolute integrity...' of the writings of Breton (Jennings, 1936: 167).

Despite these protestations against nostalgia for Romantic literature, Jennings did, in fact, share his fellow English Surrealists' fascination for Romanticism. He re-visits Byron repeatedly in his art work and literature, for example, and one of his greatest legacies is a compilation of works written during the Romantic period which reflect the effects of the industrial revolution in England, *Pandæmonium* (Jennings, 1986). Jennings clearly valued Romanticism, but he recognised that for Surrealism in England to be effective it needed to be immediately responsive to its own times, striving for political and social change, a quality he recognised in abundance in the manifestoes of the Paris group (Jennings, 1936).

Romanticism and Surrealism

Because Romanticism is integral to the research questions that drive my thesis, I will present a definition of the ways in which the term can be used, indicating the way I will be drawing upon it in this thesis. Before I begin I will present a survey of the literature that has addressed the relationship between Surrealism and Romanticism; it is a necessarily brief survey since very little has been written about this topic. The most significant discussions on the topic are those in the catalogue for the 1936 'Surrealism' exhibition, published in 1936, and a more recent article, Matthew Wickman's 'Terror's Abduction of Experience: A Gothic History' (Wickman, 2005). Wickman cites the prioritising of 'experience' through shock or confusion as the defining factor of the English Gothic novel's relationship to Surrealism. He identifies the notion of 'experience' as having its roots in the enlightenment, with individual discovery and personal experience beginning to take an important role in scientific, socio-political and artistic developments.

There has also recently been some attention given to the influence of Carroll's Alice stories on Surrealism. This legacy has been the subject of a recent exhibition and conference at Tate Liverpool, 'Alice in Wonderland' (2011-2012), and has been explored by Catriona McAra in her article 'Surrealism's Curiosity: Lewis Carroll and the *Femme-Enfant*' (2011). McAra writes mostly about the work of Dorothea Tanning and Max Ernst, but mentions many others who draw upon Carroll's writing, including Breton, Salvador Dali and Dora Carrington, drawing attention to explorations of feminine identity and slippages between womanhood and girlhood in some Surrealist works. She also notes the importance of transgressions between reality and fantasy in the Alice stories and in the Surrealist works that draw upon them.

There is in addition a handful of other publications that address the 1936 Jennings article that I described above. Three of these publications are exhibition catalogues celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of the 1936 International Surrealism exhibition in London, and most of them focus on this particular event. *Surrealism in Britain in the Thirties: Angels of Anarchy and Machines for Making Clouds* (Gooding, Friedman, Remy, Robertson, 1986) is an edited collection including articles written by a selection of art historians, along with some of the original essays by members of the first English Surrealist group such as Sykes Davies, Read and Gascoyne. The relationship between English literature and Surrealism is touched upon in the context of the debate between Sykes Davies, Read, Gascoyne and Jennings. Other exhibition catalogues which address English literature's relationship to Surrealism include *Surrealism in England, 1936 and After* (Renzio and Scott, 1986) and Eileen Agar's *British Surrealism Fifty Years On* (1986), which, like Gooding et al, mentions the relationship between English literature and Surrealism in the context of the Jennings debate. Michel Remy takes a similar approach in his book *Surrealism in Britain*.

The relationship between English literary traditions and Surrealism is given much more emphasis in an essay by J.H. Matthews in *Contrariwise: Surrealism in Britain 1930-1986* (1986), edited by Ian Walker. Matthews argues that the 'spirit' of Surrealism is more important when defining it than membership of an official group. He outlines an English literary heritage which includes Romanticism and other related works of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as important precursors, but concludes that 'to develop, Surrealism must come to live in the contemporary world of the dole and corporate capitalism.' (Matthews, 1986: 14).

There have also been a couple of books published more recently that address closely related topics. These include Michael Löwy's *Morning Star: Surrealism, Anarchism, Situationism and Utopia*, in which Löwy argues for recognition of the strong relationship between the libertarian political insurgence of eighteenth and nineteenth century Romanticism and Surrealism, with the book's title drawing on Victor Hugo's unfinished epic poem about the fall of satan (La Coss, 2009: vii). In a similar vein, Deaglán Ó Donghaile, in his book *Blasted Literature: Victorian Political Fiction and the Shock of Modernism* (2011), argues that the anarchist polemic of the English Vorticist movement had its roots in politically motivated popular nineteenth century English literature, such as roman noir novels and the work of Thomas Hardy. Ó'Donghaile's discussion, although not directly about Surrealism, draws strong links between English literature of the Romantic period and early modernism.

The term Romanticism can be applied to many varied areas of creative practice and philosophy, and I have identified three main ways in which the concept is used in scholarly discussions. Firstly, it can refer to the work of a particular set of practitioners, mostly writers and artists, working during the late-eighteenth up until the mid-nineteenth century across the Western world. They were not a coherent group, indeed, in some countries, notably in England, the term Romanticism was not used to describe these works until the late-nineteenth century (Day, 1996: 87). The Romantics were, however, identifiable through their shared interest in working self-consciously towards overturning the way people in the West experience their place in society, particularly their emotions and imaginations. This impulse was inspired by the French revolution (or revolutions), when overturning old societal structures and religious practices became a tangible reality. William Wordsworth and the Lakes school of poets in England were particularly noted for this insurgent influence (Day, 1996: 87). Romanticism strived towards a society in which individuals were connected with their own emotions and feelings, and against the old dictatorial systems of monarchy and religion.

The Romantic interest in emotions led to an emphasis on the imagination and fantasy as means of representing and provoking extreme reactions in, for example, Gothic novels such as Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto*; Fuseli's painting *The Nightmare* (1791) (figure 1. 8); Anne Radcliffe's noir novels, including *The Mysteries of Udolph* (1794) and *The Italian* (1796); and Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818). This tendency towards dreams and the imagination pitted Romanticism against the rational thinking of the enlightenment (Bullock,

1988: 751); however, Romanticism's exploration of the self and what would later, through the work of Freud, come to be termed the sub-conscious, was a direct result of the importance placed on free thinking during the enlightenment. The Romantic movement was thus a manifestation of the same enlightenment beliefs about the dissipation of religious and monarchical thinking that culminated in the first French revolution at the end of the eighteenth century (Day, 1996: 87). The Romantics engendered a set of recognisable and deliberate aesthetics. In painting and writing these included a rebellion against the realist style, which had become fashionable by the mid-nineteenth century, in favour of a more fantastical aesthetic; and in literature, a penchant for wandering, often labyrinthine narration which was often said to be based on dreams.

Figure 1. 8 Henry Fuseli, *The Nightmare*, 1781, oil on canvas, 101.6cm x 127cm. Detroit Institute of Art. Detroit.

Such ideas and aesthetics remained influential on creative practices during the nineteenth century, while egalitarian political thinking became more sophisticated, notably with Karl Marx's analysis of class oppression gaining in popularity by the end of that period. There was a continuing reaction against the worst effects of the industrial revolution with a tendency for practitioners to look to nature, the irrational or a time before the beginnings of the scientific age for inspiration. Examples can be found in artists such as the Pre-Raphaelites, who looked to a simpler, pre-industrialised age; William Morris and the Arts and Crafts movement, who valued nature and the craftsperson above industry; Thomas Hardy, whose writing is critical of class and gender oppressions, while connecting humanity to the natural landscape; Charles Dickens, who satirised the horrors of the industrial revolution and nineteenth century class oppression; and Robert Louis Stevenson, whose *Strange Case of Dr. Jeckyl and Mr. Hyde* (1882) is a direct anticipation of Freud's theory of the sub-conscious.

Alongside these developments in the arts and political thinking during the nineteenth century, science also began to place a greater value on the individual, notably through the work of Freud for whom the free rein of the imagination, or the sub-conscious, was an ideal state via which to achieve psychological liberation. Fashionable thinking was beginning to place a value – if often still somewhat theoretical – on *all* persons, not just those of religious, monetary or aristocratic note. While Freud, Marx, Dickens and Morris were not Romantics in the most orthodox sense of the word, they did reflect Romanticism's moves towards egalitarianism and explorations of the individual psyche. Marx, Dickens and Morris were also forbearers of the call to political action which was rallied by the Surrealists, although, of course, not all of these figures would have supported Breton's violent cry.

The third way the term Romanticism has been used is to describe any particularly expressive, flamboyant or imaginative creative work. The term Romanticism has been used in this way in relation to British cinema in the past (Wollen, 1993), notably by John Orr in his 2010 book *Romantics and Modernists*, to describe films made by directors such as Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger or, later on, by Jarman and Jordan. Although many of the films in my survey and case study chapters have been described in this way, my use of the term Romanticism differs from that of Wollen and Orr. I will be using the term Romanticism to refer to the first two classifications outlined above when considering how far Romanticism is significant to Surrealism in British film.

Lewis Carroll's Alice Stories

Carroll's Alice stories are, possibly, the most influential of all English writing on Surrealism. Carrollian narrative subversion is key to storytelling in Surrealism, particularly for Surrealism on film. The stories are full of narrative cul-de-sacs, unexplained events and unlikely creatures and situations, their accumulative effect being a narrative style in which reality and the imagination merge. There is no real sense to the narrational threads in Carroll's stories, while all nonsense is explained away as being the result of 'a dream'. Alice's dream initially presents as reality and seems just as significant, if not more so than anything that happens in the waking world (a central idea which connects the two films studied in detail in part two of this thesis).

Carroll delights in creating confusion about what is real and what is not in the narration of his stories. At one point, in *Alice Through the Looking Glass and What she Found There* (Carroll, 1993, first published 1871), Alice encounters a unicorn, and both she and the unicorn doubt each other's existence. The unicorn asks, dramatically, 'What – is – this?', when he learns it is a child. He is told: 'We only found it today. It's large as life and twice as natural!' the unicorn replies 'I always thought they [children] were fabulous monsters!... Is it alive?'. Alice retorts by doubting the unicorn's existence with 'Do you know, I always thought Unicorns were fabulous monsters too!'. But despite both parties believing the other to be a fiction, their quandary is resolved when the unicorn suggests 'if you believe in me, I'll believe in you'. Alice concedes, saying 'seeing is believing' (Carroll, 1993: 219), and a pact of mutual suspension of disbelief is confirmed, in much the same way as readers of novels, viewers of paintings or a cinema audience agree to suspend disbelief when immersed in the conventions of each medium.

In neither *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1993, first published 1865) nor *Alice Through the Looking Glass…* does Alice, however, seek verification of such fantasies as a talking rabbit, a floating cat, a garden of talking flowers or chess pieces with human qualities. She even accepts the existence of a mock turtle, with whose existence she is familiar because of mock turtle soup and whose great sorrow is that he is no longer a 'real turtle', seemingly great clues to his fictional nature. Carroll invites the reader to engage with his fictional creatures in a similar 'seeing is believing' approach to Alice's; during the Gryphon's tale (a Gryphon of course being a fictional creature), he requests that 'If you [the reader] don't know what a Gryphon is, look at the picture' (Carroll, 1993: 93). The situations, creatures

and characters Alice encounters during her adventures seem unbelievable; nevertheless, she *and* her readers experience them as being just as significant as the waking world that frames sections of Alice's stories. Again, Carroll raises questions about what we do and do not believe, and how far what we see *can* in fact be believed.

These Carrollian qualities have been adopted by many Surrealists, sometimes making reference to the Alice stories and sometimes in the form of a more subtle homage. Examples include Dorothea Tanning's painting *The Birthday* (1942) (figure 1.4), a self portrait which shows its subject standing in front of a labyrinth-like series of open doors with a Griffin-like creature at her feet; the work of Salvador Dali, who referenced them in many of his paintings, and in 1969, produced a series of illustrations for the stories; Max Ernst, who references them in order to explore childhood trauma in many of his photomontages, and who, in 1970, like Dali, also produced a series of illustrations for the stories; Francesca Woodman, who plays with scale in a domestic setting to explore domestic trauma – she uses Mary Jane shoes, just like the ones worn by Alice, as a recurring motif; and John Melville's *Study: Alice in Wonderland* (1937) and Bill Brandt's *Young Girl: Eaton Place, London* (1955) which both use scale to unsettle the viewer.

Figure 1. 9 Dorothea Tanning, *Birthday*, 1942, oil on canvas, 102.2cm x 64.8cm. Philadelphia Museum of Art. Philadelphia.

Figure 1. 10 Salvador Dali, *The Queen's Croquet Ground*, illustration for Lewis Carrol's Alice's Adventures in Wonderland, 1969, heliogravure with woodcut remarque.

Figure 1. 11 Bill Brandt, *Young Girl, Eaton Place*, 1955, gelatin silver print, 22.9cm x 19.7cm. Museum of Modern Art, New York.

Surrealism and Protest

Carroll's investigation of the dynamic between actuality and the fantastic are central to English Romanticism, to Surrealism and to my exploration of British film in this thesis. Despite these similarities; however, the degrees of insurgence in Romanticism and Surrealism remain an important, defining difference between the two. Walderberg eloquently describes this difference:

> Judging by the contents of Breton's manifesto alone, one might see in Surrealism only a shoot of the Romantic tree... made stranger still by a cutting from Freudian theory... [but] We must insist on the fact – too often passed over in silence by critics when they are dealing with a work of Surrealist character, and mostly unknown to the general public – that Surrealism was from start to finish a revolutionary movement. (Walderberg, 1965: 17 – 18)

Surrealism was not just an attempt at emotional freedom, but also an attack on all that the Surrealists thought might threaten freedom. Where English Romanticism of the eighteenth and nineteenth century was covertly political, Surrealism was aggressively so. The early

Surrealists sought to overturn *every* aspect of Western life by almost any means possible, from monetary systems to religion, governments and personal relationships.

This struggle resulted in an ongoing Surrealist engagement with Western conventions. Much of Surrealist painting and filmmaking *embraces* the conventions of realism, if only to tear them apart or expose them. A good example of this phenomenon is Salvador Dali's *Christ of St John of the Cross* (1951) (Figure 1.7) in which Dali presents a depiction of Christ's crucifixion in realist style, but for the painting's perspective having opposing vanishing points. Christ appears to be floating above a lake, but we see the scene from one perspective straight across the lake and from another perspective from above Christ, mirroring his own view and therefore possibly representing the view of God, looking down on Christ's figure and onto the scene below.

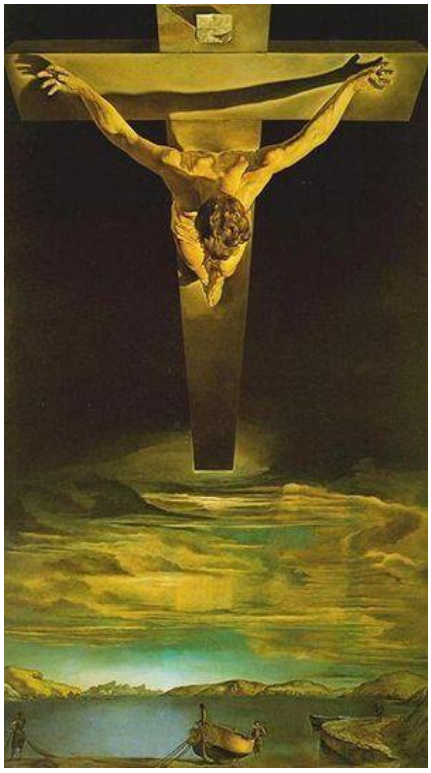


Figure 1. 12 Salvador Dali, *Christ of St. John of the Cross*, 1951, oil on canvas, 205cm x 116cm, Kelvin Grove Art Gallery, Glasgow.

Dali's painting creates a sense of a mysterious all-seeing eye, which can perceive a scene from different angles simultaneously. This reflects not only God's view, but also the

Surrealist (and Freudian) idea that human beings see their worlds in at least two different ways simultaneously. In Surrealism, the imagination and labyrinthine narration of the Romantics becomes a more acute and aggressive force. Where Romantic art such as Fuseli's *The Nightmare*, or William Blake's *The Ancient of Days* (1794), turned away from realism, Surrealist works, such as Dali's *Christ of St. John on the Cross* brought it centre stage, if only to expose the fragility of realism's premise. The Surrealists were telling us that realism relies on a pact between its creators and its audiences; it only works if they, like Carroll's unicorn and Alice, agree to suspend disbelief. In Surrealism, the author constantly reminds his/her audience that this pact is broken. Surrealist works suggest that just as the author has broken the pact of realism, so can the audience, an idea I will explore in more detail in the next chapter when I look at Surrealism and narration on film.

Conclusion: Surrealism and Film

In this chapter, I have laid key foundations for the exploration of Surrealism and British cinema I present later in the thesis. Even though I have, so far, barely mentioned film, I have explained the ways in which the terms Surrealism and Romanticism can be mobilised in scholarly discussions, as well as identifying the way I use those words in this thesis. The immediacy of Surrealism's aim means that it is in a state of constant evolution, while its ideas and methods have spread in a viral-like fashion across the arts. The categories of Surrealism I established in this chapter provide a map for usages of Surrealism. Most of the films I discuss in this thesis – in fact almost all films associated with Surrealism – can be described as being less orthodox, meaning that filmmakers use Surrealist ideas, either knowingly or unknowingly, but do not live as Surrealists or join a Surrealist group.

Making this distinction establishes the way in which filmmakers, who are often working in a financially driven context – even if they themselves are not fiscally motivated, engage with Surrealism. In this way, filmmaking differs from many other art forms associated with Surrealism, such as painting, montage or writing, all of which require minimal funds and only a single author. The collaborative and relatively expensive nature of moving image creative works sets it apart from most other Surrealist inspired art forms, at least historically, because, of course, recording and editing moving images is now an ordinary, everyday activity. Buñuel and Dali received private funding for *Un Chien…* and *l'Age d'Or*, meaning they had complete control over their production, but this was – and still would be – an exceptional circumstance. Even films made with arts funding, such as those made by

Jarman, Keiller and Kötting, have some kind of imposed agenda which is not derived from Surrealism.

It is for this reason, then, that Surrealism on film is usefully studied as an element amongst others, and as something that contributes to a greater whole, which may or may not be in sympathy with Surrealism. This, of course, leaves a broad spectrum of films that can be studied in relation to Surrealism. I have narrowed this down by choosing to look at films that are the most orthodox in terms of their engagement with Surrealist ideas. One of the most important qualities I have looked for, alongside the coalescence or fusion of reality and fantasy, is an overt engagement with protest.

I have argued that an impulse towards protest marks the evolution of Romanticism to Surrealism. Romanticism challenged socio-political and religious structures of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries by championing personal expression and truth of experience – something which at the time, was often a radical act of dissent. Surrealism, however, attacked those structures directly. It did not simply champion truth and personal expression; rather, it demanded them.

Jennings' understandable offence at the idea that an English conversion to Surrealism could be a smooth transition and free of dramatic protest is at the core of my argument. He was lamenting the dissipation of Surrealism's cry for revolution, a bloody one if necessary, in the hands of the rest of the London Surrealist group. Surrealism was being touted to the British as a comfortable, familiar way of creating art works, a cosiness that was at direct odds with the nature of Surrealism. Jennings understood that for Surrealism to have any chance of reforming Britain, it had to face contemporary society and culture head on, and not waste time looking for 'ghosts on battlements' (Jennings, 1937), or in other words, engaging with old fights against distant oppressions of the eighteenth and nineteenth century, all the while ignoring current issues.

In this chapter I have explored the roots of the ways in which this dissent is expressed in filmmaking by looking at Romanticism, and at Surrealism's earliest days. Subversive storytelling has always been a central concern of both movements. The Romantic approach to narration, paving the way for the Surrealists, confused time and space with visceral effect, beginning with the roman noir novel. This tendency was taken to a greater extreme in Carroll's novels, an impulse which was then embraced by the Surrealists. At first, automatic writing relied upon the conventions of language and grammar, but disordered its

flow, disrupting its rules. Later painterly conventions of realism were disrupted in a more self-consciously considered and systematic manner by the Surrealists, with Dali's *Christ of St. John on the Cross* an excellent example of this tendency (figure 1. 12).

The Surrealist reliance on a realist or figurative style (the Spanish painter Joan Miró being a notable exception) is unique to early modernist painting for which abstraction is more usual. Similarly, the Surrealist approach to filmmaking has been most celebrated when it has embraced realist, cinematic narrative conventions – just as automatic writing embraced language and grammar. For example, Buñuel and Dali's two films and more recently the films of David Lynch set up and then confound the expectations of audiences that are familiar with commercial cinema that is contemporary to their making. The bulk of my thesis considers the importance of this tendency to British cinema, but first, in the next chapter, I will look at how it plays out in cinema that is already firmly associated with Surrealism.

Chapter Two: Surrealism, Storytelling and Film

When Alice encounters the Mad Hatter and his tea party in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland,* she is asked to tell a story. As she doesn't know any, the Dormouse is elected in her place.

> '"Tell us a story!" said the March Hare.
>
> "Yes please do" pleaded Alice.
>
> "And be quick about it", added the hatter, "or you'll be asleep again before it's done"
>
> "Once upon a time…"' (Carroll, 1993 first published 1865:75)

In the exchange that follows, the Dormouse (the narrator) keeps falling asleep, leaving Alice (the audience) in a state of increasing agitation (Carroll, 1993: 75-77).

Figure 2. 1 Illustration of Mad Hatter's tea party for Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1863) by John Tenniel, ink on paper.

This exchange makes a useful starting point for a discussion of Surrealist storytelling on film, the subject of this chapter, and especially Buñuellian narration, a case study of which

is developed below. Carroll's Dormouse draws upon established convention in his storytelling: his opening phrase, 'Once upon a time...' (which also opens *Un Chien Andalou* (Buñuel and Dali, 1929), a film I discuss in more detail below), signals the most traditional of tales. And he does indeed follow the rules of cause and effect with a clear beginning and middle, even if we never get to hear the end. But the events he describes, such as three sisters who live in the bottom of a well and eat only treacle, are so unlikely that any internal logic is rendered unsettling. Adding to this instability, the Dormouse's somnolence sabotages any continuity. Alice, who is, of course, curious and outspoken, questions the plausibility of his story, her irritation compounded by his inconsistent commitment to telling it. Despite all of this, she is still fascinated and pleads with the Dormouse to continue, making every effort to rationalise each new development (Carroll, 1993: 77). Eventually, Alice becomes so stressed by this process, and by the Mad Hatter's insistence that she pay attention quietly, that she abruptly leaves the party (Carroll, 1993: 7). In fact, throughout this exchange, she behaves in much the same way as an unsuspecting cinema audience might when confronted with heavy doses of Surrealist-inspired narration.

In this chapter, I explore Surrealist disruptions of traditional filmic storytelling methods, starting with arguably the most orthodox example of Surrealism on film, *Un Chien...*, then moving on to Luis Buñuel's less orthodox art-house successes of the 1960s and 1970s. In the process I draw upon ideas established by Philip Drummond about time, space and traditional narration in *Un Chien...* (Drummond, 1977) which were expanded upon by Robert Short in his study of *L'Âge d'or* (Short, 2008). More recently these ideas have been re-organised and extended by Elza Adamowicz to include the study of other aspects of *Un Chien...* (Adamowicz, 2010: 31-61), and I, in turn, will expand on selected areas of Adamowicz's analysis.

Drummond and Short argue that commercial cinema narration is a powerful means of suspending audience disbelief, and that it is, therefore, experienced as a kind of filmic reality. They argue that in *Un Chien...* (and *L'Âge d'or* in Short's case) this illusion is continually disrupted as pockets of irrationality litter its progress. Drummond and Short's ideas about traditional cinema narration as a kind of realism are reflected in the arguments of William Earle. He draws attention to the fictionality of realism and the emotional truths of imagination, stating that in the most powerful films, the two converge (Earle, 1987: 12). By exploring these ideas in relation to Buñuel's art-house cinema, I will establish a model for my later readings of British films that draw in various ways on Surrealist ideas and

principles. Before this, however, I will survey the vast landscape of writing about Surrealism on film and explain how my own research fits into that landscape.

Surrealism and Film: a Literature Survey

In this survey I focus on scholarly works that draw attention to confusions and disruptions of realism and the fantastic, especially the disruption of traditional narration. There are many other approaches I could have taken, but, as I have already explained, ideas about the dynamic of realism, documentary and the imagination are central to British cinema studies, as well as being important to some of the most influential studies of Surrealism on film. By taking this approach, I begin to establish how Surrealist-inspired narration dovetails with the realism/fantasy dynamic in British film. First, I look at how cinematic realism has been regarded as central to narration in Surrealism and cinema (Adamowicz, 2010; Drummond, 1977; Short, 2003) and then at how more general ideas about the dynamic of realism and fantasy have been addressed by J.H. Matthews, one of the leading commentators in this field.

In her essay 'Romantic melodrama or magic theatre', under the heading 'Classic film narrative subverted', Adamowicz explains how traditional narration is central to storytelling in *Un Chien...*. She divides her discussion into sections on 'Plot structure'; 'Characterization'; 'Time and space'; 'Editing'; 'Soundtrack'; 'Repetition and serialization' and 'Close up shots' (Adamowicz, 2010: 32). In each case, she describes how our usual expectations are at first met through the use of established cause and effect and continuity editing processes, only to be overthrown and then re-instated.

Adamowicz's reading of *Un Chien...* builds on the work of Drummond and Short. Drummond wrote 'Textual Space in *Un Chien...'* (1977) in response to what he saw as a neglect of the formal qualities of *Un Chien...* in academic writing, despite it being, as he says, the most written about film in film studies (Drummond, 1977). He identifies complex patterns of narration, whereby notions of cinematic space are disrupted, focussing on two short sequences, the opening 'prologue' as he calls it, and the infamous 'donkey and piano' sequence, providing an almost frame by frame analysis. These two passages are accompanied by a chart showing relationships of time and space throughout the entire film, which I will draw upon in my own analysis of *Un Chien...* and some of the films in later chapters. Drummond argues that the fragmentation of traditional narration in *Un Chien...* makes it,

> a turning point between the alternatives of 'dominant' and 'counter' cinema. In other words, Buñuel and Dali's film instigates a third direction in film-making which confuses or combines traditional narration with techniques that seek to undermine its dominance. (Drummond, 1977: 65)

Short builds on this perspective in *The Age of Gold: Surrealist Cinema* (2003), arguing that films made by Surrealists before *Un Chien...*, such as *The Seashell and the Clergyman* (Dulac, 1927) and *Entr'acte* (Clair, 1924) are too divorced from traditional narration for audiences to really lose themselves when watching. This resulted, he argues, in an overly-conscious engagement, which is, of course, the antithesis of Surrealism's aim (Short, 2008: 94-5). Buñuel and Dali's films, however, allow their audiences to sink into their sub-conscious in the way commercial cinema does because they deploy traditional narration. Ironically, the most effective way for Buñuel and Dali to rage against convention was to embrace it; as Short puts it, they entered into a 'pact with the devil' in the following way:

> In mainstream cinema, an impression of reality or verisimilitude is usually assured by apparent fidelity to the audiences' experience of time and space. The audience's belief in what is seen comes from spatial continuity and the logic of cause and effect. It is these logics that *Un Chien...* mocks and largely defies. In terms of the ordering of the film, it is in the cuts – the very points at which classical narrative montage strives most for continuity – that the body of the film is dismembered. (Short, 2008: 94)

Short elaborates this observation, suggesting that rather than being representative of subconscious thoughts themselves, narration in *Un Chien...* and *L'Âge d'or* mirrors ongoing tensions between the conscious and subconscious mind (Short, 2008: 93-4). He argues that Buñuel and Dali represent this experience, even re-creating it in their audiences, by using and then disrupting conventional cinematic narration in a carefully orchestrated manner (Short, 2008: 94). In his concluding chapter, Short indicates the legacy of techniques established in *Un Chien...* and *L'Âge d'or* in Buñuel's later work as well as for other filmmakers such as many of those associated with the French New Wave, and Terry Gilliam (Short, 2008: 174-6), who is, of course, important to my survey of Surrealism in British film.

The dynamic of realism and fantasy in Surrealist-influenced films is addressed more generally in J.H. Matthews' Pulitzer prize-winning *Surrealism and Film* (1971) and *Surrealism and American Feature Films* (1979). The first book looks at films by members of the official Surrealist group, and their writings about other films. However, in his second, he interprets a selection of films that were admired by the Paris Surrealists, plus *The Last Remake of Beau Geste* (Feldman, 1977), which, he argues, shows qualities the Surrealists would admire.

Three of the seven films he writes about have significant British connections, *Night of the Hunter* (Laughton, 1955) and *The Last Remake of Beau Geste*, the directors of both were British; and *Pandora and the Flying Dutchman* (Lewin, 1951) which was produced by a British company, Romulus films, with British funding, while the cinematography of the British Jack Cardiff (also known for his work with Powell and Pressburger) defines its distinctive style (see figure 2. 2).

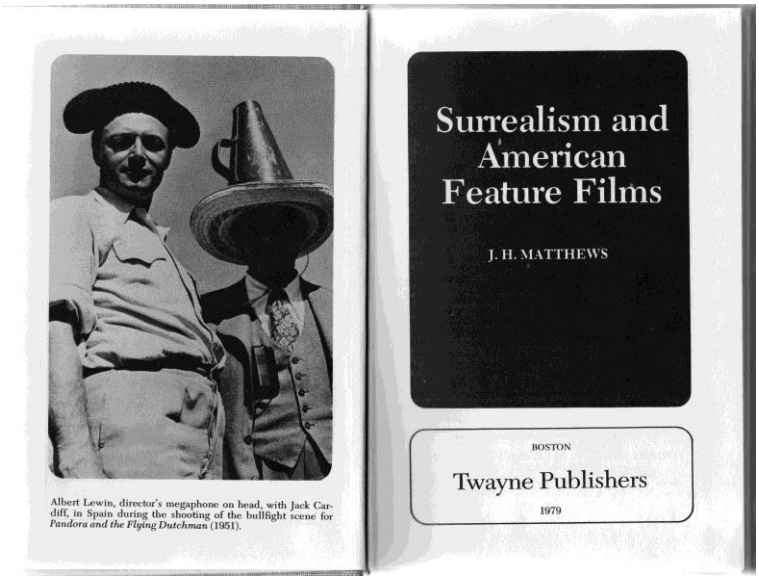


Figure 2. 2 Frontispiece of J.H. Matthews' *Surrealism in American Feature Films* (1979), featuring a photograph of the British cinematographer Jack Cardiff with director Albert Lewin on the set of *Pandora and the Flying Dutchman* (1951), usually classified as a British film.

In her article 'From Surrealist Cinema to Surrealism in Cinema: Does a Surrealist Genre Exist in Film?', Raphaëlle Moine raises concerns about the status of studies of Surrealism on film

in a broader humanities landscape (Moine, 2006: 99). She warns that Surrealism should not be treated like a genre and defined as 'what we collectively believe it to be' (Tudor in Moine, 2006: 104-105). She also observes a tendency to call films Surrealist because they include some recollection of Surrealism, often to indicate artistic value. She argues that both these approaches disregard intertwining dialogues in disciplines such as art history, design history and literature. Thus, she writes, using the term 'Surrealism' carelessly devalues film studies (Moine, 2006: 99). She does not give any specific examples of the term Surrealism being applied in this way so it is difficult to assess her argument against evidence; however, her polemic remains a valuable warning against ignoring established lexicons, debates and approaches, lest film studies becomes alienated from debates about Surrealism.

Moine's warning is sound because it is, indeed, important for film studies debates to be connected with those developed elsewhere in the humanities. Aligning our use of lexicon is a fundamental way of doing this. Hence, in this thesis, I acknowledge long-standing debates by using the terms Surrealism and Surrealist to refer to the movement itself: what I address in my study of British cinema is the influence of Surrealism in works that also draw upon many other inspirations. I do not define the films in my study as Surrealist; rather, I argue that they have sympathies with Surrealism, and that their study can be enlightened by a reflection on those sympathies. Crucially, I work with specific formal and thematic qualities that are associated with Surrealism, particularly on film, to explore the way they have played out in British cinema. Contrary to Moine's advice, I do, in fact, seek to identify artistic merit, in that I establish significant affinities with an artistic movement. However, my discussion is not short-hand, as Moine has suggested of other studies of Surrealism and film: it is structured around a carefully selected set of formal techniques, themes and philosophies that are derived from established Surrealist works.

If one were to stick rigidly with Moine and accept her argument that we should use only the most orthodox of definitions of Surrealism, this would also leave film studies out of step with other humanities disciplines. For example, studies of Surrealism and design have proven valuable inter-disciplinary contributions to the way in which Surrealism's anti-commercialism has influenced creativity in a usually highly commercial industry (Baudot, 2002; Blum, 2003; Clarke, 2005; Gibson-Quick, 2001; Mackrell, 2005; Martin, 1989; Palmer-White, 1996; Rawle, 2010; Wood, 2007); this thesis sets out to do something similar with film.

The key to avoiding positioning Surrealism on film as a genre is to clearly identify which elements of the movement's influence a study is addressing. It is also important to recognise a clear distinction between the colloquial use of the terms surreal, Surrealism and Surrealist to mean anything that is strange or unreal-seeming, and the aims and techniques of the Surrealist movement itself, which, conversely, is intensely interested in reality and authenticity. As Adamowicz, Drummond, Matthews and Short have explained, Buñuel and Dali's films mirror the tension between who we actually are and how we have to behave in order to fit into, and often to survive in, Western society. These filmmakers dissected cinematic conventions in order to show us that realism can often, in fact, disguise reality; as such, my next discussion addresses traditional narration.

Traditional Film Narration and the Concept of the Author

Debates about cinema narration more generally have, of course, been dominated by the ideas of David Bordwell since the publication of *The Classical Hollywood Cinema: Film Style and Mode of Production to 1960* in 1985 (Bordwell et al, 1985). He and his co-authors, Kristin Thompson and Janet Staiger, identify key issues in Western commercial film-making, right up until the time of the book's publication.

In the section on 'The Classical Hollywood Style', Bordwell addresses cause and effect narration and continuity editing, underpinning principles in Buňuellian storytelling. Bordwell identifies three systems at work in classical narration: 'a system of narrative logic, which depends upon story events and causal relations and parallelisms among them' - that is, cause and effect narration; 'a system of cinematic time'; and 'a system of cinematic space' (Bordwell, 1985: 6). Bordwell explains that devices such as lighting, framing and transitions from shot to shot (fades or dissolves and so on) can operate in each of the three systems. He also observes that 'space and time are almost invariably made vehicles for narrative causality' (Bordwell, 1985: 6), hence his analysis puts cause and effect structures at the heart of 'classical narration'.

The ideas that emerged in *The Classical Hollywood Cinema* are notable for their influence, but also because of the wealth of writing that challenges them; in fact, such work has become a veritable mini-industry. Discussions centre on the idea of whether or not there has been a fundamental shift in film storytelling style since the 1960s, with Bordwell and his colleagues in one corner arguing that there have been only superficial developments, mostly inspired by technology (Bordwell, 2004); in the other corner is a range of academics

who see the change as far more drastic, citing major shifts in marketing and technology, along with the emergence of film theory (Cowie, 1998; Dixon, 2001; Krämer, 1998; Maltby, 1998; Schamus, 1998; Schatz, 1993; Thanouli, 2009; Wyatt, 1994). Most of the narrative devices discussed by Bordwell and his fellow narratology specialists are not my main concern in this study; however some of them are, especially cause and effect storytelling and continuity editing.

Debates about terminology, and especially the appropriateness of the 'classical' label (Bordwell, 2004: 27-50 and Thanouli, 2009: 30-69), are also relevant to my study because I too need to decide on a suitable lexicon. The term 'classical narration' is problematic in this thesis because it refers to a wide range of cinematic narrational strategies and devices, when I am concerned primarily with the devices of cause and effect storytelling and continuity editing. Also, in a broader art history and literature context, classicism, of course, refers to ancient Greek and Roman aesthetics, which key Surrealists such as Breton saw as the antithesis of Surrealism.

The terms 'conventional' or 'traditional narration' offer an alternative that could be applied to a narrower set of devices than is classical narration; they are also suitably neutral in the context of broader visual studies debates. Of the two, I have opted for 'traditional narration' because it indicates an evolution of film language with a shared, dynamic, culture rather than the fixed state implied by the term 'conventional'. It is possible to say that cinema itself is too young to have developed any traditions of its own, but I would argue that cause and effect narration and continuity editing were deeply established fast enough and with enough longevity (some hundred years to date) to merit that mantle.

Because Surrealism on film is often concerned with the dynamics of what is and is not real, debates about storytelling, or from whom stories, or parts of stories, emanate in a film are important to my study. In particular I need an appropriate means of describing the role of the narrator. In 1992 Ed Branigan tackled this matter by identifying an eight-layered framework in his book *Narrative Comprehension and the Fiction Film*. Some of the terms he uses and his accompanying discussions are useful to this thesis; however, there are also problems with Branigan's analysis, which I will address before embracing any of his lexicon. The most significant issue is that so many of the different kinds of film narration he identifies overlap with or are even identical to each other. He presents a diagram with eight layers of narration, implying a kind of Russian-doll system of narrative techniques. Problems

arise with this system because film narration does not operate in such an ordered, structured, hierarchical or predictable way.

Nevertheless, his is one of the most significant analyses of film *narrators* available and has been drawn upon by such notable figures in the field of film narration as Bordwell (1985) and Jakob Lothe (2000). Branigan arranges his framework in 'levels', in what he calls 'a hierarchy of narration' (Branigan, 1992: 100), with four different kinds of direct narrators at the top end of his hierarchy, and four of what he calls 'focalization' narration techniques, the representation of the point of view and inner life of film characters, at the bottom.

Branigan begins with the 'historical author', meaning what an audience already knows of the perceived author of a film. He argues that, although the identity of this narrator has a strong basis in reality, audiences buy into a marketing image of a filmmaker or other author and watch films with a set of carefully managed expectations. Hence, although the historical author is real, what we know of him or her cannot be trusted; it is, at the very least, a creative interpretation of reality.

The second level Branigan identifies is the 'extra fictional narrator', meaning a character, voice-over or written text which takes ownership of the story. He cites as an example *The Wrong Man* (1956), in which Hitchcock introduces the film while standing on a sound stage. The director's voice leads us to the story as it unfolds in images but fades quickly, allowing diegetic sound to take over. Of course, this sequence represents both a 'historical author' and an 'extra-fictional narrator'.

Branigan expands the category of 'extra-fictional narrator' to 'implied extra-fictional narrator' for times when there is no voice over or character narration (Branigan, 1992: 89). There are a few problems with this, most obviously the fact that the phrase is over-long and wordy, while 'implied extra-fictional narration' is far more usual in film storytelling than 'extra-fictional narration', so it makes little sense to have it as a sub-section. In addition, Branigan places 'nondiegetic narrator', along with 'diegetic narrator', immediately below 'Implied extra-fictional narrator', even though their meanings seem almost identical, although it is difficult to be certain because he doesn't adequately define them. Tellingly, Branigan abandons 'implied extra-fictional narrator' to use Chatman's term 'implied author' later on in the chapter (Branigan, 1992: 91).

The second half of Branigan's hierarchy, 'focalization', refers to storytelling through characters. The first layer of focalization he identifies is when we can see a character's thoughts, memories or dreams; the next is 'external focalization' where we can see or hear what a character does but not from their direct point of view. Branigan describes the next two levels as 'internal focalization', meaning the character's direct point of view. For example, a close up shot of a cup of tea tipping towards the camera to signify a character drinking is 'surface internal focalization', while a blurred shot to show the point of view of a drunken character, or representations of dreams and private thoughts (Branigan, 1992: 93-104), or the lead character's famous baby apparitions in the US TV series *Ally McBeal*, would be 'depth internal focalization'. This final category overlaps with the first of his 'focalization' categories because it too applies to dreams, imaginings and unspoken thoughts.

Branigan's hierarchy of narrators reveals significant problems with imposing a set framework upon points of view in film narration. Moving image storytelling is so fluid and often so subtle that categories cannot be arranged hierarchically in a way in which one style is deemed more important than another; they will inevitably overlap, defying any allotted place. Further, I would argue that any set framework, not just a hierarchical one, would become problematic when applied to such a fluid and complex story telling medium as film, or to moving image narration more generally. In addition to this broader issue, Branigan's generic way of approaching film narration is not – on the whole – subtle or flexible enough for research which is based on close textual analysis.

Narratologists have wrestled over the question of how the overall narrator of a film should be referred to; however, this topic has not received the same degree of attention as other matters. In *Narrative and the Fiction Film*, Bordwell argues against the use of the term narrator, but does not propose an alternative. For him 'narrator' refers to a human being and he does not see film narration as human in the way literary storytelling is universally accepted to be. Furthermore, filmmaking is usually a team effort and he sees 'narrator' as referring to a single person (Bordwell, 1985: 61-62).

I would argue against this view for the following reasons: storytelling is a uniquely human activity, even though, historically, films have not always been seen that way because moving images are reliant on technology. However, just as literacy became widespread, so the moving image making process has become de-mystified through widely available

technology and social media. Perhaps an even stronger counter-argument to Bordwell's view is the fact that, in fiction, stories are often told by animals or even inanimate objects. A good example of this is Carroll's Dormouse. In addition, although films are made by many people, they are still able to present a single vision or world view to the same degree as literature. Co-authored books and so on work in a similar way because their narratives can also be presented by a single storyteller identity.

In analysis of fiction films, the term 'narrator' is usually only applied to character narration or voice-over narration – that is, to instances when there is a character telling the story. Seymour Chatman uses the term 'implied author' to describe the deliverer of overall narration (Chatman, 1978: 147), the closest existing term to my own view of film narration. It is still not perfect, I would argue, because what is implied is not so much an author, but a character narrator. The author(s) of a film construct a fictional storytelling identity which works to disguise their true selves, at times even obscuring their very existence. This means that the realities of the personalities and processes of the writers, directors, producers, designers, actors, cinematographers and so on are not usually implied, unless the author's identity is especially featured, as in some of Hitchcock's films (and even then we cannot be certain that this is the author's true identity, as I will explain later in this chapter). If an author is actually implied in either case, it is usually a fictionalised or semi-fictionalised identity through which the story is told.

Despite my criticism of the existing lexicon for film narration, I will refer to some of the terms I have discussed for the purposes of my argument, especially in the two case studies of individual films, where close appreciation of narrational dynamics is most important. However, I will use more concise phrases during my readings of the films thereafter which I will now explain. I refer Branigan's concept of 'diegetic narration' for any storytelling delivered from within the story-world, to distinguish it from 'non-diegetic narration', which refers to spoken or written words that are not part of the story-world. However, I will continue thereafter with the term 'character narrator'. I will employ another of Branigan's terms, 'depth internal focalization', to refer to the representation of a character's inner life on the screen. Although this has been established in film studies, it is still over-wordy when discussing already complex films; hence I will use the phrase 'character's imagination, dream or point of view'. However, I will actually continue my discussions with a more precise and tailored description of what is happening in the film. For the reasons I explained in the passage above, I will use the term 'overall narrator', rather than 'implied author', to

refer to the overall storytelling of a film. In addition, the two case study films the term 'implied author' could in fact refer to one or more of the characters in each film.

My choices define a useful set of concepts for discussing Surrealism and narration on film, and reflect my central concern about the relationship between realism and the fantastic. Most of the terms I use indicate whether a story is being told from inside or outside its own frame of reference, or refer to the entire storytelling process. In the films I look at, diegetic and non-diegetic narration tend to clash, especially in the two case study chapters, during which the interplay of narrator and character narrator are key. This brief analysis of different kinds of narrator is also useful in terms of laying the foundation for my historical surveys of British films, as well as the following analysis of storytelling in the films of Buñuel and Dali.

Narrational Confusion, Realism and the Fantastic in *Un Chien Andalou*

The roots of the realism/fantasy dynamic in Surrealism on film can be traced to Buñuel and Dali's first collaboration, *Un Chien...*, a work with undeniable relevance to Surrealism in the cinema because it almost certainly the best known and certainly is the most written about amongst scholars (Adamowicz, 2010). Hence, in this section, I explore the way that dynamic is played out in this film, identifying two key narrational methods: an engagement with the rules of continuity editing and cause and effect storytelling, if only to savagely undermine them; and the interplay of storytelling conventions derived from documentary and other realist traditions on the one hand, and fantasy and other fiction modes on the other. I will subsequently look at Buñuel and Dali's second film, *L'Âge d'or*, the documentary film *Las Hurdes* (1933), and Buñuel's later feature films of the 1960s and 1970s, made during his renaissance as an art-house filmmaker. These readings inform my responses to my core research questions about the dynamic relationship between realism and the fantastic, and about the place of protest in filmic Surrealism, qualities which are, as I will explain in more detail, key to Buñuel's storytelling method. *Las Hurdes* and Buñuel's later films work so well, I argue, because in many ways they represent, in an exemplary manner, the very conventions they undermine. *Las Hurdes* has been mistaken for an entirely genuine documentary film (Wright, 1971); similarly, Buñuel's later art-house work mobilises fiction film storytelling traditions expertly. I argue that Buñuel is able to communicate the complexity of his ideas about Catholicism, class and sexuality by manipulating a form that is familiar to almost everybody.

Buñuel had been working in the French film industry for a number of years when he and Dali made *Un Chien...*. He began in art direction, on the strength of his experience in theatre design while still living in Spain, and then became an editor and director, as well as working as a film critic and film programmer (Adamowicz, 2010: 71; Buñuel, 1984: 87-103; Drummond, 1977: 59; Drummond, 1994: vi-x; Matthews, 1971: ; Short, 2008: 59-62); thus, by the time he made *Un Chien...*, he had acquired considerable knowledge about the fundamental building blocks of storytelling in commercial film.

In this reading I build on existing ideas about narration in *Un Chien...*. I draw upon Adamowicz's framework of editing, space and time, and characterization. I add to this an examination of the use of documentary or documentary-style footage alongside obviously fictional footage, a film-making technique which is, of course, central to my thesis. By opening *Un Chien...* with the inter-title 'Once upon a time…', Buñuel and Dali signal an engagement with storytelling tradition; indeed, 'we are led to expect the unfolding of a straightforward, chronologically arranged storyline' (Short, 2008: 68). But those traditions, represented in film by cause and effect narration and continuity editing, are soon abandoned, only to be returned to in a frenzied cycle of repetition. This on/off quality encourages us to keep investing in the story as we would with a more conventional film, but our efforts are betrayed. Adamowicz described the process thus:

> [R]ather than rejecting cinematic illusion, Buñuel [and Dali] plays with it, using continuity editing from within. As in avant-garde films – or an amateur movie – the film is full of minor inconsistencies that subtly undermine the seamlessness of classical editing, foregrounding the montage process itself. (Adamowicz, 2010: 36)

Un Chien... leaves us suspended between coherence and incoherence. Thus, it incites a powerful reaction that Buñuel continued to provoke during his later art-house career, much like the Dormouse's tale does in *Alice in Wonderland*, which also begins with the phrase 'Once upon a time..'. The short sequence that follows Buñuel and Dali's inter-title of the same phrase in effect represents the film's overall message. *Un Chien...* demands that its audience sees things another way, with the conventions of film storytelling acting as a foil for this particular protestation. The narrator of *Un Chien...* is not in the traditional,

formulaic mode, as the opening inter-title would have us believe. Instead, this storyteller leads us by the hand through a brutal dissection of cinematic convention.

Figure 2. 3 Screen grab from *Un Chien Andalou* (1929), showing Buñuel's hands looking as if it is about to slash a woman's eye. Note the tie and striped shirt, neither of which feature in the bull's eye shot (which is too gruesome even to reproduce here).

Buñuel poses with a cut-throat razor, as if to slash the eye of the female lead (Simone Mareuil), who sits in front of him; this is followed by a close up of a bull's eye being slashed. Most viewers, even experts on the film, will close their eyes in horror at this point. Thus the fact that these are two separate scenes with two very different subjects is missed, and even viewers who keep their eyes open will be fooled into thinking the woman's eye is being slashed. This is, of course, an example of Kuleshovian/Eisensteinian montage whereby two separate scenes are cut together combine to create a new meaning and/or the idea of a single scene. This visceral start to the film jolts us out of any comfortable expectations about what may follow; while the idea of Buñuel slashing an eye mirrors his actions when cutting a film. The eye and the celluloid on which it is recorded appear to be cut simultaneously. In this way Buñuel and Dali symbolically destroy the eye that sees according to existing conventions, setting up a pattern that is repeated throughout Buñuel's art-house career. We, the audience, are unsettled out of any comfortable status quo that is implied by the 'Once upon a time…' opening inter-title.

Buñuel and Dali create further disruption by confusing characterisation in *Un Chien...*. Bordwell identifies recurring 'motifs' as Hollywood cinema's way of reinforcing 'the

individuality and consistency of each character' (Bordwell, 1985: 15), and I follow his lead in my analysis, focussing on the usual visual signifiers of character in cinematic storytelling (voice is, of course, absent in silent film). A character's name is perhaps their most obvious motif, but the protagonists of *Un Chien...* are nameless, creating an immediate and enduring enigma. We are, however, offered the possibility of trying to pin their identities down using other recurring motifs in their appearance and behaviour that Buñuel and Dali offer. This process, for the spectator, is akin to Alice's response to the Dormouse's tale: we keep trying to work things out, but ultimately there are not enough indicators to piece characters together coherently.

The female lead's appearance stays exactly the same throughout the film but changes in the appearance of the male lead (Pierre Batcheff) are plentiful, even extending to what seems to be his doppelganger, played by another actor (Robert Hommet) (Adamowicz, 2010). Developments in character identity are directed by the passage of time, in real life and in storytelling; hence, the confusion of time and of identity are necessarily inter-dependent.

Confusion of the woman's identity does occur, however, when she leaves the apartment to attend to the male lead who has fallen from his bicycle and lies injured in the street, she does so twice in immediate succession, each time in a slightly different manner and without going back inside. We are left wondering, are there two of her, is this another door, did we go backwards/forward in time? These questions are left hanging, as we try to join up the pieces of this puzzle according to the usual rules of moving image narration.

By opening with 'Once upon a time…', Buñuel and Dali place time at the forefront of the film, suspending its opening in the mysterious temporality of the fairytale (Adamowicz, 2010: 34; Short, 2008: 68). More precise indications are given on further inter-titles throughout the film, of which there are five in total. These read: 'Eight years later', 'Towards three in the morning', 'Sixteen years before' and 'In the spring'. Of course, inter-titles traditionally anchor a silent film's narrative (Adamowicz, 2010: 34), particularly regarding time; but what we are told in these inter-titles and what unfolds in the action and editing of the film is contradictory and nonsensical.

Production design is a film's strongest indicator of time outside of written or verbal cues such as inter-titles and dialogue. Hence, the presentation of the two lead characters and the décor of the female lead's bedsitting room, the main setting of the film, are key

indicators in *Un Chien*.... In fact, the woman's costume and appearance, along with her room remain exactly the same and in the same condition throughout, and only the position of the woman's armchair changes. This suggests the events of the film take place over the same day, at most, according to the rules of cinematic narration and not, in fact, over several decades, as the inter-titles would have us believe.

Like the inter-titles, the presentation of the male lead also suggests a longer time span than a single day, even if its chaos is not in synch with that of the inter-titles. The man's costume changes indicate different occasions and even, perhaps, different times of year. He begins the film dressed in a dark casual suit and round collar, an outfit that could be worn at any time of the year as ordinary daywear at the time the film was made. When the second actor plays him, he wears a light coloured suit with a more formal winged collar, which suggests summer-wear, as well as a nice contrast with the dark clothing of his alter-ego; he then combines his original dark suit with the nun-like outfit that is laid out on the bed by the female lead. Finally, at the beach, he sports summer leisure wear of plus-fours, rolled up shirt-sleeves and a knitted tank-top. To add to this complexity there are other less easily identifiable, but possibly isolated moments in time. They are the opening sequence on the balcony, the hands shaking a cocktail maker through holes in a painted backdrop and the static moth.

We cannot let go of internal verisimilitude entirely, however, because there are, in fact, snippets of correlation between the inter-titles and moving images. Immediately after the caption, 'Three in the morning', there is a cut to the hands shaking a cocktail shaker. This image perhaps suggests decadent partying of the kind that often takes place at three in the morning, and that was fashionable at the time the film was made. But any semblance of reliability this juxtaposition of inter-title and image offers is questionable. The image of the cocktail shaking is delivered to us in an odd manner, the hands appearing through holes in a painted backdrop, and its frivolous connotations do not fit with the serious and angst-fuelled activities of the film's lead characters.

There is also the slim possibility of a correlation after the caption 'In the spring'. We see the couple buried up to their waists in sand, heads lolling as if they are dead, or at least unconscious. Of course, this state connotes the opposite of spring's new life, but the way the two figures emerge from the ground, heads bowed, is also reminiscent of emerging spring flowers, such as snow drops or crocuses. Whether or not it is actually spring at the

end of *Un Chien...* is left open to interpretation, but even if we choose to conclude that it is, this can be no ordinary spring.

Space is similarly confused in *Un Chien...*. There are six identifiable locations in the film: the balcony on which the female lead's eye is slashed by Buñuel; the street outside the bed-sitting room; the bed-sitting room in which most of the action takes place; the beach; the veranda outside the bed-sitting room; and the woods. In addition, there is the background of the moth images and the cocktail shaker that are not identifiable in terms of space, but which are connected through their similar shade and texture. Some of these venues are featured only once, such as the balcony, the woods and the landing, while the street, bed-sitting room and beach recur.

Sometimes transitions between these spaces are logical and other times they are not, 'destabilizing any sense of spatial coherence and literally disorientating the spectator' (Adamowicz, 2010: 34). For example, the first transition between major spaces occurs when there is a cut from the balcony to a street scene in which the male lead cycles down a road in broad daylight. No physical connection between the two locations is indicated and there are entirely new times and characters. All of these factors indicate a new story space which is introduced in precisely the way cinema audiences might expect it to be (although Adamowicz sees this as a second beginning to the film (Adamowicz, 2010: 34)). The next transition seems equally logical. When the male lead falls from his bicycle, there is a cut to another entirely new space, the bed-sitting room in which the female lead reads her book about the seventeenth century Dutch master of realism, Vermeer. In response to the crowd growing outside her window due to the accident, she drops the book in her rush to look down from her veranda at the commotion.

Our expectations of space are then confused. The bed-sitting room is the central location of the film from whence characters re-locate to the street below, the landing, the woods and the beach. Improbably, all of these locations are accessed through the same door, but perversely, this seems acceptable because the editing is in accordance with traditional cinema narration. For example, when the female lead storms off through the door we see the wind from the beach rustle her hair as she stands on the threshold. This cuts directly to a windy beach, hence, cause and effect tells us the door connects the bedsitting room to the beach, but connecting doors between the upper floors of town houses and beaches are nigh on impossible in life, and extraordinarily rare in the cinema. Equally improbable is the

male lead's transition from the woods to the beach where he waits to greet the female lead on her final exit from the bedsitting room; we are given no indication of how or why he got there, although by the way he greets her, we are encouraged to deduce that she is expected.

Into this stew of confused fiction film conventions, Buñuel and Dali throw a couple of very short documentary-style shots. They are so brief, in fact, that if you blinked you would miss them. Static-seeming close ups of a death-head moth with its wings open recur twice during the exchange between the male and female lead in the bed-sitting room. This random anthropological reference does, in fact, relate to the film's theme of time, the moth's life-span being remarkable because it lasts for only 24 hours, and because this particular moth is suspended, either in mid-flight or about to be pinned to a display (the characterless painted backdrop makes it hard to tell). A bit like the female lead and her bed-sitting room, the moth and its setting stays the same while other things change at a frantic pace (given that her costume, hair and make-up indicate a single day, she even seems to have a similar on-screen life-span). Adamowicz's question about whether 'the death-moth sequence belongs to the realist narrartive or to a fantasy sequence' (Adamowicz, 2010: 35) reveals an interesting assumption about what is real and what is fantasy in the film. In asking this question, Adamowicz positions most of the film as 'realist', even though it features such wild imaginings as priests dragging pianos with dead donkeys on top of them, and a central character who seems to be played by two actors of the same age. What Adamowicz perceives to be outside of the film's reality, the images of a static moth in isolation, do not however challenge expectations of either actual reality or the conventions of realism on film.

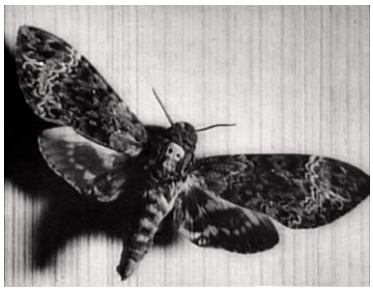


Figure 2. 4 Screen grab from *Un Chien Andalou* (1929) showing the anthropological-like still image of a death head moth which briefly recurs twice.

All of the above elements combine to make *Un Chien...* seem chaotic. But, as Drummond has pointed out, the film could not, in fact, be better orchestrated to manipulate its audience into remaining connected enough to be thrown into a state of utter confusion, rather than to dis-engage completely (Drummond, 1977: 65). Like the film's namesakes, the packs of wild dogs that live in the mountains of Andalusia and roam its villages and towns at night in ruthless pursuit of food, Buñuel and Dali do not turn away from civilization.

Disorientating the Spectator in *L'Âge d'or* and *Las Hurdes*

Figure 2. 5 Screen grab from *L'Âge d'or* (1930) showing documentary footage of scorpions.

Buñuel and Dali's next film, *L'Âge d'or*, draws upon documentary footage in a more obvious manner. Despite being a dramatized love story, it opens with footage of scorpions (see figure 2. 5). We are told in a series of inter-titles how their tails and stings work, how venomous and fierce they are, and of their need to retreat under stones away from the sun to retire alone. Unlike the inter-titles in *Un Chien...*, these words correspond with the action we see on the screen. Hence, when taken separately from the rest of *L'Âge d'or*, the sequence makes perfect sense according to the rules of traditional narration. It is only when considered as the introduction to an otherwise obviously fictional film, a romance between a man and a woman, that its presence seems unusual.

This said there are thematic connections between the documentary footage and main body of the film because, for the Surrealists, scorpions represented intense sexual energy (Weiss, 1987: 159). This is, predictably, a vital component of 'amour fou', the pure, abandoned

heterosexual love they strived for as an ideal state. Both *L'Âge d'or* and *Un Chien...* can easily be read as stories of amour fou, thwarted by the pressures and expectations of repressive and hierarchical structures such as Catholicism and social/economic class. But scorpions are not mentioned or shown again in the film, so as is often the case in Buñuel and Dali's narrational style, they leave us with no obvious explanation for their initial appearance. We may ask, why scorpions, why is there a documentary sequence now, or is this somehow part of the fiction film that follows? But the film refuses to provide any answers and so remains enigmatic.

Buñuel's next film, *Las Hurdes*, is presented entirely as a documentary. In fact, Basil Wright, the British documentarist, saw the film as a noble and accurate portrait of Spanish poverty, spoilt only by a crass voice-over and a clumsy musical score after its completion (Wright, 1971: 146). As Grahame Roberts has pointed out, not realising that Buñuel designed the film's sound track that way deliberately, Wright missed the irony and satire that is so often important to Surrealism.

If, unlike Wright, one watches the film with an awareness of Surrealism, Buñuel's witty but sometimes harsh satire of factual film-making becomes clear. In *Las Hurdes*, Buñuel asks his audience to suspend disbelief by various means, including manipulation of the subject matter, exaggeration, and frequent mis-matching of diegetic and non-diegetic sound. In one sequence, the voice-over narrator explains how the terrain at *Las Hurdes* is so rocky and steep that even goats cannot navigate it. We see a goat suddenly fall off a cliff, but a puff of smoke is visible in the corner of the screen just behind it (figure 2. 6). Of course, this seems suspiciously like a gunshot has been fired, and the goat's fate has been staged, or at least misrepresented by the voice over. This suspicion is confirmed by accounts of the rushes of *Las Hurdes* in which the crew chase at the animal as it stands firm, until Buñuel resorts to shooting it (Ibraz, 2004: 37). At another point the narrator tells us that a woman is actually 33 but has had a hard life and so looks considerably older (figure 2.7). We are left wondering, could this be true? As viewers we cannot be sure. Later, suspicion about the reliability of the narrator is further alerted when what look like children of about nine or ten are described as under-nourished cretins who he says are, in fact, in their late twenties. *Las Hurdes* is as much a satire of our gullibility when faced with moving image convention and tradition as it is a document of a region suffering in poverty. It is, ultimately, impossible to know what to believe when watching *Las Hurdes*.

Figure 2. 6 Screen grab of an unfortunate goat just before it loses its grip. The voice over tells us the terrain in *Las Hurdes* is too tough even for this master of balance; rushes from the film show it being chased and shot at by Buñuel and his crew.

Figure 2. 7 Screen grab from *Las Hurdes* showing a '33 year old woman' who the voice-over narrator thinks looks much older due to her difficult life.

Surrealism and Buñuel's Feature Films of the 1960s and 1970s

Buñuel re-visits and re-works many of these same strategies for disorientating the spectator in his art-house feature films of the 1960s and 1970s. In *The Exterminating Angel*, for instance Buñuel presents what, for much of the time, passes convincingly as a conventional fiction film (in comparison with *Un Chien...* and *L'Âge d'or*); however key details that would be present in more conventional narration are left un-shown. The film's story is the first example. A distinguished member of the bourgeoisie, Nobile (Enrique Rambal), hosts a dinner party and concert. Afterwards his guests find themselves unable to leave the concert room. Neither we the audience, nor they themselves have any idea why, but they remain in this state for an extended but undefined time period lasting most of the

film. Nobile's guests are almost entirely without food, water, medicine and sanitation, and as a result of these conditions, their community becomes barbaric. Theft, sexual assault, violence and other cruelties become the norm. Only Nobile remains civilized. Having tried to escape unsuccessfully many times, one of the guests comes up with the idea that they should recreate the moment at which they became trapped. This works and they are free again.

This narrative would be perfectly logical but for the fact that neither the audience nor the guests know why they are trapped, or why they are eventually freed. By comparison, there is far more missing from the story of *Un Chien...*, decipherable elements of which are: an anonymous young woman meets an injured anonymous young man outside her apartment building, she takes him inside, there is a sexual altercation between them, the man pursues the woman aggressively and she objects; they walk along a beach together, and then they are buried to their waists in sand, looking as if they are dead or unconscious.

By ensuring that there are fewer absences and more decipherable links between the existing scenes, Buñuel makes *The Exterminating Angel* more accessible to regular filmgoers, with a clear story and characterisation to the film, which only renders its confusions all the more powerful. There are smaller examples of narrational disruption in *The Exterminating Angel*, one being when guests arrive at Nobile's mansion twice (just as the female lead in *Un Chien...* leaves her apartment building twice). As in *Un Chien...,* this sequence reflects themes such as dual identity and the collapsing of time and space. Instead of moving on to the evening's activities, as might be expected in cause and effect narration, the same guests arrive again, going through the same process. Apart from this one key diversion from cause and effect narration in the sequence, Buñuel conveys their actions according to accepted narrative logic. For example, both times a couple arrive at the door of Nobile's mansion; we see one of them ring the doorbell; Nobile's butler opens the door and we see the couple from what is, more or less, his point of view; the guests enter the house and the butler takes their coats; and the guests greet Nobile, but each time in a slightly different manner. Buñuel's adherence to cause and effect narration and continuity editing in this way means we can suspend our disbelief and become immersed; but, there is more than enough askance here (as there is in the rest of the film) for us to feel disorientated.

As the film progresses, there is more nonsense. For example, before the dinner party, we see various live animals gathered in the mansion for a practical joke that never takes place; the hostess throws an ornament, smashing a window in the dining room, for an untold reason (the guests hear this from another room and decide it must be a passing Jew, an oppressed group in Spain when the film was made); and when a lady opens her evening bag white feathers and the feet of a bird spill out (see figure 2. 8).

Figure 2. 8 Screen grab from *The Exterminating Angel* (1962) showing the feet and feathers of a bird emerging from the evening bag of Nobile's concert guest.

The very condition of Nobile's guests seems nonsensical given that there appears to be only a phantom barrier between them and the society in which they enjoy immense privilege. After a while, they are all dirty and dishevelled, while most behave in the most uncivilised ways: various parties have attempted to sexually assault and murder other guests; cheating and tricking each other for food and water has become the norm; some have stolen drugs to use as a means of escape from their terrible situation – even though it meant depriving those in pain of relief; and polite social graces are a rarity as guests routinely insult each other. By the second farewell in Nobile's concert room, the time and space they inhabit may be the same but they are also in complete contradiction. What was once a time and place of niceties and luxury has become one of barbarism and deprivation.

Nonsensical incidents continue to occur during this barbaric period in the film, but it is now difficult to tell what is real (within the film's diegesis) and what is hallucinated. The distinction between the overall narrator's point of view (implied author) and character's

point of view (depth internal focalization) is blurred. Examples include one of the goats for the cancelled practical joke wandering into the living room; and a guest seeing a dismembered hand moving along the floor. As Karen Backstein has observed 'Even the so-called "real" activities they (the guests) engage in, because of the context, seem absurd' (Backstein, 2009: online). It seems as if the narrator must be hallucinating as well as the guests; or if not, then maybe it is we, the cinema audiences, who are seeing things that are not real (and, of course, we are).

Buñuel confuses reality and fiction again in the final sequence of the film, this time using documentary-style footage. After the guests are incarcerated again, this time in a church, he cuts to a crowd of rioters being shot at by police just beyond the church gates. He begins at a high angle, moving down and forward over the policemen's heads with a grace that implies a level of premeditated artistry; by contrast, the next shot is shaky and hand-held as we see the crowd beaten and shot at from closer to their own point of view (figure 2. 9).

Figure 2. 9 Screen grab from *The Exterminating Angel* (1964) showing the documentary-like shot of protesters at the close of the film.

Documentary-style fictional footage is also featured at the end of his 1964 film, *The Diary of a Chambermaid*. We see the tail end of what looks like a genuine fascist rally in a series of jump cuts as it makes its way down a Cherbourg street. The sequence has a raw quality that, just as with the ending of *The Exterminating Angel*, contrasts with the rest of the film.

Another way in which Buñuel confuses traditional narration is to present a series of events which follow cause and effect, but in an unexpected way. Two examples of this are *The*

Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie (1972) and *The Phantom of Liberty*. In *The Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie* (1972), as in *The Exterminating Angel*, a group of guests arrive at a mansion for a dinner party. Their host Alice (Stéphane Audran) is asleep (like Carroll's Alice), and no preparations have been made. Her butler wakes her and Alice joins the unexpected guests on their quest to find and complete a dinner party. This results in a series of bizarre occurrences that intercept their attempts to dine at various venues. Finally, they manage to complete their main course, but are executed by a firing line of anarchists before they can begin dessert. The story of Alice and her friends follows cause and effect because there is a clear reason why each attempt is thwarted. However, the improbability of so many unfinished dinners begs the question, 'How can this keep happening to the same group of people?', and their fate is, thus, just as perplexing as that of Nobile and his guests in *The Exterminating Angel*.

Buñuel's Carrollian influence is more overt in *The Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie*. His central character, Alice, experiences a chain of misadventures in a series of stories within stories, some obviously dreams and others confusions of dream and waking. The film begins while Alice is asleep and she remains in her glamorous, sleep-wear throughout, the implication being that what happens is all in her dreams (or as Branigan might say, depth internal focalization, as in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*). However, the dreams of Buñuel's Alice's are political, eventually violently so. She and her bourgeois friends are continuously interrupted and eventually executed by various anarchist terrorists. Thus, Buñuel's Alice does not wake to find her adventures were a dream; rather, she does not wake at all, but is murdered just at the point when her bourgeois pursuit of a successful dinner party is reaching fruition. Nevertheless Buñuel's Alice is, potentially, the narrator of the whole film. Even if Buñuel does not offer any certainty about the identity of his narrator(s), Alice's point of view/dreams are confused with that of the film's overall narrator, just as in Carroll's Alice stories. In this way, of course, Buñuel also confuses diegetic and non-diegetic narration, because an anonymous narrator stands outside of the story, while Alice's dreams stem from inside it.

In his final film, *The Phantom of Liberty*, Buñuel employs a similar narrative structure. As in *The Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie*, *The Phantom of Liberty* is made up of a series of sketches that combine waking and dream events (and, like many of his films, it is circular, ending where it begins); however, this time the stories are not connected by central characters, rather by minor ones who wander from vignette to vignette for equally minor

reasons. For example, the first vignette is narrated in voice-over by a woman reading to a companion on a park bench. We are taken to the next story when the camera pans away from her to an unconnected couple walking along a nearby path. Buñuel thus begins with diegetic narration, as a character reads the story, but what unfolds is not connected to our reader and she seems detached from and unaware of these events. He presents the transition according to the rules of voice-over narration, but only just, and in such a way that we are not, at first certain that he has done. Another two scenes are connected by a minor character delivering a letter from one set of characters to another, but the letter is not otherwise relevant to either story. None of these vignettes is resolved with anything approaching a satisfactory ending, or seems directly related to what happens in prior or subsequent stories. Instead, in a loop-hole in the rules of traditional moving image narration, background characters are intermittently prioritised by the film's narrator and allowed to take the lead. Buñuel still uses cause and effect narration and continuity editing throughout, while recurring themes and settings add to this sense of cohesion. He explores the impossibility of complete liberty, most often sexual, throughout the film, while the same hotel and police training centre are the axes for several of the stories.

Buñuel expects his audience to inhabit a space somewhere between belief and dis-belief, seeming to offer the usual deal of traditional narration, only to renege on his side of the bargain. It is his expert understanding of moving image narration that allows him to toy with its rules in this way. However, where *Un Chien...* rages in its exposure of convention, his later films operate more subtly, seeming to acknowledge the value of shared understanding: without it, Buñuel's films would lose much of their power to communicate.

In this way, Buñuel expresses the continual mismatch between human desire and human reality. Complete freedom is not, in fact, possible. Like Buñuel's films, it is our rules and traditions that bind us, and we can rail against the limitations they impose, but if we abandon them completely we are without common experience and, hence, community. Buñuel's work seems to be calling for us to be aware of the fragility of those shared agreements, and to know that, as in his movies, we can manipulate them and even change them.

Conclusion: Surrealism, Storytelling and Film

In this chapter I have laid the foundations for my subsequent discussion of Surrealism and British cinema, and especially for answering the questions I posed in my introduction. By

first focussing on existing writing about Surrealism on film, I have identified two key discussions that are important to the dynamic relationship between realism and the fantastic in British cinema studies. Both relate to what might be described as Surrealist storytelling. First, there is the subversion of cause/effect narration and continuity editing in so many films that are in some way influenced by Surrealism. Secondly, there is the deliberate confusing of documentary and fiction, or of realism and the fantastic. From this perspective, narration can be identified as a key point of convergence in studies of Surrealism on film and of British cinema studies. The discussion of narration and the establishment of some vital terminology in this chapter creates a path along which the rest of my thesis will follow.

Perhaps most significantly, however, building this foundation involves identifying key storytelling patterns in films that are already associated with Surrealism, particularly in the works of Buñuel. My analysis of his later works operates as an example of how techniques that emerged in *Un Chien...* are played out in what is, by comparison, a much more commercially driven, populist cinema. Some of Buñuel's later films are, in fact, almost entirely traditionally narrated, but I have tried to show a range of work that illustrates how varying degrees of disruption can be mobilised to different effect.

True to his Surrealist roots, Buñuel is nothing if not a cinematic protester. Thus, his very technique of disturbing the established, unspoken rules of cinema storytelling acts as a mirror for wider protest against the conventions of Western society and especially Catholic and fascist Spain. By identifying this formal mode of protest against the status quo (traditional storytelling) I can examine how it is mobilised in a different socio-political, and sometimes different religious, context in British film. Hence, this study of Buñuel's technique allows me to explore the extent to which the Surrealist penchant for protest is manifest in Surrealist-influenced films. What we will see is that, although the content of the films I address in the following chapters may not always be the same as Buñuel's, there can be a similar impulse to protest.

Like Ado Kyrou in his article 'Romanticisme et Cinéma' (1951), I propose that there is a strong connection between the frenzy of Romanticism and that of Surrealism on film. Thus, Buñuel's narrational style can in some ways be seen as a development of specific approaches in Romantic literature. Like Buñuel, Carroll left absences in his stories. Sometimes these are gaping holes, like there being no apparent reason for an entire alien

world with its own social infrastructure underneath a tree by an English river; sometimes these gaps are smaller but just as effective, such as those created by the Dormouse's somnolence. In the Romantic tradition, these absences are a protest. They occur at times when what has happened in the story is unspeakable, so instead of explicitly referring to events, authors such as Radcliffe would withhold specific information. In Buñuel's work the very act of withholding key information is often a remonstration against traditional form itself. Whatever the context in which lacunae are used, be it the Romantic novel, Carroll's stories, or Buñuel's films, they are designed to shock audiences out of their conventional expectations.

Buñuel's interest in disrupting our idea of what is real and what is fiction also echoes Romanticism. Like him, writers such as Coleridge and Byron wanted to overturn the status quo, extending their interest to form as well as content. Presenting a work as a dream or imaginative piece put personal truth and interpretation ahead of the conventions of realism that were so fashionable during the early-to mid-nineteenth century. The wild narratives of the Romantics were designed to resonate with some emotional truth in their readers, and not to tell their audience what reality, in fact, is, as is the case with Vermeer, who is literally cast aside in *Un Chien...*.

Alongside this, the Romantics sought to disrupt conventional structures such as gender, religion and class. For example, Coleridge's fascination for the myth of Prometheus (a Greek god who re-distributed the privileges of heaven amongst all classes of mortals) foreshadows the ideas of Karl Marx, who was also a Romantic poet before becoming a social theorist (Sperber, 2014). The Romantic tandem of challenging convention with form as well as content can be clearly seen in Buñuel's work. But, as I have argued, drawing on the works of Drummond, Short and Adamowicz, Buñuel does not turn away from realism, as the Romantics did. Instead, he establishes a 'pact with the devil' (Short, 2008: 94), an arrangement that, later on in his career, settles into a love-hate relationship, with varying degrees of emphasis. It is this sophisticated engagement with realism that makes it so potentially illuminating to compare Buñuel's methods to techniques found in certain British films, especially those that reveal an interest in social or political remonstration, even if it is often in a very different context to Buñuel's Catholic and fascist Spain. I begin this process in the next chapter by looking at British films often classified as belonging to the realism genre, but which can be seen to work in ways that suggest a Surrealist influence.

Chapter Three: Super-Realism and British Film

In a recent review of debates in British cinema studies, John Hill cites the use of opposing classifications of films as fundamental to the development of the subject. Realism and fantasy are one such opposing pair, with the others being high versus low culture, and critical versus socio-economic approaches. Hill acknowledges the value of these dynamics of opposition in propelling British cinema studies forward, from the relative vacuum which existed fifty years ago, to its currently well-populated status. However, he argues that 'settling into orthodox patterns' established by this earlier dynamic should be avoided (Hill, 2010: 308-309). In fact, as he points out, two of the most respected works about British cinema, Charles Barr's book about Ealing Studios, and David Pirie's on Hammer Horror, observe the inter-relationship of realism and fantasy (Hill, 2010: 303).

In the next two chapters of this thesis, I explore this inter-relationship further, thereby problematizing the familiar notion of realism and fantasy as separate, opposing strands. To do so, I draw upon the technique of 'making strange'. While the concept of 'making strange' was coined in 1917 by the Russian formalist Viktor Shklovskij, the technique has a much longer history in practice. To make something strange is to render unfamiliar a thing or an idea that has become so familiar as to seem natural, and beyond any need to be questioned in a new way. In his article 'Art as Device', Shklovskij cites several examples to make his point, including the riddle, in which the punch line makes what has gone before seem strange (2009, first published, 1917). He also cites Tolstoy's use of a horse as a narrator in *War and Peace*, whereby Western human society is related from an outsider's point of view. Shklovskij describes the process of making strange, or de-familiarization, as the entire point of all creativity, saying all that does so is poetry, and can only inspire further creativity (Shkovskij, 2009: 4-10).

Like Shklovskij and Hill, I too want to 'avoid settling into orthodox patterns' (Hill, 2010: 308) in my discussion of British cinema. It is therefore my aim, in this and the next chapter, to make the polarity of realism and the fantastic in British cinema studies seem strange. To do so I use an idea that has existed for a long time amongst Surrealists, but which is unfamiliar

in British cinema studies. As I explained in my introduction to this thesis, the first translation of the French term 'surréalisme' into English was 'super-realism' (Blunt, Sykes-Davies, dates?). Breton stated in his first manifesto, 'my aim is the future resolution of… dream and reality, into a kind of absolute reality' (Breton, 1924: 14).

I present an account of realism and fantasy or the imagination in British cinema that is intended to destabilize the idea of them as opposing polarities, just as Breton calls for the categories of dream and reality to be merged. In this chapter I address films that are usually categorised as belonging to the documentary-realist genre, and in the next I deal with the Gothic genre of British cinema. As with the Surrealists, however, my purpose is not to maintain the distinction between the realist and the fantastic, but to make it strange, presenting British realist filmmaking through the ideas of Breton and his fellow Surrealists, and demonstrating clear links between those films and others more usually separated off as Gothic. In the chapters that follow, I continue to demonstrate the ways in which realism and the fantastic are intertwined and interdependent in satirical films and television and in a range of artists' films and videos. Focusing on such material also allows me to explore the idea of protest, the most potent of ingredients in the Surrealist quest for absolute realism. Finally, in my detailed case studies of the two Neil Jordan films, *The Company of Wolves* and *Mona Lisa*, I look at the ways in which they embody and play out these three key aspects of Surrealism, reality, the imagination and protest.

There are significant cross-overs between film and television in all of my survey and case study chapters. For example, British realism found a powerful outlet in both BBC and ITV productions during the 1960s, 70s and 80s, while Hammer studios extended their work to television during the 1970s. This relationship extends further in my chapter on satire, where I note that Spike Milligan migrated from radio (*The Goon Show*) to television and then to film, while the Monty Python team and Terry Gilliam established their signature styles of filmmaking during the BBC *Monty Python's Flying Circus* series. Indeed, their first feature film, *And Now for Something Completely Different* (Ian McNaughton, 1971), was a compilation of sketches drawn from that television series. In my chapter on artist's film and video, I look at the work of artists such as Patrick Keiller and Andrew Kötting, who have both made feature films intended for screening both on television and at the cinema; these films are also part of wider projects shown in art galleries and on the internet. The two case study films are the most traditionally cinematic in terms of content, but even they were supported by Channel Four.

In the remainder of this chapter, I address perhaps the most familiar territory in this thesis, in an effort to de-familiarize it. There is little doubt that realism in British film has been researched extensively. It has certainly served as a starting point for most studies of British cinema, with films being defined as realist or anti-realist. The role of Surrealism has fared less well and seems little understood, being used by Murphy, for example, to describe anti-realist tendencies in a recent edition of the *British Cinema Book* (Murphy, 2009: 7). This hardly does justice to the Surrealists' aim of dissolving the idea of reality and fantasy as opposites, or even as separate. The idea that Surrealism might be placed on one or the other side of this dynamic is, in fact, anathema to their entire cause.

Documentation, Reality and Super-Realism

Reality and its documentation, was, in fact, a fundamental concern of the Paris Surrealists and they saw dreams and daydreams as an important part of reality. Their first journal was titled *Documents* and featured records of their own dreams and random thoughts. Likewise, Surrealist painting is distinctive amongst modernist art for its use of realist or naturalist techniques. The dreamscapes of the Surrealists' paintings, for example, those of Magritte or Salvador Dali, may look strange, but they are records of actual dreams, or of dreams combined with actual waking events or settings. For example, Magritte's 'Son of Man' (1966) (figure 3. 1) is a naturalistic self-portrait documenting a dream of the artist's, in which an equally naturalistically painted apple masks his face.

Figure 3. 1 'Son of Man' (1964) by René Magritte. Oil on canvas, 116 cm × 89 cm (45.67 in × 35 in), private collection.

When one considers these facts, it is perhaps not such a great leap from 'The Son of Man' to John Grierson's famous surmising of documentary as 'the creative interpretation of actuality'. Grierson managed the creative team at the GPO filmmaking unit in Britain in the mid-1930s and is often credited as building the foundations of British, and even, international documentary filmmaking. Grierson's words are strikingly similar to Breton's in the quote above. Creativity is foregrounded in both, even if Grierson may have been referring to documentary films made under specified production conditions which exact varying degrees of control over the filmmaker's choices.

A number of films made under the auspices of the British documentary movement have a direct connection to the Surrealist movement, notably those made by Humphrey Jennings, and his fellow Surrealist Alberto Cavalcanti who was influenced by the Paris Surrealist group (Monegal, 1955). Selecting the work of only these two means I have missed out other films made for the Empire Marketing Board, GPO and Crown film units that might well be fruitfully discussed in terms of Surrealism. For example, Len Lye's seamless combination of inner and outer realities in *N or NW* (1937) shows the influence of the movement. My discussion, however, is focused on the drama-documentary/documentary-drama format, a more mainstream genre of filmmaking that combines fiction with reality, and in which Jennings and Cavalcanti excelled.

Humphrey Jennings, Surrealism in Britain and Mass Observation

I begin my survey with the work of Humphrey Jennings for two main reasons. Firstly, he is seen as one of the most influential documentary filmmakers to have worked in Britain, whose legacy helped lay the foundation of the British documentary tradition. Secondly, Jennings was also a founder of the Surrealist movement in Britain, and a prolific Surrealist painter, writer and maker of collages of both words and pictures (see figures 4.2 and 4.3 for examples of his pictorial collages).

While an undergraduate at Cambridge University, Jennings spent time with Breton and the original Surrealists in Paris. He brought their ideas back to Britain, and became a passionate and prolific practitioner of Surrealism, a founding member of the London Surrealist group and an organiser of the 1936 London Surrealism exhibition. His other activities stem, to some degree or another, from this basis (Remy, 2009: 102-104).

Figure 3. 2 ‘Tree with Rainbow Stripe’ (1935) by Humphrey Jennings. Black and white photograph with collage. Sherwin Collection, Leeds, UK.

Figure 3. 3 ‘Portrait of Lord Byron with Book’ (Humphrey Jennings, 1935). Collage on paper, 20x14cm, The Israel Museum, Jerusalem, Israel.

Before his work as a film director, Jennings’ interest in documentation extended to what would come to be termed social history. He and fellow Surrealist, Charles Madge, devised the Mass Observation Survey, a project recording the mannerisms and culture of working-class people. They chose Bolton as their first location and made records via researchers who took notes and photographs, of which Humphrey Spender’s famous ‘Worktown’ images are a result (see figures 4.4 and 4.5). The Mass Observation survey is still active to this day, although it is now used as much for market research as it is for social history (Remy, 1999: 102-103).

Figure 3. 4 ‘Worktown’ (1937-8) Humphrey Spender. Black and white photography, Bolton Museum.

Figure 3. 5 ‘Worktown’ (1937-8) Humphrey Spender. Black and white photography, Bolton Museum.

Jennings is, of course, better known in film studies debates as a documentary filmmaker with a lasting influence on British documentary and realist filmmaking (Murphy, 1989: 34-60; Richards and Sheridan, 1987). His simultaneous involvement in Surrealism demonstrates that it is integral to the development of the British documentary movement. As Rod Mengham points out:

> It is because of [Jennings and Madge’s] involvement in Mass-Observation, and because of Jennings’ pioneering work in documentary film, that one can begin to think about a development in English culture in which Surrealism is the formative influence upon both the origins of sociology in Britain and on a war-time and post-war realism concerned with the portrayal of working-class culture. (Mengham, 2001: 27)

In fact, the first published announcement of the Mass Observation Survey in the *New Statesman and Nation* in 1937 is reminiscent of a Surrealist document, the list of subjects for study outlined in the original 'plan of campaign' akin to a Surrealist, or even Carrollian, poem. As Mengham explains, 'The notion of the poem as 'report' and the poet as 'reporter' that is specified as a technique of the Mass Observation Survey in the short article is one of the things that links Madge's and Jennings' procedures as Surrealist writers with their activities as social historians' (2001: 32). The list reads as follows::

> Behaviour of people at war memorials.
>
> Shouts and gestures of motorists.
>
> The aspidistra cult.
>
> Anthropology of football pools.
>
> Bathroom behaviour.
>
> Beards, armpits, eyebrows.
>
> Anti-semitism.
>
> Distribution, diffusion and significance of the dirty joke.
>
> Funerals and undertakers.
>
> Female taboos about eating.
>
> The private lives of midwives.
>
> (Harrison et al, 1937)

Underpinning Jennings' activities was a fascination for eighteenth and nineteenth century literature (see figure 3. 3 for one of a number of art works he made featuring Lord Byron). His posthumously published book, *Pandæmonium,* is a collection of short sections of writing from this period taken from a wide range of sources, including novels, poetry and magazine and newspaper articles. However, the greatest emphasis was on the work of the Romantic movement. The aim of the book was to illustrate the emotional and personal impact of the industrial revolution, and of capitalism, on the people of Britain; hence the

book's title, inspired by John Milton's seven circles of Hell (Jennings and Madge, 1986: xxxv-xxxviii). Jennings referred to the passages in the book as images, a term he used to mean impressions of an experience, or a kind of poetry (Miller, 2001: 34-35). *Pandæmonium* has had relatively little exposure in the past, even if in recent times this has changed dramatically, with Jenning's collection inspiring the first half of the 2012 Olympic Games Opening Ceremony (Cottrell Boyce in Jennings, 2012), to which I will briefly return towards the end of this chapter.

As a documentary filmmaker in the 1930s and 1940s, Jennings made many of his films under the management of fellow Surrealist Cavalcanti at the GPO and Crown Film Units. His films are distinct from many others made in the same units, I argue, because a significant Surrealist influence remains, despite his obligation to produce propaganda with a strong nationalist agenda, which in many ways seems the antithesis of Surrealism. I would argue this influence is most significant in the way his films can make what is familiar seem strange, even though he achieves this in a gentler, less directly challenging way than Buñuel. Perhaps the most obvious moments when Jennings does this are during his drama-documentaries, of which he made a significant number.

***Silent Village* (Humphrey Jennings, 1943)**

I have selected one, *Silent Village* (1943), on which to focus, for two main reasons. It presents the true story of the Nazi occupation of the Czechoslovakian village of Lidice in a fictionalised account, and thereby explicitly combines reality and fiction. However, Jennings uses an actual Welsh village, Cwmgiedd, and its villagers to represent Lidice, thereby making strange the idea of a Czech community, by bringing it closer to home. In doing this he also makes strange the Welsh oppression of and invasion by the English. Hence, although *Silent Village* was made under the remit of British war-time propaganda, it comments directly on the English oppression of the Welsh. Villagers play themselves, and we see actual mining families while at work, home and school. By the time *Silent Village* was made, Jennings had already established his documentary-drama technique in *Fires Were Started/I Was a Fireman*, a feature-length film in which the staff of a fire station played out their response to a war-time bombing raid. But *Silent Village* is also an example of the way Jennings drew upon the strangeness of real life, in this case, the horrific absurdity of day-to-day Nazi oppression, and the absurdity of the obliteration of Welsh

culture. Jennings thus produces a film that shocks its audiences into acknowledging the horror of the events of Lidice and the defiant spirit of its villagers.

The film betrays Jennings' fascination for local or folk culture, a pre-occupation of the Surrealists (Alexandrian, 1995: 23-25; Breton, 1924: 15-16; Buñuel, 1929; Buñuel 1932; Thalman, 1964). For the Surrealists, folk cultures were the antithesis of bourgeois values and of religion, both of which they saw as disingenuous and oppressive, the two cardinal sins for Surrealism. Jennings' interest in working-class and folk culture is, of course, evident in his involvement in the Mass Observation Survey.

One can observe a similar impulse in the first section of *Silent Village.* Jennings records fundamental aspects of life in Cwmgiedd, the routine of the miners as they work, school children as they are tutored, women and men working in their homes and gardens. Welsh music accompanies the film, beginning with an orchestra during the opening credits, then with the village choir accompanying much of the ensuing action. Jennings' fascination for sound continues when the beat of a woman breaking stones in a garden extends several scenarios beyond its diegetic place, a steady rhythm binding Cwmgiedd lives together. There is also a glimpse into the everyday danger the miners face when union representatives discuss high rates of lung disease amongst the village men. Although there is a strong anthropological aspect to these sequences, they are presented in Jennings' usual poetic style. The community nestles in lush countryside and *Silent Village* is presented in kind, with the opening credits running over a backdrop of picturesque valleys and fields, followed by a close up of a bubbling brook.

The close up of the brook returns at the beginning of the film's second section, but this time the sound of the water's journey is accompanied by German brass band music as a Nazi van passes over the bridge and into the village, seemingly belting out its tune from a loudspeaker. Thus begins a clash between the German oppressors and the indigenous Welsh community spirit.

The loudspeaker announces 'the re-birth of [their] homeland', instructing the villagers to trust in Hitler to abandon any past working agreements. Instead the miners hold a union meeting in which they decide to strike against slave labour conditions, and a fateful battle unfolds. Miners are shot dead so the union takes undercover action, at first sabotaging the mine, then working slow and pouring sand into the machinery and water into the engine oil. From the darkness and chaos of an explosion down the pit, the Deputy Reich Protector

is shot dead. Control is heightened as the Nazis demand that the villagers give up his assassins and declare the eradication of all traces of Welsh culture. A stalemate ensues as the Nazis continue to kill villagers for seemingly arbitrary reasons.

The villagers resist, their efforts taking place in semi-darkness, either down mines, or on cliff-tops and abbey ruins at dusk; Cwmgiedd/Lidice's resistance is thus chiaroscuro, brooding and Gothic (see figure 3. 6). Finally, the Nazis obliterate Cwmgiedd, murdering all of the men, sending the women to concentration camps and, ominously, the children to 'the relevant authorities'. At this point we see the brook at the edge of the village run to the strains of German music, signifying Cwmgiedd's submission to the Nazis.

Figure 3. 6 Screen grab from *Silent Village* (Humphrey Jennings, 1943).

Jennings uses a Chinese box-style narrative framework for *Silent Village*. We are introduced to Cwmgiedd in the opening inter-title, which explains that the village is actually in South Wales and is being used as a stand in for the Czech village of Lidice. But henceforth, the community is referred to as Cwmgiedd. But as the story closes with scenes of the obliterated village, a German news reader announces Lidice's destruction and those words are repeated on the lips of a villager as she reads the bulletin aloud to a group gathered around a Cwmgiedd kitchen table.

This is not to say that there is no connection between Cwmgiedd and the events we witness in *Silent Village*. The school teacher announces that, 'There is no more Welsh to be spoken in this school. All our hymns, our beautiful songs, our poems are to be heard no more', which can be read as a reference to assaults on Welsh culture by the English that have taken place for centuries; while the teacher's appeal for the children to keep their culture alive whenever and wherever they can is reminiscent of Welsh resistance against English oppression. The next lesson she gives is a history of England's oppression of Wales, beginning with William the Conqueror's invasion, so Jennings certainly seems to have wanted us to make that connection (see figure 3. 7).

Figure 3. 7 Screen grab from *Silent Village* (Humphrey Jennings, 1943). The actual school children of Cwmgiedd are taught about the Norman/English oppression of Wales.

Jennings shows the influence of Surrealism in several ways. He documents the story of Lidice, an act which is Surrealist in its impulse to record, as well as in its motivation to protest against injustice and oppression. Jennings then combines this reality with another, the cultural life, and oppression by the English, of the people of Wales, and more specifically the villagers of Cwmgeidd. We are left with the question then, is this a greater reality, a more absolute reality, than a reconstruction using actors and unrelated settings of either the oppression of Lidice, or that of Wales? The oppression of the Welsh by the English can be read as having been normalised, or as Breton might say, automatized, in

English culture. Transposing it into a story about Nazi oppression makes it strange. At the same time, Jennings makes the people of Lidice seem closer to our own by making them Welsh.

***Went the Day Well?* (Alberto Cavalcanti, 1942)**

A few years earlier, Jennings' fellow Surrealist and former manager, Cavalcanti, had made, *Went the Day Well?*, another drama-documentary about the Nazi invasion of an English village. *Went the Day Well?* was made by Ealing Studios, which, as Charles Barr has observed, made several films that merge reality and fantasy to convey the complexities of human existence (Barr, 1986). Nowhere is this more evident than in Cavalcanti's first film for the studio, even if it is much less light-hearted than most of the company's films. However, I would argue that Cavalcanti not only merges realism and fantasy in *Went the Day Well?*, but that, in doing so, as with Jennings in *Silent Village*, he presents us with a super, or absolute, reality.

Once again, the story is of Nazis operating on the British mainland, this time in an English village, a situation that sees the cosy village post-mistress turn ruthless assassin. As she attacks, we see her from a low angle, lit in semi-darkness from below, in an expression of perverse glee; she smiles, her eyes glistening in the light, as the axe she brandishes crushes into her Nazi target's skull. Up until this point, Cavalcanti presents us with a realist docu-drama style. But the chiaroscuro effect and low angle of this sequence draw on other influences more associated with Gothic or horror traditions (see figure 3. 8). This change in style is just as shocking and disorientating as the woman's change in character. Thus Cavalcanti brings home the absolute reality that, no matter how refined our surface manners, when pushed, most of us can become brutal savages.

Figure 3. 8 Screen grab from *Went the Day Well?* (Alberto Cavalcanti, 1942).

Went the Day Well? tells us that things are not black and white, and neither do they exist exclusively in our imaginations or in our actualities. By the end of the film we are unable to place the villagers into any pre-conceived identity; as such, Cavalcanti leaves us with a far more realistic representation of human nature than at the start of the film. In this respect, a key message of *Went the Day Well?* is similar to that of Buñuel's *Exterminating Angel* (1962): given dire enough circumstances, even the most apparently civilized communities will behave savagely.

'The dreams I dream are yours to see. Over there in reality': Free Cinema and the Work of Lindsay Anderson, Karel Reisz and Tony Richardson

Jennings died tragically young in the mid-1950s, but his influence on realism in British film remains formidable. It is perhaps at its strongest in the Free Cinema films of the 1950s. The term Free Cinema was coined by director Lindsay Anderson because these films were made outside of the constraints of box office or government unit demands. The movement originated as a series of three screenings of documentary films made by Anderson, Karel Reisz, Tony Richardson and Lorenza Mazzetti at the National Film Theatre between February 1956 and March 1959. The films were made independently of each other, but Reisz, who was already a programmer at the National Film Theatre, observed a definite 'attitude in common'; as such, the films were accompanied by a manifesto that described the ideas behind the films and the programme (Hill, 2008: 128-129).

This 'attitude in common' also shared much with the films of Jennings. John Hill observes that, 'it was Humphrey Jennings, of all the 1930s documentarists, that Anderson and also Reisz, most admired' (Hill, 2008: 128). This was despite the Free Cinema group's rebellion against the GPO and Crown Film Units, along with the commercial studio systems, both of which they saw as embodying staid middle-class values. Clearly, in their eyes, Jennings was an exception. In fact, years later, Anderson stated that like Jennings, they wanted to represent the realities of everyday life, while also having creative freedom (Anderson in Cowie, 1964: 14 and Anderson, 1961: 12). According to Hill, personal expression was, in fact, their main aim (Hill, 2008: 128).

It is interesting to consider how relatively independent production conditions influenced the content of the Free Cinema films. Although none of the group were Surrealists, they do cite Jennings as their strongest influence, while their rebellion against bourgeois values and

aim to document subjective reality certainly chime with the intentions of Breton and Buñuel.

Lindsay Anderson's short, *O Dreamland* (1953), is characterised by the lack of a production agenda dictated from outside. It showcases the fun fair of the film's title in Margate on the South Coast of England. If viewed from a Bretonian point of view, the film shows a time when the routines, or automatized behaviours, of the ordinary people who visit the fair are broken. Anderson portrays the resort as a place where the usually contained, uncomfortable or excess emotions of its visitors erupt into the open, its visitors temporarily free of many of the usual expectations of civility and conformity. The film is characterised by a fascination for presenting a version of everyday reality that may surprise us, an influence traceable to Jennings' *Spare Time*, and the bizarre-looking kazoo band performance (see figure 3. 9), for example, which is, in turn, reminiscent of the Mass Observation 'Worktown' photographs taken by Humphrey Spender. All three examples make everyday occurrences seem strange.

Figure 3. 9 Screen grab from *Spare Time* (Humphrey Jennings, 1939).

However, Anderson's film revels in the darker aspects of human nature, and is, in this way, perhaps more in tune with that particular aspect of Surrealism than Jennings' work. Of course, Jennings left us in no doubt that human beings were capable of terrible things, but there were usually clear lines between good and bad people. For example, in *Silent Village* the Nazis/English are undoubtedly bad, while the Czech/Welsh villagers are good. Like Cavalcanti, Anderson explores the way ordinary, usually civilised people can foster dark

desires. He opens the film, for instance, with fairground visitors spellbound by an array of human cruelties in the attraction 'Torture through the ages', and a little later a sign reads 'The dreams I dream are yours to see. Over there in reality' (see figure 3. 10).

Figure 3. 10 Screen grab from *O Dreamland* (1953, Lindsay Anderson). Anderson uses a fairground sign to make a point about reality and the imagination.

The theme of working-class leisure continues in the films *Momma Don't Allow* (Karel Reisz and Tony Richardson, 1954) and *We Are the Lambeth Boys* (Karel Reisz, 1959). *Momma Don't Allow* is set in a jazz club in London. Its regulars are young cleaners, factory workers, shop workers and so on. Anderson's and Reisz's ability to capture the young people's passion for jazz, dancing and each other makes the film remarkable. When a group of rich kids arrive in a Rolls Royce, they seem like outsiders at the club. They dress differently, wearing evening clothes and not the usual smart/casual and dark beatnik style of the club. Similarly, their dancing doesn't quite fit with the club's style, and their interactions with the others seem like that of new acquaintances rather than cohorts in jazz appreciation (as do the others).

In *We Are the Lambeth Boys*, the civilized surface appearance of youth centre activities is laced with an undercurrent of danger as a gang of less-than-entirely-civilised-looking boys skulk through to loiter at the back of the club. As with Jennings in films such as *Spare Time*, and in his Mass Observation Survey, the Free Cinema movement strived for an authentic representation of working-class life in Britain. The Free Cinema directors tried to honour working-class leisure as equal to their own pursuits.

Gothic Melodrama and the British New Wave

Of course, Anderson, Reisz and Richardson went on to become key directors of the British New Wave, continuing their interest in representing the working-class of Britain (Taylor, 2006: 70). Anderson's contribution to the New Wave, but also that of Jack Clayton, are of particular interest here because they display themes and techniques that are connected to both Surrealism and Romanticism. This becomes especially poignant when one considers them in the context of the directors' earlier and later works.

As has been well documented, Clayton's *Room at the Top* (1959) and Anderson's *This Sporting Life* (1963) continue many of the themes and ideas of Free Cinema (Hallam and Marshment, 2000: 45; Hayward, 2013: 66; Lay, 2002: 11; Lowenstein, 2000: 225; Street, 2009:91-93; Taylor, 2012: 6-7). They are studies in the perils of prioritising material gain over human relationships and love, another Surrealist obsession. *This Sporting Life* also continues Free Cinema's interest in aesthetic experimentation. I argue that both of these films can be seen as a continuation of the romantic sublime. They both feature core characters who are at the mercy of greater, overwhelming powers, but remain, to some degree, enthralled by those powers. While *Room at the Top* paints a picture of a society which is at the behest of materialism to the extent that it is almost impossible to love, *This Sporting Life* represents the masculine sublime.

Lindsay Anderson's Films of the 1960s: From *This Sporting Life* to *If*

The central character of *The Sporting Life*, Frank Machin (Richard Harris) represents the masculine sublime, his grieving widowed landlady, Mrs. Margaret Hammond (Rachel Roberts), at the mercy of his rages. The enclosed domestic setting of most of their relationship is, in fact, typical of the kind of masculine sublime found in the novels of Anne Radcliffe; and as a brutal anti-hero Machin is comparable to Heathcliffe in Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*, Rochester in Jane Austen's *Jane Eyre* or even Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (see figure 3. 11). Frank's behaviour towards his landlady and subsequently lover, is characterised by systematic abuse and sadism. This begins slowly when, at first, he insists on talking to the recently widowed Hammond as if she were a romantic partner, even when she asks him to leave her alone. As she explains, Frank is only living in the house because of her financial necessity. However, he becomes more and more persistent, until he eventually rapes her as she makes his bed. True to traditions of the literary masculine sublime, she submits to him, if only to live unhappily and in terror. Machin responds to her

objections with psychological torment, such as telling her she made her dead husband so unhappy he killed himself, and assaulting her several times. Hammond finally snaps and, in a hysterical rage, she convinces him to leave. But it is too late. She becomes terminally ill, and as the doctors tell Machin when he visits her in hospital, she no longer has the will to live.

As is typical in stories of the masculine sublime, whatever pleasure she has gained from Machin only results in misery, and eventual death. Like Jane Eyre with Rochester, Cathy in *Wuthering Heights* and the women who are drawn to Dracula, Hammond remains irrationally attached to Machin, despite his brutality and sadism (the screen grab in figure 3. 11 eloquently expresses the bizarre combination of fear and attraction which is characteristic of the Gothic masculine sublime). The fact that *This Sporting Life* uses the realist style to tell such a story also parallels Gothic novels and the masculine sublime, as novels such as *Jane Eyre*, *Dracula*, and *Wuthering Heights* were also often written in a naturalist style.

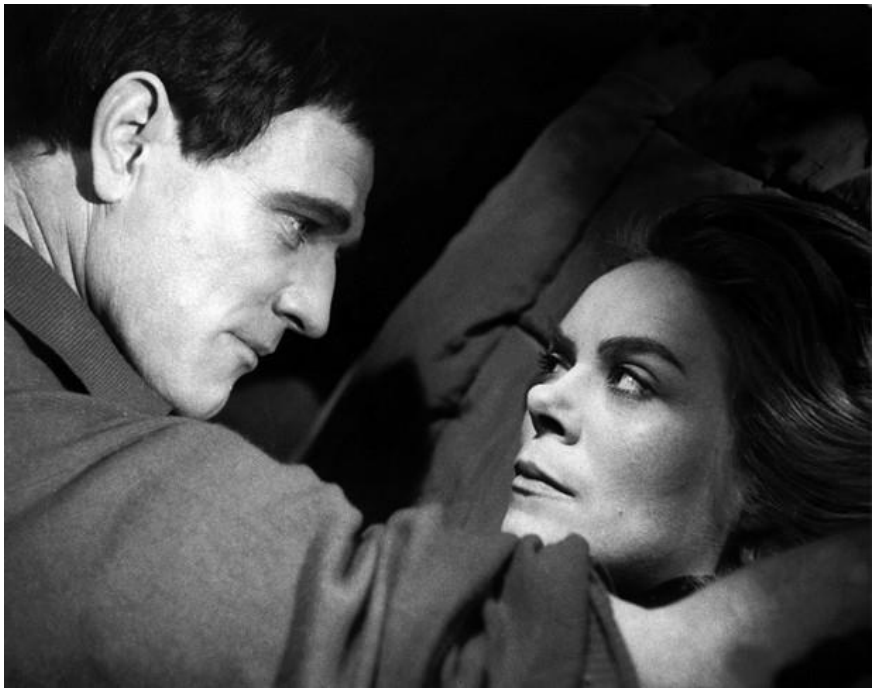


Figure 3. 11 Screen grab from *This Sporting Life* (Lindsay Anderson, 1963). Hammond (Rachel Roberts) seems paradoxically repulsed and mesmerised by Machin (Richard Harris).

Much of the film is told through a series of memories recalled by Frank while under the influence of cocaine, having his teeth repaired at the dentist. There is some confusion about what is real and not real at these points in the story, a signature technique of Anderson's, as well as a characteristic feature of Gothic novels. In *Wuthering Heights*, Cathy eventually confuses her outer reality with dreams and hallucinations, while much of the power of Dracula comes from the fantastical nature of its story in combination with a stark, realist style of writing. Anderson's interest in this approach can be traced to *O Dreamland*, where the strangeness of the fairground is showcased, but in a realist, documentary style. The sign 'The dreams I dream are yours to see. Over there in reality' gives a clear indication of his intent.

This inclination to combine realism with dreams, inner imaginings or fantasy is abundant in Anderson's next film, *The White Bus* (1966), a film not readily associated with the British New Wave's realist aesthetic but which is certainly relevant to the idea of super-realism, thereby overcoming one of the defining binaries of British cinema studies. It addresses a reality of life contemporary to its makers, the experience of a young woman from a Northern town living and working in London and navigating the class assumptions and structures depicted in *Momma Don't Allow*. *The White Bus* is a twenty minute short made as one of three sections of an experimental portmanteau film, the others of which never saw fruition. Filmed with a realist-style mise-en-scène, with fragmented traditional narration in which outer reality and inner imaginings merge (in the manner of *Un Chien Andalou* (Luis Buñuel and Dali)), it tells the story of the young woman travelling home from her office job in London. Often, documentary footage merges with fiction in the same mise-en-scène. For example, the scene in which she catches the train to leave London for Salford is filmed at Paddington Station as crowds of actual commuters and travellers go about their business. In fact, occasionally they look directly at the camera with curiosity (see figure 3. 12). In the midst of this real-life scene, a suited man in a bowler hat runs alongside the girl babbling about his opinions about socialising with working-class people, and then insisting that she write to him. Once in Salford she takes a tour around the city on an open topped bus (of the film's title), and is treated to views of the grimmest industrial scenes, and to a tour of a factory.

Figure 3. 12 Screen grab from *The White Bus* (Lindsay Anderson, 1966). Fictional characters walk amongst crowds of actual commuters at Paddington Station. A commuter in the foreground looks with hesitant curiosity at the camera.

The idea of work, industry and materialism as oppressive is the running theme of the film, which begins at the end of the girl's working day. She gets up to leave, but there is a jump cut showing the same scene, only with her feet and legs dangling into frame above her desk, as if hanging. The babbling man in the station is dressed for work in a bowler hat and suit (is Anderson trying to tell us meaningless work made the man vacuous?), and her tour takes in the work of the city. *The White Bus* ends with the girl sitting at a café as the man and woman who run it finish their day by piling chairs onto the tables in preparation for cleaning. They are chanting that on Tuesday they must catch up with Monday's work, on Wednesday, Tuesday's and so on. Their lives are an endless grind of monotonous work, but Anderson shows little reason for it or any satisfaction. *The White Bus* is shot almost entirely in black and white but is occasionally interspersed with a few seconds of colour. This, along with the technique of combining the inner and outer lives of its central character, 'makes strange' the film storytelling process.

Anderson uses these techniques again in his better known work, *If…* (1968). It begins in a realist, traditionally narrated style, and is shot in black and white. Anderson shows the hierarchical nature of the school's social structure. Older boys dominate younger ones, with the 'fag' system relegating some boys to serving others, and the school's teaching is characterised by conformity. The only release seems to come from sport.

Once this scene is set, Anderson begins to disturb the film's traditional narration. He momentarily switches from black and white to colour. This happens for the first time when the main characters are fencing, and they reach a peak of abandon, marking the beginning

of their rebellion. Disruptions of traditional narration build during an army training battle. At first, their conflict looks real and only when the school's Reverend refers to it as a training exercise do we realise it is a mock battle. However, further confusion ensues as Travis takes aim at the Reverend and we see his face as he appears to stab the Reverend in a vicious frenzy. But in the next scene the school's headmaster tells the boys 'the Reverend could have been seriously hurt…' as they are lined up in his office. The Reverend is then revealed lying inside a cabinet drawer when the headmaster opens it (a scenario reminiscent of Buñuel's *Exterminating Angel*, when birds feet randomly emerge from a lady's evening bag; see figure 2. 8 in the previous chapter). To add to the strangeness of the situation, the Reverend greets the boys as if it is normal for him to be lying in a cabinet drawer.

In another twist, violence explodes for real soon after this meeting, at an end-of-academic-year service. The Reverend preaches about the necessity of hierarchy, orders and obedience, citing the boy's privilege as reason for them to obey and work hard to be obeyed in turn. Travis and his friends open fire in the church using guns they have found in the school's armoury, randomly slaughtering and maiming attendees of the service, much like Breton's random shot in the street. The school's authority figures, the reverend, teachers, and so on, take to arms and a battle ensues. The film ends with a long shot of the school and its grounds littered with the injured and dead bodies of school officials and parents. Looking at Anderson as an auteur in the context of Breton's Surrealism and Buñuel's approach to filmmaking, reveals that he has is hence as much in sympathy with the Surrealist movement as he is with the British New Wave.

Jack Clayton and *Room at the Top* (1958)

Jack Clayton's *Room at the Top* also shares themes with its director's other films that are more usually associated with Surrealism, or with the perceived fantastical strand of British film making. For example, hauntings characterise Clayton's first short film *The Bespoke Overcoat*, an adaptation of a Gogol short story, narrated in flashback by a ghost. In his adaptation of Henry James' *The Turn of the Screw*, *The Innocents*, a nanny is haunted, either by her own psyche or by a spirit, but we are never sure which. Similarly, *Room at the Top* ends with Joe Lampton (Laurence Harvey) faced with a life haunted by his own guilt after the gruesome death of his true love in a car crash. The accident is caused by her grief, after his callous rejection of her in favour of material gain. His entrapment in a loveless (at least

from his side) shot-gun marriage, and the fact that he cannot admit to being haunted, is also reminiscent of Edgar Allen Poe's *The Premature Burial* (2015, first published 1844), in which the lead character must suffer, alone and unheard as he dies of suffocation. Lampton is, metaphorically, buried alive, and his fate must surely send him insane.

Figure 3. 13 Detail of screen grab from *Room at the Top* (Jack Clayton, 1959). Lampton's wedding, or, metaphorically speaking, his 'Premature Burial'.

Both Machin in *This Sporting Life* and Lampton in *Room at the Top* are monsters, or at least commit monstrous acts, in the name of progress. They are social and financial climbers, with their lives defined by an unwavering belief in the importance of materialism. As Anderson shows us in *The White Bus*, the mechanical, material dreams of the industrial revolution have a tendency to crush humanity. And as Mary Shelley predicted in *Frankenstein*, people who are manufactured according to a method or a formula, and not with emotion, can never be entirely human.

Realism, Super-Realism, British Television Drama and its Legacies

Television, of course, has made a major contribution to the development of realism on British screens, with an impulse to protest via the means of combining documentary techniques with fiction during the 1960s and 1970s. The capacity of these films to unsettle their audiences is enhanced because they entered people's homes, hence taking them off guard in a way that is not possible in the cinema (a phenomenon identified by Helen Wheatley in her 2006 study of Gothic Television, more of which in the next chapter). They also drew upon the aesthetics of factual programming, and often had a didactic impulse.

Series such as the BBC's *Wednesday Play* explored and frequently protested against, social issues. The BBC's wider agenda to inform and educate was not far from the surface in any of these films and although officially classed as drama, the *Wednesday Play* had a strong documentary element. Indeed, Hill devotes an entire chapter to the way in which the distinction between fact and fiction is 'blurred' in the series (Hill, 2011: 51-79).

The series' capacity to provoke reached its peak with *Up the Junction* (Ken Loach, 1965) and *Cathy Come Home* (Ken Loach, 1966). *Up the Junction* caused outrage immediately prior to a parliamentary vote on the abortion act with an unflinching portrayal of back street abortion, while the latter film is well known for provoking public concern about homelessness. Both films upset their audiences, changing the way they saw their society, a key Surrealist aim. Reactions to *Cathy Come Home* were so strong that the housing charity Shelter was established a few days after it was first screened (Platt, 1999: 104). The *Wednesday Plays* were, in effect, drama-documentaries, just as much as *Silent Village* and *Went the Day Well*. They were often shot at authentic locations (Hill, 2011: 57) and had an immediacy that can be compared to Free Cinema films, as well as to those made earlier by Jennings. Hill describes the way in which *Cathy Come Home* is made to look like a documentary film. For example, it uses authentic locations and a camera style that mimics candid filming, with 'many of the shots of local people … apparently unplanned and filmed as they occurred' (Hill, 2011: 58). But as Hill points out, its story is told in a highly subjective fashion, employing classic melodrama. For example, at the film's end, Cathy is portrayed as an innocent and helpless victim, standing alone and shot from a long-distance high angle, a classical melodramatic fiction technique (Hill, 2011: 58-9).

Mike Leigh is another director whose film career emerged as a result of working on the *Play for Today* (previously the *Wednesday Play*) television series. One of the distinctive aspects of Leigh's work is his use of improvisation. Scripts are developed from a series of spontaneous sessions in which the actors/actresses form dialogue and plot from their understanding of their characters in given situations. Leigh's actors lose themselves in their characters in an extreme form of method acting. Hence, in effect, Leigh's films are documentations of characters reacting to each other, rather than premeditated, scripted pieces (Clements, 1983). Perhaps this element of real-life interaction is what allows for the well-documented humour of his films, a quality that has sometimes been seen as a distraction from Leigh's credentials as a realist (Whitehead, 2007).

The legacy of these various developments in British cinema and television is clearly evident in the work of more recent filmmakers in the British realist tradition. The didactic tradition of Loach can be traced in the work of Lynne Ramsay and Andrea Arnold, whose films seek to inform their audiences about difficult issues, usually shocking or traumatic ones, while Leigh's humorous studies of human struggles are evident in the work of Shane Meadows. As with Loach, there is little humour in the films of Arnold and Ramsay, and their bleak depictions make it difficult to classify them as entertainment. In Arnold's *Fish Tank* (2009), for example we are taught about the complexities and miseries of Mia (Katie Jarvis), a teenage girl, as she tries to navigate various responses, mostly brutal, to her emerging sexuality.

It is possible to trace Arnold's style back to Anderson. She has an impulse to portray working-class life and her camera style is self-consciously documentary-like with shaky hand-held cameras and her films have a relentlessly bleak tone, reminiscent of *This Sporting Life* and *If…*. Ramsay's work has a similar impulse. *We Need to Talk About Kevin* (2011) is, in part, an educational film about what makes people serial killers. Like Anderson with *If…*, it turns its focus on troubled middle-class life, something Leigh has also touched upon in his films *High Hopes* (1988) and *Naked* (1993), even if his bourgeois characters are only a foil to working-class protagonists. Also like Anderson, Ramsay deals with a school shooting, only this time our sympathies are meant to be squarely against the gunman.

Ramsay's films *Ratcatcher* (1999) and *We Need to Talk About Kevin* are interesting when compared to the films of Buñuel because they too rely on disruptions of cinematic conventions of time and space. In *We Need to Talk About Kevin*, there is a loose narrative structure, but this is repeatedly disrupted as we do not always know when and where events are taking place. Just as Buñuel's work reflects the struggle between the conscious and the sub-conscious through narrational style, Ramsay's represents the vagaries of human memory and its sometimes conflicting and confusing narratives.

Conclusion: Super-Realism and British Film

While the discussion above has moved through relatively familiar territory, I hope that I have made this journey seem strange in two important ways. Firstly, I have shown the ways in which British super-realism, or absolute realism has strong connections to the imagination, and to Romanticism more specifically. And secondly, I have shown how films

that may more readily be associated with fantasy, like *The White Bus*, in fact, stemmed from British documentary traditions.

The argument that realism, Romanticism, Surrealism and the imagination are intertwined, and often dependent on each other, is surmised in film director Danny Boyle's opening ceremony for the 2012 Olympic Games. This was broadcast as a documentary of an actual live event, the performance of *Isles of Wonder,* along with audience reactions to it. Characters playing themselves mingled with actors playing fictional or historical figures. For example a real-life group of pearly kings and queens and the Grimethorpe Colliery Band performed alongside actors re-creating the arrival of immigrants from the Caribbean arriving on the 'Empire Windrush' liner.

At the same time, the book that inspired the ceremony, Jennings' *Pandæmonium*, was a record of factual and imaginative responses to the industrial revolution in Britain. I would argue that Jennings' collection of writings or 'images' as he refers to them is inseparable from his involvement in Surrealism, and hence Boyle's Olympic ceremony is also relevant in this context. Boyle recorded imaginative responses to the British industrial revolution, just as much as the Paris Surrealists recorded each other's dreams and word associations.

The blending of documentary style with fiction, and vice-versa, that I have explored in this chapter is central to the rest of my discussion of British film. In fact, many of the films left out of this chapter because of its focus on drama-documentary will be addressed in Chapter Six, when I look at documentary films made by artists. Before that, however, I will continue my survey of British film by looking at Surrealism's path through the British Gothic film.

Chapter Four: Gothic Elements, Surrealism and British Film

Gothic cinema has been cited by David Pirie as an example of non-realist cinema, a perception that has remained influential in British cinema studies ever since (Pirie 1973; Murphy, 2009). However, as noted in the previous chapter, there are significant cross-overs between the traditions of realism and the Gothic in British cinema. In fact, when opening *A Heritage of Horror: The English Gothic Cinema* (1973: 7), Pirie used the exact quotation from Breton that I drew upon to begin my discussion of realism in British cinema: 'my aim is the future resolution of… dream and reality, into a kind of absolute reality, a Surreality' (Breton, 1924: 14). Indeed, the quotation serves this chapter just as well as the previous one. In what follows, I will continue to make strange the terms of the debate about the relationship between realism and the fantastic in British cinema by examining a collection of films from what is generally perceived as the fantastical or Gothic side of that binary polemic; in so doing, I will demonstrate their connections to the so-called realist tradition of British cinema.

Previous writing on Gothic British Cinema emphasises its association with the Horror genre. Of course, Pirie established this pattern with his horror history's subtitle, …*The English Gothic Tradition*, while Barry Forshaw continued in this vein with *British Gothic Cinema* (2013), another book about Gothic-horror films (with a chapter about Gothic television). Both books assess Hammer Horror and the Hammer film studio's contribution to the British Cinema, with Pirie's almost entirely devoted to it, and Forshaw devoting a third of his book to the studio.

As I have already noted, Pirie draws attention to what he sees as Hammer Studio's importance to Surrealism in Britain. He even goes so far as to say that the Hammer Horror aesthetic would never have existed if we had had a more coherent and visible official Surrealist group in Britain (Pirie, 1973: 11-21). This is of course a bold claim. It is also one of the few assertions of the importance of Surrealism to British cinema in academic debates. Pirie's reasons for this are that Hammer films are shocking and sexual, while they draw upon the nineteenth century Gothic literary tradition. He, rightly, of course, associates

these qualities with Surrealism (1973: 11-21). However, the same argument could just as easily be made for most Gothic-inspired horror films, British or otherwise.

Despite all of this, it is difficult to ignore Pirie's role in driving the realism and fantasy dynamic of British Cinema Studies, a debate that is central to my thesis. As I explained in the introduction to my thesis, his work on Hammer Horror is often credited as being an early key to unlocking the 'lost continent' of non-realist British Cinema.

In this chapter I will assess how relevant Pirie's claims are to the study of Surrealism and British film, in part by looking closely at two Hammer films. My case study of Hammer Horror films in this chapter are, then, in some ways similarly motivated to my readings of Jennings' films in the previous chapter; my purpose is to re-evaluate a prior perception in British Cinema Studies, or to make it strange. At the time of writing this thesis I know of no other such assessments of Pirie's work in relation to Surrealism. Forshaw does not mention Surrealism; in fact, he barley mentions Pirie (although the undeniable influence of Pirie's work is evident in Forshaw's agenda, to 'discuss every major film from both the Hammer studios and elsewhere' (Forshaw, 2013: 4)). My readings of Hammer Horror films are, then, also rare in their evaluation of Pirie's argument about Surrealism in British film.

There are three other book length studies of British Horror film, Peter Hutching's *Hammer Horror and Beyond* (1993), Steve Chibnall and Julian Petley's *British Horror Cinema* (2001) and Ian Cooper's *Frightmares: A History of British Horror Cinema* (2016) that devote significant attention to Hammer's Gothic Horror films. There are also auteur studies of Terence Fisher's, including his Hammer Horror films, Hutching's *Terence Fisher* (2001) and Wheeler Dixon's *The Charm of Evil: The Life and Films of Terence Fisher* (1991). All of these books, of course refer to the themes of sex and shock, which are important to Surrealism. But as I have already indicated these are central themes to any Horror film study. Hutching's analysis of the realism and fantasy dynamic is, however, relevant to my discussion. He still defines British Horror films as belonging to the fantasy side of a realism/fantasy dynamic, but this time as equal to realism. He saw Pirie's book as positioning them as a smaller if powerful contribution to British film (Hutchings, 1994: 14), a position I would dispute. In fact, I would say Pirie argued for Gothic British cinema to be viewed as more significant than realism. Of course Hutching and Chibnall and Petley both discuss Hammer's literary adaptations, but not in the context of a literary heritage. Pirie's study remains the only study to look at Hammer Horror films' relationship to Surrealism and Gothic literature.

Another important study in this context is Helen Wheatley's *Gothic Television* (2006). It draws upon British television for its main case studies, and her views on the power of Gothic in a domestic setting are significant here, as well as in other chapters later in the thesis. Wheatley argues that television is a particularly effective medium because it can meld seamlessly with the intimate spaces in which it is so often watched, and hence, act as a kind of Trojan horse, unsettling audiences in their own homes. Wheatley's argument for Gothic television is equally applicable to Surrealism on television, because, as I have already said, Surrealism is also at its most effective when it creates such unsettling disturbances.

Before I present my survey of British films, the Gothic and Surrealism, I pay particular attention to Adonis Kyrou's article, 'Romanticisme et Cinéma' (1951) and the film *A Corridor of Mirrors* (Terence Young, 1948), which features heavily in it. As I noted in Chapter Two, although the article is an international call for an intense, frenzied cinema, he uses many British films as examples. He praises David Lean's Dickens adaptations and Powell and Pressburger's films. He cites *A Corridor of Mirrors* (1948) as the kind of tumultuous cinema that he, as a Surrealist, admired most of all, with an image from the film placed in prominence on its first page. Of course, Hammer Horror films were yet to be made, so no commentary on Kyrou's part was possible. But it is significant that Kyrou does not discuss horror films at all, hence, raising the possibility that Hammer Horror films might not have been as revered by him as they were by Pirie.

A Corridor of Mirrors is an adaptation of a Gothic novel by Christopher Massie (1947), and a romance set contemporary to the film's making. It is framed by realist-style sequences depicting the happy and respectably married life of Mifanwy Conwy (Edana Romney), the film's central character. This style is broken during the flashback sequences in which Conwy remembers a strange love affair with a man obsessed with the past (whom on first sight she compares to Lord Byron). Past and present merge as Conwy enters the home of her lover, Paul Mangin (Eric Portman), which is reminiscent of a Gothic-style castle. He dresses her in a vast collection of fifteenth-century-style gowns and jewellery that he has had made. They are copies of those worn by a fifteenth century aristocrat of whom he holds a portrait (which is, in reality, a photograph of Edana Romney) and whom he is convinced is his soul-mate, despite the fact that they live in different ages. The romance which unfolds is characterised by confusions of time, space, reality and fantasy as both Conwy and Mangin wonder, out loud, whether they are in the present or the past, or perhaps both. The film's audiences must feel a similar sense of disorientation. Much of the action takes place in the

corridor of mirrors of the film's title. Conwy and Mangin open and close mirrored doors, creating multiple reflections of the room and of themselves. Behind each of the doors is a dummy dressed in one of Mangin's gowns and a wig that replicates Mifanwy's hair. At one point, Mifanwy wonders if she too will become one of his dolls.

Figure 4. 1 Screen grab from *A Corridor of Mirrors* (Terence Young, 1948). The past and present merge as present-day character Myfanwy Conwy (Edana Romney) is dressed as her historical counterpart.

Adapting the Gothic Novel

As I pointed out in Chapter Two, confusions of reality, fantasy, time, space and identity were also defining features of Luis Buñuel and Salvador Dali's films, and this confusion will form the basis of my discussion of Gothic elements of British cinema. Despite this similarity

of key themes, Kyrou's selection of Romantic and Surrealist-inspired films is more broadly defined than my own. For my purposes, the term Gothic film refers to adaptations of Gothic literature, or to films that use storytelling methods and themes from Gothic literature. I focus on material that is richest in these qualities. Most of my discussion is taken up with readings of three films, Ealing Studios' portmanteau film *Dead of Night* (Cavalcanti et al, 1945), and the Hammer Horror films, *The Curse of Frankenstein* (Terence Fisher, 1957) and *Dracula* (Terence Fisher, 1958). I will also include some television, with a particular focus on Hammer's subsequent television series.

Dead of Night, like the Hammer Horror films, was produced in a studio setting. However, unlike the Hammer Horrors that followed it, its narration was anything but formulaic. *Dead of Night* was co-directed by Cavalcanti, whose previous film for Ealing Studios was *Went the Day Well?* (1942). Its debt to Buñuel and Dali's films is more obvious than in *Went the Day Well?*, and those influences form the lion's share of my discussion of the film.

The Curse of Frankenstein and *Dracula* are, of course, direct adaptations of well-known Gothic novels. Their stories were already well-liked by British and American audiences and, true to the studio film-making tradition, Hammer built on this commerciality by employing traditional narration, a tried and trusted method. This rendered the films true to the realist-style narration of the original novels. I use *The Curse of Frankenstein* and *Dracula* here to represent Hammer's vast Gothic oeuvre, as well as indicating Fisher as an auteur within that context. *The Curse of Frankenstein* is the first of Hammer's Gothic translations and establishes some of the classic themes and story-telling methods associated with the studio. *Dracula* was their second Gothic film, in which these tropes are fully developed. It is through close study of these two films that I assess the merit of Pirie's claim that Hammer films represent a British version of Surrealism, albeit and accidental one.

Of course, I could have followed Kyrou's lead and focussed on other forms of Gothic besides Gothic Horror. In which case, like him I could have examined Lean's Dickens adaptations, *The Corridor of Mirrors* and Powell and Pressburger. I would have added some of Thorold Dickinson's films to that list of possibilities from Kyrou's period (particularly his version of *Gaslight* (1940)). There are other Gothic films that I could have focused on in this chapter as well, including *The Lodger* (Hitchcock, 1927), in which a landlady's imaginings about her tenant combine with the internal reality of the film. Similarly, in *The Innocents* (Clayton, 1961), in Jack Clayton's adaptation of Henry James' Gothic novel *The Turn of the Screw* (1994, first published 1898), we never quite know if what we see before us is a ghost

story or the deranged imaginings of a nanny. Several of Ken Russell's films also have Gothic themes, most notably *Gothic* (1986), an account of the events leading up to the writing of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*. Russell confuses the heavily Freudian hallucinations, imaginings and realities of his main characters, Shelley and her fellow Romantic writers Lord Byron, Percy Shelley (who was, of course, her husband) and Dr. John Polidori. Russell also made *The Lair of the White Worm* (1988), an adaptation of a Bram Stoker novel of the same name, which was inspired by the Hammer film, *The Reptile* (John Gilling, 1966), which features a similarly reptilian woman who also wreaks havoc arrives when she arrives in an English village. *The Lair of the White Worm* is a Freudian tale of a snake-woman who devours her male suitors. I focus on *Dead of Night*, however, because of Cavalcanti's involvement and because the film embraces a wider range of Surrealist and Romantic narrational strategies and themes.

***Dead of Night* (1945, Cavalcanti et al)**

Ealing Studios (and the *Dead of Night's* producer, Michael Balcon) may not typically be associated with Surrealism. As noted previously, however, Charles Barr has argued that Ealing films were characterised by their capacity to combine realism with the fantastic (Barr, 1998, first published, 1977). Although he did not connect that quality with Surrealism, there is certainly a strong case for doing so with *Dead of Night,* one of the strongest examples of a Surrealist and Romantic style of filmic narration to emerge from Britain.

Dead of Night is a portmanteau film, a structure derived from the Gothic novel (which became important to British horror cinema when Amicus films had great success with it in the 1960s and 1970s, something I discuss later in this chapter). Variations on the portmanteau were also adopted by Buñuel for *The Milky Way* (1969), *The Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie* (1972) and *The Phantom of Liberty* (1974). Telling multiple stories within the frame of an over-arching narrative allows the makers of *Dead of Night*, like Buñuel, to confuse boundaries between what is meant to be real and what fantasy in *Dead of Night*.

As again like Buñuel, Lewis Carroll's Alice stories are a significant influence in *Dead of Night*. Dream and waking worlds collide, identities fluctuate and time and space are confused, while there are direct references to Carroll. Teenager Sally O'Hara (Sally Ann Howes), comments that maybe all the guests in the living room are just the subject of a dream, 'like the red queen's dream in *Alice Through the Looking Glass*', for instance, while there is a vignette about transitions through a mirror ('The Haunted Mirror').

Dead of Night opens with its central character, an architect named Walter Craig (Mervyn Johns) waking at home, having just had a nightmare. He travels to a cottage he is working on for the first time, but which is profoundly familiar to him, as are the group of people he finds congregated in it. Each guest tells of a spooky experience from their own lives. In the first, Hugh Grainger (Anthony Baird) has a premonition and near-death experience following his recovery from a racing-car accident. In the second, 'The Christmas Party', Sally O'Hara tells of her encounter with a ghost. While playing sardines at a costume party, she sees a young boy in nineteenth century dress. Later, she finds that a little boy was murdered in the same room about a hundred years earlier.

The story 'Haunted Mirror' is one of the most interesting in terms of Gothic and Surrealist themes and references. It was Robert Hamer's first directorial credit, and he went on to make *Kind Hearts and Coronets* (1949), a film that also has Surrealist qualities which I will discuss in the next chapter. The 'Haunted Mirror' sequence is narrated in flashback by Mrs. Cortland and is about the effects of a Rococo mirror she bought as a gift for her new husband. When he looks into it he sees a nineteenth-century Gothic bedroom, and not the bright, clean lines of the 1930s living room in which he stands. The more he gazes into the mirror, the more his usually bright demeanour sours to suit the brooding, Gothic scene. His wife's efforts to return her husband to normality are met with only limited success. Standing next to him in front of the reflection, she talks him back into their present day reality, but their respite is temporary as he soon returns to the vision and to his black mood. Eventually he throttles his wife in a jealous rage. She saves herself by grabbing the mirror and bringing it to the floor, reducing it to splinters.

Mrs. Cortland returns to the antique shop in which she bought the mirror to investigate its history. It transpires that the antique last belonged to an early nineteenth-century aristocrat. Injured while horse riding with his wife, he later became convinced that she and his now more athletic friend were having an affair. He eventually strangled his friend from his sick-bed in front of the mirror (a remarkably energetic rage given his crippling injuries). Although the husband does not actually pass through the mirror, his psyche and its milieu merge with his identity, emotions and behaviour. The world he sees in the mirror passes through time and space and into him.

Figure 4. 2 Screen grab of Mr. Cortland's (Ralph Michael) reflection in 'The Haunted Mirror' in *Dead of Night* (Robert Hamer, 1945).

The dark mood of *Dead of Night* is temporarily broken when the owner of the cottage recounts a tale about his friend, a golfer who competes with his golfing buddy for the heart of a young woman. On losing a game of golf, and thus the woman's hand in marriage, one of the friends walks into a near-by lake, never to be seen alive again. He does, however, return in spirit, haunting his newly married friend in a series of farcical comic events. The contrast between this light-hearted comic tale and the dark, unrelenting, horror of the others is so strong that it disturbs our expectations of cinematic convention, making the film seem very odd.

In the final vignette, 'The Ventriloquist's Dummy' (directed by Cavalcanti), a ventriloquist, Maxwell Frere (Michael Redgrave), claims his dummy has coerced him to murder. He is presumed insane by those around him, including his jailors and psychiatrist. But in the final sequence, the dummy comes to life and strangles his owner. Or so it seems, since we don't know if this is imagined by Frere or if it is actually happening. 'The Ventriloquist's Dummy' is followed by a montage sequence during which Craig enters the milieu of each story. He finds himself in the reflection of the haunted mirror, terrified; then confronted by Frere's dummy; finally, true to an earlier premonition of his, he punches O'Hara when his terror peaks on entering the 'Christmas Party'. The idea that each tale is separate from the other, as well as separate from the framing narrative is shattered; thus, the verisimilitude of traditional narration and, hence, the illusion that what we are watching is real is broken.

At this point, Craig wakes from his nightmare. Back at home with his wife, the story begins all over again and we come to see that, just as with Carroll's Alice, Craig is the narrator of the film's over-arching narrative. He takes the same trip to the cottage, and experiences the same sense of déjà-vu. Like Nobile's guests in *The Exterminating Angel,* Craig is trapped in an illogical and circular narrative. *Dead of Night*'s challenging narrational strategies are a

useful counterpoint to Hammer's highly commercial and conformist storytelling methods (in-spite of their controversial content). In Hammer's case, Gothic literature inspired a remarkably different if equally relevant set of Surrealist-like qualities. *The Curse of Frankenstein* was the first of Hammer's Gothic horrors and it established their formidable reputation for that genre in an international market (Pirie, 1973: 33-34).

***The Curse of Frankenstein* (Terence Fisher, 1957)**

As well as establishing Britain's reputation for horror cinema, *The Curse of Frankenstein* established Hammer's house style for Gothic adaptations that were shocking but highly commercial and traditionally narrated. The film also established Terence Fisher as an important auteur for whom the kind of frenzy admired by Kyrou was key. The success of *The Curse of Frankenstein* and Hammer's later Gothic adaptations is due, in part, to the fact that Romanticism – and, in turn, Surrealism – address universal human experiences and emotions which are often hidden (such as sex and fear), a feature that is maintained in Hammer's and Fisher's films. The film's success can also be partially attributed to its use of surface realism and traditional narration throughout, something that made it easily accessible to a wide audience. Hence, despite *The Curse of Frankenstein's* is intrinsically linked to realism. Its story was inspired by actual scientific developments taking place during the late nineteenth century, in which electricity was used to animate dead animals. It eventual takes us to a fantastical conclusion, whereby a human being (or composite human being) is animated after death, but as in Shelley's time science seems to be moving ever closer to that end. Hence reality and realism were also contributed to the terror one might experience when viewing *The Curse of Frankenstein* (as it must have done when reading early editions of Shelley's novel), when things seem real they are bound to be more frightening, an idea I will expand on later in this chapter when I look at Hammer's television series.

The Curse of Frankenstein is narrated in retrospect by its lead character Dr. Frankenstein, as he waits in a prison cell to be executed by guillotine for the murder of his maid. Dr. Frankenstein is a wealthy aristocratic scientist who has spent decades working in a laboratory in his home to recreate human life. He begins with animals, and experiences some success, but his work becomes increasingly gruesome and criminal when he moves onto human subjects. He collects body parts from people who have died, eventually murdering his old Professor in order to pillage his brain. This plan back-fires horribly when the glass jar in which the brain is stored smashes but in his deranged, obsessive frenzy, the

doctor uses it anyway. The result is a clumsy and gruesome-looking creature who, nevertheless, possesses a full range of human emotions and vulnerabilities.

In both the original Shelley novel and Fisher's version of the story, un-checked rationalism in the guise of science wreaks disastrous consequences. In fact, Dr. Frankenstein is so unaware of his own emotions that he cannot harness them and they eventually destroy any value his intellect may have had. As I discussed in Chapter One, this is also the basis of Breton's polemic about rationality and irrationality. As the Surrealists might have predicted, Dr. Frankenstein's failure to recognise his own irrationality, along with a detachment from the creature he creates as an emotional being, is his downfall. He loses professional credibility, his relationships and, ultimately, his life. All of this is in spite of his experiment being a triumph of intellectual effort.

But there is also a significant sexual element to the film. Dr. Frankenstein is a predator, seducing his maid by promising marriage, only to cast her aside when his long-arranged wedding to his cousin becomes imminent. Close ups of the maid's face show her gazing at him, eyes glistening and lips quivering as he looks on in sadistic pleasure. He approaches sex the way he does his scientific endeavours, with the attitude of an all-powerful being who can toss his minions whichever way he pleases.

Figure 4. 3 Screen grab from *The Curse of Frankenstein* (Terence Fisher, 1957). Dr. Frankenstein (Peter Cushing) and his maid, Justine (Valerie Gaunt) in a passionate embrace).

The maid's sexuality features again when she goes in search of evidence that will incriminate Dr. Frankenstein. She emerges in the corridor wearing a long, semi-transparent,

cleavage-exposing night-dress, the first of many such garments to be worn by Hammer's Gothic heroines. In a motif that would become familiar to Hammer audiences over the next decade, back lighting emphasises the dress' transparency and her cleavage palpitates as she approaches the laboratory. Once inside, Frankenstein, who is close behind, locks the door behind her. The creature turns on her, she screams, her bosom heaving as it approaches. Although we do not see or hear the details of her demise, there is certainly a sexual overtone to the scene and we are left wondering, did the creature sexually attack as well as murder her? There is a cut to Dr. Frankenstein as he stands behind the door with an expression of mild resigned regret. This indifference is confirmed as the next scene opens with him coolly asking his cousin (who is also his fiancée) to 'pass the marmalade' as they eat breakfast. Dr. Frankenstein's callous nature eventually signals his demise. His teacher and long-time scientific collaborator, Professor Bernstein (Paul Hardtmuth), is so disgusted by Frankenstein's lack of humanity that he withholds evidence that the creature existed, thus framing the doctor for the murder of his maid.

The Curse of Frankenstein is what Breton would have termed 'marvellous', for the way it stirs hidden, repressed emotions that collide with the principles of industrialised, rational society; it is, as such, a kind of coincidental Surrealism. But the motivation to protest is minimal in the film. The film's shocking elements are hardly the 'random shot in the street' of Breton's socio-political protest. Rather, they are saleable commodities, and there seems little doubt of the studio's awareness of the appeal of sex and horror to its audiences. On the other hand, the film's warnings against living only in one's intellect harbour some significant Surrealist tendencies. Mary Shelley had drawn on fantasy and rationalism in equal measure when creating her novel. In her 1831 account of its devising, she tells of how she and fellow writers, Lord Byron, Dr. John Polidori and Percy Shelley spent evenings devising ghost stories and discussing scientific developments of the day, including Darwin's ideas about evolution, and the use of electricity to animate usually inanimate objects, and to aid medical treatment.

The idea of Dr. Frankenstein's story, she says, came to her in a flash in the middle of the night, as a terrifying 'waking dream' which she then set about writing up. Her choice to use a naturalistic style of writing and settings is combined with this frenzy of irrational inspiration. She wanted her readers to feel as overwhelmed as she had during her 'dream' so she produced an accurate record of what she saw in her vision (1980: 9-10). Her method pre-empts the Surrealists working in Paris more than a hundred years later when they

considered documentation and records of dreams, day dreams and other irrational wanderings the key to Surrealism.

Shelley's proto-Surrealist combination of frenzy and surface realism is continued in Fisher's *Frankenstein*. It is a style that remained characteristic of the studio, one that ensured their films were simultaneously shocking and highly commercial. These qualities also provide evidence to support Pirie's claim that Hammer horror films are an unintentional, but important, strand of British Surrealism (Pirie, 1973: 11-21). It is however worth noting that Fisher rarely addressed head on the relationship of reason and emotion again; instead, the content of his later films (if not their form) seem to celebrate irrationality, as both good and evil.

***Dracula* (Terence Fisher, 1958)**

Like *The Curse of Frankenstein, Dracula* is also a direct adaptation of a Gothic novel, and it expands on themes of social hierarchy and repressed sexuality. It also draws upon traditional narration, inviting its audiences to suspend disbelief and engage with what unfolds as if it were real. Unlike *The Curse of Frankenstein*, however, there is no obvious connection between the story of the film, or the novel from which it was adapted, to the realities of its audiences. Dr. Frankenstein and his dalliance with his maid is a prototype for representations of sex in subsequent Hammer horror films, particularly in its series of Dracula films, and the Count is an intense version of the aristocratic predator we see in Dr. Frankenstein. In fact, it is possible to see Count Dracula as an exaggerated, more intense version of the eighteenth and nineteenth-century aristocratic male. He is (almost) all-powerful, while his existence (not just his bloodline) spans vast historical eras. He is more sexual, stronger both mentally and physically, more cunning and his identity more powerful than ordinary mortals. He exists in the past, present and future all at once. Van Helsing's (Peter Cushing) mission is to find his weaknesses and bring him into line with the usual human condition of mortality.

Fisher's *Dracula* is set in late nineteenth-century Europe. It begins with vampire slayer and Englishman, Jonathan Harker (John Van Eyssen), arriving at Count Dracula's (Christopher Lee) castle in Transylvania, in the guise of a librarian taking on the task of curating the Count's vast library. He eats his first meal there alone, but encounters a young woman who says she is trapped by the Count, and who begs for his help. But the woman turns on Harker, biting his neck. That day, Harker takes his opportunity to drive a stake through the hearts of both the woman and the Count while they sleep in their coffins in the cellar. He

kills the female vampire but Dracula is not in his coffin and Harker finds himself locked in the cellar, alone with the Count. A couple of weeks later, Harker's fellow vampire slayer, Van Helsing, arrives from England to find him at the castle, vampirised. Van Hesling drives a stake through his colleague's heart, the only way to end his torment. Van Helsing returns to England and is followed by the Count, who has developed an obsession with Harker's fiancée, Lucy (Carol Marsh).

While pursuing Lucy, the Count mesmerises and/or vampirises most of the other women in her and Harker's social circle. As with Dr. Frankenstein and his maid, Dracula's effect on women is dramatic as they become overwhelmed with desire, despite all apparent dangers. First, there is the young woman that Harker encounters at the Count's castle, bound irrationally to this evil place. She expresses desperation to escape but remains enslaved to the Count, and to vampirism – even turning her teeth to Harker's neck. Then, of course, Lucy succumbs, becoming one of the undead herself. Finally and perhaps most unexpectedly, Lucy's mother, the prim and sensible Inga (Barbara Archer), surrenders to Dracula. She leans back on her bed as Dracula takes to her neck. Just as with the maid in *The Curse of Frankenstein*, her eyes (in close up: see Fig. 4. 4) show fear, excitement and longing, a classic Gothic-sublime representation of female sexuality.

Figure 4. 4 Screen grab from *Dracula* (Terence Fisher, 1958). Inga (Barbara Archer) submitting to Count Dracula (Christopher Lee).

Despite these Surrealist and Romantic themes, Hammer's Gothic oeuvre does not usually feature Romantic or Surrealist storytelling techniques. Possible exceptions include *Brides of Dracula* (Fisher, 1960) and *The Devil Rides Out* (Fisher, 1968). As Forshaw has identified, in

Brides of Dracula, fragmented scripting and editing create what he describes as a non-linear effect comparable to *Un Chien Andalou* (Buñuel and Dali, 1929) (Forshaw, 2013: 49-51). The usual rules of linear storytelling are also subverted in *The Devil Rides Out* when time and space are confused in Duc de Richelieu's (Christopher Lee) bid to beat the powers of evil. These sequences feature dramatic juxtapositions in production design, notably, through time and scale. For example, during the film's denouement Richelieu must defend himself and his friends against a set of demons. They retreat to the home of the Eatons, a Tudor mansion complete with Tudor interiors, and vow to stay inside a pentagram Richelieu has drawn on the floor. A host of demons attempts to force them out of the pentagram. One of these is a mediaeval knight on a horse; hence, mediaeval, Tudor and 1930s production design are all on screen at the same time. Similarly, the home of Simon Aron (Patrick Mower), where devil-worshiping takes place, is Georgian-built and has corresponding interior design. The various deaths and possessions that occur due to the antics of Simon and the occult group's leader, Mocata (Charles Gray), are finally reversed when Richelieu conjures a spell that reverses time. Mocata's life is taken by the devil as a price for the reversal of time that takes place. All of these factors, of course, echo the television series *Dr. Who*, whose central character also travels across time, even reversing it, although, as with Richelieu's spell, there is usually a price to pay.

Pirie's assertion that Hammer Horror films are a British manifestation of the Surrealist movement seems, in light of the analyses above, somewhat exaggerated. There are some significant themes which come about mostly because the films draw so much on adaptations of Gothic novels which had been an influence on Surrealism. However, the socio-political protest that defines Surrealism in this thesis is almost entirely absent from Hammer's films. In a similar way, storytelling methods are mostly limited to traditional narration with only the two exceptions I discuss above. One of these, *Brides of Dracula*, does seem disjointed, but despite Forshaw's assertion that its narration echoes *Un Chien…*, its narrational disturbances are unique amongst Hammer's vast oeuvre. Hence, to single Hammer Horror films out as more significant to Surrealism than other British horror films is misleading.

Hammer's success inspired rival production company Amicus films, whose output was significant, if nowhere near as prolific as Hammer's. Amicus are best known for their portmanteau films, including *Dr. Terror's House of Horrors* (Freddie Francis, 1965), *The Torture Garden* (Freddie Francis, 1967), *The House that Dripped Blood* (Peter Duffell, 1971),

Tales from the Crypt (Freddie Francis, 1972), *Asylum* (Roy Ward Baker, 1972), *Vault of Horror* (Roy Ward Baker, 1973) and *From Beyond the Grave* (Kevin Connor, 1974). Like *Dead of Night*, some of Bunuel's feature films and other films of the Surrealist cannon, notably *The Sargasso Manuscript* (Wocjiech Has, 1966), they feature several stories framed by an over-arching narrative and character-narrator. However, unlike *Dead of Night* et al, there is little sense of confusion between reality and fantasy in their narrational style. It is important that I mention Amicus films here because they are a useful comparison to Hammer Horror films, representing the same Surrealist qualities, along with the portmanteau style). Both portray fantastical stories that shock their audiences in part by using the familiar conventions of traditional narration and naturalistic mise en scène. Thus they too mirror many of the original Gothic novels such as *Dracula* and *Frankenstein*, as well as Buñuel's later films, by combining fantastical content with naturalistic form.

There is also a small group of films made by other production companies that looked towards English folk culture as a source of the Gothic. *Witchfinder General* (Michael Reeves, 1968), *Blood on Satan's Claw* (Piers Haggard, 1971) and *The Wickerman* (Robin Hardy, 1973) all linked folk-culture to witch-craft, for instance. Looking back at folk culture, fairy-tales and so on has been important to Gothic and Surrealist traditions since William Blake, and can be seen in the work of English painter Samuel Palmer (whose work I will discuss in more detail in Chapter Four). This group of folk-horror films are also relevant here because of their commitment to realism. As Forshaw observes, the attention to historical detail in the production design of *Witchfinder General* is rare in horror films (Forshaw, 2013: 97-100). This is also the case with *Blood on Satan's Claw*, while the folk rituals in *The Wickerman* are based upon actual English traditions (Forshaw, 2013: 98) (even though the film is set in Scotland). *The Wickerman* is particularly interesting because it combines horror fantasy with a present-day (at the time of the film's making), realist style of mise-en-scene and narration.

Hammer Horror and Television Realism

Since Hammer Studios closed in the late 1970s, their presence has been sporadic, if true to the Gothic themes of *The Curse of Frankenstein* and *Dracula*. Hammer produced a series of television dramas during the early 1980s in which each hour-long episode told a strange and unsettling tale. Wheatley focusses on them as a case study, identifying their use of tropes from television realism, along with domestic settings, as key to their success in provoking the uncanny. I take a similar stance in the following discussion of the series, but I

also focus on the extent to which these dramas relate to the model of Surrealism identified in this thesis. Hammer had moved on from the gratuitous gore and shock-tactics of its later filmic output to embrace a more suspenseful and creepy format. To this end, the series combines realism and artifice or fantasy in a more consistent and effective way than Hammer's earlier films did. They are shot primarily in the style of the BBC television plays of the 1970s and 1980s and set in contemporary everyday Britain. Thus, as Wheatley observes, they meld seamlessly with much of their audience's domestic experience.

However, embedded in this, they include fantasy elements, such as a ghost-story, as in *The House that Bled to Death* (Tom Clegg, 1980), whose production design could pass for a Ken Loach television play or film. The drama takes place in a 1950s-style council house when a young family falls prey to unemployment; the film focusses on their subsequent difficulties, and only when these are established does the ghost story begin.

Figure 4. 5 Screen grab from *The House that Bled to Death* (Tom Clegg, 1980) showing the opening scene, shot in a realist style typical of British television dramas made at a similar time.

In other episodes, such as *The Two Faces of Evil* (Alan Gibson, 1980), obvious artifice combines with a sparse, realist style. A strong red and white theme runs through the episode's production design. This seems realistic in the home of the family the story is about, while its bold graphic style resonates with fashionable interiors and dress of the time. However, its continuation in a more extreme form in the interiors and uniform of a hospital, along with cantered and low-angled shots, gives these parts of the episode a camp, comic book feel. This creates a dissonance which jars with the realist style of other sequences.

Figures 4. 6 and 4. 7 Screen grabs from *The Two Faces of Evil* (Alan Gibson, 1980). A fashionable red and white theme in the family's costume and domestic interior come to seem more sinister after we see the bizarre red and white-themed hospital.

In this, way production design in *The Two Faces of Evil* first indicates reality, and then undermines it; after seeing the red and white of the hospital, the same colour scheme seems creepy and unsettling in the family home. It lets us know that the horrors of the hospital are not entirely absent there, and that, perhaps, the horrors we imagine may not be completely removed from our realities.

Conclusion: Gothic Elements, Surrealism and British Film

There is little doubt that Pirie's study of Gothic British film generated a forceful and essential dynamic in studies of British cinema at the time it was written; Pirie was without doubt a major contributor in the unearthing of British films not classified as realism. Perhaps, however, the need to over-turn the assumption that only British films defined as realist were worthy of study resulted in an approach that focussed heavily on divisions between reality and the imagination which we can now discard.

Similarly, Pirie's assertion that Hammer Horror is unique in representing a strand of (accidental) British Surrealism are, I would argue, somewhat misleading. There are plenty of alternative examples of Gothic film and television that are just as, or much more, relevant to Surrealism, key examples of which I have outlined in this chapter. I also argue that Pirie's interpretation of Surrealism as the antithesis of realism could now be usefully departed from; this idea is counter to Breton's proclamation in the very quote Pirie uses to open his book. Breton was in fact calling for us to understand the correlation between these two

perceived ideas, eventually reaching a point at which we saw no difference. It is for this reason I used it to open both this chapter, in which I discuss films usually defined as fantasy in British Cinema Studies, as well as the previous one in which I discuss those defined as realism.

The example of *Dead of Night* demonstrates how reality and dream can become confused as narrational techniques, while in Hammer's horror films, the realism of traditional narration combines with fantastical stories of monsters. Both approaches have relevance to Surrealism's aim to reconcile reality with fantasy and both are shocking (at least at their time of making). However, on the whole, Hammer films do not shock in order to protest, an important distinction in this thesis. Rather, their sensationalism is commercially driven.

Protest is, however, central to *Dead of Night*. As is typical of works associated with Surrealism, Mr. Craig's protest is against repression, and emerges in the form of a dream. He rages against Dr. Van Straaten (Frederick Valk), a German, hence, Freud-like psychiatrist, one of the guests in the cottage. Dr. Van Straaten insists that Mr. Craig's terrible premonition that he will assault Sally is false, and that Mr. Craig is, in fact, in control of his own destiny. Mr. Craig's rage against the doctor culminates in him murdering the man then passing through the story-world of each vignette, until, in his frenzy, he lashes out at Sally in 'The Christmas Story' as his prediction is fulfilled. It is possible then to read the entire film as a Freudian therapy session in which Mr. Craig's dream and his anger are laid bare, having been provoked by Dr. Van Straaten.

The tropes I have described above as inspired by Surrealism and Romanticism were originally designed to uncover emotions in restrictive circumstances. Looser censorship laws in Britain and America during the 1970s allowed for more graphic depictions of sex and violence. For Hammer and much of the rest of British horror filmmaking, this resulted in more graphic representations, typified by late Hammer films like *Vampire Lovers* (Roy Ward Baker, 1970) and *To the Devil a Daughter* (Peter Sykes, 1976). The scarcity of protest in Hammer's films meant that without the need to code sex and violence in Gothic motifs, their horror oeuvre began to lose its relevance to Surrealism. For the most part, British horror has followed this lead ever since. The revived Hammer label's recent Gothic adaptations and spin-offs, *The Woman in Black* (James Watkins, 2012) and *Woman in Black 2: Angel of Death* (Tom Harper, 2014), are exceptions. Unlike Hammer's original cycle of Gothic films, they rely on fragmented or incomplete narratives, another Gothic (and Surrealist) storytelling method, to create drama. We are never entirely sure who the

woman in black actually is, or even if she exists; this contrasts with the graphic depictions of characters such as Dracula and Dr. Frankenstein, along with various other horrors, which were a defining feature of Hammer's earlier films.

There is also, of course, an argument for tracing confusions of time and space through science fiction. The *Dr. Who* television series and films are a particularly strong example in which time, identity, and space seem infinitely flexible, just as they are in *Un Chien…*, and at the denouement of *The Devil Rides Out*. Transgressions of time and space are also key to my discussion of 'mad-cap comedy' in the next chapter. Examples include television series such as Anthony Newley's *The Strange World of Gurney Slade* (John Trent, 1960) and *Monty Python's Flying Circus*, as well as films by the Pythons.

Chapter Five: Surrealism, Satire and British Film

Introduction

In his first manifesto of Surrealism, Breton cites Jonathan Swift, the eighteenth century British satirist, as an important proto-Surrealist. Given Breton's mission to merge reality and the imagination, it is not surprising, then, that a coalescence of reality and fiction is often seen as key to satire (Diehl, 2013: 314). Satire can be defined as the presentation of an alternative, sometimes exaggerated, account of something real in order to expose its weaknesses (Diehl, 2013: 314). In effect, it makes real life events seem strange in order to show up problematic aspects of those events. Swift himself inspired readers to combine his fictional writing with 'their own knowledge of the real world'. In his spoof political pamphlet, *A Modest Proposal* (2012, first published 1729), Swift took ideas about starving Irish children as akin to live-stock, which had been circulating in English politics for a number of decades, to their ultimate, grisly, conclusion. The pamphlet outlined methods of slaughtering the children, along with a selection of recipes. Its tone was that of a sincere, concerned voice, expressing a solution to a social problem. The proto-Marxist quality of *A Modest Proposal*, along with the use of fiction to illuminate reality, is typical of Swift, and is surely what attracted Breton and the Surrealists to his work. Protest against the idea of treating human beings as commodities is also key to my discussion of satire, Surrealism and British film.

Despite a strong tradition of satire in British culture, little has been written about satire and British film, with even less material available about Surrealism, satire and British film in scholarly publications. There is, however, a very useful blog by James Whiton, which provides a series of observations about Surrealism, satire, Lewis Carroll and British moving image culture during the 1960s, and many of the films and television programmes from that period that I discuss below are addressed by Whiton. Satire has been important to Surrealism on film since Luis Buñuel and Salvador Dali distorted traditional filmic narration in *Un Chien Andalou*, presenting an alternative account of potentially real-world scenarios

in order to expose their underlying perversities. But it is not just the diegetic world that seems perverse. As I pointed out in Chapter Two, in *Un Chien…* and *L'Age d'Or*, Buñuel and Dali draw on some aspects of traditional narration, but leave out or exaggerate other traits. Thus, in their hands, traditional cinema storytelling itself becomes strange.

Buñuel took this idea even further in his documentary/travelogue, *Las Hurdes* (Buñuel, 1930), in which he spoofed public perceptions of the Hurdes region of Spain, as well as audience expectations of realism (see Chapter Two). British moving image satire has certainly always drawn upon confusions of fiction and reality, but, on the whole, only began to express the Surrealist impulse towards protest from the 1950s to the 1970s, a peak period for Surrealism-inspired satire in Britain, and one on which I concentrate in this chapter.

I will pay special attention to the work of the Monty Python team, including Terry Gilliam as an independent director, with case studies of the Python's last film, *The Meaning of Life* (Terry Gilliam and Terry Jones, 1983) and Gilliam's *Brazil* (1985). Others have already identified this body of films as important to any discussion of Surrealism and British film (Short, 2008 and Spicer, 2007). Even so, close analysis of how and why their films can be understood in terms of Surrealism is much harder to find. Perhaps more importantly, the Monty Python oeuvre exemplifies the central themes of this thesis, including confusions of realism and the fantastic, protest and storytelling traditions with their roots in Surrealism, Romanticism and the work of Lewis Carroll.

Of all the film and television material associated with the Python team, *The Meaning of Life* (1983) most strongly exemplifies Surrealist-style Buñuellian narration, while also exploring some of the most unpleasant recesses of material capitalism. *Brazil* (1985), meanwhile, has been identified with Surrealism more often than other films by the Pythons (Short, 2002; Spicer, 2007 and Murphy, 2009) and I will explore how useful those assertions are.

Television plays a stronger role in this chapter than in any other. Spike Milligan, Richard Lester and the Pythons all developed their careers as satirists and film-makers in television. There are other important examples of surrealism-inspired satire, such as Anthony Newly's *The Strange World of Guerney Slade* (John Trent, 1960) and *The Corridor People* (Edward Boyd, 1966), which were also made for television. As with the Gothic television discussed in the previous chapter, satire on television often took advantage of the medium's setting in people's domestic spaces, where they are often off-guard. As I will explain below, this

allowed for some interesting experimentation with television form and convention, which, in turn often found its way onto the cinema screen.

The Early Days of Satire and Surrealism in British Cinema

Earlier British moving image satire tends to poke fun at social trends or other fashionable forms of fiction. Examples include Robert W. Paul's film *The ? Motorist* (1906), in which the efforts of rogue motorists to escape the law are spoofed when one takes a trip to the moon. There were also the Pimple films of the 1910s, in which contemporary stage and screen drama is satirised. *The Whip* (Joe Evans, 1917), for example, poked fun at a West End stage show of the same name that featured a live horse race. Pimple used pantomime horses to tell the same story, foreshadowing the use of pantomime horses in *Monty Python and the Holy Grail* (1974, Terry Gilliam and Terry Jones). In the 1920s Adrian Brunel made a series of short films for the comparatively esoteric Film Society market, spoofing contemporary film-forms. These included *Crossing the Great Sagrada* (Brunel, 1924), which is, like *Las Hurdes,* a mock-documentary travelogue with mis-matching images and expositional inter-titles.

Figure 5. 1 Screen grab of *Pimple in The Whip* (Joe Evans, 1917). A lavish West End production, 'The Whip', featuring a live horse race, is satirised using pantomime horses, pre-figuring Monty Python (Dixon, 2003-2014).

The Crazy Gang

The comedy of the Crazy Gang, a group of six musical hall performers who made a series of films during the 1930s and early 1940s, also often relied on the subversion of traditional filmic storytelling methods, genres and cultural expectations. For example, they would occasionally merge music hall and film conventions to break the fourth wall and directly address the audience, a rare occurrence at the time they were making films. In their films

Alf's Button Afloat (Marcel Varnel, 1938) and *Gasbags* (Walter Forde and Marcel Varnel, 1941), Bud (Bud Flanagan) takes a break from the drama to turn to the camera to ask for commentary from the audience. The audience is also invited to jeer at a Nazi guard in a concentration camp, thereby disrupting any suspension of disbelief. In response we hear crowds booing and hissing. Although this invitation to audience participation is familiar music hall fare, it was unusual in cinema during the 1930s (as it still is).

The Crazy Gang films also often explore social hierarchies and materialistic attitudes. For example, in *Alf's Button Afloat*, the gang find themselves shanghai'd into the navy. It just happens that one of the buttons of Bud Flanagan's uniform is made from re-cycled metal from Aladdin's lamp, so when he polishes it a genie appears who will grant his every wish. This of course means that the power dynamics between the gang and their Officers is completely disrupted. Much of the comedy arises from what happens when the usually powerless attain some power of their own. However, the film could not exactly be described as revolutionary, as the gang never stop seeking the approval of their superiors. The gang are similarly downtrodden in *O-Kay for Sound* (1937), in which a similar reversal of dynamics sees the gang playing an out-of-luck variety act who are mistaken for powerful movie producers. In *The Frozen Limits* (1938), the gang travel to America to stage a fake gold rush. Although they do not hold positions of power, the film is a morality tale about the perils of greed. *Gasbags*, as war-time propaganda, but with none of the more general socio-political commentary of the British documentary films, has an entirely different agenda. The gang are transported to a Nazi concentration camp in Germany (a fact which gives the film's title extraordinarily creepy connotations), where they embark on an escape and a campaign which sees them defeat Hitler, armed only with a Hitler look-a-like they spot at the camp. It could be argued that because such underlings as the Crazy Gang manage to defeat Hitler, the film champions society's under-dogs, as well as their crusade against fascism. In these ways it is in sympathy with the Surrealists' penchant for protest, even if it was made with the sole purpose of boosting anti-German, pro-British morale.

Ealing Comedies

Ealing comedies may not be immediately associated with Surrealism, although their satirical nature is well documented (Barr, 1998), and a significant number involve protest against a hierarchical and unjust English or British society, while often blurring any boundaries between realism and fantasy. These two qualities merit a more extensive study than is

possible here. Instead, I will use *Kind Hearts and Coronets* (Robert Hamer, 1949) as a case study which exemplifies both the disruption of traditional narration and the theme of protest against social, hierarchical oppression. *Kind Hearts and Coronets* is also pertinent because it was directed by Hamer, the director of 'The Haunted Mirror', one of the vignettes from Ealing's Gothic horror *Dead of Night*, discussed in the previous chapter. Considering these films in terms of Surrealism reveals an authorial consistency to Hamer's earlier work which links two of the better known British films in a way that may not previously have been considered.

Kind Hearts and Coronets is an exaggerated tale of ruthless social climbing in which its protagonist, Louis (Dennis Price), murders eight members of the d'Ascoyne family, all played by Alec Guinness (who also plays their ancestor, the seventh Duke d'Ascoyne), a feat which could seem implausible, but is, in effect, believable. The film is shot in a realist, historical-drama style. However, verisimilitude is challenged when one person first ingratiates themselves with each of the remaining d'Ascoyne family and then assassinates them, all without suspicion. The fact that all of the characters are being played by one actor amounts to a collision of realism and the fantastical that is worthy of Buñuel and Dali. The film is narrated in flashback by Louis as he writes a chronicle of the multiple murders he has committed in order to become the first heir to the d'Ascoyne Dukedom. Ironically, he does this from his prison cell while awaiting execution for another murder, which he did not commit. *Kind Hearts and Coronets* makes strange the idea of social mobility, and reveals the shaming and frustrating effects of English class hierarchy, to similarly gruesome effect as Swift's *A Modest Proposal* does child exploitation in Ireland.

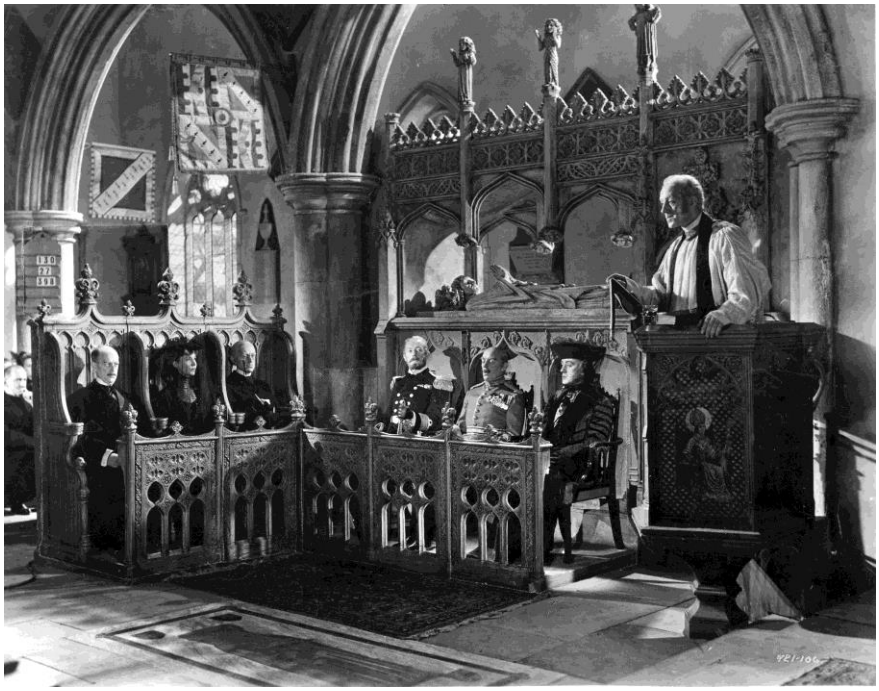


Figure 5. 2 Screen grab from *Kind Hearts and Coronets* (Robert Hamer, 1949). Six remaining d'Ascoygne family members at the funeral of their cousin, Lord d'Ascoyne, the banker, all played by Alec Guiness. Reverend Lord Henry d'Ascoyne delivers the service and the banker's widow also attends.

Satire, Surrealism and British Television and Radio of the 1950s and 60s

The acerbic rebellion against the British social order that is so powerful in *Kind Hearts and Coronets* became typical of Surrealist-like comedy satire in subsequent decades, until at least the 1980s. This strand was particularly strong in, first, radio, and then television, media which are, of course, characterised by their consumption in a domestic setting and, in this sense, quite unlike the cinema satire that came before it. Irreverent rebellion against social hierarchies was a foundation of *The Goon Show*, a BBC radio comedy series which ran between 1951 and 1960. It was broadcast weekly and featured a team of comedians who had cut their teeth as performers during World War Two. They included Spike Milligan and Peter Sellers, who would both go on to make film and television programmes that are important to this study. *The Goon Show* was ground-breaking in its high degree of irreverence, both for social structures and for narrational form, and became a significant and lasting influence on film and television comedy in Britain. It is significant to Surrealism in its own right, however, because it typifies the rebellion and disruption of narrative form

that I have outlined as key in this study. It featured a series of bizarre set characters, including 'Bluebottle' (Peter Sellers), 'Moriarty' (Spike Milligan) and 'Neddie Seagoon' (Harry Secombe), who played out short vignettes each week, often spoofing popular fictional forms of the time, such as historical dramas, detective stories, melodrama and horror. For example, one show, entitled 'The Toothpaste Expedition', satirised history's valorisation of explorers. As well as lampooning form, The Goon Show ridiculed social hierarchy. For example, one of its main characters, Major Bloodnok (Peter Sellers) was an upper-class military man on the make, with the catch phrase, 'moneyyyyyyy'. Major Bloodnok's ruthlessness materialism can be read as satirising people who profit from war. This becomes an especially pertinent idea when one considers that most of those involved in *The Goon Show* were World War Two veterans. The show was also characterised by Carollian word-play and a pre-occupation with the absurdity of Western culture and convention. For example, when the character Eccles (Spike Milligan) is asked 'What time is it?', he replies, 'Just a minute, I've got it written down on a piece of paper'.

Milligan wrote most of the scripts for the series and the chaotic style he developed for *The Goon Show* remained key to his own future work, as well as providing a foundation for the more anarchic strands of British comedy that I address in this chapter. The first *Goon Show*-inspired television show was *The Idiot Weekly Price 2d* (1956), of which there is little remaining footage. What is left indicates that its content and narrative format was similar to that of the better preserved Goon Show-inspired series *A Show Called Fred* (1957) and *Son of Fred* (1957), which were scripted by Milligan and directed by Richard Lester, both important figures in subsequent British film and television production with strong sympathies with Surrealism. As John Oliver explains,

> With *A Show Called Fred* and *Son of Fred,* Milligan challenged the established norms of the medium [television]. Whether running the end of one sketch into the beginning of another, employing inappropriate back projection, or focusing attention onto the artifice of television production itself by placing camera crews or other personnel in shot, he gave the shows an appearance of chaotic anarchy that made little sense – which was the point. Although the above may sound rudimentary today they were innovative and ground-breaking advances at the time. (Oliver, 2003-2014)

The disruptions to traditional narration Oliver describes above are, in fact, a cornerstone of Buñuelian narration, and would later become standard in British television comedy. Milligan certainly must have surprised his radio and television audiences with this technique, as Wheatley suggested was the case with Gothic television. But his televisions shows also introduced mainstream audiences to Surrealist-like moving image storytelling, hence, surely, making its transition to cinema that much smoother.

Milligan and Sellers, along with director Richard Lester made the Oscar-nominated twenty minute short, *The Running, Jumping, Standing Still Film* (Richard Lester, 1960), a series of similar slapstick, nonsensical comedy scenes that, although otherwise unrelated, are inter-linked by themes and characters. The film was made over two weekends by members of the cast and crew of *A Show Called Fred* and developed ideas derived from the series. Because it was nominated for an Oscar, it brought its director, Lester, international recognition and a film career, as well as promoting the profile of its stars, Milligan and Sellers. Milligan continued this method of narration in his own satirical television sketch show, *Q5-10* (Ian MacNaughton et al, 1969-1980), in which random-seeming recurring threads and motifs would link otherwise disconnected scenes. He also continued the physical comedy and nonsense aspects of the Goon Show in these television spin offs.

Figure 5. 3 Spike Milligan in a screen grab from *The Running, Jumping and Standing Still Film* (Richard Lester, 1960).

The Films of Richard Lester

Lester went on to direct the Beatles' first feature film, *A Hard Day's Night* (1964), a pseudo-documentary which gently satirises consumerism and show business, while, ironically, doing an excellent job of promoting the Beatles. Neil Sinyard places *A Hard Day's Night*

along with *The Knack* and *Help!* as a trilogy of what he sees as 'youth films', what he sees as Lester's exuberant celebration of positive social climes of early 1960s Britain. He also suggests that they are all films characterised by revolt against old British post-war orders of militarism and in-born social hierarchy, and are hence, in that respect Surrealist (Sinyard, 1985:21). He goes so far as to say that the message of *A Hard Days Night* 'is one of social revolution [a Surrealist motivation]' (Sinyard, 1985: 27). However, *The Bedsitting Room* is the Lester film he most associates with Surrealism:

> 'Surrealism is a word which has often been used, rather loosely, of Lester's style, but the term is appropriate for *The Bed-Sitting Room* conceptually as well as visually, for the film not only has the visual originality of Surrealism but also its attack on the madness of bourgeois norms'. (Sinyard, 1985: 68)

In the following passage I discuss the validity of Sinyard's assertions that Lester's are films of Surrealist-style protest, as well, of course, as looking at the films' relationship to Surrealism more generally.

Lester uses the same technique of disrupting traditional narration and combining documentary-realism and fantasy that he had developed in his television career and in *The Running Jumping Standing Still Film*. Early in the film, the Beatles sit in a train carriage with a businessman who they lampoon mercilessly, despite his reasonable objections to an open window and their loud radio. When he asks for respect, especially as he had fought in World War Two, they ridicule him even more, saying they bet he wished he had lost. The band's rebellion echoes the irreverence towards authority which was played out in *The Goon Show* and plays into the heavily marketed idea of the Beatles as a working-class band. With this fact in mind, their rebellion against the businessman in the carriage becomes less about class and social exploitation. The Beatle's irreverence towards him can be read as being about wanting to take his place in established hierarchies, as it is about actually wanting to change the nature of society. Unlike the schoolboys of Lindsay Anderson's *If…* who object to oppressive social structures and exploitation by the military, in this sequence, The Beatles seem only to want to play loud music and get away with being rude to the older generation for the purposes of advancing their own careers. Any suffering the businessman might have undergone as a soldier is completely disregarded, signalling a very

different attitude to war and exploitation to that which Anderson displays in *If…* (more of which a little later).

Nevertheless, *A Hard Day's Night* does include some elements that are relevant to this study and it would be wrong to exclude it on the grounds that its social protest is tepid. The sequence in the train carriage is filmed in a realist style with the Beatles playing themselves, as their fans know them. When they leave the carriage, they are shown looking through the glass panel at him, shouting 'can we 'ave our ball back, mister?'. Then a jump cut shows them through the outside window of the carriage, running alongside the train, repeating the same phrase. Of course, this breaks the sense of traditional narration in the film as well as establishing a pattern of repeated visual and verbal phrases that punctuate the film.

Lester's next film, *The Knack and How to Get it…* (1965), employed similar techniques, even though it dealt with the weightier subject of confused attitudes towards sexual consent, among both men and women. Its title refers to a method of seduction employed by Tolen (Ray Brooks), one of three young men (the others are Colin (Michael Crawford) and Tom (Donal Donnelley)), who debate how best to be successful with women. Tolen advocates disregarding consent, arguing that a woman will fall in love if raped. The other men are incredulous, setting out to prove his theory with Nancy Jones (Rita Tushingham) the object of his attention. *The Knack…* becomes Surrealist in its confusion of reality and imagination as Lester portrays her encounter with Tolen by combining short sections of Nancy's imagination and inner life with the view of the overall narrator. He also leaves a narrative gap where the encounter between Nancy and Tolen takes place, and this, as I will explain in my filmic essay chapters is an important storytelling method in Romantic literature, as well as in Surrealism on film. There is then some protest in *The Knack...* as Nancy swings from passionate objection against being raped by Tolen to being besotted and in love as a result of being seduced by him. However, the overall effect is more that of a character in confusion than of Breton's random shot in the street.

Lester's *The Bedsitting Room* (1969) is an adaptation of a stage play co-written by Milligan and John Antrobus. It is certainly rebellious and satirises the futility of consumerism, as well as the futility of nuclear weaponry. Set in the future some years after a nuclear war, it portrays the journey of a middle-aged couple and their pregnant teenage daughter as they traverse a seemingly vast landscape of discarded consumerist items such as washing machines, record players, cars and so on, in order to find the bedsit of the film's title.

Although the film looks strange, and contains commentary about some key socio-political concerns of the Surrealists, it rarely confuses reality and fantasy, with the film's traditional narration remaining consistent, and there is little passionate remonstration. Instead the film offers, as Sinyard himself observes towards the end of his discussion, a resigned pessimism with regard to consumerism (Sinyard, 1985: 70-71). Its protest is an agonised, yet phlegmatic, groan, rather than Breton's random shot in the street. At the end of the film the wife/mother of the family has become a wardrobe in the bedsitting room. The mother's voice emanates from this piece of furniture but it is only heard outside of the film's diegesis, with none of the characters aware of it, even though the daughter longs for her mother. This ending is sad and strange, but it is not a passionate protest.

The Strange World of Gurney Slade* and *The Corridor People

The Goon Show spin-offs and Milligan's programmes were not the only Surrealism-inspired television programmes to emerge at this time, or to influence later British satire. *The Strange World of Gurney Slade* (John Trent, 1960), for instance, a six part ITV series, features a sit-com character that walks off the set of his show in protest against the crass and unrealistic nature of the programme. As a trope this worked particularly well on television. Slade's original sit-com is about a family. The wife does housework, while the husband makes un-funny jokes about their visiting neighbour. Gurney Slade (Anthony Newley) turns to camera, offering audiences a critique of the programme, telling us it is nothing like real life. He proceeds to offer us an alternative, and, as he sees it, more realistic view of life throughout the series. This technique is all the more powerful because Slade is speaking to his audiences as they themselves sit in their own living rooms, possibly thinking that what they usually see before them is not like real life. Of course, this entire scenario is highly ironic given that Slade is a fictional character. The narrative that follows is characterised by tension between Slade's desire for freedom and the restrictions of being a television character. The sound of a metronome ticking recurs throughout the series, emphasising the importance of time to our culture, not least in the world of moving image production. The sectioning of blocks of time is essential in television, from pre-production, to production, to scheduling. The metronome reminds us that, as a television character, Slade is on a tight schedule, despite the stream-of-consciousness-style of his delivery. Like the rabbit in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, Slade is perpetually running against the clock. Other Alice references run through the series: one section is titled 'Gurney in

Wonderland', while in another there is a chaotic court case featuring a Queen-judge with the power to execute Gurney for the crime of making an 'unfunny' episode of his series.

Figure 5. 4 Screen grab from episode 1 of *The Strange World of Gurney Slade* (John Trent, 1960). Anthony Newley playing Gurney Slade, the sit-com character who escapes to run his own show, and Una Stubbs as an advertising illustration that is about to come to life. She accompanies him in a sequence titled 'Gurney in Wonderland'.

Figure 5. 5 Screen grab from episode 4 of *The Strange World of Gurney Slade* (John Trent, 1960). Gurney's trial for being 'unfunny' convened by a queen with the power to execute him. The clown in the foreground is a witness for the prosecution.

Recurring topics addressed by Gurney include the media and consumerism, Romantic love, and the countryside. In sympathy with the Surrealist pursuit of mad love, in the first

episode, after escaping the set of his sit-com, he is attracted by a picture of a girl (Una Stubbs) who features in an advertising poster for vacuum cleaners. As he wonders at how lovely she is, the image comes to life and the girl accompanies him for a series of Alice-like adventures in the park (see figure 5. 4). He then ponders against marrying too hastily and thus missing the chance for true love. He even persuades a married man to leave his wife and children for this purpose. In response, the wife decides there are plenty more fish in the sea and leaves the children with Slade. The children become a recurring motif in the series as they feature briefly in several future episodes. Hence, like Carroll's Alice stories, and the idea of time, the children randomly recur, linking sequences that may otherwise seem disconnected.

Another television series made a few years later, *The Corridor People* (Edward Boyd, 1966), satirises consumerism while employing narrational devices that are in sympathy with Surrealism. It tells the tale of the heir to a cosmetics company, and those who want to get their hands on his fortune. The film is shot entirely in interior settings with minimal, stylised production design. Performances are similarly formalised. For example, when the heir to the cosmetics company meets with a business associate, he introduces a model who performs a series of static clichéd poses (very well), in the office, as if that is what models do all the time. Artifice becomes so extreme that it can no longer be relied upon and any suspension of disbelief is ruptured.

Monty Python's Flying Circus and Beyond

The television series, *Monty Python's Flying Circus*, emerged in this context of Surrealism-inspired satire on British film and television. As with the films of Buñuel and the television oeuvre associated with Milligan, they presented a series of vignettes (or sketches) linked by the transition of a minor character from scene to scene, or by an event experienced by characters that belong to different scenarios. Also like Milligan's work, the *Python* television shows seemed chaotic and nonsensical, but were, in fact, carefully designed as satire that poked fun at the absurdities of British culture. Unlike Milligan, however, the Pythons did not pay much attention to contemporary politics (until their last film); neither were they as pre-occupied with the futility and tragedy of war. It is for this reason, perhaps, that their television shows seem gentler and lighter in tone than Milligan's work.

Their first film, *And Now For Something Completely Different* (Ian McNaughton, 1971), was a compilation of sketches from their television series which satirise our expectation about

traditional narrational form. It opens with the title credit 'H. M. Government Public Service Films', a spoof of public information films of the 1930s to 1950s, recalling the opening to Brunel's *Crossing the Great Sagrada* over forty years earlier. An official-sounding presenter tells us he will show us 'How Not to be Seen', and we see a series of people being seen and not seen, mostly accompanied by an empty field in front of a copse. Each is asked by the commentator to stand, and then is shot. The idea of camouflage and violence, coupled with the government film-style voice-over and opening credit, are reminders of war, but, unlike Buñuel and Milligan, the Python team seem to be revelling in absurdity more than they are remonstrating against the perceived absurdities of contemporary life.

The same cannot be said of their other feature films. Their second, *Monty Python and the Holy Grail* (1975, Terry Gilliam and Terry Jones) was a powerful satirical attack on the way we write history and the nature of storytelling. It opens with black and white credits and opening shots that, from the flamboyant graphics, dated production design and jovial music, look typical of a British comedy film of the late 1950s or early 1960s. A van carrying the logo 'Dreem' delivers crates of this product (which is unspecified) to what looks like a British high street shop, which we see a woman approach and enter. This unfolding drama is abruptly halted with a cut to credits with a more sober font, accompanied by sombre music and Swedish subtitles, a reference to the Swedish art-house films considered to be the height of intellectual cinema during the 1970s. These are, in turn, disrupted when the subtitles diverge from the written credits, giving us a personal-sounding account of the film's making. We are then shown an intertitle with details of the sacking of various sub-titlers. As in *The Strange World of Gurney Slade*, we are thus presented with a fictionalised account of the film's making.

It is only after this that the story of the search for the Holy Grail begins, opening with a shot of a hill top and the silhouette of a corpse left on a Catherine wheel. We hear the sound of horses' hooves galloping and assume that a knight on horseback is approaching. Instead we see a knight galloping horseless to the top of the hill, accompanied a by a page knocking coconut shells together. Gilliam, the director, cites the high cost of providing horses as the reason for using coconut shells and so on (Gilliam, 2004). Although this may be true, the effect is to ridicule and disrupt suspension of disbelief (as with the pantomime horses in *Pimple in The Whip*). We are reminded that the events we are watching are far from real; we are also reminded of the absurdity of believing fiction, or, in this case, history.

Figure 5. 6 Screen grab from *Monty Python and the Holy Grail* (Terry Gilliam and Terry Jones, 1975). The Killer Rabbit of Caerbannog, a white rabbit that guards underground tunnels leading to the Holy Grail, amongst the bones of its victims.

Suspension of disbelief is disturbed on numerous other occasions in the film. In a reference to Carroll's Alice stories, a vicious white rabbit (the Killer Rabbit of Caerbannog) guards the opening of a series of underground caves. The knights battle the rabbit, only to be slaughtered or to 'run away' (a phrase that became something of a Monty Python catch phrase). A couple of modern-day policemen who are standing in a nearby field hear the attacks, and come to the scene. They return again at the end of the film, this time with reinforcements and a modern-day lady who identifies the knights as trouble causers. We are faced with the dilemma of whether or not to believe these modern characters are real, and if so, to which reality they belong. The knights are arrested and bundled into the police van. Once again, it seems as if we are watching a film of *Monty Python and The Holy Grail* being filmed; or maybe the modern-day characters have travelled in time, or perhaps even escaped from the earlier comedy-drama?

The Python's third film, *Monty Python's Life of Brian* (Terry Jones, 1979) is, perhaps, their most controversial satire. It is the story of Brian, who is mistaken for Jesus, the son of God, following a series of mishaps and mis-understandings, and is an allegory for religious dogma. Its content is, thus, undoubtedly controversial. However, in terms of film form, it is the most conventional of all the Python films. There is only one disturbance to our expectations of traditional narration, when Brian is abducted by aliens and the historical drama genre is invaded by science fiction. However, this sequence does not break the conventions of cause and effect or continuity editing; rather, it toys with our expectations of genre. Perhaps it was felt that further disruption of narrational form, as well as

presenting such controversial content, would have prevented the film from becoming a commercial success.

Monty Python's Meaning of Life (1983) includes the most Buñuellian narrational devices of all of the Python films, and it is the most political of their entire oeuvre. As with *The Strange World of Gurney Slade*, it is divided into a series of sections that address different subjects. These more or less follow the human life-cycle, 'I: Birth', 'II: Birth 2', 'III: The Third World (Yorkshire)', 'IV: Growth and Learning', 'V: Fighting Each Other', 'VI: Middle Age', 'VII: Autumn Years', 'VIII: Live Organ Donation', and, finally, 'IX: Death'. All of these, of course, address the main topic and title of the film, *The Meaning of Life*.

A short film by Gilliam, 'The Crimson Permanent Assurance' (1983) prefaces and then invades the main body of *The Meaning of Life*. A voice-over tells us the gentlemen we see toiling miserably in an accountancy office once worked happily for a family firm, but they now suffer at the hands of a merciless, monetarist corporate bank. This, of course, evokes the monetarist policies of Margaret Thatcher's Conservative Government and the increasingly globalised corporate business arena of the 1980s. The accountants form a mutiny, and go on to take over another corporate bank. Gilliam confuses time, depicting the office at first as modern-day, then as a Roman galley ship, with the accountants as slaves rowing while their manager (or slave master) brandishes a whip. When the uprising begins, they make their manager walk the plank out of the office window. In subsequent shots, the modern-day appearance of the accountants and their office building is combined with that of seventeenth-century pirates and a ship. Once their manager is dispatched, they raise the building/ship's anchor from the pavement below, and the building/ship sails its way through a landscape of mirrored tower blocks reminiscent of a London or New York-like business district. They arrive at their destination, and swing like characters in a pirate film through its windows to overcome the bankers inside.

Figure 5. 7 Screen grab from *The Meaning of Life* (Terry Jones, 1983). The accountants/pirates invade an American bank or board room.

Just after the live organ donation sequence, we return to this scene from 'The Crimson Permanent Assurance' to see the pirates'/accountants' invasion from the perspective of the board room. A voice-over announces, 'we apologise for the invasion of the main feature by this short film, normal transmission will follow shortly'. Thus Gilliam seems to break the rules of film narration: one film cannot invade another without suspension of disbelief being thwarted. The commodification of human life which begins with the accountants in *The Crimson Permanent Assurance* becomes increasingly brutal as the film progresses. This culminates in the live organ donor sequence when vital human body parts are collected as debt payment. Then, in an equally disgusting tale, over-eating leads to a grossly obese man exploding over his fellow restaurant diners.

There is a similar interruption in the middle of the film, introduced by an inter-title with the words 'The Middle of the Film'. Michael Palin, dressed as a female arts commentator, tells the audience there will now be a break from the main film with the chance for the audience and the characters to interact. He/she tells us that a clip from another film will follow, and we can try to find a fish that is hidden in it, shouting out our answers if we so wish. A bizarre sequence (even by Python and Gilliam standards) set in the expansive corridor of a stately home follows. Terry Jones is dressed in a tuxedo with long extending arms, and he performs a dance around Graham Chapman who stands in the same central spot dressed in 1980s-style futuristic drag fetish wear (figure 5. 8).

Figure 5. 8 Screen grab from *Monty Python's The Meaning of Life* (Terry Jones, 1983). Terry Jones and Graham Chapman encourage cinema audiences to 'find the fish' in 'The Middle of the Film', a mock art-house film designed to encourage interaction.

Together they recite a poem about losing and then finding a much treasured fish while another figure dressed in evening wear, but sporting an elephant's head, approaches from the distance. All the while we hear shouts identifying the whereabouts of the fish: 'it's in the cupboard', 'it's behind the sofa'. The invitation for audiences to interact (no doubt some people have done so when watching the film) is reminiscent of an English Christmas pantomime, as well as recalling the invitations to audience participation in the Crazy Gang films discussed earlier. It acts as a commentary on the film (we are at its middle and we need a break), as well as acknowledging the existing presence and participation of the audience. After all, an audience would only need a break from a film if watching it involved effort.

And Now for Something Completely Different, then, operates in similar ways to *Un Chien…*. It relies on traditional narration, if only to disturb and disrupt it. The film often does this in ways that are not immediately obvious, or that can be forgotten or lost in its seeming confusion. The viewers feel themselves to be disturbed or challenged by the film, without necessarily understanding why on first viewing. This experience of being challenged, of course, mirrors the subversive content of the film, which confronts the perceived pitfalls of monetarism.

***Brazil* (Terry Gilliam, 1985)**

Brazil was a solo project, directed by Terry Gilliam, and not actually part of the Monty Python body of work. It is important to my discussion because it has a significant reputation as a Surrealist film in British cinema studies as noted by Murphy (Murphy, 2009: 5), and I will explore the possible reasons for that reputation, and the extent to which it is deserved.

Its reputation as a Surrealist film possibly stems from the idea of the movement as unreal or as the antithesis of realism, and idea that has circulated in British cinema studies for some time (Murphy, 2009: 5). *Brazil* is certainly unreal in character. It is set in an entirely fantastical world, and is characterised by the even more fantastical day-dreams of its central character, Sam Lowry (Jonathan Pryce). It also draws upon surface motifs that have become associated with Surrealism, a notable example being Lowry's mother's distinctive shoe-hats (copies of Schiapparelli's collaborative work with Salvador Dali during the 1930s). Hence, if one were to follow Robert Murphy's view of Surrealism as the opposite of realism, and/or if one were to see the movement as being characterised by a limited repertoire of 'Surrealist' visual motifs, then one could argue that *Brazil* is important to studies of the movement; however, neither of these arguments follows the rationale of my thesis.

Figure 5. 9 Screen grab from *Brazil* (Terry Gilliam, 1985) with Lowry's mother on the left wearing a copy of one of Schiaparelli's distinctive shoe hats, designed in collaboration with Salvador Dali.

Some of the themes present in *Brazil* are, however, more in line with how I have defined Surrealism. They include a critique of capitalism, and the commodification of the human body. The film opens with an advertisement screened on a television in a shop window decorated for the Christmas season. It is for 'enhanced ducts', the large tubes that feature in all of the smaller interiors in the film, and which crowd out characters in their own homes and work places, signalling an ever present, oppressive, consumerism. The Christmas season is ongoing in the film as unsympathetic characters, such as Lowry (Michael Palin) and his mother, give out carefully wrapped Christmas presents at social

occasions. Consumerism is explored most brutally when Lowry's mother and her friend are increasingly pre-occupied with plastic surgery. At the end of the film, the mother commandeers the body of Lowry's now dead love interest, while a plastic-surgery-induced infection has killed her friend.

Gilliam uses traditional narration for almost all of the film, during which there is a clearly defined distinction between its diegetic reality and Lowry's fantasy sequences. However, the two are confused near the end, even if Gilliam eventually makes clear which is which (unlike Buñuel and Dali in *Un Chien...*). Lowry copes with being tortured by fantasising about being rescued by Tuttle (Robert de Niro) and a team of terrorists, a sequence coded as the film's diegetic reality. But we realise it is one of Lowry's fantasies when, at the very end of the film, we see the torture scene again without any such rescue. The effect of the film's narration at this point is not to shock us, but to bring home the power of Lowry's fantasy as a method of escape from horror.

Despite the oppressive society *Brazil* depicts, protest is actually rare and usually half-hearted in the film. Lowry's love interest, Jill Leyton (Kim Greist), has an argument with an administrator, and the son of Buttle (who has been arrested and executed as a result of an administrative error) who rails against Lowry during his patronising and bureaucracy-obsessed attempt to compensate Mrs. Buttle, the boy's mother and wife of the wrongfully executed man. Even Tuttle, who Leyton imagines as a fearless freedom fighter is, in fact, only suspected of terrorism and a dramatic rescue of Lowry in the film turns out to be Lowry's a fantasy. When Leyton asks Lowry, 'have you ever met an actual terrorist?', his answer is no, as it must be because, as in George Orwell's novel *1984*, and as Leyton points out, bombs are exploded in the world of *Brazil* to create an atmosphere of mistrust and fear amongst its people, not to protest.

In terms of protest, it is possible to argue that the entire film is an objection to bureaucracy, although it does not seem to be a very passionate one; rather, it is an observation of its worst effects. Buttle is abducted from his home by the police, amidst his wife and children's preparations for Christmas. A warrant for the arrest of suspected terrorist, Tuttle, is issued in the name of Buttle by mistake. The film's narrative is driven by Lowry's attempts to put this right. Absurdly, this entails Lowry giving Buttle's wife a refund cheque, and then objecting to her emotional outburst in response. He makes his own escapes via fantasy, a coping strategy that was never on the Surrealists' agenda. For them, dream and the

imagination were a way of gaining a heightened access to reality, not of escaping it. Thus, while there are some Surrealist aspects to *Brazil*, it is not, in my view, the great Surrealist masterpiece of British cinema that some claim.

Surrealism and British Television Satire during the 1980s

1980s British television did, though, produce plenty of socio-political commentary, the best known of which is, perhaps, *Spitting Image* (Bob Cousins and Peter Harris, 1984-1996), in which current affairs were satirised in sketches played out by puppet-caricatures of public figures. The use of puppets instead of actors meant personalities and situations could be depicted as a more intense version of reality; *Spitting Image* thereby combined reality with fiction to shock its audiences into a heightened awareness of socio-political issues. Given the Surrealists' interest in similarly motivated texts, it is easy to imagine Breton and his cohorts approving of *Spitting Image*. Less well remembered examples of 1980s television satire that are characterised by disruptions of traditional narration, and for which socio-political commentary was key, include *A Kick up the 80s* (Brian Jobson and Tom Gutteridge, 1981 and 1984) and *Alexi Sayle's Stuff* (Marcus Mortimer, 1988-1991). Both programmes used the Milligan/Python sketch show format to satirise issues of the day. *A Kick up the 80s* took a more direct approach with specific targets, while *Alexi Sayle's Stuff* seemed more about venting anger in a general and often quite superficial way, despite Sayle being a self-proclaimed Marxist. The writers and cast of *A Kick up the 80s* (Brian Jobson and Tom Gutteridge, 1981-1984) went on to make *The Young Ones* (Ed Bye et al, 1982-1985), a sitcom about a household of students (with Alexi Sayle as their landlord). The show was rich in Surrealist-inspired storytelling, such as disrupted narration and anthropomorphic animals and objects. However, it satirised the personal foibles of its characters, rather than broader socio-political matters.

Since the 1980s there has been a plentiful supply of comedy series which are marked by narrational disruptions and the impulse to 'make strange', including various Reeves and Mortimer shows, *The League of Gentlemen* (Steve Bendelack, 1999-2002), *Spaced* (Edgar Wright, 1999-2001) and *The Mighty Boosh* (Paul King and Steve Bendelack, 2003-2007). It is possible to classify these programmes as belonging to two inter-related themes. Many of these shows have a strong music hall or variety show element, with physical comedy, visual tricks and novelty being central to their success, as with Reeves and Mortimer's shows and *The Mighty Boosh*. Another strand takes real-life situations and 'makes them strange'. *The*

League of Gentleman and *Spaced*, for instance, are based on real-life contemporary experiences, such as the social security advisor Pauline (with her pens) and the perils of flat sharing in London (*Spaced*). *The League of Gentlemen* exaggerated some of the more unpleasant aspects of British life, while *Spaced* confused fantastical inner lives with more mundane realities. As the narrative theorist Edward Branigan might put it, in-depth internal focalization of the programme's central characters is confused with that of the programme's overall story narrator. Such programmes are undoubtedly part of a tradition of British television with its roots in the work of Milligan and Monty Python and their variety show-inspired nonsense, as well as the impulse to make reality strange, or even bizarre.

Satire, Surrealism and Current Affairs on British Television

Brass Eye (Michael Cumming and Tristram Shapeero), a spoof television current affairs programme broadcast in 1997, with one special produced in 2001, also satirised the television form. Written, directed by and starring Chris Morris, *Brass Eye* drew on a similar technique to that of Buñuel's *Las Hurdes*, using amplified versions of fashionable formats, along with storylines that were typical but exaggerated. Where Buñuel ridiculed perceptions of rural Spain and our willingness to believe the documentary form, Morris ridiculed the increasingly show-business style of 1990s current affairs television. A frequent technique in *Brass Eye* was to interview a celebrity on a serious subject about which they knew practically nothing. The subjects were, of course, unable to respond logically to probing questions, and therefore usually emerged from *Brass Eye* looking particularly stupid (Greaves, 2003-2014). But despite the media controversy caused by this, *Brass Eye* did not explore issues beyond television form and content.

There has been little British moving image satire with a significant relationship to Surrealism since *Brass Eye*. The work of Charlie Brooker, who was a writer for *Brass Eye*, is a rare exception and includes *Charlie Brooker's Weekly Wipe* (Andy Devonshire et al,2013-), a current affairs commentary, and the drama series *Black Mirror* (Otto Bathurst et al, 2011-2014). As with *Brass Eye*, *Charlie Brooker's Weekly Wipe* combines the television news format with current issues and fictional presenters and content. However, *Charlie Brooker's Weekly Wipe* does not exactly protest against current affairs; rather, it comments in an incredulous and sometimes irritated tone. In *Black Mirror*, the influence of modern technology on our lives is satirised. The series often shocks its audiences, presenting the

'shout in the street' that Breton thought was key to Surrealism. For example, in the first episode of the first series, *The National Anthem* (2011), the pursuit of popular opinion and power at the expense of dignity and personal life, or genuine interest in social policy, is the target of satire. Britain's Prime Minister agrees, with horrified reluctance, to have sex with a pig live on television in order to comply with a ransom bid for a Princess (who looks very much like Kate Middleton). The Princess is released half an hour before the Prime Minister's ordeal begins. Nevertheless, the Prime Minister's sacrifice results in his popularity rocketing, even though his loving marriage seems to be irrevocably damaged. The Prime Minister's decision to comply with the kidnapper's wishes is provoked by public opinion as expressed in media-generated polls and online media. *Black Mirror* is certainly not designed to make us laugh; its style is of the grimmest Gothic-horror.

Conclusion: Surrealism, Satire and British Film and Television

This chapter has been characterised more than any other in this thesis by the interplay of television and film, with film-makers moving from one medium to the other, carrying narrational techniques from the domestic space of television to the cinema (and presumably back again with the addition of home film screenings to everyday British life). Disturbances to domestic life, beginning with Milligan's television work, remain a significant feature of British Surrealism-inspired film and television satire to this day. Television exposed the British public to a storytelling style that reminds us not always to believe traditionally narrated stories, be they documentary or fiction. Even those which are not story-based themselves, such as *Brass Eye*, satirise the conventions of television news and current affairs storytelling. Exaggeration is a key way of doing this, and is a technique that can be traced back to Swift, with his augmentation of existing attitudes to the starving population of Ireland in *A Modest Proposal*, to Carroll's Alice stories in which fantasy is taken to an extreme, and to Buñuel's *Las Hurdes* in which the hardships of living in Las Hurdes are converted to ridiculous hyperbole. Amplification of actuality is key to *Kind Hearts and Coronets*, which targets social hierarchies; *The Corridor People,* which satirises greed and commerciality; and *Brazil*, which exaggerates bureaucracy; while in *Brass Eye,* the target is news and current affairs. The other method of subverting traditional narration in British satire is to intercept it. This is also a technique traceable to Carroll, this time following a path through *Un Chien...* and *L'Age d'Or*. On British screens it can be seen in the Goon Show spin-offs, Milligan's television series, *The Strange World of Gurney Slade* and in

the film and television productions of the Python team. These techniques are also, predictably, abundant in British Art Cinema.

Ironically, the use of disruptive narration by self-proclaimed artists is satirised in *The Meaning of Life* and in *Black Mirror*. In *The Meaning of Life*, the 'find the fish' sequence is announced by Michael Palin as a section of another, art-house, film. Its extreme ridiculousness is clear from Figure 5. 8, showing Graham Chapman's fantastical drag outfit, combined with the two men in evening dress, one elephant-headed and the other with impossibly long arms. There are some elements believability in this sequence as a piece of art cinema, but its visual hyperbole is too strong for it to be entirely convincing. Similarly, the kidnapping of the Princess and the Prime Minister's televised ordeal in *Black Mirror* are the work of an artist, whose list of aesthetic rules for the filming of the ordeal echo the ten rules of the Dogme 95 film movement. In fact, a crew member comments on the similarity of the televised event to the films of Lars von Trier (his grisly sexual drama, *Antichrist* (2009), springs to mind). Brooker then satirises art cinema by presenting an exaggerated version of the kind of gruesome spectacle that has become common place for filmmakers such as von Trier. He thus echoes Swift's grisly interpretation of callously decadent attitudes to starving Irish children more than two hundred years before him. Brooker seems to be saying that without some moral content or direction, the desire to shock becomes nihilistic in the extreme. And this, I would argue, is where some examples of more modern art cinema divert from Surrealism, despite using some narrational methods derived from the movement. In the following chapter, I explore a selection of films that combine both the Surrealist's methods, and their moral purpose.

Chapter Six: Artists' Film and Video and Surrealism in Britain

Introduction

Surrealism may have its roots in literature, but of course it also has strong associations with fine art. This was acknowledged by Breton in his 1928 essay 'Surrealism and Painting', a follow up to his first manifesto, which addressed the blossoming of painting as a means of expression amongst the Paris Surrealist group (Breton, 1928). Surrealism has since become better known for its association with fine art and painting than for its roots in literature. It is therefore important to address the role of Surrealism in moving image works associated with fine art in Britain.

It may seem likely then that this chapter about artists' film and video would include the most orthodox examples of Surrealism of all the survey chapters. However, official Surrealist groups have been relatively thin on the ground in Britain, while their filmmaking activities in the mid-twentieth century seem to have been concentrated in the government-sponsored documentary and propaganda units discussed in Chapter Three. And as I pointed out there, the GPO and Crown film units films lack the ferocious socio-political bite that was central to the Surrealists' vision.

One of the main tasks of this chapter, then, is to assess how far the Surrealist bite is present alongside their other pre-occupation, the fusion of reality with fiction or fantasy, in the films and videos of other artists working in Britain outside of the government-sponsored film units. Most of the films I look at have been made by artists; however, there are some that have emerged from other avenues, including political activism, academia and creative practitioners who usually work in other environments. I consider the form and content of all of the films in this chapter to have been motivated more by creative vision than by commerciality. I could have described these films as 'experimental', but the label 'artists' film and video' better emphasises the links between fine art practices in Britain and Surrealism that is the purpose of this chapter. The fact that I refer here to video and not just film is necessary because, of all the chapters in this survey, the artists to whom I refer here work across the broadest range of media.

Attention to artists' film and video in Britain is a relatively small but expanding area of research and Surrealism is mentioned in most of the writing that addresses such work, but usually as a passing reference to surface style (Cubitt et al, 2012; Curtis, 2006; Dwoskin, 1975; Hein et al., 1979; Rees, 1999; Wollen, 1993). Academic studies that address the techniques and ideology of Surrealism amongst British moving image makers are rare; in fact, Michel Remy's brief entries about the British documentary movement in his book *Surrealism in Britain* (2000, 49-62) and Graham Roberts' 2007 chapter 'Soluble Fish: How Surrealism Saved Documentary from John Grierson' are the only ones I have been able to identify. Even Lyndsay Anderson's essay, 'Only Connect', offers 'personal reactions' that although illuminating do not address the role of Surrealism in Jennings' filmmaking technique (1982), even though, as I discussed in Chapter Three, Anderson's films show considerable sympathies with the movement.

As with the other chapters in this survey, the relationship between realism and the fantastic in the films, videos and other works that I discuss here is a central concern. Home movies and documentary are integral to many of the works I discuss, and as such the influence of Jennings and his Surrealist colleagues is plainly evident. It is interesting to note however that this realist/documentary impulse was in fact present before the films of Jennings and his colleagues in the GPO Film Unit.

Surrealist Tendencies in the 1920s

Kenneth McPherson was an artist associated with the Glasgow School of Art during the 1920s. Like the Surrealist group in Paris at the same time, McPherson focussed in his films on sub-conscious responses, even if in his case they were fictional. He is best known for *Wing Beat* (1927) and *Borderline* (1929) (as well as for being a co-producer of Hans Richter's American-produced, Surrealism-inspired, *Dreams that Money Can Buy* (1944)). *Wing Beat* is a study of a romantic relationship between a man and a woman told through body language. Only a small fragment of the film survives but what remains shows a fragment of a fictional narrative shot in a realist style, combined with a montage of close up shots of hand gestures, eye movements and landscapes. The landscape shots do not relate to the diegetic location of the characters, hence it is possible that they represent inner experience or the sub-conscious.

Borderline tells the story of an inter-racial love triangle using a combination of traditional narration and the more experimental techniques he employed in *Wing Beat.* For example,

when the lead character has a disagreement with her land-lady there is a series of jump cuts. The same shot of her hand as it moves towards the landlady is repeated. This echoes the use of jump cuts and repeats in *Un Chien Andalou* (Luis Buñuel and Salvador Dali, 1929) and disrupts traditional narration in the same way. In addition to these techniques, McPherson's fascination for romantic passion, especially in the face of oppressive circumstances, is reminiscent of the Surrealist interest in mad love (amour fou). However, MacPherson's films are also characterised by their gentle, poetic qualities, the antithesis of Buñuel and Dali's aggressive approach in *Un Chien….*

Hans Richter's *Everyday* (1929/67) also uses traditional narration combined with repetitive montage sequences. Richter made the film as part of a film workshop run in London for the Film Society (Curtis, 2006, 156). This time, the documentary-style realism is combined with repetition to emphasise the dulling effects of routine and repetition on office workers and the underlying emotional frustrations that this can create. Eventually these emotions surface, as in a point of view shot where the food of an office worker's plate comes to life in stop-motion. The Surrealists' fascination for inanimate objects that come to life (The Brothers Quay and Jan Svankmajer are notable examples), disrupted traditional narration, and rebellions against repressive societal systems (here the humorous approach of inserting a sequence of dancing sausages) are all comparable with the work of Buñuel and Dali. However, *Everyday* makes humorous digs rather than embracing the culture of Breton's passionate gunshot in the street.

Figure 6. 1 Screen grab of Dora Carrington and friends performing in *Dr. Turner's Mental Home* (Dora Carrington, 1929) in the garden of her home, Ham Spray House.

Other Surrealists who made films in Britain during the 1920s include Dora Carrington and Jacques Brunius. Carrington was a key figure in the English Surrealist group and she made

two short films with Beakus Penrose, the brother of Roland Penrose, another key English Surrealist. *Dr. Turner's Mental Home* and *Topical Budget, Ham Spray September* (both Carrington, 1929) were shot over a single weekend at Carrington's home, Ham Spray House. The films are very much like home movies and show Carrington, Penrose and their friends acting out loose narratives at the house and in its grounds (see figure 6. 1). In *Dr. Turner…* the eponymous doctor experiments on his patients, turning them into animals. Indeed, the blurring of boundaries between humans, animals and inanimate objects is a recurring theme of both films. *Topical Budget…* is a spoof of cinema newsreels of the time and presents a humorous account of the activities at Ham Spray House over the September weekend during which *Dr. Turner…* was made. Both films combine fiction with reality. For example, neither makes much attempt to disguise the mechanics of its making, with characters in *Dr. Turner…* laughing and looking to camera, and the realities of Carrington's domestic life only half-heartedly disguised. In *Topical Budget*… scenes from the longer fiction film are interwoven into an exaggerated documentary style. For example, we see Carrington playing with an inflatable swan, used to represent a real swan, in the lake at Ham Spray Houses (see figure 6. 2). In this way, the films pre-empt Derek Jarman's home-movie-based fiction of the 1970s and 1980s, with the fusion of home-movie aesthetics with fiction challenging any suspension of disbelief. This is, of course, a key Surrealist filmmaking tactic, but, again, any rebellion is registered with gentle humour rather than serious bite.

Figure 6. 2 Screen grab of Dora Carrington in *Topical Budget Ham Spray House* September (Dora Carrington, 1929) swimming with an inflatable swan in the lake at Ham Spray House.

Massingham, Brunius and Broughton

Richard Massingham was a medical doctor who began filmmaking as a side-line to his career as a Senior Medical Officer at the *London Fever Hospital.* His 1934 film *Tell Me If It* Hurts is the story of a restaurant diner struck by tooth ache and his subsequent trip to the dentist. Although it uses traditional narration for its over-arching framework, Massingham disrupts our expectations of traditional narration to create dissonance during the patient's visit, by including inconsistent and unexpected camera angles, inconsistent shot lengths and confusions of space. For example we see the patient sitting in the dentist's chair in a bright surgery, then cut to a close up of his mouth lit in chiaroscuro with a black background (see figure 6. 3). To the noise of a drill, the camera moves closer and closer to the patient's mouth until there's a black out in which a drill spins furiously at centre screen.

Figure 6. 3 Screen grab from Richard Massingham's *Tell Me If It Hurts* (1934). The patient's open mouth awaits the dentist's drill. The background of this shot seems displaced from the clinical white of the surgery.

*These effects are edited together to produce jolting, jump cut montage sequences, which interrupt the traditional narration of the film to reflect the patient's disturbance. Massingham e*ventually left his medical post to work full-time for the GPO film unit and set up his own production company. Disruptions of traditional narration were typical of his work as they expressed inner life in combination with outer reality; however, his motivation

was again not to protest. Massingham also produced some films made by with Paris Surrealist Jacques Brunius but the films they made together show less evidence of Surrealism's influence than the films Massingham directed himself. *Brief City* (1951-2) was commissioned by the *Manchester Guardian* newspaper to record the progress of building works for the Festival of Britain. It uses a straightforward traditional style of narration which follows the lead of a voice-over. *The Blakes Slept Here* (1953) is a thirty-minute drama recalling the history of the Blake family from 1851 until 1951, another film made to commemorate the Festival of Britain. Although these films do not, in themselves, display the influence of Surrealism, Massingham's repeated collaboration with Brunius perhaps reveals his continuing interest in the Surrealist movement.

In 1953, the American artist, James Broughton, visited Britain and while there made *The Pleasure Garden* (1952-3), a 37 minute fantasy film about a group of free-living individuals playing in the ruins of Crystal Palace Gardens (one of them played by Lyndsay Anderson). One day, Colonel Pall. K. Gargoyle (John Le Mesurier) and his side-kick Aunt Minerva (Jean Anderson) come along and establish an oppressive regime whereby fun and free expression are banned (see figure 6. 4). However, the community is restored to its former state when a fairy, Mrs. Albion (Hattie Jacques), sets each of its members free with a wave of her scarf. The film is Surrealist in its championing of free expression in the face of oppression; however, it uses traditional narration throughout and there is little in terms of protest with residents accepting Colonel Pall's authority without question.

Figure 6. 4 Screen grab from James Broughton's *The Pleasure Garden* (1952-3). Colonel Pall. K. Gargoyle (John Le Messurier) prohibits cycling, along with anything else that's fun.

Bruce Lacey and Jeff Keen

The fantastical nature of *The Pleasure Garden* pre-empts the films of both Bruce Lacey and Jeff Keen. Lacey had trained as an artist and was an actor in Richard Lester's *Running, Jumping and Standing Still Film*. He began making films in the early 1960s and remains active at the time of writing. A key motivation for Lacey was to make everyday things seems strange. For example, he made a series of films designed to inform aliens about human activities. His *How to Have a Bath*… films (1971) were inspired by Massingham's *The Five Inch Bather* (1942), a short instructional on how to save water and energy when bathing in war-time Britain. Lacey's films offer an equally pragmatic if more sensually motivated guide in which a man and wife bathe together. The act of bathing is presented as a new and strange thing which needs careful explanation, with specific instruction on filling a bath, entering the bath, washing and drying. Although there is no doubt that Lacey's films are Surrealist in their capacity to make the everyday strange, there is little narrational deviance or protest in his films.

The same cannot be said of the works of Jeff Keen who, like Lacey, had trained as an artist and began making films during the early 1960s. Keen professes a strong interest in Surrealism, stating that all of his art works are influenced by the movement, even though he is not known to be a member of any official Surrealist group (Keen, 2008). Keen's films are mostly non-narrative and are often a combination of fantasy, documentary or documentary-like footage and montages featuring still shots of commercial design, such as comic book imagery, advertising posters and product packaging. However, Keen's fantasy sequences often also have a home-movie quality about them, echoing Carrington's earlier films. For example in *Mad Love* (1972-1978), Keen shows an erotically dressed woman reclining on an arm chair. There is an element of fiction to the film, as she is performing to the camera; however, the scene is recognisable as Keen's living room as it is in other parts of the film, and there is no attempt to disguise that fact.

Keen's films are visceral and often shocking in their subjects and in their use of juxtaposition. For example the scene with the reclining woman in *Mad Love* seems like a private moment we have invaded. The element of private, sexual passion in the scene is emphasised by a soundtrack of Argentine tango music, while the film's title is taken from Breton's writings and the Surrealists' idea of 'amour fou' (Keen, 2008). These can be read as

references to *Un Chien...*, which is also set to Argentine tango music and tells the story of a heterosexual couple's pursuit of 'amour fou'.

The Political Avant-Garde of the 1970s and 1980s

The rebellious nature of Keen's work during the 1960s pre-empts a more politically motivated strand of artists' film and video in Britain which gathered momentum throughout the 1970s and 1980s. Many of these films sprang from trade union, feminist, or anti-racist activism and writing. David Hill's work for Scottish television is a notable example in which a series of film shorts were broadcast unannounced and uncredited in order to 'create a break in the flow of the viewer's potential relationship to their television receiver', with the purpose of undermining commercial television (Meigh-Andrews, 2006: 39). For example, in one of the seven 'T.V. Interruptions' (1971), a tap is lowered into a blank screen while the television set apparently fills with water. This of, course, not only disrupts the flow of normal broadcasting but also the notion of the television as a piece of electrical equipment, and living room furniture. It exploits the potentially soporific, domestic, nature of television viewing, as well as the power of advertising, as these films were broadcast during commercial breaks.

Feminist protest came from Laura Mulvey, the well-known feminist film analyst, and her scholar-filmmaker partner, Peter Wollen, made *Riddles of the Sphynx* (1977), which explores the inner lives of women seeking to escape oppressive domestic settings. In the mode of the masculine sublime in Romantic novels, such as those written by Anne Radcliffe, the female characters had felt that their lives were out of control. Here in Mulvey's film, however, they begin to regain control. The film's central story is about a telephonist who has left her husband and cares for her children alone. The film is shot mostly in a realist drama-documentary style but this is punctuated by and merged with a voice-over narration that tells the story of the sphynx, and by captions featuring unfinished sentences that don't always relate directly to the central, realist, narrative. These aesthetic and thematic features lend the film something akin to Surrealist art-works.

Other feminist filmmakers working during the 1970s, such as Sally Potter and Susan Pitt, mobilised similar methods. Thus Potter used fragmented narration and the theme of objection to male oppression in *Thriller* (1980), in which she deconstructed the plight of the tragic female romantic heroine of Puccini's opera, *La Boheme*. However, both Mulvey's and Potter's films take a relatively self-conscious and analytical approach. Rather than

representing a random shot in the street, they are characterised by carefully considered objection and analysis.

Pitt's animated feminist film *Asparagus* (1978) dealt with a favoured Surrealist topic, sexual consciousness. A woman's lust for phallic imagery in the form of asparagus is illustrated in a shockingly graphic manner. This often merges with aspects of mundane domestic reality such as curtains and lavatories to portray the inner-life and sexuality of the female protagonist, whose face we never see. For example, a close up shot at the beginning of the film shows the woman excreting asparagus into a toilet (a vision that, as with the eye-slashing sequence in *Un Chien...*, I find too gross to illustrate here). The vegetables then interact with her. Despite its shocking content, however, the film does not really protest; rather Pitt develops the theme in her own way, regardless of societal norms and conventions.

There is little traditional story to the film, which is rather a set of scenarios with each merging into the next, albeit told using the conventions of cause and effect and continuity editing. At one point the lead character looks out of her living room at a giant animated version of herself grasping at a crop of giant animated asparagus (see figure 6. 5). Later, Pitt's heroine visits a theatre, at first sitting in the audience and then merging with the show. She goes behind the stage screen, opens a carpet bag she is carrying and a series of fantastical objects and creatures fly from it and float into the auditorium above the audience. Thus, Pitt fuses reality and the imagination to convey a message about female sexuality which must have been outrageous at the time of the film's making (as it still is today). In this respect *Asparagus* displays considerable sympathy with Surrealism.

Figure 6. 5 Screen grab of Pitt's faceless heroine in *Asparagus* (Susan Pitt, 1979 as she looks out of her living room window at some giant asparagus.

Black filmmakers also produced some rebellious, experimental films during the 1970s and 1980s which, again, adopt devices that might be seen as Surrealist. Isaac Julien is a particularly useful example. Like Mulvey, Julien drew upon documentary-style filmmaking to make his point. Unlike Mulvey, however, Julien's work is visceral and often tangibly angry. For example, *Territories* (Julien, 1984) is a half-hour documentary which explores the converging identities present at the Notting Hill Carnival during the aftermath of the Brixton race riots of the early 1980s. It opens with a close up shot of a burning Union Jack cut with images taken during the Brixton riots, a violent protest against Metropolitan Police racism. The film goes on to explore the divergent racial and sexual identities that make up the black community in London, and Julien draws attention to the black gay community, a facet of Brixton's identity which is not often recognised. The film has a male and a female voice-over narration, each of which tell the story of Brixton's black community from their own perspective. This sense of the black community as multi-faceted is also reflected in the fragmented narrational style of the film. Images are repeated and sequences cut unexpectedly to create an irregular, jarring rhythm. In this way, Julien challenges our expectations in a similar way to *Un Chien....*

Derek Jarman and his Acolytes

In 1991, Julien made *Derek*, a documentary film about the British artist and filmmaker, Derek Jarman. The visual styles and themes of the two directors often correspond. For example, Jarman also draws upon home-movie and documentary-style footage; he addresses sexual identity, with the fragmentation of British culture a recurring theme. His films are similarly visceral, in terms of both content and style.

Where Jarman differs from Julien is that many of his works are framed as dreams or visions, even though they are constructed from home movie or documentary footage. Many of his films were also journals. Even his 1978 film, *Jubilee*, a fantasy set in the future, began as a journal recording the wild social scene Jarman was experiencing in and around his studios in Bank Side in London (Jarman, 1993). The film that emerged from this chronicled the spirit of the new Punk movement, focussing on its cynicism and ruthlessness, a negative consequence of punk's championing of the individual.

Jarman frames *Jubilee* as a vision of the future presented by John Donne to Queen Elizabeth I. A band of murderous women maraud their way through a nihilistic and barbaric future London. The central narrative of the film tells their story, as well as a sub-plot about two brothers with whom they share a flat and their friend, a woman artist. This is done using causal narration and continuity editing throughout. However, Jarman's combination of documentary and documentary-like footage with a fantastical narrative creates a low-level but continual disturbance to the ability to suspend disbelief.

Figure 6. 6 Jordan photographed at a London punk club in London c. 1976.

Figure 6. 7 Screen grab from Derek Jarman's *Jubilee* (1977) with subtitles. The murderous Amyl Nitrate (Jordan) reads from her own history book.

Much of the footage in the film is drawn from actual stage performances and events. Figures such as Adam Ant (Kid), Jordan (Amyl Nitrate) and Toyah (Chaos) were recruited from the Punk scene which congregated at Malcom McLaren and Vivienne Westwood's shop on the Kings Road. In fact the shop supplied many of the costumes for the film. The London punks, along with Jayne/Wayne County (Lounge Lizard) (an American punk singer who was prominent in London) played characters drawn from their own personalities. Jordan was a central punk figure who was notorious in the tabloid press during the mid to late 1970s. Her distinctive costume and make-up in *Jubilee* are almost identical to those she wears in photographs of her taken in her real life (see figures 6. 6 and 6. 7). Adam and the Ants' rendition of 'Plastic Surgery' is filmed in a studio setting with the band giving a performance as themselves; while Jayne/Wayne County's performance as the character 'Lounge Lizard' is almost entirely drawn from his stage act, including his rendition of the song 'Paranoid Paradise', which he usually performed with his band, Wayne County and the Electric Chairs.

Breton's idea of the Surrealist gesture being like a random shot in the street provides a useful comparison to the aggression depicted in *Jubilee.* There are many examples of random violence; the women carry out several sexual assaults and murders, along with multiple spontaneous displays of sadomasochism. From one perspective, however, their rage seems self-indulgent rather than motivated by protest against an oppressive societal

structure, as with Breton. In *Jubilee*, Jarman seems to be showing us what he thinks future London would be like if the punk ethos of chaos, individualism and uncharted free-will became a way of life in Britain. Anarchism, for the Surrealists, was an idealised vision of an equal society whereby smaller communities self-govern. For the punk movement it came to mean chaos and destruction, the Sex Pistol's song 'Anarchy in the UK' (1977) being a typical example of this idea.

From another perspective, though, *Jubilee* can be seen as a protest against the disintegration of societal structures and public amenities in Britain and the emerging dominance of global media. The media mogul, Borgia Ginz (Jack Birkett), makes a speech after Kid auditions for a record contract with him (a recorded studio performance by Adam and the Ants). He tells one of his minions while being fed grapes,

> You wanna know my story Babe, it's easy. This is the generation that grew up and forgot to lead their lives. They were so busy watching my endless movie. It's power babes, power. I don't create it, I own it. I sucked and sucked and I sucked. The media became their only reality and I own their world of flickering shadows. BBC, TUC, ITV, ABC, ATV, MGM, KGB, C. of. E you name it I bought them all and re-arranged the alphabet. Without me they don't exist. (Borgia Ginz (Jack Birkett) in *Jubilee* (1978))

Jarman seems to be warning us of the dangers of immersion in fantasy and the un-real at the expense of reality. Ginz's speech confuses film and television production with political power (KGB), trade unions (TUC) and religion (C. of. E). Jarman seems to be speculating that late 1970s Britain was moving towards such a society. Like the Surrealists, Jarman protests against materialistic oppression.

The Last of England (1987) and *The Garden* (1990) were also both framed as Jarman's diaries and dreams. *The Last of England* is narrated as Jarman's inner monologue, while *The Garden* combines documentary footage of him working on his garden and on the film itself with a dramatization of Christ's story. Like *Jubilee,* both of these later films are polemical about the excesses of nihilistic materialism in Jarman's contemporary England. *The Garden'*s opening credits are accompanied by blurred, hand-held footage of what looks like the film being made, while we hear indecipherable voices that seem to be negotiating

direction (see figure 6. 8). Perhaps what we see and hear is preparation for one of the blue screen sequences that follow.

Figure 6. 8 Screen grab from the opening credit sequence of Derek Jarman's *The Garden* (1990). We might later ask ourselves, could this be the set of one of the blue screen sequences that follow?

Immediately after the credit sequence we see a shot of Jarman in his home, Prospect Cottage, having fallen asleep while writing a journal. This encourages us to read what follows as a combination of Jarman's diary and his dreams. Although the film is loosely structured around Christ's story, from the Immaculate Conception to his crucifixion, this is punctuated by vignettes or scenes of varying narrational coherence. In one, Judas, dressed in biking leathers, hangs by the neck while a credit card salesman pitches his cards to camera (see figure 6. 9). The scene begins with the salesman sat on the bike waving his cards to camera. He then proceeds to tell the audience how well his credit cards work for Judas.

Figure 6. 9 Screen grab from Derek Jarman's *The Garden* (1990) showing Judas, his motor bike and a credit card salesman. Is this the film set we saw during the opening credits?

These staged scenes are combined with other hand-held footage which was clearly taken in the garden of Prospect Cottage. Some of the home movie-style, garden footage is part of the Christ story; for example, Tilda Swindon plays the Virgin Mary being admired and eventually besieged by the paparazzi. There is also footage which has an entirely home-movie quality, whereby hand-held camera footage showcases the beauty and scenery of Jarman's garden. The two facets of home movie and fictional story combine when a super 8 camera follows Jarman as he films his actors performing in fictional scenes we have already seen, also with a super 8 camera. We see him coaching their performances as he goes (see figure 6. 10). Thus Jarman combines the reality of his home life and of the filming process with fictional content of the film. The effect of this technique is, I would say, poetic rather than remonstrative. Protest in *The Garden*, I argue lies in the film's content and themes rather than in technique.

Figure 6. 10 Screen grab from *The Garden* (1990), as Jarman films while being filmed.

Protest against oppressive structures is also an important theme in *The Garden*. For example, the excesses of capitalism and materialism are pilloried in the scene with Judas and the credit card salesman. Public school life is depicted as oppressive, with teachers rhythmically slamming canes against the wood of a table while reading from scholarly books. Similarly, a pillow fight between two boys in what looks like a dormitory bed is visually graceful as feathers fly in the air around them. But they are accompanied by an ominously discordant sound like metal screeching against metal and a brooding overcast sky in the background. Later, three sinister Father Christmases grab at two men asleep in embrace in the same bed as the pillow fighting boys. The cacophony created by these combinations echoes Breton's call for passionate rebuke.

It is also worth noting the work of a group of filmmakers who are often associated with Jarman. Chris Newby, John Maybury and Cerys Wyn Evans all made films in a similar home-movie style combined with fantasy. They were all art-school educated and some of them had worked with and for Jarman; Maybury, for example, had worked on *Jubilee*, in production design (O'Pray, 1996: 18-20). Like Jarman, their films addressed homosexuality, which, during the late 1970s and early 1980s was still a highly controversial subject. Their work was, then, shocking and dealt with issues of freedom of expression in various ways. O'Pray describes them as being allied, aesthetically at least, to Kenneth Anger, Maya Deren and Jean Cocteau, all filmmakers associated with Surrealism. But he also argues that their work was marked by a lack of commitment to political change (O'Pray, 1996: 18-20). I

would argue, however, that socio-political commentary was, in fact, central to some of their films, while the assertion of overt homosexuality can in itself during this period be read as a stand against socio-political oppression, if not a random shot in the street.

A good example in this respect is *Dream Machine* (1983), a flamboyant celebration of homosexuality made by Maybury and Wyn Evans and Jarman. Maybury and Wyn Evans were associated with the New Romantic night club scene in London (O'Pray, 1996- Jarman book: 124-5) and, as with *Jubilee*, the film features figures from that scene as they might present themselves in real life. For example, the cross-dressing singer Marilyn plays a version of himself in a dream-like, fantastical setting. Although *Dream Machine*'s overt focus on homosexuality must have been shocking at the time it was made, there is little sense of protest in it. The same cannot be said for Maybury's non-narrative film, *Remembrance of Things Fast: True Stories, Visual Lies* (1994), which combines documentary-like images of shopping centres with blue screen sequences in which images of consumer produce, including a lip-stick and a car are juxtaposed with footage of the performance artist, Leigh Bowery, dancing. Maybury thus satirises consumerism, setting its colourful but conformist clichés, such as red lipstick and sports cars, against the extreme non-conformism of Leigh Bowery.

Patrick Keiller and Andrew Kötting

Reality and fiction are combined in a different way in the films of self-proclaimed Surrealist Patrick Keiller, a some-time art school lecturer with a fascination for the literature of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. *London* (1994), *Robinson in Space* (1997) and *Robinson in Ruins* (2010) all use static documentary shots of various locations across England, which are accompanied by voice-over narrations telling the story of Robinson, whose name is borrowed from Daniel Defoe's novel *Robinson Crusoe*. Keiller and, in turn, Robinson choose to tour England in order to investigate 'the problem of England'. By this they mean the effects of the 'peculiarly English capitalism' which Robinson explains began in England at the time of Defoe and the 'Great Revolution of 1688'. Hence the films are driven by a socio-political agenda which challenges an oppressive status quo.

In the first two films Robinson's story is told via the voice-over narration of his friend and lover, 'The Narrator', played by Paul Schofield. In the final film of the trilogy, Robinson's story is told by The Narrator's friend and lover, an academic played by Vanessa Redgrave. The narratives of all three films are driven by research projects about the state of English

life in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. The films chronicle the exploitations of capitalism in urban and rural landscapes, and Robinson's interest in Surrealism and literature of the Romantic period allow Keiller to apply those references directly to a commentary on modern England. These voice-over narrations are interspersed with music from classic films, including the music that plays during the lead character's ascent to heaven in Powell and Pressburger's *A Matter of Life and Death* (1946) is a recurring motif in *Robinson in Space*. The fictional voice-over is paired with still documentary shots which we are told have been taken during the course of Robinson's journeys and projects as he travels around England observing built environments. Surrealist influences are also evident in the way that Keiller confuses 'conventionally distinct orders' of time and space in the film, sometimes, as Paul Dave points out, within the same frame: in *Robinson in Space*, for instance, the futuristic Knauf factory at Ridham is foregrounded by pastoral landscape (Dave, 2006: 122).

Robinson's stories are about the decline of England as an industrial centre, and the emergence of what he sees as an increasingly economically divided society. There is little doubt then that Keiller's films register an objection to perceived societal injustice; however, Breton's call for a random shot in the street cannot be said to have been answered in Keiller's Robinson trilogy. There is little, if any, protest in the films. Rather they are a carefully considered commentary on England's economic situation and history, especially regarding capitalism. This is, of course, interesting and closely related to the ideas of the Surrealists, but these highly rational and carefully considered observations tell us why we, or Robinson, might want to protest rather than actually demonstrating protest in action.

Andrew Kötting, another artist who emerged during the 1980s, also takes a tour of England, or a particular part of England, in his films *Gallivant* (2007) and *Swandown* (2012). Kötting describes his approach to life and art as 'wantonly dada or absurdist', and adopts a serious socio-political agenda to challenge the commercial, or what he terms, 'vanilla', aspects of contemporary culture (Kötting in Sandhu, 2011: online). In *Gallivant* he travels around England in a camper van with his grandmother and his eight year old daughter Eden, stopping to encounter local traditions, accents and people and revealing aspects of English culture, some well-known and mundane, others more obscure and fantastical. He combines this with footage of a television weather forecast, which instead of updating us on the weather tells the story of Britain's geological history through sign language.

Gallivant has several other Surrealism-inspired qualities, including the fusion of documentary and fantasy. For example, Kötting's mother tells how Eden wanted her to dress up as a lollipop-lady, a recurring motif in the film. We hear how Eden went to the garden and brought a stick back with a crisp packet perched on top of it. All the while we see documentary-style shots of Eden playing in a garden. This cuts to the somewhat artificial scene of a shot of a lollipop-lady in full costume, standing in an entirely black studio space. We then see Kötting, his mother and Eden standing in the same black studio space with Kötting as a monk (another recurring theme) and the other two as lollipop-ladies. Such montages and imagery are typical of the coalescence of reality and the imagination in *Gallivant*, which is however a celebration and observation of the eccentricities of the British mainland rather than a protest.

Figure 6. 11 Screen grab from *Swandown* (Andrew Kötting, 2012) Kötting and Ian Sinclair in the stolen (or as they might say, set-free) swan-shaped pedalo.

Protest is, however, crucial to *Swandown* (2012), in which Kötting and novelist Iain Sinclair protest against what they see as the cynical commercialism of the 2012 Olympic games. To do so they 'set free' (steal) a swan-shaped pedalo in order to pedal it from Hastings to Hackney via the coastal and inland waterways of southern England (see figure 6. 11). They encounter real swans, while a woman dressed in white swims along the river's edge behind the pair, seemingly un-seen by them. There are, then, three versions of swan in *Swandown,* the swan-shaped pedalo, the real swans the pair encounter on the river and the human-swan-ghost. The premise of the film, to set free a plastic swan, also confuses reality with

fiction since inanimate objects cannot experience freedom. Despite their rebellious sentiments, Kötting and Sinclair's protest is, in the end, a gentle one, and their actions hardly echo the sudden brutality of Breton's random shot in the street.

Conclusion: Artists' Film and Video, Surrealism and British Film

Perhaps the most important Surrealist quality of the films discussed in this chapter is their communication of the actuality of personal experience. In doing so, the filmmakers I have looked at often fuse reality and the imagination, or even present these two states as inseparable. This is most apparent in Jarman's work, particularly in *The Garden*, a film that can be read as a home movie that records both the outer and inner realities of Jarman's life at Prospect Cottage. This, combined with the strong element of shock and protest in Jarman's films, especially against repressive structures such as public school life and exploitative materialism, makes Jarman, I would argue, the most Surrealist-like of all the filmmakers in this chapter.

Actual author, fictional author and narrator often merge in the films of Jarman, Kötting and Keiller as they reflect the complexity, difficulty and often beauty involved in expressing human truth in any context, whether in a film, a book, during a conversation, or even in the context of retrieving one's own memory. The films discussed in this chapter serve as affirmations of the continual slippage between reality and fiction which is an inevitable part of human communication, and which has been an integral part of Surrealism on film since Buñuel and Dali's *Un Chien*....

It is tempting to attribute the fusion of documentary and fiction in artists' film and video in Britain to the influence of Jennings. But as is evidenced by Carrington's films and Brunius' documentary film, this quality was present prior to Jennings' appearance on the scene. In fact, Carrington's home movies, which are a mixture of journals and fiction filmed amongst friends and relatives, seem more in tune with Jarman's and Kötting's films than do Jennings'.

A significant scarcity in the selection of films in this discussion of Artists' Film and Video, is direct or in-direct reference to Romantic texts. Jarman and Keen certainly show sympathy with the Romantic impulse for frenzy so enamoured by Kyrou (1951), but there is little direct evidence of the movement. Keiller, of course, makes plenty of overt references to eighteenth and nineteenth century Romantic literature, Romanticism included. However,

despite his literary quotations, with the name of his central character even being taken from a literary figure, Keiller's films are the antithesis of frenzy, instead being characterised by a calm stillness.

Although protest is surprisingly scarce in artists' film and video in Britain, its presence has been stronger in more commercially-driven films, especially those that adopt the modes of realism, horror or satire. This tendency is reflected in the next two chapters in which two films made for commercial release by Neil Jordan, *The Company of Wolves* (1984) and *Mona Lisa* (1986), are presented as filmic essays that explore key Surrealist themes and strategies and, when considered together, tell an important story about the place and role of Surrealism in British films.

Part Two: Super-realism with Teeth: Filmic Essays on Surrealism in British film

'I like to take stories ... that start from the point of realism and go to some other place that is Surrealistic' (Neil Jordan in Rockett, 2005: 208).

Chapter Seven: Super-realism and the British Cinema Auteur, an Introduction to Part Two of the Thesis

My discussion of British films and the films of Buñuel and Dali has been auteur-based, even though my material on British film has been divided up according to genres. Establishing connections between films by the same director across those genres has been an important way of drawing the lines that trace Surrealism in British film, and of seeing British films in a different way. There are some directors, however, that are just as important to Surrealism in British film but who, I would argue, tellingly, do not fit as neatly into the genre categories established in this thesis. I take this opportunity here, at the start of the second part of the thesis, which is dedicated to the work of a single auteur, to provide an overview of some of those film-makers, as well as a brief mention of the Surrealist qualities of their work.

Powell and Pressburger, *The Red Shoes* (1948) and *Matter of Life and Death* (1946)

Possibly the best known of the auteurs I have yet to address in terms of their connection to Surrealism are Powell and Pressburger (Christie, 1985; Christie, 2000 and Christie and Moor, 2005). It is certainly true that their films have a tendency towards combining realism and fantasy. *The Red Shoes* (1948) is a particularly strong example of this. During her theatre performance of *The Red Shoes* ballet for the Lermontov ballet company she dances in frenzy through the back of the stage set, only to enter her own imaginary world. The sequence seems to flow into increasingly deeper layers of her psyche, reaching further and further away from the initial stage performance. Eventually she seems to come full circle as she is on the stage again, what we might presume to be the film's diegetic reality. However, instead of an audience, Page dances in front of waves as they crash up against the orchestra pit.

Another important example is Hein Heckroth playing the production designer for the Lermontov ballet company. He was in fact playing himself, as Heckroth worked regularly with Powell and Pressburger, including for *The Red Shoes.* When he shows his portfolio of

illustrations for the forthcoming ballet production to the owner of the Lermontov Ballet company, Boris Lermontov (Anton Walbrook) they are the ones used for Powell and Pressburger's film of *The Red Shoes*. This echoes Picabia's use of found objects (see figure 1. 2) as well as mirroring Carrington and Jarman's incorporation of records of the creative process into the final film.

The merging of reality and the imagination is also reflected in their other films. *A Matter of Life and Death* (1946) features a version of heaven which can easily read as the vision of Peter Carter (David Niven) during one his recurrent black outs, while Conductor 71 (Marius Goring), who transits from heaven to earth, is only witnessed by Carter, implying that his presence is imagined by Carter. Interestingly, heaven, a place we can only imagine, at least for now, is presented as black and white while the realities of earth are in technicolour, a reversal of the usual realism and fantasy colour coding. As with *The Red Shoes*, mad love is central to *Matter of Life and Death*: a couple's struggle to be together is at the centre of each narrative.

I would argue, however, that *The Red Shoes* is the greater representative of Breton's random shot in the street. In *Matter of Life and Death* (1946) Carter protests his right to remain on earth on the grounds of having found true love, but his is not so much a remonstration as a passionately but rationally argued case. In fact the denouement of his objections takes place in a court room with Doctor Reeves (Roger Livesey) putting the case. *The Red Shoes*, however, registers a degree of protest. In the film's denouement, Page is visited at the theatre by her husband and he forces her to choose between him and her ballet career. She chooses her ballet career. But after he leaves, in a frenzy, she dances through the theatre, out of the French windows of the theatre balcony and then over its edge only to fall onto the railway tracks below. Rather like Breton's random shot in the street, Page acts without thinking in her choice of mad love and she is caught under the wheels of a train, eventually dying on the railway tracks as her husband holds her.

Ken Russell also merged reality and fantasy in many of his films, notably in *The Devils* (1971), in which the sexual repressions of a convent of Catholic nuns collide with political corruption to bring down the idealised egalitarian town of Loudun in seventeenth-century France. *The Devils* is based on a true story, but some of the scenes, such as an orgy of nuns who defile various religious iconography, are (or at least seem) fantastical. The film also has a non-realistic setting (designed by Derek Jarman, his first job in the film industry), and the

town of Loudon is almost entirely white. This quality, combined with the warning against corrupt power, both political and religious, means that the film has significant sympathies with Surrealism.

Nicolas Roeg similarly combines realism and fantasy in films such as *Don't Look Now* (1973). The inner terror of parents who have lost a child is projected onto the film's diegesis via their visions of a red-coated child on the streets of Venice where they are staying. The figure in red is first seen from behind and looks like a child but when it turns it has an old and monstrous face. Other than these sequences, the film is shot and narrated in a realist style; the sudden confusion of not knowing if the vision is real or not is shocking and sad enough to reflect the couple's anger at losing their child, and hence a significant remonstration.

Peter Greenaway's films challenge notions of cinematic storytelling by using confusions of reality and fiction as a device. For example, in *A Zed and Two Noughts* (1985) he combines documentary footage of animals and natural settings with images of fictional twin brothers, Oliver and Oswald. Greenaway thus draws attention to similarities and differences between reality and cinematic fiction in a way that registers an objection to the manipulation of media images, although the stoically ordered narration of *A Zed and Two Noughts* makes it difficult to argue that it fulminates in quite the same way as Breton's random shot in the street.

Sally Potter has moved on from her earlier short avant-garde films (such as Thriller, discussed in the previous chapter), but her later feature-length art-house films remain concerned with the dynamic of reality and fiction, as well as displaying a considerable motivation to protest. In *Rage* (2009), for instance, she presents a series of interviews recorded on a mobile phone as if by an amateur after a murder at Paris fashion week. *Rage* was released as an online stream, designed to be viewed on mobile phones, as amateur footage often is, as well as in cinemas. Hence, it is presented as reality, not only due to its visual style but also because of the way in which it was released; at the same time, of course, it is an account of a fictional story. Potter attacks what she sees as the ruthless vacuity of the fashion industry, painting it as an environment in which human life is worth less than profit. All of these films represent the themes of this study to varying degrees. However, there is only enough room for one close study of a film-maker's work in this

thesis, and I have chosen to look at two films by Jordan for the reasons explained in my Introduction, and which I reiterate here.

As indicated in the quotation that opens Part Two of the thesis, Neil Jordan starts with realism, and then travels to another 'Surrealistic' place (Jordan in Rockett, 2005: 208) when making films. His words foreground two of the central concerns of this thesis, storytelling and the realism/fantastic dynamic. *The Company of Wolves* (Jordan, 1984) and *Mona Lisa* (Jordan, 1986) can seem poles apart: one is a fantastical dream narrative and the other a realist thriller. However, if looked at a little more deeply, both disrupt fixed ideas of this polarity. Jordan disrupts traditional forms of filmic narration in both films, shifting from realism to the 'Surrealistic', or a place where reality and fantasy merge, as a way of unsettling his audience. In so doing, he makes direct reference to many of the texts, images and films that are important to Surrealism, as well as to Romanticism.

I thus argue in this second part of the thesis that Jordan has, like a magnet, brought together in these two films all of the key aspects of Surrealism in British film that I explored in the survey chapters. In fact, looked at together, they mirror the surveys in chapters three and four. *The Company... Wolves* could belong to the fantastical or 'Gothic' traditions of British cinema I explored in Chapter Four, while *Mona Lisa* could easily be framed as part of the realist tradition I explored in Chapter Three. The two films also reflect Jordan's interest in fine art and in satirising storytelling forms as a means of protest, two further themes explored above.

Neil Jordan as Auteur

Neil Jordan is a highly successful international film director, screenwriter and writer of novels and short stories who works mostly in America, Britain and Ireland, his native country. He began his career as a teacher and part-time jazz musician, writing in his free time, his big break coming when his collection of short stories *Night in Tunisia* won the Guardian literature prize in 1977 (Landy, 2003-2012: online). It is from this platform that he made his career in film, first as a screenwriter for television (starting with *Miracles and Mrs. Langan* (1979)) and then as a writer/director for the UK/Ireland-produced film *Angel* (1982).

Angel is filmed in an entirely realist style but it is peppered with references to the unreal and fantasy. For example the film's lead character, Danny (Stephen Rea), and Annie

(Veronica Quilligan) make love inside some stark concrete tubing outside the dance hall in which Danny has just performed (see figure 7. 1). A red neon light which spells out 'Dreamland' shines out of the rest of the dark, night-time mise en scène, making the tubing appear like a romantic setting. Along with the advertisement hoarding, the bright colours and happy message of the sign contrast with the bare functionality of the rest of the mise en scène. The wording of the signage echoes the title of Anderson's *O Dreamland* (1953), and as with Anderson's film, the scene contrasts stark reality with fantasy. Similarly there is a shocking juxtaposition between the escapism of this scene and the horror that follows it, as Annie is shot dead by terrorists/gangsters as she emerges from the tubing the next morning. This technique of combining stark realism with fictionality foreshadows Jordan's approach in *Mona Lisa*, which, as I will explain in chapter nine, is played out in an even more sophisticated and complex manner.

Figure 7. 1. Screen grab from *Angel* (Neil Jordan, 1982). Danny (Stephen Rea) and Annie (Veronica Quilligan) take refuge in some concrete tubing.

Jordan's films are at first glance, diverse, spanning genres and cinematic styles of all kinds. *The Miracle* (1991), for example, is a low-budget, slow-paced, charming and perceptively humorous coming-of-age film made in a realist style and set entirely in Jordan's contemporary Ireland. Soon after this, Jordan made *Interview with a Vampire* (1994), the highly fantastical and mostly period set Hollywood blockbuster. However, on closer inspection, the two films share plenty of important characteristics: like most of Jordan's work, the films share a set of interweaving themes which include struggles with evolving personal identity; personal loss, either because of some violent trauma suffered personally

and/or the loss of a loved one; the experiences of abandoned children; inappropriate adult-child relationships which are often sexual; the progression from child to adult, which in his films is sometimes successful, as in *The Miracle*, and sometimes thwarted, as in *Interview with a Vampire*; the revelation of some uncomfortable or shocking truth about a character; the tragedy of unrequited or impossible, but ardent, love; and the passionate, sometimes violent pursuit of freedom from some form of enchainment. Another frequent theme in Jordan's films is personal identity, particularly in terms of nationality, gender or sexuality. In all of his stories, the line between good and evil is a confusing one, but Jordan is an eloquent communicator of the complexities of human emotions and he offers his audiences a rare and sensitive understanding of his characters' motivations, a skill I will illuminate in my analyses of *The Company...* and *Mona Lisa.*

Jordan's communicates the inner lives of his characters so vividly and frequently that occasionally the audience, often along with his characters, can become confused as to what is real and what is imaginary. In this way Jordan underscores the importance of the fantastical and its relationship to the ways in which we make sense of our lives, often using dreams or day dreams as a way of informing a narrative. For example, in *Breakfast on Pluto* (2005)*,* Kitten (Cillian Murphy), fantasises about her mother, who had to abandon him at birth. She imagines she is supremely glamorous and beautiful, with blonde curls like the American film star Mitzy Gaynor. This fantasy becomes the driving force of Kitten's own identity: she too is supremely glamorous and blonde, while the search for her idealised, imagined mother drives the narrative for most of the film.

Jordan draws upon filmmaking tradition, toying with cinematic convention in all of his films, not least of all with genre. For example, film noir's visual style and labyrinthine storytelling is a recurring theme in his work, which began with his first film, *Angel*, setting a pattern that *Mona Lisa*, *The Crying Game* (1992), *The End of the Affair* (1999) and *The Brave One* (2007) have followed, if in their own distinct ways. However, none of these films sit entirely comfortably in the genre category of film noir. Hence Jordan recognises and brings into play the notion of genre, while also destabilising it.

In addition to cinema history, Jordan's wide range of cultural references includes music and literature, notably fairy stories, which recur frequently in his films. Jordan draws upon stories which have entered popular Western culture, with many of his references involving some kind of folkloric aspect of the lives of ordinary people, just as fairy tales do. But, as I

will explain in my discussions of *The Company...* and *Mona Lisa*, he also makes great use of canonical literature such as Romantic novels, which, although they may seem high-brow to a modern audience, were, at the time they were published, often considered low-brow popular reading and/or dealt with popular concerns of the day.

Previous Studies of Jordan's Films

In the past twenty five years or so, since Jordan became a well-respected director, there have been relatively few publications focussing on his work in comparison to his prolific output of films. Indeed, it took almost twenty years after the release of *The Crying Game* (1992), the film that took Jordan's reputation to international levels, for a significant study of his films to be published. This is perhaps because of the lack of general recognition of him as an auteur amongst the general public, no doubt because of the diversity of his work.

Kevin Rockett was one of the first to produce a book-length survey of Jordan's films, with two released in quick succession in the early 2000s. The first, *Neil Jordan: Contemporary Irish Filmmaker* sets a tone for most subsequent writing about Jordan's work (including Rockett's own second book). It focuses on Jordan's Irish films, thereby staking national identity, particularly Irish identity, as the central issue of his cinematic output. Rockett's second book about Jordan, co-written with Emer Rockett, *Neil Jordan: Exploring Boundaries* (2003), places an equal emphasis on Irish national identity in its readings of all of his films made up to the date of the book's publication, Rockett and Rockett contextualise the films, drawing attention to the relationship between them and Jordan's literary output, while also emphasising the way Jordan challenges rigid perceptions of national identity.

Two further book-length surveys of Jordan's films were published in 2008. Maria Pramaggiore also recognises the importance of Irishness to Jordan's work in her book *Neil Jordan*, stressing the relevance of Irish gothic literature, such as the writing of Bram Stoker and Sheridan Le Fanu, to his films. Although Pramaggiore does not mention Surrealism, she does address Jordan's interest in the relationship between fantasy and realism and the way in which his films can provoke a sense of the uncanny. She published a concise version of these observations in a chapter-length study of Jordan's work in Yvonne Tasker's 2001 edited collection, *Fifty Contemporary Filmmakers*. Carole Zucker 's *The Cinema of Neil Jordan: the Dark Carnival* again recognises Irish national identity as important to Jordan, but expands her readings of his films beyond the boundaries of any nationality to emphasise his use of Celtic folklore, fairytales, Gothic Romanticism, Postmodernism and

Magical Realism (Zucker published similar material focussing entirely on *The Company...* in an article published in 2000).

There are a considerable number of articles and chapters written about *The Company...*, with national identity and/or Rosaleen's sexuality as key topics. Catherine Lappas (1996)provides a reading of *The Company...* which prioritises the spectacle of masculinity, offering a feminist reading which sees Rosaleen as a sexual marauder. In 2003 Keith Hopper considered *The Company...*, in relation to Irishness, choosing it because it is often seen as Jordan's 'least Irish' film (Hopper, 2003: 17). Alongside his assessment of Irishness in *The Company...*, Hopper also considers Rosaleen's sexuality; like Lappas, he sees her as a sexual adventurer, but this time one who has found her 'soul-mate' (Hopper, 2003: 23) in the wolf, even if Hopper acknowledges her extreme distress, as he sees it, because of the responsibility and consequence caused by the ownership of adult sexuality (Hopper, 2003: 19-23).

Sharon McCann has drawn attention to the ways in which protest, this time against the English oppression of Ireland, can be read in *The Company...*. She presents the dream narrative of the film as a filmic version of an aisling, a form of Irish poetry which emerged during the eighteenth century as a means of rebelling against the English presence in Ireland. The aisling was usually the dream of a young man set in a liminal fantastical place, about a beautiful dark-haired young woman with whom he is in love. The young woman in aislings represents Ireland and its fate at the hands of the English, while the young man is tragically unrequited in his love and unable to rescue her. Socio-political messages were thus disguised as tragic romance stories, more specific references to controversial events designed to be indecipherable outside of Irish culture, i.e., by the English. The use of a dream-like, fantastical narrative muddied the waters even more. Of course the central character of *The Company...* is a pretty dark-haired girl named Rosaleen, a name which is symbolic of Ireland (McCann, 2010), although she is not actually a woman. McCann's reading dovetails with and supports my own in many ways.

Essays about *Mona Lisa* are much more scarce, with the film usually discussed as part of a survey of films. Thus both Andrew Spicer and Gene Phillips mention the film in their re-assessments of the Film Noir canon (2007 and 2012). Spicer usefully points out that the realist style of the film's writer, David Leland, combines with Jordan's interest in the 'Surrealistic' to create an unnerving dynamic. |He also points out that the Surrealism-

infused noir crime novel that the central character of *Mona Lisa* reads during the film influenced Jordan's conception of his own story (Spicer, 2007: 122-123). These are both ideas I expand on in my reading of the film.

Mona Lisa is also discussed in Steve Vineberg's article about female lead characters in the screenplays of David Leland (1988). Vineberg presents some connections between the personalities of Simone (Cathy Tyson) in *Mona Lisa*, Christine (Julie Walters) in *Personal Services* (Terry Jones, 1987), and Lynda (Emily Lloyd) in *Wish You Were Here* (David Leland, 1987), all of whom are either sex workers or promiscuous women, character types often represented as two dimensional in the cinema, but with Leland's writing and sometimes direction (*Wish You Were Here*) they become complex and sensitive.

The Structure of the Two Filmic Essay Chapters

To my knowledge this thesis is the first study to look at any of Jordan's films through the lens of Surrealism, and it is the first to consider *The Company...* and *Mona Lisa* together, as a complementary pair of films. My readings of *The Company...* and *Mona Lisa* explore storytelling, a well-recognised theme in Jordan's work (Rockett, 2003; Prammagiore, 2008; Zucker, 2008); however, my argument is that Jordan employs aspects of Surrealism to enhance the narration of these two films, in a similar manner to the way in which Buñuel and Dali did in *Un Chien Andalou and L'Âge d'or*. I argue that although *The Company...* and *Mona Lisa* are not Surrealist films (very few films are), Buñuelian strategies are key to their storytelling.

My two filmic case studies are structured around the central research questions of this thesis. Hence they draw attention to Surrealism's relationship to Romanticism, the dynamic of realism and fantasy, and the commitment to protest in the films, with storytelling key to all three of those enquiries. References to literature, either direct or through themes and ideas, and a strong emphasis on the mise en scène are also important to both films. As might be expected with such a visually flamboyant film, there is a particular focus on the way costume and production design contribute to the narration process in *The Company...*. Perhaps less predictable is the particularly strong literary thematic of *Mona Lisa*.

In this second part of my thesis, I look closely at Surrealism and its devices in two Neil Jordan films: *The Company...* in Chapter Eight and *Mona Lisa* in Chapter Nine. I will give a close reading of each film, drawing out its relationship with Surrealism in detail. Jordan

began as a writer and his interest in literature and storytelling is evidenced in both his narrative techniques and in the thematic, and more direct, literary references which are often abundant in his films; this is certainly the case with *The Company...* and *Mona Lisa*. Given his literary background, it seems apt that Jordan drew upon Surrealism when making these two films, a movement which, as I explained in Chapter One, was instigated by poets and novelists. But film is a series of images and both of these examples of Jordan's work also represent the influence of Surrealism through rich visual references.

Chapter Eight: Surrealism in Neil Jordan's *The Company of Wolves* (1984)

Introduction

The Company of Wolves (Neil Jordan, 1984) is one of the British films most readily associated with Surrealism. Its Surrealist qualities have been mentioned several times in academic writing, as well as in journalistic commentaries (Large, 2006; Murphy, 2009; Orr, 2010; Spicer, 2007; Zucker, 2008). This is almost certainly because Jordan drew on well known and easily recognisable imagery, narratives and situations associated with the movement, such as dreams, fantastic settings and situations, as well as the exploration of sexuality through Freudian imagery. Despite the plentiful recognition of the importance of Surrealism to *The Company...* (Large, 2006; Murphy, 2009; Orr, 2010; Pramaggiore, 2008; Spicer, 2007; Zucker, 2008), there has been little study of exactly *how* it contributes. I hope to redress that situation in the following passages.

The obviously Surrealist approach of the film was perhaps triggered by the involvement of Angela Carter as co-writer and on whose book of short stories, *The Bloody Chamber* (1979), the film is based. Carter's writing addresses female experience, often through fairy tales and always with the use of Freudian references and fantastical settings, characters and situations. In this way, she, like Jordan, explores the relationship between reality and the fantastic, if in a more flamboyant, theatrical manner than his usual filmmaking style. It is certainly arguable that Carter's involvement allowed Jordan to create a film which is more overt in its references to Surrealism than his other films.

Perhaps the most challenging aspect of my inclusion of *The Company...* in this thesis is the issue of whether or not it can be considered a British film, in terms of both cultural content and production conditions. But as I noted above, *The Company...,* in most respects works as a British production. It had a British production company, Palace Pictures, another British company, ITC Entertainment, was its major financial contributor and it was filmed in and *intended* to look like one of Britain's four component states: England (Jordan, 2005). Its characters have English (West Country) accents and live in an environment inspired by

paintings of the English landscape; while the production team included an English production designer (Anton Furst), English actors and an English writer (Angela Carter).

It is however possible to identify several national identities including Irish, French and American which are significant in *The Company...*, and in light of which it would be possible to read the film. More generally, *The Company...* is, for the most part, set in a fantastical environment which, without prior knowledge of the inspiration for the film's production design, and minus the accents of its inhabitants, could pass as almost any European culture. Indeed, Jordan himself has commented that when he watches the film dubbed into different languages it seems to take on the characteristics of each nationality or culture (Jordan, 2005).

The Irish connection is strong. Jordan is of course Irish, while the film's lead character's name, Rosaleen (Sarah Patterson), is, as Sharon McCann points out, often used as representative of the Irish nation. Most of the film's narration stems from Rosaleen's dream and McCann develops a persuasive argument for seeing the dream sequences as metaphoric of Irish oppression by the English (McCann, 2010). Rosaleen's Celtic appearance mean that she could also be seen as Irish. It could also be fruitful to read the film in terms of French cultural identity: Carter and Jordan's interpretation of *Little Red Riding Hood* is an adaptation of the French writer, Charles Perrault's, version of the story, and they included his *Little Red Riding Hood* poem at the end of the film. There are also strong American influences: ITC, although a British company, had been based in America for two years when the film was made, while the American film *The Night of the Hunter* (Laughton, 1955) provided many strong visual and thematic influences. However, this thesis is concerned with British film and I will hence address the British, or more specifically English, aspects of the film. The fact that Jordan is Irish only makes this reading more interesting precisely because the English elements in it are seen through the eyes of a director who is not of that nationality.

Jordan's exploration of English culture is also particularly fruitful in its relationship to Surrealism. His significant engagement with English Romantic art and literature, and the way he merges this with Surrealism, make this film key to my exploration of the relationship between Surrealism, English Romanticism and British film. When Jordan speaks about the film's influences in the director's commentary on the DVD release, he refers to it as 'very English' in terms of its aesthetics (Jordan, 2005) and supports this by referring to

various English influences. He identifies the work of nineteenth-century Romantics such as the painter Samuel Palmer (an apprentice of William Blake), the novelist Thomas Hardy – and Lewis Carroll. He explains that the film's production design was directly inspired by Palmer's darkly mystical representations of the English landscape and its rural communities. Meanwhile, the dream-like expressiveness of the film's settings echo Hardy's use of the English landscape as a metaphor of his characters' emotional states; while the tragic fates that befall various peasant women in a hierarchical, class-riven England mirror Hardy's stories, particular that of *Tess of the D'Urbevilles* (1891).

Most of the links to Surrealism in *The Company...* relate to Freud, such as the idea of the uncanny, the doppelganger, and the exploration of dreams and fairytales; my discussion is organised around the film's narration, however, because storytelling of various kinds is so central to the film, while the influence of Surrealism, I will argue, is key to the way in which its stories unfold. The core theme in my analysis is the relative reliability and unreliability of narration, with a particular focus on the way in which the film's narrational complexity can confuse its audience.

I begin my reading of *The Company...* with a discussion of its narrative structure, drawing attention to the way in which it creates a complex web of confusion about what is real in the film's diegesis and what is imagined. I draw attention to similarities between this style of narration and the films of Buñuel and Dali. I will then discuss literary influences, beginning with Carter and Jordan's collaboration when making the film, then moving on to look at Romantic literary influences. These include Gothic novels and Carroll's Alice stories. I trace the way in which the narrational style of *The Company...* shows similarities with these texts and traditions, as well as drawing attention to themes and direct references. This approach enables me to address the question of the relationship between Romantic literature and Surrealism in British film. But I also address the question of protest, by focusing on a significant absence at the film's denouement, when Rosaleen encounters a huntsman, linking it to similar narrational absences in Gothic novels or Surrealist films that signify rape or sexual assault. I suggest that Rosaleen's screams of terror at the end of the film are, in fact, a protest against the theft of her innocence, while Jordan's narrational style acts as a kind of filmic tinder box, and amounts to an act of remonstration just as powerful as Breton's random shot in the street.

I argue that production design and particularly costume are key to the way in which Jordan makes *The Company...* such an explosive and disorientating film. I have already noted that Palmer's paintings were a key visual influence on the film, but I also identify ways in which Jordan's representations of space, time and identity in *The Company...* are defined by costume. Plays with space, time and identity are, of course, central to the way the Surrealists disrupted traditional filmic narration, toying with our ideas about what is real or not real. I argue that visual flamboyance in *The Company...*, especially its costumes, is an essential component in the way it disorientates its audiences. Firstly, however, I present a synopsis of the film.

Plot and Narrative Structure in *The Company of Wolves*

In *The Company...,* Jordan represents the dream of its central character and sometime narrator, Rosaleen. This, the film's central story, is a re-working of Charles Perrault's *Little Red Riding Hood*. In Jordan's hands, the tale becomes a werewolf story set in a fantastical version of England's historical past. Several other, shorter stories are told within the frame of Rosaleen's dream, narrated at first by Rosaleen's Granny and then by Rosaleen herself. All of these layers are framed by sequences showing Rosaleen's non-dream life. Each layer is brought to us by different identities, firstly, the overall narrator alone, then Rosaleen's sub-conscious, then Granny, then Rosaleen, with the final sequences combining Rosaleen's sub-conscious with the overall narrator's previously solitary presentation of the framing sequences. These complex layers of narration can make the film seem nonsensical and chaotic on first viewing, but they are in fact arranged systematically and logically, if not in the way in which audiences may expect.

The film begins with a sequence set contemporary to its making during the early 1980s. Rosaleen's parents drive through the countryside to pull up at their dilapidated Georgian country mansion and unpack their supermarket shopping, while Rosaleen sleeps upstairs in her bedroom. The sequence represents the waking-world, which Rosaleen sleeps through in all but the last frames of the film. The sequence is firmly anchored in culture contemporary to the film's making through set and costume design, and is, thus, clearly separated from the dream sequences which are set firmly in the past; however, despite this contrast the production design of this waking world is directly linked to the historically inspired aspects of the dream sequences.

In her dream, Rosaleen lives a peasant life in a small village surrounded by 'the forest' where her sister, Alice, is killed by a pack of wolves immediately before the dream narrative begins. Rosaleen's maturity is accelerated by Alice's death, in the eyes of Granny, who begins knitting her a red cape and telling her werewolf stories intended for her older sister. These are warnings about the perils of adult sexuality which are presented to the viewer as a series of vignettes; however, instead of scaring Rosaleen off the perils of the forest and the wolves that live in it, the somewhat salacious nature of Granny's narration prompts her curiosity.

Rosaleen ignores her parents' and grandmother's warnings to 'not stray from the [forest] path', and, as a result, experiences a series of adventures and mis-adventures. Her final encounter off the forest path is with an aristocratic huntsman who is in fact 'a wolf who is hairy on the inside'. At this point, the familiar *Red Riding Hood* story begins to unfold as they race to Granny's house, where the wolf kills Granny, Rosaleen arriving shortly afterwards to try and fend him off. The film ends with a shot of Rosaleen in the waking world, screaming in her bed as wolves burst through the window and picture frames in her bedroom. Charles Perrault's poem warning 'little girls' who are 'pretty' about sexual predators, which ends his version of the fairy tale, is then read as the credits of *The Company...* roll.

'Chinese Box' Narrative Structure in *The Company of Wolves*

Jordan has created a 'Chinese box' narrative structure of stories within stories (Jordan 2005) in which reality and dream, time and space, and multiple different narrators seem to merge. This predictably creates a sense of chaos and confusion in the audience making the film labyrinthine in the literary sense of the word (Kern, 2005). However, it is also labyrinthine in the original sense (Kern, 2005) because it is in fact a carefully ordered structure. It winds a linear, circular path (we find ourselves back at Rosaleen's bedroom at the film's end), while the vignettes also have a circular nature, always taking us back to their narrators in the end but so complex in the journey they take that they create a, visceral, de-stabilising effect. As with any actual labyrinth (Kern, 2009), the film's narrative easily confuses and throws one off balance when one is involved in it – as an audience is; but when viewed in a more detached way, its linear, ordered, structure becomes clear.

To further bewilder, Jordan narrates *The Company...* in three different ways. Hence my discussion of the theories and lexicon of narration in Chapter Two now comes into play.

Each narrative layer of *The Company...* can be described in terms outlined by Seymour Chatman and Ed Branigan and it is useful to do that now as a context for my reading of the film. Firstly, the 'overall narrator' in Chatman's words, or 'extra-fictional narrator', in Branigan's, delivers the entire film, including the credits and the framing sequences set in the waking world; I continue to use the term 'overall narrator' for this concept for the reasons I defined in Chapter Two. Secondly, Rosaleen's 'imagination', as it would be described by Branigan, brings us the dream sequences set in the fantastical village; following Branigan, I will term this Rosaleen's imagination or dream. Thirdly, Granny and Rosaleen's stories are 'diegetically narrated' from inside the frame of a dream, in a form of 'depth-internal focalization', to use Branigan's terms; I will refer to them henceforth as being diegetically narrated. In the closing sequence, the identity of the overall narrator merges with Rosaleen's imagination as the wolves from her dream rush into her waking-world bedroom.

Jordan thus perverts the intention of traditional narration in *The Company...*. He draws upon traditional narration as a device with which to disorientate his audience instead of making things easier for them. In fact, it is difficult to know which narrator is doing what, where and at what time, especially on first viewing *The Company...*. Jordan only breaks the rules of traditional narration in the final few minutes of the film when Rosaleen's inner and outer realities merge as the wolves from her dream come crashing into her bedroom. So most of the film's narration is Surrealist because it adheres to the rules of traditional narration in a manner that is obstinately contrary, rather than because it breaks those rules. As with satire, Jordan holds up the rules of traditional filmic narration and presents them in a distorted, exaggerated form. He thus ridicules the pact made by narrator and cinema audience, with explosive effect.

The question of who is narrating what in *The Company...* is further obscured because Rosaleen has two different storyteller identities, the waking-world Rosaleen through whom we know all about her dream, and her dream version who narrates two of the vignettes. Adding to the multiplicity of her identity, she cameos in Granny's story about the devil, playing his chauffeur (driving a white Rolls Royce); the final vignette tells the story of a young injured she-wolf who 'cries forever'. This vignette comes just after Rosaleen's encounter with the huntsman and I would argue that the injured she-wolf is metaphoric of Rosaleen's own injured state. Finally Rosaleen is transformed into a wolf, who narrowly avoids being shot by her father just as the film emerges from its final vignette to return to

the dream village narrative. All of these narrators are brought to us by the film's overall narrator. This is of course, as with any film or story, a cover for the fact that the entire film stems from the inner world and/or experiences of its actual authors, Jordan (writer and director), Carter (writer), Furst (production designer) et al.

Literature and Surrealism in *The Company of Wolves*

Perhaps because he began as a writer, literature plays a significant role in many of Jordan's films, but that role is particularly important in *The Company...*. This is in part because the script is an adaptation of Carter's short stories and she and Jordan co-wrote it. Jordan, as I have already mentioned, and Carter, have both commented on the importance of Surrealism to their work (Carter, 1978), and both prioritise the literary. It is not surprising then that *The Company...* is rich with literary references, all of which have a strong relationship with Surrealism.

In this section I will, firstly, address Carter's influence and her and Jordan's shared interests in Freud and fairy tales. I will look at how the two writers' approaches to these influences combine in *The Company...*, sometimes overlapping and sometimes differing dramatically. This passage will lay the foundations for the rest of my discussion about literature, in which I will look at more thematic influences and references from the nineteenth century English literature from which Jordan draws, including the Gothic masculine sublime, the novels of Hardy and Carroll's Alice stories. All of these literary sources have a strong relevance to Surrealism. They also reflect the struggle of human beings against their own mechanised world, and a wish to return to a pre-enlightenment, less rational state, sentiments which were key to many nineteenth-century writers, to Freud and to the early Surrealists.

Carter and Jordan, a Writerly Aesthetic: Fairy Tales, Freud and Surrealism in *The Company of Wolves*.

Carter and Jordan share much common ground as creators of stories. Both draw upon the Surrealist principle of disrupting and subverting existing culture by re-working fairy tales, amongst other methods; and both explore the idea of the subconscious through an established legacy of cultural forbearers who also explored the subconscious, either purposefully or not. These include fairy tales, again, with their Freudian connotations, along with the Romantic aesthetic of the subconscious whence Freud's ideas are thought to have emerged. Both writers address trauma in their work, using Surrealism and Freud's ideas as

a way of exploring these difficult experiences. In Carter's Gothic horror stories heroines often, but not always, emerge victorious from their experiences in patriarchy; while Jordan often presents tragic tales about people who cannot escape the legacy of their trauma, no matter how hard they try.

Carter is seen as a writer who explores or subverts the subtext of fairy tales and other well-known narratives to present female protagonists who emerge from patriarchy victorious and sexually liberated, if more worldly wise (Gamble, 1997; Wisker, 1997). Perhaps the most obvious examples of these traits can be found in her short story 'The Life and Loves of Lady Purple', in which a female puppet breaks free of her strings to perform, and her novel *The Sadeian Woman* (1979) in which Sade's treatise for masculine liberation is re-worked. However, most significant for this discussion is her original short story, 'The Company...', in which the story ends when Red Riding Hood blissfully welcomes the wolf into her bed (Keenan, 1997: 147).

There is less to prove about Carter's relationship to Surrealism than there is about Jordan's. Her work is often seen as having Surrealist tendencies due to the frequency of Freudian imagery and ideas in it, because of her interest in fairy tales and because she often merges reality and the fantastic in her work (Carter, 1966, 1967, 1979, 1985 and 1991). But perhaps most significantly she writes of the importance of Surrealism to her own work, and to twentieth-century culture as a whole. Indeed in her 1978 essay, 'The Alchemy of the World' she acknowledges the extent of its influence on her and mourns its passing as a major cultural influence in the late twentieth century. Carter saw Surrealism as a magical process, allowing us to access the richer, more genuinely felt aspects of human experiences (Carter, 1978: 67-73). She stopped short of allying herself entirely with the Surrealists, feeling marginalised by what she saw as their favouring of the expression of men's desires over women's; but, as she declares in her article's final sentence, 'Does the struggle [Surrealism] continue? Why not. Give me one good reason. Even if the struggle has changed its terms'.

Carter's book of short stories, *The Bloody Chamber*, on which *The Company...* is based, is a collection of re-worked fairy tales, a favourite Surrealist topic. In it, feminine experience contemporary to the time of Carter's writing is intertwined with familiar figures and stories that have been deconstructed, and re-constructed; as the book progresses, elements of each tale are re-worked in subsequent stories (Armitt, 1997: 89). As such, *The Bloody*

Chamber explores the way in which literature, or storytelling more broadly, as fairy tales were originally oral texts, evolves as a complex tradition.

The link between fairy tales and Freudian imagery is a fitting one because of the importance of folk tales to the development of Freud's theories, and his view of fairy tales, along with Greek mythology, as representations of the collective subconscious of our society. He observed in his paper 'The Occurrence in Dreams of Material from Fairy Tales' (Freud, 1913) that his patients would sometimes re-live traumatic events from their childhood as elements of fairy tales in dreams (Freud 1978: 281). His view of the fairy tale has influenced many creative practitioners since, particularly those associated with Surrealism, such as Breton and Carter, both of whom also see fairy tales as an expression of the collective and often subconscious concerns of society (Breton, 1924; Carter, 1978). Breton, his fellow early Surrealists and Carter all approach fairytales as existing beyond the realms of rational society.

Similarly, in *The Company...*, Jordan explores the storytelling process with the use of obvious Freudian imagery. Indeed he frequently references fairy stories in his literature and films as a way of representing his traumatised protagonists' displacement of difficult emotions. Unlike Carter, he does not offer happy or victorious endings, and has a history of making films about traumatic experiences from which his central characters emerge confused and damaged. Although he does incorporate Carter's impetus to deconstruct fairy tales and draw out their Freudian potential in *The Company...,* I will argue that, unlike so many of Carter's heroines, Rosaleen cannot successfully turn the tables on her aggressor. Instead, Jordan explores the ways in which she copes with a tragic experience, while warning the audience about the, often hidden, dangers of humanity and especially masculinity.

The Masculine Sublime, Lacunae and Traditions of Romantic and Surrealist Storytelling in *The Company of Wolves*

In *The Company...*, there is a narrative absence, or lacuna at the film's denouement, which is of course, the point at which the important things in a story are usually revealed. The narrative jumps from Rosaleen shooting the huntsman, to her becoming a wolf without any clear explanation. Of course, as with any lacuna, what happens during this absence is open to interpretation. Many critics have filled this gap with a positive sexual experience for Rosaleen and this has, as I mentioned in the previous chapter, become the dominant

reading of the film (Hopper, 2002; Lappas, 2006; McCann, 2010; Zucker, 2000 and 2008;). Even McCann, who reads Rosaleen as representative of a repressed Ireland, savaged at the hands of the English, follows this view (McCann, 2010). However, I place this moment in *The Company...* in a tradition of narrative absences stemming back to Romantic literature and through Surrealism on film that signify a trauma which is so unspeakable that it can't be shown or written about.

Like McCann, I position protest as central to *The Company...* and like her I see it as a filmic version of the aisling, which is an Irish literary form of protest, as I explained in the previous chapter. McCann's positioning of Rosaleen as representative of Ireland is convincing, while her view that the village in *The Company...* is a Catholic community attacked by English aggressors is also compelling. Although these are not the focus of my reading, they do provide a useful context to it and a platform on which my own interpretation builds. McCann reads the encounter between Rosaleen and the huntsman as representative of Ireland being rescued by non-English European forces (McCann, 2010: 77), but this contradicts the usually tragic ending of aisling stories, as well as of most other Jordan films. In the reading that follows, I suggest that Rosaleen is oppressed in *The Company...* because at its end she is raped. I also argue that Rosaleen's hysterical terror at the end of the film, along with Jordan's infuriatingly confusing narration, are key ways in which Jordan protests against this act.

My reading thus supports Pramaggiore's view that *The Company...* does not have

> a happy ending…[because] Rosaleen never fully awakens into adulthood. Instead she remains suspended in her own imagination, which respects no boundaries. Her embrace of her own sexual monstrosity prevents her from returning to the waking world as a child or as an adult. (Pramaggiore, 2008: 34-35)

However, my reading also differs from Pramggiore's. I agree that Rosaleen remains in a liminal position between childhood and womanhood but I read that tragic situation as being the result of her enforced embrace of the monstrous sexuality of the huntsman/wolf, and not as a response to her own natural awakenings.

Hence I place *The Company...* alongside many works associated with Surrealism which deal with uncovering difficult or hidden sexualities. Child sexual abuse survivors such as Violette

Noziéres, who murdered her parents after years of sexual abuse at the hands of her father, were held to be exemplary Surrealists and championed by the original Paris Surrealist group (Maza, 2011: 107-138; Warlick, 2001 :136). As such, responses to this kind of trauma became an important theme, amongst other difficult sexualities, in Surrealist thinking.

In the following passages I read the narrative absence at the end of *The Company...* as signifying that Rosaleen is raped by the huntsman, and I see the surrounding sequences as supporting that interpretation. I also argue that even if Rosaleen's experience with the huntsman is positive and that she eventual concedes to him consensually, there are deeply problematic issues to be addressed. The actress who plays Rosaleen celebrated her twelfth birthday during its filming (making her either eleven or twelve when the scene was shot), and Jordan explains that he chose her for her ability to portray the particular kind of naïve romantic/sexual curiosity that girls of that age often display (Jordan, 2005). Rosaleen is coded as being at the onset of her menses, through the splashes of red in the film, including the red cape she wears, something that usually happened at an average age of thirteen when *The Company*… was made (Jones and Lopez, 2013: 111). All of which is, of course, well before the age of consent in Britain (or Ireland) when the film was made, as it still is today. The actor playing the huntsman in the film (Micha Bergese) was 38 and is clearly intended to be seen as a mature man in the film. So even if Rosaleen's initiation into sex was eventually pleasurable, these facts mean that it cannot have been a consensual or entirely positive experience.

Rosaleen's experience of sexual abuse begins with a grooming process on behalf of the huntsman. He generates her interest in his sexuality and genital area by creating an enigma around an object in his pocket, a compass which allows him to stray from the path, and therefore break the usual rules of human conduct; he touches Rosaleen in a progressively more aggressive and sexual way. First he 'punishes' her for telling stories about wolves who are hairy on the inside with a kiss and a playful wrestle to the ground.

Then later on at Granny's house, when he attempts to kiss her she pulls out a knife from her basket in self-defence. He takes the knife and runs it down her neck and the front of her chest, getting her to remove and burn her cape. The huntsman then insists that she keep her promise to kiss him, made at his suggestion. Rosaleen complies but pulls away on feeling his 'big teeth'. When he tries to get her to kiss him again, she shoots at him with Granny's shot gun (in a series of movements that echo those of Rachel Cooper (Lillian Gish)

as she protects her brood of children from Harry Powell (Robert Mitchum) in *The Night of the Hunter* (Charles Lawton, 1955)). This is when the huntsman transforms into a wolf in an erotic performance by Micha Bergese in which he writhes rhythmically and pushes out his hips (see figure 8. 2). Rosaleen responds with terror and awe as she watches him, lit in a flattering firelight effect which showcases Bergese's muscular dancer's body (see figure 8. 3). Rosaleen's seemingly contradictory response of terror combined with awe is a familiar theme in Gothic novels, as is the confusion and narrative absence that characterise this sequence, and indeed the entire film.

This series of shots, transferring between Rosaleen and her point of view of the huntsman, then cuts immediately to her holding the wolf and telling the sad tale of the injured she-wolf. Of course, this leaves an absence, or lacuna. We do not, in fact, know for certain what happened. However, the surrounding footage makes it seem an unpleasant event, if sexual. Hence, Rosaleen's experiences and the way they are narrated are comparable to the Gothic masculine sublime tradition. The idea of the masculine sublime stems from the Romantic sublime more generally, whereby on-lookers felt overwhelming awe in the face of natural beauty, typically mountain ranges or seascapes, but at the same time were terrified by its life-threatening potential (see figure 8.1). Writers of Romantic Gothic novels, notably Anne Radcliffe, transported this phenomenon to women's experience of patriarchy in the domestic setting. This experience of patriarchy as sublime has been termed the 'Gothic masculine sublime', while the novels have been categorised as 'Roman Noir'.

Figure 8. 1 *An Avalanche in the Alps*, Philip James De Loutherbourg (1803), oil on canvas, 110cm x 160cm. Tate Gallery, London. The Romantic natural sublime: A group of travellers look on in awe as well as terror.

Figure 8. 2 Screen grab from *The Company of Wolves* (Neil Jordan, 1984). The Gothic masculine sublime: Rosaleen looks on in awe as well as terror when the huntsman transforms into a wolf, immediately before the film's denouement, a narrative absence.

Figure 8. 3 Screen grab from *The Company of Wolves*. In the surrounding shots we see Rosaleen's point of view as she watches the huntsman/wolf's disturbing fusion of horror and beauty.

Roman Noir novels depicted the confusion and loss of control nineteenth century women often experienced in their relationships with men, often with violent and sexual assault at the centre of their narratives. These novels expressed the difficult experiences of nineteenth-century women both in the content of their stories and through the use of labyrinthine narration (Shaw, 2006). Their structures were often confusing and seemed to make no sense to the reader; they had mysterious and perplexing gaps in their narratives, usually in places where a sexual attack could have happened and via subject matters such as mysterious hauntings or hallucinations (Shaw, 2006).

Rosaleen screams in terror in the final sequence of the film, as wolves flood her dream so forcefully they seem to enter her present reality, just as terrifying memories can flood the dreams of trauma survivors. She screams herself awake as wolves rush through her window

and through the family portraits that line the hallway outside her bedroom. As the credits roll, Charles Perrault's poem is read aloud by a male actor, warning pretty little girls of the dangers of predatory strangers. Jordan's use of Surrealist motifs and references to present a rape or trauma narrative thus places *The Company...* in a strong heritage of Gothic and Surrealist works which represent repressed or emerging trauma, especially those relating to sexuality.

Rosaleen's attack echoes this Gothic tradition in several ways. The rape is implied, leaving a gap in the narrative, around which the Chinese Box narration of the film is structured and which leads to confusion in the audience, mirroring that of a victim, or survivor. Of course, experiences such as this are hard to face up to and their acceptance can come in layers of fragmented narratives, or memories, and Jordan's layering of narratives in *The Company...* mirrors that experience.

The representation of difficult sexualities, including sexual abuse and its consequences, was particularly important to Luis Buñuel. In *Un Chien Andalou* (Buñuel and Salvador Dali, 1929) the male character appears to sexually assault his female companion; *Viridiana* (Buñuel, 1961) is the tale of a kind young woman raped by those she helps; in *The Exterminating Angel* (Buñuel*,* 1962) opportunistic sexual assaults occur as the trapped concert goers sleep on the parlour floor; *Diary of a Chambermaid* (Buñuel, 1964) explores responses to the rape and murder of a little girl (drawing on the Little Red Riding Hood wolf-in-a-forest motif) and the relationship between sex and class; *Simon of the Desert* (Buñuel, 1965) addresses sexual repression and bestiality; *Belle de Jour* (Buñuel, 1967) traces the responses of an adult woman to her own childhood sexual trauma suffered at the hands of her father; *The Phantom of Liberty* (Buñuel, 1974) represents incest between a nephew and his aunt, sado-masochism, necrophilia and paedophilia; and *That Obscure Object of Desire* (Buñuel, 1977) deals with the strain patriarchy and monetary-based class structures place on Western male/female sexual relationships. More recently, the rape and murder of Laura Palmer was at the centre of David Lynch's Surrealist narrative for the television series *Twin Peaks* (1990-91)*;* while David Cronenberg's *A Dangerous Method* (2012) tells the tale of a young woman who was sexually abused by her father as a child, and, as in *Belle de Jour* and *The Company...*, Freud's notion of the emergence of repressed memory is central.

By addressing this topic, Jordan is not only keying into a Surrealist tradition, but also into the heritage of English Romantic fiction, which is of course, one of the cultural movements

from whence Surrealism emerged. The use of narrative lacunae to represent rape and sexual abuse is also key to the telling of many of Buñuel's films, with missing information or key parts of traditional narration remaining absent. Jordan's use of a multi-narrator Chinese box narration also mirrors the way both Romantic and Surrealist works can confuse reality and fantasy when addressing this kind of topic. For example at the beginning of *Belle de Jour*, the lead character, Severine (Catherine Deneuve), seems to be genuinely at the behest of a group of attackers. We soon see that she is imagining the scene, but then we learn through a series of flashbacks that these masochistic imaginings are in fact a re-working of sexual abuse that took place in her childhood. I would argue that when, after the huntsman's transformation, Rosaleen shows sympathy for him and then even becomes a wolf, her nascent sexuality, like Severine's in *Belle de Jour*, becomes trapped in the shadow or her tragic experience.

The Novels of Thomas Hardy

Rosaleen's story has been described by Jordan as 'Hardyesque' (Jordan, 2005). Like Hardy's novels, *The Company...* deals with the exploitation of lower status women by aristocratic men in class-bound and patriarchal systems. Rosaleen's own story, along with those told by her and Granny, reflect elements of Hardy's novel *Tess of the D'urbevilles.* She, like Tess, is a pretty peasant girl who is groomed by an aristocratic man (the huntsman); while the peasant girl in her first story is made pregnant and abandoned by an upper class man, unlike Tess, she finds revenge for her mistreatment.

There are also similarities in the way in which Jordan and Hardy use landscape to express a character's emotions, to such an extent that settings become almost anthropomorphic. Hardy uses isolated or barren landscapes to express Tess's tragic solitude in a patriarchal environment, while Jordan uses markedly Freudian phallic imagery in the form of trees, giant mushrooms and the monument at the village well to express Rosaleen's emerging interest in sex. The overbearing nature of these phallic objects and the forest more generally reflects the way in which male sexuality will come to dominate Rosaleen's life in terror, rather than as opportunity.

Jordan, like Hardy, addresses the effect of male oppression of female identity and destiny. In *Tess of the D'urbevilles*, Tess becomes a destitute outcast as the result of being an unmarried mother, any standing she may have had in society completely shattered.

Similarly, Rosaleen is separated from her family and human society, taking on the identity and shame of her attacker, a wolf.

'I'll believe in you, if you believe in me…': Lewis Carroll's Alice Stories and Questionable Realities in *The Company of Wolves*.

Carroll's Alice stories may seem to be unlikely bedfellows of the dark themes of the Romantic Gothic sublime and Hardy's novels, but in fact they share several common elements. Of course, they were written in England during the same period, the mid-nineteenth century, but Carroll's stories are also about another young female who is confused and at the mercy of forces which overpower her. Alice experiences her own version of the sublime as she is in a state of terror and wonderment for most of her adventures. Carroll's stories also employ similar devices to Hardy and the Romantics, such as altered states; inanimate objects or animals with powerful human qualities (as Hardy does with the English landscape); lacunae and apparently nonsensical episodes.

There are Carrollian references throughout *The Company...,* including the name of Rosaleen's sister, Alice; a white rabbit which is present in the foreground of a couple of shots; similarities in production design to Arthur Rackham's illustrations for the 1906 version of *Adventures in Wonderland, and What Alice Found There*; Alice tumbling down a dark woodland path to be accosted by outsized, normally inanimate, objects; and the use of a dream as a way of framing a narrative. However, perhaps the most significant of Carroll's influences is Jordan's exploration of the transience of reality and fantasy, a theme which permeates the entire film and makes for some interesting comparisons between Carroll's Alice stories and Rosaleen's mis-adventures.

Both Carroll's Alice and Jordan's Rosaleen are persuaded to believe in the reality of things or characters who they initially doubt to be real. In *Alice Through the Looking Glass*, as noted in Chapter One, Alice cannot believe in the unicorn she sees, nor he, at first in her, so the animal tells her, 'now that we *have* seen each other, if you'll believe in me, I'll believe in you' (Carroll, 1993: 219). This satisfies Alice, but Rosaleen is not so easily persuaded when similar conversations take place in *The Company...*. When Rosaleen's father (David Warner) brings home the hand of a man, which had been the forepaw of a wolf, Rosaleen cannot believe it, and when he tells her 'seeing is believing', she replies 'what about touching?', reaches towards the hand and touches it. Later in the film, Rosaleen does not believe what the huntsman says about his compass, that its needle always points North to which he

responds that 'seeing is believing', and then of course, we wonder if Rosaleen is curious about touching the huntsman's compass, just as she touched the hand. This line of dialogue continues when she and the huntsman arrive at Granny's house. Rosaleen responds to the huntsman's phrase (from *Little Red Riding Hood),* 'all the better to see you with' by telling him 'they say seeing is believing, but I'd never swear to it'. Her words raise doubt about the reliability of any reality, including the reality of the film – can we, as spectators believe what we see?

Rosaleen's encounters with fantastical creatures provoke uncertainty about what is real and what is fantasy in *The Company...*, mirroring Alice's encounters with usually inanimate objects which have lives of their own and which move and talk. For example, at the beginning of Rosaleen's dream, her slightly older sister, Alice falls down a tunnel. As she tumbles she is grabbed at and chased by giant versions of the teddy bear and sailor doll first seen during the opening sequence in Rosaleen's bedroom. This idea of inanimate objects having a life of their own is a Surrealist theme which has its roots in the notion of a 'truth behind the real'; Surrealist art and film can represent objects which make up our everyday reality as being in possession of a separate reality of their own.

Rosaleen's identity is also in flux, just like Carroll's Alice. In a photograph in her 1980s bedroom, she looks uncertain and timid, while the dream version is clearly a confident, 'bold, fearless girl' (the words of both Granny and the wolf/huntsman). Her dual personality fuels the narration of *The Company...* as the layers of dream and waking sequences overlap. As I explained in the introduction to this chapter, there are even more fluxes to Rosaleen's identity: she cameos as the Devil's chauffeur; the wolf-girl in the final vignette can be read as a version of herself; and, finally, she becomes a wolf.

This mix of fiction, dream and waking stories creates uncertainty about the reliability of any of the narrations, as we ask which narrator, if any, we, the audience, should believe in, and which is fantasy; and can we believe in our own reality? This Carollian blurring of boundaries between reality and fantasy is further encouraged within the film's diegesis when Rosaleen's mother (Tusse Silberg) doubts the credibility of both Granny and Rosaleen's stories, raising further doubt about the reliability of any narrative voice in the film. If Granny and Rosaleen can be unreliable, then so could any other narrator.

Both Carroll and Jordan use a dream as a narrative frame through which to explore notions of reality and unreality, and to suggest, like Freud, that there is far more to our experiences

as human beings than we may ordinarily perceive. When Alice awakes at the end of her adventures in Wonderland in Carroll's first book, she is convinced that the rabbit and all she saw and experienced while lost down the rabbit hole were real, and through her conviction and his vivid representation, Carroll invites us to concur with Alice. Her adventures seem real, or at least just as *significant* as something real, to us the reader. Similarly, we the audience engage with Rosaleen's dream world as if it were a reality. It is by far the primary vehicle for the film's narrative, while we are able, perhaps, to connect with it on a deeper level than her waking world, a milieu which seems to serve as a context for the main focus of the film: Rosaleen's subconscious meanderings and discoveries.

The idea of the subconscious as key to Surrealism, to Freud and to nineteenth century English literature, because the subconscious holds those things we find unable to bring to the surface and its exposition often reveals unpleasant or unacceptable emotions or memories. The motivation behind both Romanticism and the original Surrealist groups was precisely to bring these unpleasant realities to the surface. As such, *The Company...* can be seen as a modern day manifestation of a long tradition in which revelations and representations of the sub-conscious are of paramount importance.

Jordan's exploration of the theme of uncertain reality in *The Company...* also reflects English Romantic literary sensibilities. These writers looked to their imaginations to validate experience, rather than towards traditional conventions of religion and societal norms. Key figures such as Radcliffe and Hardy began, in earnest, to question the class-bound, patriarchal system under which people had lived for centuries. Ideas from their writing translate so well in Jordan's film because they so often addressed the plight of confused and lost young women or girls in traumatic and often altered states such as dreams. They often feature women who like Rosaleen and the women in her and Granny's stories struggle to survive patriarchal oppression.

In *The Company...,* Jordan thus renders tragic the lives of the female characters he has borrowed from Angela Carter, in whose stories those characters usually enjoy a positive outcome. He has retained Carter's literary influences, such as Perrault's Little Red Riding Hood and Carroll's Alice, but where Carter's use of these stories allows for sexual awakening and emerging adult identity, Jordan's appropriation of her material is much darker. This is in part because of the way in which he draws on other nineteenth-century

literary influences such as the tragedy of Hardy and the terror and confusion of Roman Noir novels.

Jordan's use of a combination of stories and imagery from both nineteenth-century English Romantic literature and Freud's writing is interesting because his amalgamation of these elements echoes the sensibilities of the early Surrealist groups. Breton et al saw their own use of Freudian methods to access the subconscious as the direct continuation of English Romantic art and literature (Breton, 1924, 1936).

Narration and Production Design in *The Company of Wolves*

As one might expect in a film as visually flamboyant as *The Company...*, production design plays an important role in its narration. The film retains a sense of visual unity, along with a sense that what we see and hear stem, ultimately, from a single source. This is because, although each layer of narration has its own identifiable characteristics and dress codes, there are also, to differing degrees, strong stylistic motifs and themes running through all three layers – and just occasionally, specific dress codes stray from one narrative thread to another, even if they still make perfect sense in that context and hence are in accordance with the rules of traditional narration. This device undermines the idea of any single narrative thread in *The Company...* being read as diegetic reality, or as entirely fantasy.

Production design in *The Company...* also reflects themes such as class and gender hierarchies of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The theme of class difference is of course a Marxist one (and we should remember that Marx's *Das Kapital* (1867) was about London), and given the relevance of Marxist thinking to Surrealism, that strand of thinking is also important to my discussion of the film. The production design in *The Company...* also references visual texts associated with Surrealism, most significantly the work of Palmer, but also several films which are associated with Surrealism.

Given the importance of production design to *The Company...*, a brief note about the designer, Anton Furst, seems appropriate here. He graduated from the Royal Academy as a theatre designer, and went on to work in special effects for film and television, notably on *Alien* (Ridley Scott, 1979), eventually becoming a production designer, first in television, then in film. After *The Company...*, Furst was hired by Stanley Kubrick for *Full Metal Jacket* (1987), and then by Tim Burton for *Batman* (1989), for which he won an Oscar (IMDb, 2011).

Jordan met Furst shortly before the filming of *The Company...* began and production design seems to have been something of a collaboration between the two, with Jordan specifying aspects such as the appropriation of Palmer's paintings, the Carrollian theme, and their use of the sets left over from American productions such as *Star Wars* (George Lucas, 1977) at Pinewood studios (Jordan, 2005). I will refer to Furst as the author of production design in the film, but this is with the understanding that he was heavily guided by Jordan, and that Jordan is, ultimately, the overall author of *The Company...*.

Design for this film is very much of its time and reflects the early 1980s fashion for retro style, combining multiple influences from a range of periods. This climate in design made it easy for a diverse range of strong influences from cinema, design, art and literature to merge, yet still seem contemporary in both the dream and waking sequences. The strong visual influences that run through the film include Palmer's paintings; Hammer Horror films; Roger Corman's Edgar Alan Poe adaptations; and the film *La bête* (Walerian Borowczyk, 1975), a Surrealist film set in the eighteenth century that Jordan (2005) has cited as a strong influence (*La bête* also deals with emerging female sexuality and sexual assault).

Production Design and the Non-Dream Sequences

Jordan presents the non-dream sequences via an overall narrator, without any obvious contribution from character narrators. However, this overall narrator displays prior knowledge of what is to come in Rosaleen's dream by including multiple references to it in the framing sequences, but in such a way as to fit seamlessly with early 1980s design trends. In this way, Jordan blurs the distinction between overall narrator, diegetic reality and a character's imagination. His confusion of boundaries becomes complete by the end of the film when Rosaleen's imagination and the overall narration seem to become one. Production design is perhaps the most important way in which Jordan conveys a sense of flux between diegetic reality and unreality.

The production design in the framing sequences offers a high degree of verisimilitude with a contemporary British audience's reality, even if there are some important fissures in that impression. Rosaleen and her family's retro-inspired but up to the minute Ralph Lauren and Armani-influenced dress sense, along with their possession of a Volvo Estate car, from which they unpack Sainsbury's shopping bags, identify them as living in Britain in the early 1980s. However, the interior of Rosaleen's family home is far less polished than her family's fashion sense. Although its exterior is a pristine white, as would be expected for a well-kept

Georgian mansion, its interior is tattered and worn, and whatever colour scheme might have once been is faded with age. Jordan states in the director's commentary that he sees the house as like something out of a Hammer Horror film, 'dark and creepy' (Jordan, 2005); but its dark, faded eighteenth-century-style decor, littered with splashes of red, are also reminiscent of Corman's films.

The first we see of the interior of the Georgian mansion is a dim, narrow hallway leading to the living room in which there is a dilapidated but elegant Rococo-style sofa with a carved wooden frame and red velvet cover, an early indication of the role the colour red is to play in the film. Bare wooden floors contrast with the red velvet, but blend easily with the yellowing walls on which old portraits hang or are propped up on the floor. This scheme continues along the narrow, dusty upstairs corridors in a claustrophobic shot that closely follows Alice en-route to Rosaleen's bedroom. She tries, unsuccessfully, to wake Rosaleen through the locked door of her room, giving the audience its first glimpse of the sibling tensions that exist between them. She rattles the door knob and hisses 'Rosaleen; wake up; pain, pain'. The creepy, horror-film nature of the house is unusual for a family home, but its early 1980s setting, along with the family's fashionable nods to the nineteenth century in their dress sense make its dishevelled period appearance believable if a little unsettling.

This semi-fantastical interior decor hints that Rosaleen's family home has an intrinsic connection to the fantastical settings which follow in Rosaleen's dream. Thus, Jordan and Furst, just like Carroll in his Alice stories and Buñuel in many of his films, use production design to disrupt conventional ideas about the distinction between waking experience and dream, between realism and the fantastic, and between the perspective of the overall narrator of the film and individual character narration – or more specifically, imagination.

Production Design and Transitions Between Reality and Fantasy

Rosaleen's bedroom serves as a transitional space between the non-dreaming and dreaming worlds, and between overall narration and imagination, and its production design is key to that role. The references to Rosaleen's dream are stronger and more frequent in her bedroom than they are in the rest of the house and the outdoor sequences of the film's early 1980s frame. A close up tracking shot along Rosaleen's shelves and windowsill reveal a collection of toys which will come to life or play a key narrative role in the dream sequences that follow. The shot ends with a close up of a photograph of an anxious-looking

Rosaleen crouching down to hold a Belgian Shepherd dog, the breed Jordan used to portray wolves in most sequences of the film.

Rosaleen sleeps in a white nightgown decorated with small red and pink hearts, a design which is in keeping with the fashions of the early 1980s, and, thus, with the dress sense of her immediate family, but which also subtly references both Carroll's Alice stories and the world of desire. Above her head, to the left there is a wooden hand mirror lying on the pillow, its oval shape and dark wooden frame suggesting a vague historical reference, while her lips display freshly applied ruby red lipstick. Both items are signifiers of Rosaleen's emerging womanhood, and as noted earlier, they are also significant to the narrative of her dream (figure 8. 4).

Figure 8. 4 Screen grab from *The Company of Wolves.*

On the pillow next to Rosaleen is a copy of *My Weekly*, a woman's magazine with a headline, 'The Shattered Dream', and an illustration of a rural period scene in which a horse and cart it travels up a winding, crooked path at what looks to be twilight. The man driving the cart is wearing a wide brimmed hat with a tall thin feather perched in its band, a striking silhouette that foreshadows Rosaleen's father and some of the other village men in the dream sequences that follow.

Production Design in the Dream Sequences

Everything we see in the dream sequence is, of course, within the film's diegesis, the product of Rosaleen's imagination. Her character does not present this material for the benefit of other characters; rather, we, the audience, are privy to the most private depths of her psyche. Hence, despite the connecting references I have described above, there is a strong contrast between the overall narrator working alone and Rosaleen's imagination. In the dream sequences, Furst presents a theatrical and fantastical milieu with minimal specific contemporary references; in fact they are present only during the stories Granny and Rosaleen narrate. Instead what we see is a combination of historical and fictional references associated with the past, including Palmer's interest in mysticism, dreams and social justice. Palmer celebrated the beauty of the English landscape and its rural traditions, but he did so as a protest against the threats to its maintenance represented by man's own rationality and scientific advancements. Palmer depicted humanity and nature as one, with both of them idealised against the threat of industrial progress. Furst's production design presents a powerful, darkly mystical English landscape with which its human inhabitants are at one. But Palmer and Furst alike combine this beauty with a sense of foreboding threat. The landscape in Palmer's work, although powerful, seems like a fragile fairy-tale world, as though it has already entered the realms of myth, as things long since past sometimes do. This is of course in keeping with the Romantic sublime, and with my reading of Rosaleen's sexual experiences in *The Company...*.

A direct reference to Palmer's work features in the first scenes of Rosaleen's dream sequences. At the end of the transitional sequence in which we see Rosaleen asleep, the shot I described earlier, which pans across Rosaleen's bedroom as she is sleeping, finally settles at the view from her bedroom window. The camera zooms into the tree tops in the middle distance, their branches creating black silhouettes against a red–brown twilight sky, a vista that is beautiful but obviously fake. This fades into a sequence in which Rosaleen's sister Alice runs down a path lined with giant, animated versions of toys and objects from Rosaleen's bedroom, including the teddy bear, which tries to assault her. Alice then finds a rat in the bed of the Wendy-house (surely this must be an ominous sign), while more rats crawl from the cavity of a grandfather clock we first saw in the living room of Rosaleen's 1980s family house, as it chimes midnight. After Alice is killed by wolves, the clock chimes continue over a fade to a shot of silhouetted treetops which dissolves to a scene similar to Palmer's *The Rise of the Skylark* (1839) (figure 8. 5) and *The Bellman* (1879) (figure 8. 6).

Shades of warm browns, yellows and deep russet reds merge as trees frame the scene, their upper branches arching to the top of the shot to create a Romantic and fairytale-like image (figure 8. 7).

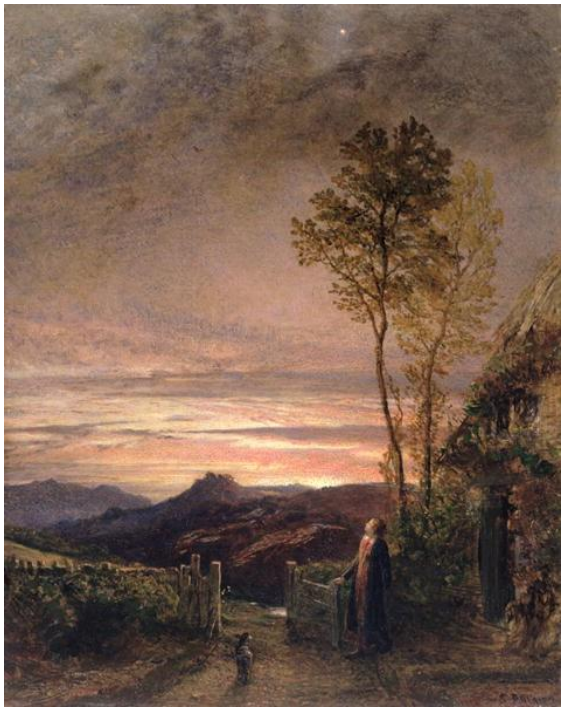


Figure 8. 5 *The Rise of the Skylark,* Samuel Palmer, 1839, oil on canvas, 30 x 24cm. National Museum, Cardiff, Wales.

Figure 8. 6 *The Bellman, from Il Penseroso*, Samuel Palmer, 1879, oil on canvas. Higgins Art Gallery and Museum, Bedford.

Figure 8. 7 Screen grab from *The Company of Wolves.*

This is one of several scenes in the film which are directly inspired by the composition of particular Palmer paintings, but there is also a more thematic Palmeresque quality to the production design of the dream sequences as a whole. The buildings of the village are brown hut-like structures, while their frontispieces feature gentle, rounded, but pointed, Gothic arches, of the kind that were often depicted by Palmer (figure 8. 8). The village seems to have emerged from the mud and soil, while brambles and bushes grow around and amongst its buildings. Its church is similarly Gothic, if modest in style: it has a tall steeple which is visible in many of the wide shots of the village, and its frontispiece is, again, a gentle Gothic arch (see figure 8. 9), while its graveyard is populated by arched gravestones and a Palmeresque tree which drapes picturesquely over the path to its door.

Figure 8. 8 *Coming from Evening Church*, Samuel Palmer, 1830. Mixed media on gesso on paper support: 302 x 200 mm. Tate Britain.

Figure 8. 9 Screen grab from *The Company of Wolves* showing the Palmeresque village church.

Furst deviates from the Palmer-inspired aesthetic in only one of the dream sequences, the first story told by Rosaleen, about a pregnant peasant girl disrupting the wedding celebrations of an aristocrat whose child she is carrying. This sequence is almost entirely influenced by a modern day interpretation of Georgian dress and décor. The fact that it seems so well anchored in the 1980s and is set in the grounds of Rosaleen's family home makes it seem connected to the framing sequences. It also seems separate from the rest of the dream narrative because it is so light, set almost entirely in daylight in an all-white, light-coloured or reflective interior. The table is decorated with elegant, Rococo-style candlesticks, while a gold Rococo-style mirror hangs on the wall. The theatrical and kitsch potential of the Georgian style is exploited with the use of white plastic urns and fussy silver table decorations, lending the scene an air of the aesthetics of kitsch twentieth century-revivals of the eighteenth century, and reminding us that we are not in fact watching something happening in the distant past.

Defining Space, Time and Narrator Identity: Costume Design and Disruptions of Traditional Narration in *The Company of Wolves*

The most prominent way in which costume contributes to Surrealist themes in *The Company...* is to define and then confuse what is real and what is fantasy in the film, an integral part of any Surrealist-inspired endeavour. However, costume also contributes to the Surrealist qualities of the film in other ways, which can often relate to specific political or psychological issues.

Costume is, with the exception of the Georgian wedding, the only way the different narrative threads within the dream sequences are identifiable once character narrators stop speaking. It also creates a consistent link with the framing sequences, throughout the dream narratives. I will now explore the ways in which Furst creates distinct but inter-weaving realties for each of the framing sequences, the dream village and villagers and each of the vignettes in *The Company...*.

Costume in the Framing Sequences of *The Company of Wolves*

Rosaleen's parents emerge from their Volvo hatchback dressed as though sitting for a contemporary fashion advertising photograph (figures 8. 10, 8. 11 and 8. 12). They wear corresponding tweed suits, her mother's belted, shoulder-padded and worn with elegant, slender court shoes and a neat chignon, all of which combine to suggest a professional identity; while the father's three-piece tweed suit is loosely tailored and traditional yet professional looking (figure 8. 12). This look was firmly associated with the moneyed population of the early 1980s and suggests allegiance to an upper class identity.

Figure 8. 10 Ralph Lauren photographic advertisement, 1983.

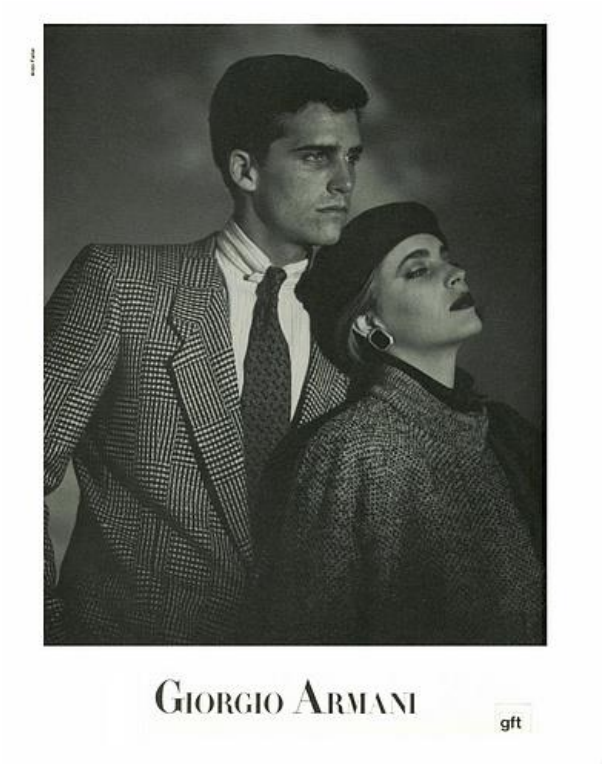


Figure 8. 11 Armarni photographic advertisement, 1983.

Figure 8. 12 Screen grab from *The Company of Wolves.*

Rosaleen's sister, Alice, helps her parents unload their shopping wearing a white lace-trimmed long dress with a gypsy neckline and skirt with multiple ruffles in the Edwardian night-dress style. This is a look made popular by the successful British high street fashion chain Laura Ashley during the late 1970s (figure 8. 11). The company romanticised the dress and lifestyles of mostly bourgeois or upper-class nineteenth and early twentieth-century women, thus, helping to fuel the retro fashion for styles of the eighteenth century and onwards which took hold in Britain during the early 1980s.

Alice's dress is accessorised with low-heeled red court shoes and a thin red belt at her waist (note again the use of red), and these bold modern accessories together with a historically-inspired dress nod towards the flamboyant New Romantic subculture, as does Rosaleen's white, strapless 1950s-style layered tulle dress, which hangs on the back of her bedroom door. New Romantic dress-style was also nostalgic, this time emerging from English night-club culture, mainly from London during the late 1970s. By the time of the film's making, these styles had become popular on the British high street and had found an eager market amongst teenagers who were of a similar age to Alice and Rosaleen.

Costume in Rosaleen's Dream Village

As I mentioned earlier, the costumes in Rosaleen's dream village life are influenced by the work of Palmer and by popular notions of fairy-tale dress. As with the framing sequences, Furst's use of multiple historical and period references alongside contemporary design sits well with early 1980s British style because it romanticises historic dress. This coalescence of fantastical and realistic references also de-stabilises notions of reality and fantasy in the film.

The dress of Rosaleen's family and the other residents of her village is markedly working-class or peasant-class. In this way it acts as a counterpoint to the dress worn by aristocratic characters. Although they are all peasants, and of the same colour palette, warm browns and neutral shades, the villagers' costumes differ in style *and* period according to gender. The village men are dressed as figures in Palmer paintings, so they reference the nineteenth century; while the women wear a look inspired by twentieth century cinematic conventions for eighteenth-century peasant women, and by fairy-tale illustration of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

As in Palmer paintings such as *The Bellman* (figure 8. 6) and *Coming Home From Evening Church* (figure 8. 8), the men in Rosaleen's village wear loose, informal trousers and jackets made of thick woollen weave with white linen or cotton chemise, and topped with wide brimmed hats with a single tall thin feather, sometimes creating a poetic silhouette against the sky, just as those of Palmer's workers did. The village women wear white chemise under laced corsets, pannier-style padding at their hips, and picture hats tied with ribbon under the chin and wide hooded capes; while Rosaleen's black leather court shoes sport decorative buckles and Louis heels, all of which reference eighteenth-century dress.

Both the Palmeresque aesthetic and the eighteenth-century-inspired fairy-tale look are references to culture which rebels against or is contrary to industrialised capitalism and rationalism. Palmer celebrated the pre-enlightenment traditions of English rural life which struggled to survive in the nineteenth century. As I noted earlier, fairy tales were seen by both Freud and the Surrealists as a way of accessing freer human expression, and were associated with a period before mechanised industry and enlightened, rational thought.

Costume in Granny's and Rosaleen's Stories

Granny's and Rosaleen's stories provide a further set of conventions for the dress of their characters. Each of these narrators tells two stories, each narrative with its own milieu and dress code; however, all the tales are united in their difference from the dream Rosaleen's village life in their costuming. Unlike the dream village sequences, they all also make occasional references to the time of the film's framing sequences: the early 1980s.

The first time aristocrats are identifiable in the film is during Rosaleen's first story in the wedding sequence. Pale creams, pinks and whites are used for men's and women's costumes, along with powdered wigs, pale make up and heavily defined red lips and black beauty spots, all of which signify the eighteenth century, according to cinematic convention. There are also nods to this aesthetic in both of Granny's stories: the male guests and the groom at the peasant wedding in her first story wear eighteenth-century-style brocade men's waistcoats over their Palmeresque peasant outfits, while in Granny's second story, the young man who encounters the devil in the forest wears eighteenth–century-style breeches and waistcoat.

Costumes that are contemporary to Rosaleen's waking world, and the late twentieth century, are first seen in the dream sequences during Granny's second story, although this

time they have a 1930s retro twist. Yet another version of Rosaleen chauffeurs the devil along the forest path in a white Rolls Royce, while dressed in a late twentieth-century white masculine chauffeur's uniform, complete with cap, a contemporary take on Marlene Dietrich's famous white-suited entrance in *Blonde Venus* (Josef von Sternberg, 1932). The devil meanwhile wears a late twentieth-century tailored three-piece business suit with a shirt and tie, and hence seems to belong very much to the framing sequences.

We see a reference to contemporary style again in the final tale, the story Rosaleen tells about the wolf-girl. The wolf-girl is played by singer Daniel Dax who looks very similar to the way she did during actual stage performances at the Batcave Club, a New Romantic venue in London during the early 1980s (see figures 8. 13 and 8. 14). Her long hair is backcombed and layered for a wild 'big hair' look, while she has heavy diagonal eyebrows. This figure from the London New Romantic scene emerges from the well in the centre of Rosaleen's dream village, only to be shot and then nursed and comforted by the village priest. There is then a significant degree of realism to Dax's persona, as, like Wayne/Jayne County and Adam Ant in *Jubilee* and Hein Heckroth in *The Red Shoes*, she plays a version of herself. Hence right at the centre of Rosaleen's fantasy is something that is taken from reality, and like Jarman and Powell and Pressburger, Jordan is then in sympathy with the Surrealist artist Francis Picabia, who used actual objects to represent fantastical images (see figure 1.2).

Figure 8. 13 Screen grab from *The Company of Wolves* showing Danielle Dax playing a version of herself as seen at the Batcave night club in figure 8.14.

Figure 8. 14 Photograph of Daniel Dax taken by Mike Mercer at the 'Batcave' night club, London, August 1983.

The Huntsman: Disrupting Costume Conventions and Confusing Narrative Threads

The huntsman Rosaleen encounters in the woods is the next, and only other, entirely aristocratically-dressed character in the film, and his dress seems to have leaked out of Rosaleen's Georgian wedding story into her dream village life; however, by contrast with those in the wedding scene, his clothes are predominantly dark (see figure 8. 15). He wears a midnight blue suit with a tail-coat and waistcoat over a white chemise with knee breeches, and a black tricorn hat. The suit is embroidered with metallic thread and white rhinestones so that it sparkles, thus emphasising the difference between him and the rest of this almost entirely Palmeresque-looking narrative strand. His appearance is in stark contrast to the village men, both in terms of colour palette and period. This identifies him with Rosaleen and Grannys' wolf stories, while his presence in Rosaleen's dream narration indicates a merging of the overall dream narrative and that of the shorter, diegetically narrated tales.

Figure 8. 15 Screen grab from *The Company of Wolves.*

Rosaleen's Cape and Other Red Details

Connecting all of these narrative threads are the splashes of red which permeate *The Company...*, contrasting with its neutral brown shades, or sometimes with white for a more dramatic effect. As already noted, these splashes of colour can be understood to signify the onset of Rosaleen's menses and her emerging maturity. Examples in the framing sequences include: Alice's red sash, a red velvet sofa and Rosaleen's lipstick; in the dream village sequences: the blood of the wolf-man's hand, Rosaleen's cape and lipstick, and the blood the huntsman spills on Granny's snow covered garden; and in the vignettes: the milk that turns red with the blood of a wolf in Granny's first story, and the white rose which turns red in Rosaleen's final story.

Rosaleen's cape is intertwined with ideas of storytelling and maturity and is key to narration in the dream sequences. The cape was originally intended for Alice, as were the tales that are told by Granny. Before telling her first tale, Granny deliberates briefly about whether or not Rosaleen is old enough to hear the wolf fables, but concedes that it 'may as well be now as later'. Rosaleen listens to the stories while sitting at Granny's knee twining some red wool, and later, when their twining is done, as Granny knits. Her eventual ownership of the cape and her exposure to the stories are thus indicators of her progression towards adulthood: she begins to narrate her own fables.

The easy combination of past and present in the production design of *The Company...* means that its dream and waking worlds are not completely distinguishable, but they are still very much present. In this way the film plays out the Surrealist aim of breaking down the boundaries between dream and waking experiences. But it also underlines the fact that *The Company...* is carefully organised and internally coherent, despite initial impressions.

Conclusion: Surrealism in *The Company of Wolves*

My reading of *The Company...* has addressed the way in which Jordan does indeed take Rosaleen's story 'from a point of realism and go to some other place that is Surrealistic' (Jordan in Rockett, 2005: 208). Disruptions and confusions of traditional narration have been central to Surrealism on film since its beginnings; my reading has outlined the ways in which Jordan's storytelling techniques in *The Company...* are similar to those in films more firmly associated with Surrealism. At the heart of those methods is the idea that things may not always be as they seem.

Jordan's exploration of class and gender oppression also echoes that of key writers of the Gothic sublime such as Anne Radcliffe, hailed as precursors of the Surrealist idea. Like Jordan, Radcliffe et al also wrote narrative structures which were traditional, yet subversive of that tradition because of their complexity. Like *The Company...* these novels were designed to unsettle and confuse their readers. They often used complex narrative structures and left a gap in the story where a key traumatic event is implied rather than represented. Jordan's use of an absence or gap at the point at which I suggest Rosaleen is raped, likewise adds to the unsettling nature of the film. Uncertainty about the precise nature of what happens makes this event seem even more sinister, just as gaps in the narrative of Roman Noir novels could provoke the darker recesses of a reader's imagination.

Jordan's references to Romanticism along with Freudian ideas and Surrealism in *The Company...* serve as a commentary on the relationship between these sets of concepts and demonstrate how closely linked these ideas and movements are. The desire to represent – or express – responses to difficult or taboo subjects is a key driving force in Romanticism and Surrealism, as it is in Freud's psychoanalytic methodology. Breaking free from rational cultural conventions is *the* key route to doing this in all three of these traditions, while motifs and themes such as labyrinthine narration and the disruption of accepted cultural norms are also recurrent across Romanticism and Surrealism.

Playing with traditional conventions of storytelling is the main way Jordan carries these ideas from Romanticism and Surrealism into *The Company...*, just as directors who are more readily associated with Surrealism have done. Some of the narrative techniques he uses in *The Company...* hold common ground with Buñuel's later films, which are characterised by subtle, infrequent disruptions of a conventional narrative technique. However, Jordan rarely breaks narrative convention in *The Company...*; instead, he uses it in a more complex manner than we might expect. Perhaps the most powerfully subversive aspect of this film in terms of narration is its capacity to disorientate by making us *feel* as if storytelling traditions have been discarded when they haven't. Jordan's complication of traditional narration in the film thus sheds doubt on the reliability of all storytelling conventions.

Jordan's Chinese box system is marked through subtleties of production design, with costume playing a key role. Each layer of the film's narration is defined by particular dress codes, each with a set of signifiers and references which enrich the film's underlying psychological and socio-political meanings, such as class and gender oppression and the tension between humanity's natural state and the subconscious, on the one hand, and rational, industrial society on the other. Furst draws upon dress in both Palmer's paintings and fairy tales to signify freer, non-rational psyches which are at one with their natural surroundings; the villagers and their buildings thus meld seamlessly with their Palmeresque settings. Meanwhile the oppressors in the film, the aristocracy, wear eighteenth-century-style costumes, signifying enlightenment values and the emergence of the industrial revolution and consumerism. Just as in a Palmer painting, Furst represents an English landscape, whose inhabitants' lives are enmeshed with their natural surroundings, but controlled and exploited by the upper hierarchies of human society, their existence under threat from the ravages of industry.

In the waking sequences, the rational values of the eighteenth century and beyond are represented by Rosaleen's parents and their home. They live in the same Georgian mansion house that is featured in Rosaleen's vignette; they drive a Volvo hatchback, a popular bourgeois choice at the time of the film's making; they are dressed in fashionable attire of the period; while we only see them doing one thing: unloading copious amounts of shopping from their car. This seems to be a shared family activity as Alice helps them to bring a large potted palm plant and multiple carrier bags into the house.

During these opening sequences of *The Company...*, Jordan draws visual parallels between wolves, Rosaleen's parents in their car and their mansion house. He opens the film with a shot of their car as it approaches their house. This runs parallel to a long shot of Alice running from the forest towards the house, which allows the building to become a spectacle for the film's audience. Jordan intersperses these two activities with parallel shots of a Belgian Shepherd dog as it runs first through the forest and then along the road next to the car. The dog passes an old, over-grown, phallic stone well in a forest clearing – which will later be seen as the centre-piece of Rosaleen's dream village. Rosaleen's parents, the dog and Alice all travel in Rosaleen's direction as she sleeps; this pattern culminates with Alice dashing along the upstairs corridor towards Rosaleen's bedroom, the Belgian Shepherd dog running alongside her, finally knocking on Rosaleen's door, stimulating her semi-rousal from sleep, and our subsequent insight into her dream.

Through this sequence of parallels, Jordan suggests an interconnection between the idea of bourgeois consumerism, eighteenth-century enlightenment and wolves (the dog). Together, these images represent ruthless material gain under either unregulated industrial capitalism or aristocratic rule. Rosaleen's dream and her hysterical awakening, on the other hand, are akin to a Surrealist protest against all of those things. The mansion house represents wealth acquired through the exploitation of the land and of those who live on it. As I discussed in Chapter Six, Patrick Keiller explores this way of seeing the British stately home in *Robinson in Space* (1996), seeing country seats not as an embellishment to our landscapes, but as evidence that they have been ravaged, all the life that surrounds them having been sucked up in order to provide the great wealth necessary for their production and for the lifestyles of those they house. It is arguable that Jordan does a similar thing in *The Company....* Those coded as upper-class, at least in the dream narratives, are exploitative and to be feared by the villagers (the wedding guests, the devil and the huntsman).

Jordan transports Rosaleen from her late twentieth-century life with her professional, Volvo-driving parents to a dream world: a peasant, fairy-tale-inspired dream setting, drawing upon references that audiences recognise. It is a space in which Rosaleen can explore her hidden, perhaps subconscious, emotions which exist – for the most part – outside of rational, industrialised, contemporary culture. Jordan thus draws upon signifiers of reality, through a conventional filmic realism, and of the fantastic, through these

Freudian, Surrealist and Romantic approaches, in order to explore and blur the boundaries between them in this film.

Jordan's appropriation of various English Romantic traditions, including literature, art and films such as those of the Hammer Horror Studios, establish *The Company...* in the Romantic tradition of British funded filmmaking identified by Julian Petley in 1986 as 'The Lost Continent'. As noted earlier in the thesis, Petley outlined a tendency amongst films of this Romantic tradition to explore the ambiguities of realism and the fantastic. This reading has illustrated how one of the films he discussed, *The Company...*, lays bare the connecting threads between Romantic traditions and Surrealism, even if it is itself perhaps not entirely Surrealist.

Chapter Nine: Surrealism in Neil Jordan's *Mona Lisa*

Introduction

Neil Jordan's *Mona Lisa* (1986) is perhaps one of the least likely British films to be included in this thesis. It is, on first glance, a realist noir thriller. But a closer look reveals as much, if not more, relevance to Surrealism than there is with *The Company of Wolves* (Jordan, 1984). During the shooting of *Mona Lisa*, Jordan instructed his cast and crew to make what is familiar seem unfamiliar (Hoskins, 1996), thereby invoking a principle at the heart of Surrealism. In this chapter I explore the ways in which *Mona Lisa* does indeed make cinematic conventions seem strange. Jordan does not draw upon easily recognisable Surrealist themes and motifs such as dreams or fantastical creatures the way he did in *The Company….* Rather he subtly subverts commercial cinematic conventions, taking his audience by surprise and unsettling them. The fact that the audience may not always be fully aware of how he does this makes his techniques all the more powerful.

Alongside this subtle disruption of conventional narration Jordan also develops equally subtle visual and thematic references to Surrealism. In what follows, I will therefore show that, although it may not seem so at first, in *Mona Lisa* Jordan takes a story that starts at the level of realism and goes to 'some other place that is surrealistic' (Jordan in Rockett, 2005: 208). As I demonstrated in Chapter Two, the setting up and subsequent undermining of realist conventions has been a mainstay of Surrealism in filmmaking since its beginnings. Like Buñuel and other filmmakers associated with Surrealism, Jordan's use of Surrealist ideas and narrative techniques in *Mona Lisa* is at times unsettling, fantastical and even disturbing, but ultimately reliant on the conventions of cinematic realism.

Unlike many films that are better recognised as Surrealist inspired, including *The Exterminating Angel,* or *The Company…*, one is not left with the feeling of having seen a fantastical or Surrealist film after viewing *Mona Lisa*; instead, it leaves the viewer feeling that they have engaged with a strange and unsettling slice of reality. My reading of *Mona Lisa* will address the ways in which Jordan, like Buñuel and the other film makers I have established as Surrealist in their play with narrative, puts in place and then disrupts realist conventions. I will argue that Jordan uses narration differently in *Mona Lisa* to the way he

does in *The Company…*, even though he engages with Surrealist-inspired storytelling in both films. In *The Company…* he rarely actually breaks with narrative convention, but rather uses it in a way that seems as if he does; whereas in *Mona Lisa* narrative convention is in fact disrupted.

There is a remarkable sense of verisimilitude in *Mona Lisa* which, as Andrew Spicer has observed, must have been helped along by the involvement of David Leland as its co-writer (Spicer, 2007: 122-123). Leland's approach is in stark contrast to Angela Carter's flamboyant explorations of the fantastic that find their way into *The Company of Wolves*. He made his name as a screenwriter working with director Alan Clarke on numerous television films, notably, the Prix Italia-winning television film, *Made in Britain* (1982), an austere documentary-like fictional account of an intelligent but terrifyingly unpredictable skinhead. Leland is also known for depictions of women who are promiscuous or sex-workers and who are frank about their sexuality; romance in difficult or unlikely places; authentic and realistic depictions of particular times and places; and astute, realistic character observations. These qualities are present in the films he wrote for close to the time of *Mona Lisa*, such as *Personal Services* (Terry Jones, 1987); and his directorial debut, *Wish You Were Here* (1987). Realism and authenticity of time and place has remained central to Leland's work. Leland's skill at achieving verisimilitude is in many ways the perfect foil for Jordan's use of Surrealism's subversive storytelling methods.

There seems to be no question that *Mona Lisa* is a British film. It is about English characters, is set in England, was filmed in the UK and was funded by predominantly British sources, with Channel Four Films as its major contributor. As an outsider looking in at English culture, Jordan presents us with unrestricted, ruthless, exploitative capitalism at its worst: the world of underground drug dealing and enforced prostitution. By exploring this in an English setting, Jordan keys into the idea of England as 'the home of capitalism' (Weber, 1961: 251), with London the subject of Karl Marx's *Das Kapital* (2009, first published 1867). Exploitative societies of any kind are, of course, prime targets for Surrealism's random shot in the street, but the very darkest side of capitalism, London's under-world, is a particularly compelling target.

How Surrealism is Manifest in *Mona Lisa*

Jordan's use of Surrealism in *Mona Lisa* is complex. He uses disparate elements that are, nevertheless, connected to the Surrealist movement and whose presence in the film intermingle and inter-relate. The loose categories I have imposed in order to make sense of this web of connections are: the disruption of traditional narration; confusions of reality and fiction; combinations of theatricality, realism and documentary in the mise en scène; literary references, including to John Franklin Bardin's novel *The Deadly Percheron* (1988, first published 1946), Lewis Carroll's Alice stories and English Gothic literature; and the use of the seaside as a place of unravelling or revelation. Each of these categories can be seen as a means of protesting, by either the film's overall narrator or its individual characters.

Plot Synopsis of *Mona Lisa*.

Mona Lisa tells the story of George, a middle-aged London gangster, who has just been released from prison after having taken responsibility for crimes carried out by his gangland boss, Mortwell. On his release, George is estranged from his wife and daughter because his wife now sees him as 'a bad lot'. Coupled with this set-back, his working life has changed beyond recognition, and he becomes a delivery man for a pornographic film enterprise and a 'date' (a colloquial term used in the film to mean escort and chauffeur) for Simone, a prostitute, who is also in the clutches of Mortwell.

George seems shocked by the changes that have taken place in the London under-world during the 7 years he has spent in prison. He is repulsed by the heroin trade and its links to child prostitution and he struggles to adapt to his new life. His only constant throughout these events is his friendship with the eccentric Thomas, whose first appearance in the film comes near its start when he restrains George during an angry outburst outside his ex-wife and daughter's house. Thomas leads George to the Bentley which he has preserved for George while he was away in prison. As they walk towards the car Thomas explains to George how much things in the London gang scene have changed since he has been away, warning his friend off any further involvement with it.

Thomas is not a gangster, but a mechanic; he is, nevertheless, insightful about George's situation. He serves little purpose for the development of the story (aside from a moment later in the film when we see him dropping Simone off at a roadside cafe to meet George and Cathy, the girl Simone has been looking for). Rather, Thomas's function is to provide

George with a safe place in which to reflect on his experiences. In helping George develop a novel he talks about writing. Thomas also provides George and the audience with a commentary on the main story of the film. His home – a garage with a caravan in it – is a strange space which seems detached from the rest of the diegetic world and in which he stores surreal objects for sale; but it is also the sanest space in the film in terms of human relationships.

George falls in love with Simone, who then takes advantage of him by spinning him a story in order to persuade him to help her find her lover, a young girl named Cathy, who has also been trapped into prostitution, this time via heroin addiction. When looking for Cathy, he scours Soho's bars and brothels and the 'meat rack', a road in King's Cross on which prostitutes wait for clients. He is, thus, brought into contact with a world that is corrupt beyond his experience, with many of the girls he encounters underage. They are, as he observes, about the same age as his daughter, and George is clearly traumatised by these experiences.

George, Cathy and Simone run away to Brighton, mirroring a story Simone told George about her earlier escape from enforced prostitution under Anderson, a pimp who is one of Mortwell's men. They book into a grand hotel suite where George sees Cathy and Simone together and realises they are lovers, and that he and Simone never will be. He and Simone go for a walk on Brighton Pier where they encounter some of Mortwell's men, including Anderson, and they are chased back to the hotel suite. Mortwell waits there for them, and after he lashes out violently at Simone, she turns the gun George gave her for protection on the gang leader and his men. She spins around firing shots until they are dead. In her frenzy, she turns the gun on George, but he stops her. At this point George glimpses something of the reality of Simone's emotional state. Despite this horrific denouement, the ending of the film is upbeat: a long shot shows George, his daughter and Thomas walking down a park avenue, implying a new, if somewhat eccentric, happy family.

Literature and Surrealism in *Mona Lisa*

Like many of Jordan's films, *Mona Lisa* draws upon a rich selection of literary references that reflect his background as a writer. Books are central to George and Thomas' friendship, with Thomas selecting reading matter for George, and with most of their conversations revolving around discussions of either the contents of Thomas' library or the novel George is devising, 'The Thin Black Tart'. The two friends are often shown seated in front of

Thomas' library, rows of books in the background as they sit on the sofa and arm chair at the centre of Thomas' home.

Their first conversation in the film is a critique of one of the books Thomas has given his friend to read while in prison, during which George posits himself as the author; later, during the first sequence at Thomas' home, George asks his friend 'have you got any books for me to read?', at which point Thomas selects *The Deadly Percheron* from his library. This pattern of literary discussion continues throughout the film. Given the importance of literature to George – and to Thomas, it is feasible that the film's literary references stem from George's imagination – and in turn from Thomas' library.

In the following passages I will examine the way Jordan draws upon literary themes and motifs to enrich storytelling in *Mona Lisa.* Firstly I will look at the way in which Jordan explores the relationship between reality and fiction, and between author and narrator, through George and Thomas' discussions about George's novel 'The Thin Black Tart' and his reading matter *The Deadly Percheron*. Secondly, I will look at the influence of nineteenth-century English Literature in *Mona Lisa,* including an analysis of Carollian themes, motifs and narrative approaches. And thirdly, I will discuss the way in which Jordan develops ideas from the nineteenth-century masculine sublime, developing them beyond those he presented in *The Company…*. As I will demonstrate, all of the literary references in the film have a strong connection to Surrealism, from *The Deadly Percheron* to nineteenth-century Gothic novels.

An important part of my discussion of literature in *Mona Lisa* is my analysis of the way in which the film is narrated, something that, as I will explain, is inseparable from its literary influences. The over-arching structure of *Mona Lisa* is linear, with the story told using classical continuity editing conventions with a cause and effect narration. But unusually, the overall narrator has a malleable identity (as do Simone and the other girls and women George encounters), sometimes even taking on two identities at once (rather like Dali's painting *Christ St. John of the Cross*, 1951, see figure 1. 12). There are also several Buñuellian/Carrollian-style lacunae or narrational cul de sacs.

'The Thin Black Tart' and *The Deadly Percheron*: Unpacking *Mona Lisa's* Chinese Box Structure.

Jordan draws upon George's literary interests as a way of exploring issues of authorship and narration. He does this by representing George's creative processes as a novelist by blurring the boundaries between George's imagination as a reader of *The Deadly Percheron*, his role as the author of 'The Thin Black Tart' and the identity of the overall narrator. This happens subtly throughout the film, but more obviously at its end, revealing a great similarity between the ending of *Mona Lisa* and that of *The Company….*

My argument builds partly on the fact that the narration of *Mona Lisa* is interwoven with George's ongoing composition of a novel about his and Simone's story; and partly on the fact that *Mona Lisa* is generously seasoned with story elements, narrational style, themes and motifs from the novel George is reading throughout the film, *The Deadly Percheron*.

The story of George's novel is inspired by Simone. After his first meeting with her, George reports back to Thomas saying he 'could write a novel about their relationship titled "The Thin Black Tart" ... a whodunnit'. His creative process continues in tandem with the friends' frequent subsequent discussions about his and Simone's unfolding relationship, and the plot of *The Deadly Percheron.* Similarly, George's completion of the novel coincides with the end of his and Simone's story. After their final scene together – the shooting in Brighton – Thomas asks George about his progress with 'The Thin Black Tart'. George offers the following insight into his lead characters: 'she was in love all right; just not with him' and 'he just couldn't see it; he was soppy', mirroring his own situation with Simone. Thomas asks, 'is that the end of the story?', to which George replies 'almost' and the film cuts to its final scene: the long shot of Thomas, George and George's daughter in silhouette, as they walk playfully, arm in arm, down a tree-lined park avenue in the style of Dorothy and her friends in *The Wizard of Oz* (1939) walking down the yellow brick road. Thus Jordan merges the film's overall narrator with George's inner diegetic narration, just as Rosaleen's imagination merges with the overall narrator of *The Company….* In doing so, Jordan also merges the film's diegetic reality, George's relationships with Thomas and his daughter, with its fiction, 'The Thin Black Tart', a product of George's imagination.

The Deadly Percheron is a noir-ish murder mystery given added psychological, Freudian, emphasis by virtue of its protagonist, also called George, being a psychiatrist rather than a detective. *The Deadly Percheron* also features bizarre characters and scenarios the reality of

which other characters – and readers – often doubt, just as Alice does in Carroll's stories, and Rosaleen does in the first half of *The Company….* For example, Bardin's George's psychiatric nurses doubt his recollections of a dwarf who always wore a flower behind his ear leading him to the scene of a crime, although as the novel transpires we realise these characters did in fact exist.

Bardin's George loses his identity and memory after an enforced and severe episode of amnesia. When he finds himself in a psychiatric institution, the staff persuade him that he is not a psychiatrist, but a long-time alcoholic with no career. He comes to believe this, and begins a new life with a new identity and partner. When his memory eventually returns, he must reconcile both his original and new identities, and their accompanying relationships. Jordan's George loses his old identity and family relationships because he took responsibility, and punishment, for a crime committed by Mortwell. In his job as Simone's 'date' he must adopt a professional persona, which she imposes, and which require him to cultivate a new set of manners and a wardrobe chosen by Simone. In addition, his milieu has changed so much that that he can no longer be the kind of gangster he was when he entered prison, but struggles to fit into his current, more ruthless, circumstances. George, like Bardin's protagonist, struggles to make sense of his new identity.

The influence of Bardin's book on *Mona Lisa* is present both thematically and in the form of motifs, including the names of key characters. Both use noir conventions, such as a labyrinthine plot, references to Freudian psychology, dual identities and an easily manipulated, alienated male protagonist. Both texts explore the consequences of wrongful incarceration, and subsequent confusions of identity.

Noir and Surrealism already have a history of co-existing. An early example is Hitchcock's *Spellbound* (1945), recently re-assessed as a classic Film Noir (Phillips, 2012: 87), and a film in which Noir's pre-occupation with the darker recesses of the human psyche is expressed through Freudian psychology and the famous dream sequence designed by Salvador Dali. In more recent years American filmmakers David Lynch and David Cronenberg have also combined Noir's Freudian themes with Surrealist ideas and motifs, but unlike Hitchcock they do not include separate Surrealist sequences; rather the dream-like qualities of Surrealism meld throughout with Noir's dark, Freudian themes. Shared Noir and Surrealist characteristics include the return of the repressed; labyrinth-like narratives; confused identities; confusions between what is real and what is fantasy; and representations of the

darker, often repressed sides of humanity. These shared elements make for an easy relationship between the two. *The Deadly Percheron* features altered states and confusions of reality and the fantastic. For example, the novel's central character cannot convince others of his true identity after having been given a mind-altering drug – while we, the readers, are also uncertain, until close to the end of the novel, about the truth of who Bardin's George is.

Mona Lisa's dark and repressive environments and scenarios are well illustrated by, and suited to, the traditions of Noir, which are also present in *The Deadly Percheron*. The film's story and cinematography show a Noir influence. Jordan presents a tale of a broken, lost, man being conned into a dangerous situation by a seductive and mysterious beautiful woman. In terms of visual style he uses chiaroscuro lighting and frequent, claustrophobic interior sets and shots; the colour palette is mostly shades of grey, black and white, with occasional pools of brighter colour, often created by diegetic lighting.

Jordan uses motifs from *The Deadly Percheron* in *Mona Lisa* in a way that, as a series of isolated incidents, can seem to have minor meaning. However, taken as a whole they create the Surrealist-inspired effect of mixing fiction, or the fantastic, with reality, reinforcing a broader theme in the film. These seemingly superficial references include names – George, of course, but also Anderson, Simone's pimp and persecutor in the film, who shares his name with the police inspector who pursues Bardin's George for murder. Later on, during a chase scene at Brighton Pier when George and Anderson have run past a souvenir stand, the camera pans back independently of George and lingers on two fighting dwarves. This serves no narrative function, but the dwarves are strongly reminiscent of those that initially drive the narrative of *The Deadly Percheron* by warning Bardin's George of impending murder.

Direct references to *The Deadly Percheron* in *Mona Lisa* can also have a more substantial effect. For example, when George finally finds Cathy, he takes her to a motorway cafe to meet Simone on the way to Brighton. Outside the cafe, he sees a white horse, similar to a Percheron (a type of horse), on which the camera lingers, as if from George's point of view. The horse's presence outside the cafe seems bizarre, partly because there is no evidence of a horse box, saddle or rider, and partly because it stands close to giant, cartoon-like playground structures, which emphasise the Surreal quality of the situation, their frivolity and obvious fakery juxtaposing with some of the harsher realities of childhood which have

recently been witnessed and experienced by George, Simone and Cathy. The use of opposites which throw each other into relief is a technique used by Surrealist artists such as Humphrey Jennings, Max Ernst, René Magritte and Lee Miller, amongst others, usually in collage or painting.

The shot of the white horse has two significant meanings. Firstly, it has no obvious narrational function and can, therefore, seem like a break in the otherwise traditional film narration, a somewhat strange, unexplained moment in the film. If the audience knows the Bardin novel, however, then the horse carries another set of meaningful connotations which serve to enrich the film's narrative. In Bardin's novel, a single Percheron is present at each of a series of murders – hence the book's title. The presence of the Percheron indicates that the unknown, mysterious villain of the novel, of whom George (the book's protagonist) is deeply afraid, has struck. Similarly, in *Mona Lisa,* the presence of the white horse foreshadows Simone's shooting frenzy in Brighton, letting readers of Bardin, if no-one else, know that violent death is ominous. These readers can conclude that, perhaps, in George's imagination and in *his* 'whodunnit' novel, 'The Thin Black Tart', Simone is the mystery villain, about to commit a murder.

Jordan's occasional merging of the narration of *Mona Lisa* with *The Deadly Percheron* and 'The Thin Black Tart' presents a commentary on the creative process, particularly writing. George's processing of his experiences by reading and composing his own novel seems relaxed and unconscious – almost as if he has to read Bardin's work in order to navigate his own life. Throughout George's discussions with Thomas, these three things run in tandem: George's experience of reading and discussing *The Deadly Percheron*; his 'real' experiences with his family and with Simone; and his shaping of his and Simone's story into his own novel.

The Deadly Percheron is, of course, understood as a work of fiction within *Mona Lisa's* diegesis; however, elements of it seep into the overall narrator's frame of reference in the film and are presented as the film's reality – for example, George and Andersons' names, the dwarves, the white horse and George's incarceration. Similarly, the parallel stories of 'The Thin Black Tart' and George's relationship with Simone merge in the film's final sequences. It is possible that, just as the overall narrator of *Mona Lisa* has insight into *The Deadly Percheron*, so s/he could also be familiar with 'The Thin Black Tart' – a story which, as far as we are aware, only George and Thomas know about. Thus, Jordan presents

another labyrinthine, Chinese box narrative structure, but a much more subtle one than that of *The Company…*.

If George's fictional world can merge with his 'real' one, then does that mean Jordan's can too? Jordan has commented that, in retrospect, he often finds his own life experiences reflected in his work (Jordan, 1996). In *Mona Lisa*, he seems to be inviting us to think he writes this way, questioning the notion of realism again, exposing it as a fantasy, while also telling us how much these fantasies are fed by the life experiences of their creators. Even if film makers and writers and so on can't always see how their work reflects their own life experiences during the throes of the creative process, they can do so in hindsight. This phenomenon is reflected in George's experiences: he seems unaware of the connections between the fiction of *The Deadly Percheron* and 'The Thin Black Tart' and the reality of his relationships. In this way, Jordan addresses an idea central to Surrealism: the Freudian notion that our most authentic and therefore most valuable expression takes place subconsciously, often during the creative process, and for it to be truly meaningful we need to be unaware of its processes at the time they are happening.

Who is Alice? Lewis Carroll's Alice Stories in *Mona Lisa*

Given Jordan's predilection for Surrealism and the film's focus on the traumas of adolescent girls, it is not surprising that Carroll's Alice stories have found their way into its narration. The stories are not, like Bardin's novel, mentioned in the diegesis of *Mona Lisa*, although their importance to the film is mentioned by Hoskins in the 1996 DVD commentary. Implicit references to the Alice stories are positioned so as to reflect George's point of view; they serve as an understated parallel to the stories of many of the film's characters. These references can be thematic, such as un-finished stories like the Dormouse's tale that I referred to in Chapter Two; the fact that George, like Alice, falls into a labyrinth of intrigue and terror populated by often hostile characters of uncertain and shifting identity; the confused identity of the story's protagonist; and the notion of confused realities. The latter two examples, as I demonstrated in the previous chapter, are also key to *The Company...*.

References to Carroll's work can also be more literal and motif-like in *Mona Lisa*. The most obvious of these is a white rabbit that George buys, but there are many others such as the rabbit's name – Arthur – possibly, a reference to Arthur Rackham, who illustrated the 1906 version of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (although *Mona Lisa* looks nothing like Rackham's illustrations, *The Company... does* bear many similarities to his work as I

explained earlier). The ending of *Mona Lisa* is also similar to that of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, with George facing punishment for stealing 'tarts', while, on Brighton Pier, a set of giant hearts crashes down around George and Simone, recalling Alice's encounter with the Queen of Hearts and the rest of her suit (figure 9. 1).

Figure 9. 1 Screen grab from *Mona Lisa* (Neil Jordan, 1986). George and Simone run away from Anderson and his men as hearts crash down around them.

A Buñuellian White Rabbit Sub-Plot

The sequence in which George buys and delivers a white rabbit is perhaps the most perplexing of *Mona Lisa*. It is a narrative cul-de-sac, but one which adds a sense of confusion and menace to the film. Near its beginning, George asks Thomas to interrupt his journey home from George's encounter with his wife and daughter so that he can buy a white rabbit to take to Mortwell's office. George requests a 'large white rabbit with long floppy ears', but the pet shop owner finds him one with 'short floppy ears, named Arthur' (see figure 9. 2).

Figure 9. 2 Screen grab from *Mona Lisa*. George and his white rabbit, Arthur.

Neither we the audience, nor Thomas, find out why George wants to give Mortwell the rabbit – Thomas' question 'why a white rabbit?' is not answered. Hoskins states in the director's commentary for *Mona Lisa* that Jordan included the rabbit as a 'red herring' or 'white rabbit' precisely in order to create confusion. He did so as a reaction to his funders who wanted the film to explain exactly why George had gone to prison (Hoskins, 1996). Jordan saw this detail as unnecessary to the story and illustrates his point by introducing the rabbit during a conversation in which George discusses his past with Thomas (Hoskins, 1996). The rabbit incident is thus a commentary on the storytelling process, an act of rebellion designed to prove that logic is not always the best approach when presenting a narrative.

As such, it is a miniature version of the way in which Buñuel constructs the entire narrative of *The Phantom of Liberty.* In my earlier discussion of that film, I explained that it is a series of vignettes which are often linked by the camera following minor characters into different scenarios where a new story will begin to unfold, but none is ever completed. Where Jordan presents one similarly instigated minor story in *Mona Lisa*, slightly de-stabilising the film's narration, Buñuel creates an entire movie based on this technique, the effect of which is to undermine our notion of cinema and storytelling all together.

As well as being redundant to the film's story (but of course key to its narration), the rabbit-buying scene also seems out of place with the rest of the film's atmosphere. It is an oasis of calm familiarity by comparison with both the disturbing crime-land settings, and Thomas's

fantastical Surreal home. Its lightness, both visually and in terms of the everyday-chirpiness of the pet shop owner, offers a stark contrast to the dark mood of the rest of the film. As such, although the scene offers the audience a connection with a safer reality, it destabilises the film's diegesis, not just its narrational form. The rest of *Mona Lisa* seems all the darker for this short episode of light relief, while George's reasons for wanting such a specific kind of rabbit seem illogical; there is then a lacuna here, adding to the nonsensical quality of this sequence, and indeed of the entire film.

Jordan reference to a production dispute as a way of disrupting narrative flow in this scene is reminiscent of Jean-Luc Godard's narration in films such as *Contempt* (1963) and *Weekend* (1967). Godard often directed the camera away from the film's story, for example, to admire a view in *Contempt*; or he disturbed the stability of the film's diegesis by inserting scenes or elements of scenes which jarred with the rest of the film. In *Mona Lisa*, Jordan does this but to a much lesser extent than Godard. He includes only the rabbit-purchasing incident and a reminder of it when the animal re-surfaces with Mortwell near the end of the film in Brighton.

Godard's interest in Surrealism extends beyond his use of narrative devices and his film *Weekend* is a particularly strong example of the influence of Surrealism on his work. It is also a useful comparison to *Mona Lisa* because there are several other parallels between the two films, including confusions of reality and fantasy, and references to nineteenth-century English literature. *Weekend* tells the story of a bourgeois couple setting out for a weekend away, but ending up lost travelling the French roads, first by car and then hitch-hiking, as they encounter seemingly random figures who offer their thoughts on modern life.

Ideas about truth and fantasy or dreams are explored throughout the film. Near its start, the female protagonist tells a detailed erotic story which lasts approximately three minutes. This tale is delivered as the woman sits silhouetted on a desk in front of the male protagonist as he listens, also in shadow. Thus, her words are prioritised throughout the sequence. When she has finished the man asks her, 'is that true or was it a nightmare?' She replies, 'I don't know'. In this way, Godard opens his film with a question about the relationship between reality, fiction, narrators and authorship, all key issues in Surrealism.

Like Jordan, Godard makes specific reference to Lewis Carroll's work – including a white rabbit - and to English Romanticism. Most obviously, a caption reads 'THE LEWIS CARROLL

WAY', just before a sequence in which characters named Emily Brontë and Tom Thumb philosophise. We first see Godard's white rabbit near the beginning of *Weekend* when the 'exterminating angel' – a reference to Buñuel's film of that title – gets into a car with a couple who are lost, carrying a white rabbit and professing his disgust about 'those who would not move André Breton's body when he died'. As in *Mona Lisa,* the rabbit returns later on in *Weekend* at the scene of a murder. This time it is skinned and dropped to the floor as a random character is shot. A gruesome close up shows blood spattering over the rabbit's flayed face and eyes.

Similarly, Jordan's white rabbit returns towards the end of *Mona Lisa*, at the scene of a murder. When Mortwell is waiting for George and Simone to return from their walk along Brighton pier, he sits stroking the rabbit George gave him as it rests on his knee. The rabbit seems more innocent and vulnerable in the presence of Mortwell's brutality, while, conversely, its fragility makes Mortwell seem more threatening. This dynamic of vulnerability and brutality is later reversed and confused. Simone's vulnerability gives way to ruthless and brutal rage when she shoots at the men around her; afterwards, when Mortwell is slumped dead on the floor, half propped up against a blood-smeared wall, the rabbit, apparently un-phased, sniffs at his blood; the power dynamic between Mortwell and Simone (and Mortwell and the rabbit) is thus reversed. Normative rules of social conduct are broken just as the rules of classical narration were dismissed when the rabbit was bought. Its presence in this scene reminds the audience of that earlier, disjointed, confusing time.

Jordan thus draws upon techniques which are used with much greater frequency by Buñuel and Godard, but perhaps he does so to greater effect precisely because he uses them in an unexpected and unexplained context. Most audiences attend Buñuel and Godard films with knowledge of what Branigan would term the historical author – their films are of niche political and artistic interest. Buñuel and Godard' audiences not only know something of how these less commercial-seeming filmmakers operate as directors and writers, but they are also *wanting* those signature anti-mainstream cinema tropes to take place.

A Jordan audience has an entirely different set of expectations when viewing one of his films. Many who see them may not have any knowledge of him as a historical author, instead looking to known stars such as Bob Hoskins or Michael Caine for a sense of the film's identity. Those who are familiar with Jordan as a historical author may be expecting

some good and interesting storytelling; some characters who deal with difficult circumstances and trauma in a creative, but possibly disturbing manner; a visually arresting film; and perhaps an exploration of English or Irish identity. However, disruption of traditional linear narration is not a technique an audience may readily expect when viewing one of his films. Subsequently, the rabbit sequence can go unregistered by an audience, making the sense of disquiet it generates all the more effective.

George does not, in fact, find Mortwell when he delivers the rabbit, but is advised by one of Mortwell's men about a job that pays 'good money' for acting as Simone's 'date' or driver. It is George's acceptance of this offer which leads him to fall into a chaotic world of fantastical happenings and characters.

George must navigate the dark corridors and basements of London's underground sex industry. He searches a basement 'knocking shop' with a warren of peep shows named 'Playboy's Tunnels of Love', another rabbit reference. There George is shown a young girl, also addicted to heroin, who, like Alice has no fixed identity. While her own identity is lost, she tells George, 'I can be Cathy, I can be whoever you want me to be'. This changeability is like Alice's uncertainty: after growing to giant size, she cries out 'who am I?', in her subsequent confusion of identity, speculating that she could be one of a list of many little girls she knows, and wondering if she will ever be herself again (Carroll, 1993: 28); later, when she is repeatedly asked by the caterpillar 'who are you?', she cannot respond with any certainty. Similarly, the identities of the young girls in *Mona Lisa* are in a state of constant flux, while their survival seems to hang on them finding the answer to the question 'who do you want me to be?'. Both Jordan's and Carroll's characters suffer physical metamorphosis due to the consumption of drugs. For the young girls in *Mona Lisa* it is heroin, while for Alice it is the 'drink me' potion. When George finally does find Cathy he reaches through a mirror (or looking glass) in order to rescue her from one of Mortwell's clients, an obvious reference to the opening passages of Carroll's *Alice Through the Looking Glass…* (1993, first published 1871).

Simone also has an identity which changes to suit her clients and to protect her in the harsh world she inhabits. She thus manages to hide her true self, at least until the film's denouement. George has no understanding of the extreme terror in which she lives, at least not until the film's climax, so her actions seem motiveless. He sees her, therefore, as a demanding Queen of Hearts figure who is impossible to please both as an employer and as

a romantic partner. For example, she judges his behaviour and choice of clothing to be grossly inappropriate, aggressively dictating what he should wear and how he should act; he struggles to get his look and behaviour right but, without insight into her true situation, the urgency she expresses about this seems nonsensical.

Simone is frequently associated with heart motifs and her costumes are chosen from a predominantly red-based palette, another reference to the Queen of Hearts. When both we, the audience, and George, first see her she is standing on a balcony above a hotel lobby, wearing a red dress with a sweetheart neckline and princess line bodice with a tapered front, which forms the shape of a heart. When George finally confronts Simone with his feelings, and about her behaviour which he finds so confusing, she is standing on Brighton Pier among a set of giant red hearts. He places a pair of red, heart-shaped sunglasses on her, thereby thinly disguising her angst during their emotionally charged exchange.

Just as Alice is confused about whom she is, in *Mona Lisa*, there is some confusion about exactly who Alice is. Several key characters are presented as Alice figures. George can be read as Alice because he follows a white rabbit into a dark underworld full of strange creatures and things that do not make sense. Simone, Cathy and the other girls in Mortwell's clutches can be read as Alice because they are, or have been, lost child-women also trying to navigate an underworld full of absurdity, often fuelled by potions they are told to consume (this time, heroin). George's daughter can be read as an Alice figure because she too is a child on the cusp of womanhood trying to make sense of the chaos of her life. Perhaps most importantly for this essay though, we, the audience, are exposed to an Alice-like experience, both through the story of *Mona Lisa* and in the way it is delivered. The film's multiple Alice characters feed into this complex narration. We cannot pin Alice down to a single figure. Instead we are faced with a hall of mirrors in which our own connections to Alice are distorted and reflected back at us. Jordan shows us that, in *Mona Lisa*, identity, along with its other storytelling facets, is unstable.

Jordan has drawn on the darker aspects of Carroll's stories to illuminate the experience of childhood trauma for both primary and secondary victims, both Simone and George. He has drawn on the Freudian, psychological elements of the stories, which address notions of identity in a way that reflects the inner-life and imagination of his central character, George. As a middle-aged gangster, he is a surprising 'Alice' figure, thus the Carroll

references are not immediately obvious or explicable and contribute to the labyrinthine quality of the film's narration and its diegetic universe.

The Masculine Sublime in *Mona Lisa*

Like *The Company...*, *Mona Lisa* also addresses the issue of women in peril at the hands of men, but in this later film, Jordan develops notions of the masculine sublime, extending them to the experiences of George, not just those of the women he encounters. At the centre of all the terror in *Mona Lisa* is Mortwell, a latter-day *Dracula* figure, an archetypal example of the masculine sublime from whom it is also almost impossible to escape. Perhaps the most prominent reference to the masculine sublime in *Mona Lisa* is the sense of confusion and mystery Jordan brings to its narration. As in Gothic novels and in *The Company...*, Jordan uses altered and dream-like states (George's imagination and the girls' heroin use), labyrinthine narration and disorientation. Unlike Gothic novels and *The Company...,* Jordan extends the masculine sublime idea to the experiences of men, and further, in a direct reversal of the original nineteenth-century dynamic, to men at the hands of women. George's confusion and trauma are at the heart of the film's story and narration, and his only stability is his friendship with Thomas.

As a small-time gangster, George can never have had great control over his life, but *Mona Lisa* represents him at a time when his volatile situation is exacerbated, when he is adjusting to the prospect of losing contact with his daughter and to his new life outside of prison. Anderson and Mortwell's brutal violence is present in increasingly more overt ways as his relationship with Simone progresses. At first Mortwell's capacity for violence is just hinted at. In a scene in which dancing girls rehearse robotically for one of his erotic stage shows, Mortwell dismisses them and settles himself on a giant pink, glittery, cupped hand, which is presumably part of a stage set. He asks George to spy on one of Simone's clients, his menacing presence juxtaposed with the camp playfulness of the giant hand. On George's next visit, Mortwell becomes aggressive, smashing the showgirls' cosmetics by sweeping his hand across the dressing room shelf in a *Citizen Kane*-like gesture. He is unhappy with the evidence George provides for him, leans towards George and tells him to find something 'filthy' and 'nasty', his face illuminated from below with an orange glow, creating a chiaroscuro effect which accentuates his sinister presence. Behind him rows of lurid pink-net show-girl costumes hang in a row on hooks around the walls of the changing

room. The girls and their costumes seem interchangeable, disposable and tired objects used to amuse others, fake versions of femininity.

About half way through the film, threats of violence made towards George are realised. When he and Simone return to her apartment building and enter its lift, Anderson charges through the corridor brandishing a large knife. The pair eventually manage to shut the gates of the lift, but only after George's arm is slashed. Anderson circles the lift, running his knife against its metal bars; his shouting, their screams and the sound of clanging metal combine to create a sense of chaos and terror as Simone and George manoeuvre the lift up and down to different floors, hoping to escape him.

During this sequence, the narrative point of view in the film is unclear and changes suddenly, with little reason according to the internal logic of the film. While some of the action is shot from inside the lift with Simone and George, some is also shot from outside of it, each of the two points of view panning in opposite directions. When Anderson finally stops circling the lift, the point of view shifts to the inside of another identical lift opposite the one George and Simone are in. This doppelganger lift runs from floor to floor, in perfect tandem with theirs, acting as a vantage point for a long shot of the terrified pair as they check each floor of the building to see if it is safe to escape to Simone's apartment. The effect of this shift in the overall narrator's point, or points, of view is to disorientate the audience, indicating that the film's overall narrator is in two places simultaneously, and hence has two identities, just as in Dali's painting *Christ St. John of the Cross* (1951) (see figure 1. 12).

George is spurred by this incident to finally find Cathy and then rescue both women from Mortwell's gang, but when he succeeds the violence re-surfaces. Anderson and two of Mortwell's other men have chased George and Simone along Brighton Pier as they flee to their hotel room. When they arrive at the room, Mortwell is sitting calmly waiting for them. He stands to address Simone, telling her 'I won't hurt you, your pimp will do that for me', then asking George, still calmly, 'why did you do it? I mean, just look at her'; then he suddenly and violently lashes out at Simone, beating her about her head. Simone and Cathy scream hysterically and Simone pulls out the gun George gave her for her own protection. She frantically shoots at Mortwell and his men until they die, finally pointing George's gun at George. Simone's actions are thus closer to '[T]he simplest Surrealist act…dashing down

the street, pistol in hand, and firing blindly, as fast as you can pull the trigger' (Breton, 1930: 145) than any other character I have written about in this thesis.

It is through Simone's actions that George finally recognises the enormity of the horror and destruction to which he has been living in close proximity since working for Mortwell, and by which Simone, at its epicentre, is engulfed. At the end of her shooting frenzy, he says to her, 'you'd have done it wouldn't you?', and 'I'm just another punter to you, aren't I?'. This scene cuts to a close up of Simone as she kneels on the floor. It shows the back of her head, her face half visible as she silently cries in agony, then she turns away from the camera, tipping her head down to face the wall, while the back lighting produces a halo effect around her profile. Simone grieves for the hopeless loss of her innocence and the freedom she dreamt of finding in Brighton. Her abject pain is rendered even more palpable because we are allowed only a glimpse of her face for a small part of the shot.

Jordan, again draws on aspects of the Romantic sublime. Simone's pain is too powerful to be expressed in its entirety, so it is only briefly indicated and then hidden as she turns her face. Just as in *The Company*… Jordan leaves a lacuna at the film's denouement. As with Rosaleen's rape, we do not see the events in their entirety, but Jordan has allowed us to imagine them, perhaps a more powerful communication of her experience than an attempt at representation would be. Just as Rosaleen's rape is couched in the re-telling of a fairy story, Simone's pain is relayed to us through George's story, and almost entirely from his perspective. In this way, both films manage to express difficult realities experienced by their characters while avoiding miscommunication or misunderstanding. Similarly, we do not find out what fate befalls Simone and Cathy, we are left to imagine, do they serve time in prison, or does more drug addiction, prostitution and then possibly death follow?

During these final sequences of *Mona Lisa,* Jordan has also extended and then inverted the notion of the masculine sublime. Firstly, he makes George a victim of terrifying male aggression for most of the film; but in its penultimate sequences, during her shooting frenzy, it is Simone who fills George with terror and confusion. By drawing upon the masculine, then feminine, sublime, Jordan adds to the strangeness and mystery of *Mona Lisa,* offering his audience the sense that George's environment, aside from when he is with Thomas, is out of control and that anything could happen in it.

The Surrealist Mise en Scène in *Mona Lisa*: Realism and the Fantastic

In the DVD commentary for *Mona Lisa*, Jordan observes that 'progressively more theatrical visual elements creep into this film [even though] it starts in a documentary manner' (Jordan, 1996). In this section I will discuss the way elements of Surrealism are expressed through the mise en scène in *Mona Lisa.* I will begin by looking at how Jordan uses a realist, 'documentary style' (Jordan, 1996) for the opening sequences of the film, and then at how he gradually introduces more fantastical elements to the mise en scène; I will then explore the way in which he uses documentary techniques, filming an actual setting – the Playboy's Tunnels of Love brothel, including prostitutes going about their daily business – to create a fantastical, bizarre effect; finally I will look at Thomas' home as a fantastical space, akin to the kinds of houses which feature in many Surrealist works (Alison, 2010).

Fantastical Realities: Documentary Strategies in *Mona Lisa*

Jordan opens *Mona Lisa* with a realist, almost documentary-like style. George walks along a London bridge during the day with a package under his arm. The camera tracks him in a full length-shot which is relatively close to George, while the rest of the mise en scène shows a naturally lit scene with passing traffic and the river Thames. George's body language is relaxed as he gets on with the business of delivering his package. In the set of shots which follow, George sits on a park bench opposite a large tree, the branches of which frame the scene. It is dusk and natural light falls from behind, creating a silhouetted effect which, although not quite chiaroscuro, echoes the dramatic uses of light and dark which follow as the film progresses. This touch of drama pre-empts the increasing thematic tensions of the rest of the film and the noir visual style which reflects them.

Jordan was keen to make the Soho sex industry sequences as authentic-looking as possible. In the DVD commentary, Hoskins comments that all of the women the hostess bar and strip show rehearsal scenes were shot in an actual Soho brothel which was run as a co-operative, without a pimp, most of whom were heroine addicts. The women in the scenes were, then, actual sex-workers in their usual working environment. Hoskins commented that getting to know them was part of Hoskins's preparation for the role of George in the film (Hoskins, 1996). While there are elements of documentary at work here, the darkly absurd nature of their habitat, and of what they are doing, seems more in tune with the fantastical elements of *Mona Lisa* than with its realism.

By taking a reality that seems so strange as to appear theatrical or fantastic, Jordan uses a recognised Surrealist technique, akin to Francis Picabia's use of found objects in *Match Woman* 1924-25 (see figure 1. 2), the documentary-style shot of a moth in *Un Chien…* (see figure 2. 4) and the scorpions that open *L'Âge d'or* (see figure 2. 5). Jordan also follows a tradition of using real-life objects or personalities in fiction, which I have noted in Dora Carrington's Ham Spray House films; Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger's *The Red Shoes*; Derek Jarman's *Jubilee* and *The Garden*; and the films of Andrew Kötting and Patrick Keiller.

Jordan's fascination for the uncanny in English life is comparable to Jennings', perhaps most notably in the kazoo-playing sequence in his documentary *Spare Time* (1939), in which a bizarrely dressed marching band perform. This sequence of *Spare Time* seems somewhat at odds with much of the film's presentation of Britain, with the performance looking strange and otherworldly. Similarly, one of the most strikingly fantastical shots in *Mona Lisa* is of Mortwell seated on a giant pink glittery hand, which was a genuine prop used by the women's prostitution collective filmed in 'The Playboy's Tunnels of Love' sequence (Jordan, 1996).

Diegetic and Non-diegetic Colour in *Mona Lisa*

Mona Lisa is characterised by a red and green colour theme which injects a camp, theatrical quality to the rest of its noir-ish realist aesthetic (see figures 9.1, 9.2 and 9.3 for examples) and becoming increasingly dramatic and at odds with the realist style of the film as George's mis-adventure progresses. Sometimes the bright, contrasting colours stem from diegetic sources, but sometimes they do not, thereby de-stabilising notions of reality and realism in *Mona Lisa*. Jordan thus undermines our suspension of disbelief so that, as in *The Company...*, seeing is no longer believing.

The opening realist-style sequence cuts to a shot of a florist's that George is approaching in order to buy flowers for his daughter, whom he will shortly attempt to visit. It is a corner shop, its wood-work painted green, with many of the abundant flowers displayed outside it red in tone. This combination of green and red tones is almost always present in the rest of the film, to a greater or lesser degree. Here it adds a light, upbeat tone to the mise en scène, reflecting George's hopeful mood as he prepares to see his daughter.

The rest of this first red and green themed sequence is a good example of the use of diegetic colour. George attempts to deliver some daffodils to his daughter at the terraced house in which she lives with her mother. Jordan continues the lighter more colourful aesthetic of the shot of the florist, drawing upon a palette which is reminiscent of a children's playground. This of course brings to mind his relationship with his teenage daughter when she was a small child before he went to prison. Jordan uses pillar box red and bright green, along with sky blue and yellow for the paint work of the adjacent houses, cars parked in the street and, of course, George's daffodils.

This lighter tone reflects George's hopes for his relationship with his daughter, making his eventual disappointment seem all the more acute. George is refused access to his daughter by his ex-wife. Father and daughter struggle physically to have contact across his ex-wife as she physically separates them; all three shout angrily in their desperation to either be together or, in the mother's case to keep her daughter away from George, who she accuses of being 'a bad lot'. The contrast between the way the scene looks and its content creates a sense of things being off kilter. The scene ends with a long shot taken from above. As with the ending of *Cathy Come Home* (Ken Loach, 1966), there is a blend of realist style and melodrama which lends the scene emotional realism.

Although Jordan's use of red and green is theatrical, it is also subtle because the colours stem from diegetic and non-diegetic sources, again confusing reality and the fantastic. To achieve this effect he uses real life settings such as the traffic lights which are in shot as George emerges from the 'Playboy's Tunnel of Love' brothel, the orange light in the tunnel down which George drives after an argument with Simone, or the red car which happens to pass in the background behind George as he stands in the motorway café car park; some of Simone's costumes are brightly coloured too, as are other elements of production design; and occasionally filtered lighting is used.

These splashes of red and green tones are designed to seem incidental and part of a reality that an audience can recognise as authentic, but at the same time their presence gives the film an un-real, other-worldly quality, which is all the more disturbing because the overall effect of the film is that of an authentic-seeming realism. A strong example of this occurs the second time George takes Simone to King's Cross, or 'the meat rack' as George calls it, a street where prostitutes gather to look for custom. The scene is set at night time so the only diegetic lighting is from street lights which cast a red-ish tinge. A head and shoulder

shot shows George as he scans the street through his window. As he turns to face the camera, which is directed at him through his side window, half his face is lit with a green glow, which does not seem to originate from the diegesis of the film. Behind him a red-ish light casts a faint glow on the pavements which are just visible through the other windows of the car. Similarly when Mortwell pressures George to find out something 'dirty, nasty' about one of Simone's clients, a non-diegetic green glow up-lights his face as we see it in close up.

Thomas' Surrealist House

Thomas' home is one of the most bizarre settings in the film (see figure 9. 3). Nevertheless, it offers George an escape from the strange and threatening people and events which populate the rest of his life, providing a safe haven for George and offering the audience some relief from the tensions of the main story, while also illuminating it, in the manner of a Greek chorus.

Figure 9. 3 Screen grab from *Mona Lisa*. George and Thomas discuss fake spaghetti in Thomas' strange home.

Thomas provides George with support and understanding to the extent that Jordan describes him as George's 'wife' (Jordan, 1996). Despite his emotional stability and outward appearance as an ordinary mechanic (he wears overalls throughout the film), Thomas has a taste for bizarre interior design and decor. This, along with his professional side-line as a

purveyor of novelty decorative items, means that his home is unusual in layout and appearance. It and the items in it frequently transgress boundaries of reality and the fantastic and Thomas seems to revel in objects which do this.

There are some interesting parallels between Thomas' home and many of the exhibits in a 2010 exhibition at London's Barbican Art Gallery entitled 'The Surreal House'. The exhibition explores the idea of the home of as a site of transgressions between reality and fantasy, transitions which are almost always the result of trauma response which takes place in the home (Alison, J, 2010). Exhibits included a series of untitled photographs (1975 - 1981) by Francesca Woodman, in which her unlikely poses in decaying interiors create a sense of dream-like, if dark, fantasy, in which she explores her own identity (in one she hangs by her hands from a door frame).

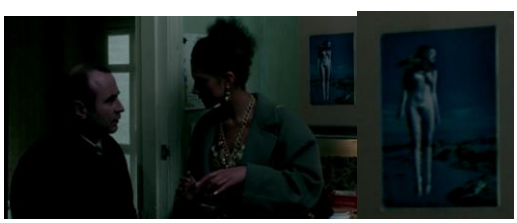
Similarly, Thomas' home reflects the inner life of its inhabitant. It has two distinct identities: it is both a home and a working garage, while each of these identities is also split. The garage doubles as a warehouse, but it also has living and dining room areas. Inside it is a caravan with an awning, the cramped interior of which serves as a kitchen, bedroom and alternative sitting area – George watches Simone's performance as a porn film actress on a video while seated on its tiny sofa, for instance. There is also a reproduction of Leonardo Da Vinci's *Mona Lisa* (1503-6), with its connotations of mystery and uncertain identity, pinned to the door of the caravan.

Thomas' side-line in the sale of curious novelty items adds to the sense that any notion of a 'normal' home or way of life is disrupted. For example, we are first introduced to Thomas' garage in a shot of George sitting at the dining table laid out with plates of fake spaghetti with forkfuls in mid-air, as if about to be eaten (figure 9. 3). George asks, 'are they real or what?', and Thomas replies 'no, no, they're plastic... here, have a fibre glass flan, or a polystyrene tutti-frutti'. When these are sold, Thomas acquires a mass of illuminated plastic statues of the Virgin Mary that are arranged in a grotto-like shrine, and shaded, bizarrely, by a parasol, at the back of his garage. Their camp nature and the fact that there are so many of them piled up, exaggerate their fakery to almost comic proportions. Their apparent illogicality in the mise en scène establishes them as Surreal objects. It is, perhaps, Thomas' easy acceptance that things are not 'normal', or not as we may expect them to be, that enables him to remain so sane.

Jordan's Surrealist mise en scène keys into traditions in both Surrealist filmmaking and British film. Inevitably, if somewhat surprisingly, these two traditions have mutual aims, to create a bridge between actuality and the imagination, or creativity. As I argued in Chapter Three, there is a strand of documentary-inspired British cinema which showcases the strangeness of real-life situations and has Surrealist tendencies (see figure 3. 9 for Jennings record of the un-real seeming, but actually real kazoo band). This tendency was also evident in some of the artists' films and videos that I discussed in Chapter Six, such as the way Derek Jarman uses fantastical costumes, sets and storylines in combination with home movie footage and real-life personalities. Similarly Jordan presents us with a contrived colour scheme which can sometimes seem artificial and sometimes real, reminding us that, although we may sometimes get lost in the drama of his film, it is, of course, a fabrication.

Seaside Surrealism: Brighton as a Sight of Unravelling

The seaside often represents a site of hoped for freedom, especially in works associated with Surrealism (for example, the couple in *Un Chien Andalou* (Buñuel and Dali, 1929) finally take a romantic stroll along a beach, just before the final shot in which they are buried up to their waists). The English Surrealist group, notably Eileen Agar and Paul Nash, who saw the south coast of England, and particularly Swanage, as having naturally Surrealist qualities, made the seaside the site of much of their activity, and the subject of many paintings, photographs and poems. Agar and Nash used found objects which juxtaposed man-made culture with nature as the basis of much of their art work, as for example in Nash's painting *Event on the Downs* (1934) (figure 9. 6) and his photograph *Bench Seats, Swanage*, 1935/6 (figure 9. 7), and Agar's *Hat for Eating Bouillabaisse* (figure 9. 8), made from items she found on the beach at Swanage. The idea of the seaside as a place of freedom and unravelling is also prevalent in British film (as has been recently documented by Steve Allen (2010)), and these two currents, one an art tradition and the other a national cinematic tendency, are both present in *Mona Lisa*.



Figures 9. 4 and 9. 5 Screen grab from *Mona Lisa* with detail of Surrealist-like montage photograph pinned to Simone's kitchen cupboard.

Figure 9. 6 *Event on the Downs* Paul Nash (1934) oil on canvas, 51cm x 61cm, Government Art Collection.

Figure 9. 7 *Bench Seats, Swanage* Paul Nash (1935/6) photograph.

Figure 9. 8 *Hat for Eating Bouillabaisse* Eileen Agar, (1937), coral, sea shells, fish bone and sea urchin.

Simone sees the seaside, specifically, Brighton, as the place where she will be liberated: her initial story, told to George, features an escape to Brighton, a place where, in her fantasy,

she manages to shake off Anderson and Mortwell. It is also where she takes George and Cathy on their actual attempt to get away, and is the site of the story's unravelling. Simone's first mention of the seaside is when she tells George her story about escape from enforced prostitution under Mortwell and Anderson as a young teenager – which later, just before her shoot-out, we find to be at least partly false because, contrary to her account, she is still enslaved by Mortwell and Anderson. She tells George of an escape to Brighton when she was a young teenager, making her living from work found with men she met on the pier.

As Simone begins her story, she stands with a photograph of a dream-like stormy beach scene pinned to the kitchen units behind her (figures 9. 5 and 9. 6). In the middle of this image is a pre-Raphaelite-style female nude floating above the waves facing the camera. This image was made using the photomontage style associated with Surrealism, and juxtaposes the stylised, painted, Romantic female nude with the realism of a photograph of an empty beach. Its representation of the seaside as a place outside of usual human conventions, much like dreams are, is reminiscent of the way the English Surrealist group saw the seaside.

Later, George finds Cathy, the three escape to Brighton and Simone experiences a taste of freedom, only to be confronted with the terrifyingly brutal reality of her entrapment, while George is also faced with a difficult reality when he sees Simone doting on Cathy as a lover would. Afterwards, he retreats to another room of their hotel suite where he watches a sequence from Nicolas Ray's *They Live by Night* (1949) on television, another film about lost innocence which features a couple seeking solace from the gangster community while plotting their escape. Like Simone and George, Bowie (Farley Granger) and Keechie (Cathy O'Donnell) meet after the man's release from 7 years wrongful imprisonment. They also run away, dreaming of clichéd romance and a life free of gangsters, only for their plans to end in tragedy. George watches a sequence where the young couple walk up the path of a 'two dollar' marriage office. There are kitsch statuettes of cherubs on each gate, just out of shot in the frames Jordan shows, but which mirror the theatricality of Jordan's seaside milieu, and which underscore the fragility of Bowie and Keechie's and now George and Simone's relationships.

Simone rouses George from watching the film by suggesting they go for a walk along the pier, and he responds, saying 'yeah, I've always liked the seaside'. When they arrive there,

he confronts her about their relationship, confused and angry about her seeming fondness for him, but obvious love for Cathy. He takes her by the arm and leads her, roughly, through the motions of a romantic walk along the pier. While doing this, he places a pair of red heart-shaped sunglasses on Simone and some star-shaped ones on himself (figure 9. 1). This creates another lacuna, disguising their eyes in a very obvious and ridiculous manner, bringing into relief the intense emotion they both feel. The garish, throw-away nature of the glasses echoes the temporal and clichéd qualities of their fake identities. This quality is also present in other areas of production design during the pier sequence: the giant heart shapes arranged on the pier and a group of dwarves who perform as they would in a circus echo the empty theatricality of Simone and George's fake identities.

So, for Simone, the seaside is a place of fantasy and possible freedom that is brutally disappointed, while for George it is a chaotic place where facades are removed and unpleasant realities exposed. Both Jordan and the early Surrealists use the seaside to draw attention to the fakery of social conventions and personal identities which are designed to hide what lies behind them. For the Surrealists, objects thrown up by the sea such as picture frames and mirrors languished out of context in a wild beach setting, while for Jordan, garishly inappropriate sunglasses act as metaphors for the masks worn by both George and Simone, as the truth of the pain and then the danger in which they both live unfolds.

Although Jordan chose the seaside as a place where these revelations can take place, Brighton is also the setting where he lets his audience know there are limits to what can be revealed through storytelling. Simone's story is too awful to be told in its entirety, her true emotions too painful and complex to be exposed to, or understood by, an audience. During the Brighton sequences Jordan tells us that there are limits, not only to his characters' lives, but also to storytelling.

Conclusion: Surrealism in *Mona Lisa*

Jordan draws upon Surrealism, its pre-cursors and its legacies in several ways. He follows in Surrealist filmic traditions by combining documentary with fiction, while also undermining traditional narration by blurring the distinction between overall narrator and character narration. There are also numerous references to aspects of nineteenth-century English literature that have been seen as important to the development of both Freudian thought and Surrealism, particularly Carroll's Alice stories and the Gothic novel, while *The Deadly*

Percheron deals with pychoanalysis, amnesia and recovered memory, key Freudian concerns.

Jordan examines the motivation of storytellers and the ways in which audiences can be manipulated, often willingly. For example, the story Simone tells George about having broken free from Mortwell years earlier seems fake, because of course she is still being pimped by Anderson, his henchman. When she tells this story to George she sits down in her arm chair, just as Granny sat in her rocking chair in *The Company of Wolves*, and like Rosaleen, George leans forward to listen. The story is a way for Simone to reel George in and help her find Cathy – and George believes her because he is in love with her.

Although we know Simone did not escape Mortwell years before (or not fully, at least), the story she tells George has some basis in truth. It includes fragments of her and Cathy's life story. Similarly, the fake identities in *Mona Lisa*, like those of Simone and the other girls, and eventually George's too, have some element of truth. Each of these fictions has a clear and distinct motivation, and each has a different effect on their audience; however, each also stems from the actuality of their creator's existence. These fake identities are presented to accommodate or manipulate those who can help or may otherwise threaten.

Jordan addresses blurred boundaries between fiction and actuality in several other ways in *Mona Lisa*. His use of documentary techniques and strategies reveals the strangeness of everyday realities, making them *seem* as if they are fake or unreal. The very points in the film during which the audience is taken to an actual setting, with objects and/or people looking and behaving as they would in an everyday, non-fictional context, are the points at which the film can *seem* most strange. For example, there are the scenes when George enters the 'Playboy's Tunnels of Love' and when Mortwell is sat on a stage set from an actual sex show (the giant pink hand). Similarly, the point at which reality intervenes in the storytelling process, when Jordan carried an actual frisson with his producers into the content of his film, is a sequence which disrupts traditional narration and thus dislocates the audience from the illusion of the film as reality.

As in many of Jordan's films, authorship, audiences and the motivations of those who create and those who consume storytelling of all kinds are crucial themes in *Mona Lisa*. Elements of Surrealism have played a key role in uncovering what lies behind the stories we are presented with in the film, from the use of garish sunglasses to emphasise the fakeness of the identities constructed by George and Simone, to the insertion of a red herring, or

white rabbit, which disrupts our very notion of cinematic reliability, if only momentarily. Jordan incorporates elements of Surrealism alongside other, often overlapping influences and themes which recur in his work, making his use of Surrealist strategies seem almost imperceptible, yet their presence in the film is all-pervasive, affecting every scene, and the way we experience the film as a whole.

Finding a way of representing issues that are difficult or otherwise inexpressible is central to the ideas of Surrealism and, in this respect, the film has an overall affiliation with the movement. By exploring Simone's story from George's perspective and using their situation as an analogy for the effects of Thatcherism, Jordan creates layers of distance, each one making a difficult story safer and easier to consume. It may seem that in doing so, his methods also, paradoxically, oppose the ideas of Surrealism because they disguise as well as reveal; however, in *Mona Lisa*, Jordan has made a film that is seen often and by many because it is *just* safe enough, and as such I would argue that *Mona Lisa* exposes far more than it hides.

Coda to Part Two: Neil Jordan, Baying Wolves and Random Gun Shots

Jordan's assertion that he 'likes to take stories ... that start from the point of realism and go to some other place that is Surrealistic' (Jordan in Rockett, 2005: 208) has been a useful starting point for my analysis of *The Company of Wolves* and *Mona Lisa.* The key issues Jordan raises in this statement are narration and transitions between realism and the fantastic, which provide an apt foundation for a discussion about Surrealism and film. Jordan's use of the vague term 'Surrealistic' could be interpreted as colloquial or conversational. However, my analysis of *The Company...* and *Mona Lisa* has identified *specific* ways in which Jordan draws upon Surrealism and texts that have a strong connection with the movement.

He has mobilised a set of techniques and references from the Surrealist canon in each film. In terms of narration, Jordan draws upon storytelling approaches associated with Surrealism, including Romantic literature and Surrealist film; he also makes direct as well as thematic references to a range of texts associated with Surrealism, including books, films, paintings and illustrations; he explores the mutability of reality and fantasy and the often interchangeable nature of authorship and narration, dwelling on the inner life and on subconscious expression through fiction.

Jordan draws upon similar narrative techniques in each film, but with different degrees of emphasis. In *The Company...,* narration is almost entirely traditional and linear, but the process of storytelling is so complex as to become a stew of conflicting and confused narrative voices. By contrast, *Mona Lisa* reads as a comparatively more conservative film, drawing on more easily recognisable conventions associated with commercial cinema, but it too leaves audiences with the feeling the something is not quite as it should be, even if by using less overt methods.

In both films, Jordan unpacks the storytelling process. In *The Company...* his emphasis is on asking the audience if they can believe anything they see, casting doubt on the validity of any story, while in *Mona Lisa* he inverts that implication, asking us to see the truth in fiction and the connections creative works have to the realities of their creators. In doing so,

Jordan indicates a key paradox of storytelling: that due to the nature of human creativity, however fantastical fiction is, it has stemmed from some kind of actual human experience.

By making this point through the narrational style of both films, Jordan shares much with the nineteenth-century writers who influenced Surrealist story-telling. His use of labyrinthine narration to mirror the confusion of terror experienced by the protagonists in both films has direct parallels with Romantic Gothic fiction. He also draws upon the idea of dream – or fantasy – and reality merging in both films, a fundamental motivation for the Romantic writers, and for Carroll, as it became for the Surrealists. Similarly, he draws upon the nonsensical, narrative cul-de-sac approach of Carroll's Alice stories in each of the films for a comparable effect.

Notably, the beginning and ending of each film mirrors either *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* or *Alice Through the Looking Glass*: Rosaleen dreams of Alice tumbling down a dark pathway populated by strange animated objects, and at the end of *The Company...,* she screams in terror, just as Alice screams in a pool of tears at the end of Carroll's second Alice novel (Jordan had wanted Rosaleen to drown in a pool of tears at the end of *The Company...*, but the limits of finance and technology prevented this ending (Jordan, 2005)). In *Mona Lisa*, George sets off in search of a rabbit at the beginning of *Mona Lisa*, and at its end he stands with his queen of hearts amid a falling pack of cards, as the dreams of both of them come to an abrupt end.

Although there are so many shared themes in *The Company...* and *Mona Lisa*, and Jordan has communicated them using similar approaches, the end results seem very different. On first viewing an audience might struggle to see the films as having been made by the same director. In addition to the apparent narrational styles in the films, this is largely due to differences in the mise en scène. Where *The Company...* is an entirely constructed fantasy world into which Rosaleen's dreaming takes us, *Mona Lisa* is presented as a reality, almost in the same tradition as the gritty realist films associated with British film of the early 1960s. However, despite this stark difference in the way the films look, there is a shared motivation behind the mise en scène of each, and a similar effect when viewing each.

In *The Company...*, realism frames a fantastical world into which we enter, suspending our disbelief so we come to see it as a kind of temporary reality, as film audiences do when viewing any fiction film. Jordan emphasises the dream-like quality of the cinema which was so important to the early Surrealists (Matthews, 1971: 4-6). He confuses our assumptions

about the cinema by presenting a dream framed by a diegetic reality, as an audience may expect. Although this framing structure makes a good point about suspended disbelief and realism, Jordan takes this further by introducing new fantasy environments within the dream when Granny and Rosaleen tell their stories. Rosaleen's dream then becomes the new diegetic reality. The film's narration approaches full circle when stylistic elements from Rosaleen's waking world, Terence Stamp's late-twentieth-century suit and Danielle Dax's styling, emerge in the vignettes. Finally, in the last sequence, dream and waking world collide as Rosaleen wakes to wolves rushing into her bedroom.

Similarly, in *Mona Lisa*, Jordan plays with our expectations of reality on film, but in a much less ostentatious manner than in *The Company...*. Perhaps because of this, *Mona Lisa* is an easier film to watch, giving an audience more of what they might expect from commercial cinema. Even so, it is not entirely conventional, even if audiences may not immediately be able to put their finger on why not. Jordan sets up a norm of traditional narration within the film's diegesis; he then throws a series of small spanners into this set up, creating a feeling of unsteadiness in his audience which mirrors the emotional state of his protagonists. Jordan does this in several ways in *Mona Lisa*. He leaves the identity of the narrator in a state of subtle flux; he presents a mise en scène which is at once chiaroscuro and highly coloured; and he presents footage filmed using documentary techniques, which often seems more strange than the fictional material he presents.

In both films, Jordan uses realist conventions and/or documentary combined with fiction to challenge the idea of truth and fantasy as polar opposites. Both films confuse the two and when *The Company...* and *Mona Lisa* are viewed as a pair, it seems that Jordan brings to the screen Jacques Brunius' observation that 'what is admirable in realism is that there is no more real, there is only the fantastic' (Brunius in Matthews, 1971: 4).

In addition to these thematic and motivational elements of Surrealism and its 'marvellous' predecessors, there are also motif-like references to and direct imitations of Surrealist texts, or texts identified by Breton and his fellow early Surrealists as 'marvellous'. Jordan and Furst draw upon Palmer's images to produce almost direct, filmic copies of his magical rural English settings in *The Company...*; while in both films motif-like references to Carroll's Alice stories remind us that, like Alice's dream, what we are witnessing is fictional, but in many ways just as relevant as what happens in the non-fictional world. In both *The Company...* and *Mona Lisa*, these motif-like references merge and complement each other.

Jordan's method of establishing traditional narration, as would be expected in commercial cinema, only to disrupt it, is reminiscent of much of the cinema associated with Surrealism. He carries this Surrealist approach in a different direction in each film. One is rather like *The Saragossa Manuscript*, involving layers upon layers of stories derived from both reality and dream, upsetting notions of expected continuity and realism in the film; the other is more like Buñuel's later work, such as *The Exterminating Angel* or *Viridiana*, in which the expectations of commercial film narration are more subtly undermined.

Both approaches, however, have the same motivation. Jordan suggests, through Rosaleen and George's storytelling, that fiction can be a useful way of attaining that ultimate Surrealist state: the expression of a personal, emotional truth, which may be too difficult for the author or reader to engage with otherwise. He also suggests that, by highlighting the impossibility of re-creating reality, or engaging in the entirely fantastical, true emotional expression is not entirely possible – his audience still has to use their imagination when attempting to empathise with his characters, or, indeed, with him. Nowhere is this more apparent than in Simone's last scene in *Mona Lisa*, after she has shot Mortwell and his men and George has left. Jordan shows us her emotion via a shot of her face turned away from the camera at an angle as she sobs. We must imagine the depths of her sorrow, perhaps empathising more through this act than if Jordan had shown her face.

Jordan's approaches to narration in *The Company...* and *Mona Lisa* correlate with the subject matter of both films: the revelation of realities which lie behind the carefully designed facades of his central characters, Rosaleen and Simone. Through the narrative style of both these films he illustrates the fantastical nature of realism *and* the way in which reality is often accurately represented through the fantastical – even if not always intentionally.

Rosaleen, George and Simone construct fake identities in order to cope with some of the extremes of Western culture, just as traditional cinema narration evolved to thrive in a culture of consumption. Both films address one of the great tragedies of consumerism: the exploitation of young people by moneyed sexual predators. The first sees its protagonist, Rosaleen, in her dream world, being groomed and then attacked by an aristocratic huntsman. In the second film, *Mona Lisa*, the long-term effects such attacks *can* have are explored as girls are drugged and conditioned to believe there is no escape from the predators who imprison them.

In exploring such issues, Jordan also links Surrealist methods to Romanticism and the representation of trauma in eighteenth-and nineteenth-century England. He draws parallels between the position of an underclass of women in late-twentieth-century England and that of peasant women in an earlier historical context. These films act as a metaphor for and commentary on capitalist exploitation in English culture since the eighteenth century, when monetarism was strongly associated with England. As such, these films take on the more political aspects of Surrealism, recalling the early Surrealists' wish to reform the exploitative nature of capitalism via the expression of personal experience and emotion.

In *The Company...* and *Mona Lisa*, Jordan shares with the early Surrealists a motivation to expose and, thus, work towards dissipating the unpleasant realities which lie under the surface of Western capitalist culture. He also shares many of their approaches and methods in carrying out this charge.

‘My aim is the future resolution of… dream and reality’. (André Breton, 1924: 14)

Conclusion

One of the key reasons for choosing to look at Surrealism in British film in this thesis was that there had not yet been a book-length study of the subject. Of course, the existence of such a gap was not, in itself, enough to merit this study. It was clear however that the prospect of looking at British cinema through the lens of Surrealism brought other compelling possibilities, not least in terms of the debate about realism and the fantastic in British cinema studies, which seemed to have reached stalemate, with calls for a move forward (Murphy, 2009: 7 and Hill, 2009: 308). In fact John Hill, rather like the Surrealists, has suggested that the idea of realism and fantasy as polar opposites has now become a restrictive orthodoxy (Hill, 2009: 308). As I have emphasised throughout this thesis, the convergence and inter-dependence of realism and the fantastic are fundamental to the Surrealist movement. Hence the Surrealist perspective on British cinema’s realism/fantasy debate seemed a particularly useful one to explore further at this juncture. If the Surrealists had worked tirelessly to merge realism and fantasy, and with some considerable success – as Breton put it, ‘my aim is the future resolution of… dream and reality, into a kind of absolute reality, a Surreality’ (Breton, 1924: 14) – then surely their outlook could help British cinema studies begin to do something similar.

This thesis did not, then, set out to present examples of ‘typically Surrealist’ British cinema. Instead, it sought to help build a bridge between realism and fantasy in British cinema debates, and then to explore the nature of that dynamic. In effect this meant making the realism/fantasy debate in British cinema studies seem strange, by moving beyond the idea of two polarities to find significant points of connection, or even coalescence. This process

resulted in a reassessment of some concepts and terms that have been used in British cinema studies – primarily, the terms Surrealism and Romanticism.

While it is important to note the high degree of confluence between the Surrealist and Romantic movements, including themes, strategies and references in British films, it is just as important to differentiate between the two. Bellicose protest, or visceral socio-political bite, is a differentiating quality between the movements. On the whole, Romanticism is characterised by a drive towards individual expression regardless of consequence; Surrealism, however, is very much concerned with broader consequences. As I have explained, it is, at its roots, a political movement with radical and systematic social change its core aim, even if that change often begins on a personal level. From this perspective, Surrealism can be understood as a form of Romanticism with teeth.

The historical surveys I undertook in the first part of the thesis show that visceral protest only emerged as a significant part of the Surrealist/Romantic strand of British film making from the 1960s onwards, reaching a peak and then falling off again during the 1990s. The films I chose for my two case studies of course emerged in this heady period and those case studies show how the sharp, protesting teeth of Surrealism played out in two films which, at first, seem very different.

At the heart of my project was a desire to challenge the ways in which the terms Surrealism and Romanticism have been used in relation to British film. In British cinema debates, the terms Surrealism, Surrealist or surreal have come to be associated with the fantastical strand of British cinema, which has been set up in opposition to the realist strand (Murphy, 2009: 7). This is quite different to the usual meaning of the term in art history, literature and broader humanities debates. Similarly, the term Romanticism in British cinema studies has come to mean anything fantastical or expressive, whereas in this thesis I have used it to refer to the influence of a specific movement and related texts. As I demonstrated in my first chapter, the Surrealist and Romantic movements, in fact, strived towards a more intense, acute sense of reality, or super-reality, even if they often drew upon the imagination to do so.

Because Surrealism is such a broad, viral, phenomenon, it was important to provide at the outset a clear definition of what I mean by the term. Most of the films I have discussed were not made by members of Surrealist groups and cannot be described as Surrealist in the strictest sense of the word. By identifying degrees of orthodoxy in Surrealism, I was able

to give a context for how ideas from a non-commercial, or even anti-commercial movement, can be mobilised in a commercial context, which is the case for most of the British films I have addressed in my thesis.

Establishing degrees of Surrealist orthodoxy has also provided a context for my discussion of Romantic literature and its relationship to the Surrealist movement. The idea of Surrealism as the tenacious, powerful, 'prehensile' tail of Romanticism means that Romanticism can be looked back upon as a less orthodox, un-self-conscious version of Surrealism, something I have demonstrated through my discussion of Carroll's Alice books. As my thesis has also demonstrated, Romantic themes such as the significance of individual experience (as opposed to monarchical and religious meta-narratives), authentic emotional expression and the use of dreams and the sub-conscious, whether actual or fictional, run through great swathes of British cinema. So too do Carrollian references.

Carroll's writing problematizes notions of realism and the imagination, and the idea of suspension of disbelief, ideas that have proved particularly relevant to the study of Surrealism in film. For example, when Alice meets a unicorn in *Alice Through the Looking Glass*, neither can believe in each-other. The unicorn suggests a pact: if Alice believes in him then he will believe in her (Carroll, 1871: 219). The pact between Alice and the unicorn is directly comparable to that of the agreement between any author of fiction and their audience, and even though Carroll wrote before the advent of cinema, moving image storytelling is no exception. Carroll's deconstruction of this pact, simply by drawing attention to it, is mirrored, decades later, by Buñuel and Dali, when they pull apart the agreement between filmic storytelling and cinema audiences. Just as Carroll's readers are never quite allowed to settle into believing what they read, audiences watching Surrealist film are never allowed to relax into a settling narrative.

Contrary to received wisdom, I have tried to show just how frequent this strategy is in British films. The conventions of realism and fantasy are an invitation to read a film or television programme in a certain way; their confluence in British cinema is a key strategy in waking audiences up to the fact that they are immersed in a fabrication, be that one they think of as realism, or as fantasy. Not only does this central theme of Carroll's Alice stories underpin the story of Surrealism in British film, but direct references and motifs are also a recurring feature in the films I have discussed. Perhaps again contrary to expectation, I have demonstrated that more than a few British films have over the years mimicked Buñuel's

ability to first draw upon and then subtly subvert the conventions of classical cinematic realism and traditional narration, while the comparatively less well known documentary elements of Buñuel's films made a useful comparison in my study of British documentary-realist filmmaking.

I did not then set out to find the most Surrealist examples of British cinema in this thesis. Instead I sought to bring together examples of British films and groups of British film which could best be used to problematize the notion of realism and fantasy as polar opposites, just as a Surrealist might. I chose to do this by engaging with the very categories I sought to make strange, and to begin by following the genre model which has dominated the study of British cinema since the elevation of realism as a preferred aesthetic during the 1930s and 1940s, and around which British cinema studies has emerged (Higson, 1986, Hill, 2009 and Murphy, 2009).

At the same time, I have tried to break down the barriers that have been constructed between realist British films and Gothic films, thereby drawing out the coalescences between realism and Romanticism in British film. I have also been at pains to identify films that draw attention to oppressive and contrary social circumstances, especially where they also raise passionate objections. Lindsay Anderson's work is a good example in this respect, since so much of it can be understood as super-realist, complete with socio-political bite. Although Anderson is usually placed in the realist camp in British cinema studies, his films actually refuse to treat realism and fantasy as mutually exclusive categories, being more characterised by an impulse to merge reality and the imagination, as well as passionate remonstration.

His film *This Sporting Life*, with its layers of drug-induced hallucination and British New Wave realism convey a classic Gothic masculine sublime storyline of domestic oppression and doomed romance. That Gothic sensibility can also be seen in other realist films and television programmes of the period. *Room at the Top*, for instance, tells a similarly melodramatic tale of entrapment, with amour fou losing out to an oppressive society, while *Cathy Come Home* is a melodrama in which an entire family is tossed about at the hands of the state; it could even be read as an example of the British social services sublime, in which amour fou loses out again.

The same tendencies can be seen in later films such as Andrea Arnold's *Fish Tank* and *We Need to Talk About Kevin*, which some might classify as realist, but which are again

intensely melodramatic. We might also reference here other bleak tales of tragedy such as Arnold's adaptation of *Wuthering Heights*, but also David Lean's Dickens adaptations of the 1940s, such as *Great Expectations*. Such films embody the frenzy that Ado Kyrou so admired in romantic films. Their very intensity and, at times, irrationality, is a way of hammering home the truth about something, just like Mary Shelley's nightmare about a monster cautioned us to the perils of modern science.

I hope I have also been able to demonstrate the pertinence of looking at such films alongside and in relation to the British horror tradition that Shelley did so much to initiate, and which has, historically, been placed so firmly in the fantasy camp in British cinema studies. Thanks to David Pirie's pioneering work, the British horror film is now held in as high esteem as any other genre of British film, including realism. This equal footing allows for a consideration of how far the Gothic tradition merges with the realist tradition in British cinema, without seeing one as superior to the other. The blurring of what is real and what is imaginary in films like *Dead of Night* and *Went the Day Well* is in this respect as significant as the interplay between rationality and irrationality in Hammer horror films, particularly those directed by Terence Fisher. For all that such films embrace fantasy and the irrational, their narrational style is remarkable for its almost unwavering adherence to traditional realism. In this way, these films echo the Gothic novels on which they are so often based.

'Making strange' is a key concept for all art but it is especially significant for Surrealism. It is also the main ingredient and purpose of satire, and in my chapter on British film and television satire, I demonstrated the Surrealist qualities of such material, and especially the Surrealist penchant for protest. Satire is, of course, a way of protesting, but it also relies on a very particular relationship between reality and fiction, holding up an exaggerated or distorted version of reality so that absurdities and injustices are revealed. One key strand of such work over the years is the strong tendency to lampoon conventional film and television forms.

Because I see the impulse to protest as so important to the Surrealist movement, I have argued, possibly controversially, that Terry Gilliam's *Brazil* is not the great Surrealist masterpiece so many have suggested because it embraces little genuine sense of protest. I do however think there is a strong affiliation between Surrealism and some of the Monty Python films. *The Meaning of Life* is a particularly good example because of its sometimes

quite vicious and shocking attacks on materialism, as well as its use of Buñuel-style narration in which a series of interwoven sketches form a portmanteau effect.

For all their rich fusions of imagination and reality, the failure to embrace a sense of protest also means that few artists' films and videos can be seen as akin to Surrealism. The films of Jeff Keen and Derek Jarman are notable exceptions because their fascination for frenzy and extreme emotion frequently tips over into aggressive remonstration against social oppression. Most of the other British artists' films and videos however adopt a predominantly whimsical or poetic approach.

What becomes clear from my historical survey of British cinema is that the Surrealist tendency in British film only really acquires teeth from the 1960s onwards, in the work of Anderson, Newly and Keen, then Spike Milligan and the Monty Python team, followed by Jarman and Jordan. The bite of Surrealism wanes after the 1980s, as gentler approaches return. In that respect, then, British filmmaking takes the reverse pattern to that of Surrealism in the rest of Europe, where dissent was most powerful during the 1920s but waned progressively thereafter (Short, 2003). .

The Company of Wolves and *Mona Lisa* are not presented as the most Surrealist British films by any means (identifying the most Surrealist works was never a core agenda of this thesis). Rather they tell an important story about Surrealism and its relationship to Romanticism and realism and the fantastic in British film. My discussion of them is the culmination of the thesis' findings. It is as if Jordan came to England from Ireland and drew all the Surrealism-inspired facets of British cinema together, only to present them back at us as *The Company of Wolves* and *Mona Lisa*. As such, the films allowed me to take a detailed look at how key themes and strategies that emerged in the rest of the survey are mobilised. These are the intertwining nature of Romantic literature, the coalescence of realism and fantasy and protest.

There are other avenues I could have taken when looking at Surrealism in British film. Firstly, I could have proceeded with Murphy's idea of Surrealism as a fantasy genre, in opposition to realism. This may have helped to bolster the position of the fantasy genre in British film as well as grouping together films with a fantasy element in a new way; however, it would not have made much difference to the progress of current debates. There is now, as Hill and Murphy have pointed out, little need to argue the value of the fantasy side of British cinema in the realism/fantasy debate. It seemed to me preferable to

mobilise the broader humanities understanding of Surrealism as a means of destabilising the genre polemic in British cinema studies.

There are also other genres I could have looked at, such as 'Mad-cap-comedy', another of the genres Spicer suggests as worthy of attention (Spicer, 2007). Choosing satire to represent the comedy genre allowed for a fuller exploration of protest in Surrealism in British film, however. Nevertheless, it would be illuminating to explore the idea of 'Mad-cap comedy' and Surrealism in British film in future research.

I could also have abandoned the genre approach all together, framing my study in other ways. For example, there is a rich seam of Surrealist influences in children's film and television that includes many of the themes I address in this thesis. The Harry Potter films and Professor Branestawm television programmes are prominent recent examples. However, most material which is made for children does not have passionate remonstration at its core; adaptations of Roald Dhal books such as *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* (Mel Stuart, 1971) with its violent anti-greed morality are, perhaps, an exception.

I could also have asked how much art school teaching has influenced the development of Surrealist tendencies in British film, a potentially illuminating path because several of the key film-makers in this study attended art schools. Similarly, the influence of major exhibitions about, or more general celebrations of Surrealism, could be significant. For example, there was a flourish of exhibitions during the mid-1980s which celebrated the fifty year anniversary of official Surrealism's arrival during the 1930s. This could be a way of framing the remarkable blossoming of Surrealism in British film and television during the 1980s. It would also be useful to look in much more detail at the context of the freer production conditions that took place since the dissipation of the British studio system in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

Television is a significant factor in this thesis, and there is certainly room for further study which focuses on that area. Such work could be framed in terms of production contexts; for example, Channel Four contributed to most of the films from the 1980s that I cite in this thesis. Similarly, the flowering of Carroll-inspired satirical Surrealism that took place during the 1960s, for example, Milligan, Lester, Newley, and the Monty Python team, has its roots in television.

It might also be fruitful to focus on Surrealism as a method for outsiders to tell their stories. The methods and ideas of Surrealism are frequently mobilised as a way of challenging oppression, be that because of gender, race, or some other exploitation in British film. This is an area I have already begun to explore (Middleton, 2014).

My thesis also points towards the need for further study of British film in terms of auteurs. Surrealism is, by its very nature, allied to personal expression and therefore a close bedfellow of auteur study. The work of some commercial directors like Anderson, Hamer, Cavalcanti and, even Jarman (about whom there is already a wealth of material), could be revealed in new and surprising ways. The possibilities in this respect are illustrated by my close study of Jordan's *The Company of Wolves* and *Mona Lisa*.

Looking beyond British Cinema studies, this thesis reveals how fruitful it is to study Jordan's films in art-historical and literary contexts. In doing so, I begin to identify significant narrational, thematic and visual patterns that in fact traverse Jordan's entire oeuvre but which have been mostly uncharted in other auteur studies (e.g. Prammagiore, 2008 and Zucker, 2008). For example, studying Jordan's films in a literary context brings into relief his own literary career which it would be fruitful to contextualise alongside his films. Of course, this presents an opportunity to discuss the significance of Noir fiction, Gothic literature, Lewis Carroll's Alice stories, fairy tales, and so on to Jordan's entire oeuvre of films and literature.

In a recent interview Jordan discusses an ongoing project, a filmic adaptation of his new novel *The Drowned Detective* (2016). He identifies it as different to his other literary output, which he sees as being 'too interior', in that it addresses the inner worlds of his characters (Jordan in Barry, 2016). *The Drowned Detective* is similar to *The Deadly Percheron* (Bardin, 1946) the novel which pervades the plot and narration of *Mona Lisa*; both are noir detective stories about men who lose their old family life and who find themselves caught up in a web of murderous intrigue in which reality and fiction seem to merge (for example, his daughter's imaginary friends seem to come to life). As John Burnside observed in a review of the novel, its premise, of the mundanities of family life, is, in many ways banal; but Jordan, characteristically, transports us to a place in which reality and fantasy have become confused (Burnside, 2016). Of course, this makes Jordan's latest novel and the film he plans to adapt from it ideal for my study of convergences of reality and fantasy. Protest, another of my key themes, is also central to *The Drowned Detective*, which is set in an un-

named Eastern European city in which battles between police and protesters are an ongoing back-drop.

This thesis has also revealed the need for a study of narration in Surrealist film more generally; my chapter on the topic makes some headway, as do Drummond's and Adamowicz's chapters, but there is certainly scope for a longer study that focuses solely on Surrealism, storytelling and film. Storytelling methods are, in fact, quite systematic in the films of Buñuel and Dali and it would be good to see a study that reflects that as well as the broader influence of those methods, not just those that play out in British films.

However important and useful these other possibilities are, my thesis, in essence, responds to recent, urgent calls by Hill and Murphy to move beyond the realism/fantasy polemic as it stood when they were writing. These were not, however, entirely new sympathies. This thesis also replies to Andrew Higson's suggestion in 1983, right at the beginning of the re-appraisals of British cinema, that realism had dominated study of British film to the exclusion of other considerations. As Hill and Murphy have already pointed out, the study of fantasy has at last caught up with the study realism in British cinema debates. However, Higson was not, in fact, asking for realism and the fantastic to be seen as separate avenues. Instead, he was calling for acknowledgement of the dynamic mutability of realism and the fantastic in British film.

My research demonstrates that conventional expectations about realism and fantasy can be overturned, often in disturbing ways. Protest, whether political or personal, is a recurrent motivation in the British films in which realism and fantasy coalesce. In identifying these qualities in British film, I demonstrate that sometimes British cinema has very sharp teeth that can in fact be as visceral as 'a random gunshot into an unsuspecting crowd', Breton's 'simplest act of Surrealism' (Breton, 1930: 125).

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Gasbags (1941). Walter Forde and Marcel Varnel. UK.

Goon Show, The (radio series 1951-1953). Spike Milligan. UK.

Gothic (1986). Ken Russell. UK.

Great Expectations (1946). David Lean. UK.

High Hopes (1988). Mike Leigh. UK.

House that Bled to Death, The (television programme 1980). Tom Clegg. UK.

House that Dripped Blood, The (1971). Peter Dufell. UK.

How to… (series of short films 1967-71). Bruce Lacey. UK.

Human Traffic (1999) Justine Kerrigan. UK.

Hurdes, Las/Land without Bread (1933). Luis Buñuel. Spain.

If… (1968) Lindsay Anderson. UK.

Innocents, *The* (1961). Jack Clayton. UK.

Interview with a Vampire (1994). Neil Jordan. US.

Inland Empire (2006). David Lynch. US/France/Poland.

Journal d'une Femme de Chambre, Le/Diary of a Chambermaid, The (1964). Luis Buñuel. France/Italy.

Jubilee (1977). Derek Jarman. UK.

Kick up the 80s, A (1981-1984). Brian Jobson and Tom Gutteridge. UK.

Kind Hearts and Coronets (1949). Richard Hamer. UK.

King Kong (1933). Ernest, B. Schoedsack and Merian C. Cooper. US.

Lacey Rituals, The (1973). Bruce Lacey. UK.

Lair of the White Worm, The (1988). Ken Russell. UK.

Last of England, The (1988). Derek Jarman. UK.

Last Remake of Beau Geste, The (1977). Marty Feldman. US.

League of Gentlemen, The (television series, 1999-2002). Steve Bendelack. UK.

Lodger, The (1927). Alfred Hitchcock. UK.

London (1994). Patrick Keiller. UK.

Mad Love (1972-1978). Jeff Keen. UK.

Made in Britain (television programme 1982). Alan Clarke. UK.

Matrix, The (1999). Wachowski, A and L. US.

Meaning of Life, The (1983). Terry Jones. UK.

Miracle, The (1991). Neil Jordan. Ireland/UK.

Mepris, Le/Contempt (1963). Jean-Luc Godard. France/Italy.

Mighty Boosh, The (television series 2003-2007). Paul King and Steve Bendelack. UK.

Momma Don't Allow (1954). Karel Reisz and Tony Richardson. UK.

Mona Lisa (1986). Neil Jordan. UK.

Monty Python and the Holy Grail (1975). Terry Gilliam and Terry Jones. UK.

Monty Python's Life of Brian (1979). Terry Jones. UK.

Mulholland Drive (2001). David Lynch. France/US.

Naked (1993). Mike Leigh. UK.

Night of the Hunter, The (1955). Charles Lawton. US.

N or WW (1937). Len Lye. UK.

Obscure Objet du Desire, Cet/Obscure Object of Desire, That (1977). Luis Buñuel. France/Spain.

Odd Man Out (1947). Carol Reed. UK.

O Dreamland (1953) Lyndsay Anderson. UK.

Pandora and the Flying Ducthman (1951). Albert Lewin. US.

Performance (1970). Nicolas Roeg. UK.

Personal Services (1987). Terry Jones. UK.

Peter Ibbertson (1935). Henry Hathaway. US.

Phantôme de la Liberté, Le/Phantom of Liberty, The (1974). Luis Buñuel. France.

Pleasure Garden, The (1952-53). James Broughton. UK.

Pulp Fiction (1994). Quentin Tarrantino. US.

Q5-10 (television series 1969-1980). Ian MacNaughton et al. UK.

Ratcatcher (1999). Lynne Ramsay. UK.

Red Shoes, The (1948). Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger. UK.

Rekopis Znaleziony w Saragossie/Saragossa Manuscript, The (1966). Wojciech Has. Poland

Reptile, The (1966). John Gilling. UK

Remembrance of Things Fast: True Stories, Visual Lies (1994). John Maybury. UK.

Riddles of the Sphynx (1977). Laura Mulvey. UK.

Robinson in Ruins (2010). Patrick Keiller. UK.

Robinson in Space (1997). Patrick Keiller. UK.

Room at the Top (1959). Jack Clayton. UK.

Saturday Night and Sunday Morning (1960). Karel Reisz.UK.

Seashell and the Clergyman, The (1927). Germaine Dulac. France.

Show Called Fred, A (television series 1956). Richard Lester. UK.

Silent Village, The (1943). Humphrey Jennings. UK.

Simone del Desierto/Simon of the Desert (1965). Luis Buñuel. Mexico.

Son of Fred (television series 1956). Richard Lester. UK.

Spaced (television series, 1999-2001). Edgar Wright. UK.

Spare Time (1939). Humphrey Jennings. UK.

Spellbound (1945). Alfred Hitchcock. US.

Sporting Life, This. (1963) Lindsay Anderson. UK.

Somewhere to Live (1950). Jacques Brunius. UK.

Spitting Image (television series, 1984-1996). Bob Cousins and Peter Harris. UK.

Star Wars (1977). George Lucas. US.

Strange Days (1995). Catherine Bigelow. US.

Strange World of Gurney Slade, The (television series 1960). John Trent. UK.

Swandown (2012). Andrew Kötting. UK.

Tales from the Crypt (1972). Freddie Francis. UK.

Tell me if it Hurts (1934). Richard Massingham. UK.

Territories (1984). Julien Isaacs. UK.

They Live by Night (1949). Nicholas Ray. USA.

Three Business Men (1998). Alex Cox. UK.

Thriller (1980). Sally Potter. UK.

Topical Budget, Ham Spray September (1929). Dora Carrington. UK.

To the Devil a Daughter (1976). Peter Sykes. UK.

To The Rescue (1952). Ronald Weyman. UK.

Torture Garden, The (1967). Freddie Francis. UK.

Trainspotting (1996). Danny Boyle. US.

Tristana (1970). Luis Buñuel. Spain.

True Story of Lilli Marlene, The (1945). Humphrey Jennings. UK.

Twin Peaks (television series 1989 - 1991). David Lynch. US.

Two Faces of Evil, The (1980). Alan Gibson. UK.

Up the Junction (1965). Neill Dunn. UK.

Vampire Lovers, The (1970). Roy Ward Baker. UK.

Vault of Horror (1973). Roy Ward Baker. UK.

Viridiana (1961) Luis Buñuel. Spain/Mexico.

Voie Lactee, La/Milky Way, The (1968). Luis Bunuel. France.

Wake of a Deadad, In the (2006). Andrew Kötting. UK.

We Are the Lambeth Boys (1959). Karel Reisz. UK.

Weekend (1967). Jean-Luc Godard. France/Italy.

We Need to Talk About Kevin (2011). Lynne Ramsay. UK/US.

Went the Day Well? (1942). Alberto Cavalcanti. UK.

White Bus, The (1966) Lindsay Anderson. UK.

Witchfinder General (1968). Michael Reeves. UK.

Wicker Man, The (1973). Robin Hardy. UK

Wing Beat (1927). Kenneth McPhereson. UK.

Wish You Were Here (1987). David Leland. UK.

Wizard of Oz (1939). Victor Fleming. US.

Woman in Black, The (2012). James Watkins. UK.

Woman in Black 2: Angel of Death, The (2014). Tom Harper. UK.

Wrong Man, The (1956). Alfred Hitchcock. US

Young Ones, The (television series 1982-1985). Ed Bye et al. UK.