

Feminine Becomings: Theories of the Girl and the Moving Image

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The candidate confirms that the work submitted is her own and that appropriate credit has been given where reference has been made to the work of others.

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This thesis is dedicated to Diana Mary Pollard (1926-2018), my grandmother. Her love of travel, art and singing (two of which I also enjoy) left a big impression on me during my formative years. Towards the end of her life, she always returned (sometimes twice in one conversation) to the stories she remembered of when she was a girl. In particular, one story which, during her time in the Women's Royal Naval Service (the Wrens), saw her rise above her station as a young woman to lead a group of radio operators, many of whom were older men. Although we always laughed about the constant repetition of stories of her time in the Wrens (*'When I was in the Wrens...!'*) I still think it is remarkable and somehow important that it was this moment above all that persisted in our conversations despite the ravages of dementia.

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Abstract

This thesis is a study of the Girl and moving image artworks. The Girl—capitalised to mark it as conceptual question, not an age, stage or designation—is examined as a dimension of feminine subjectivity that amplifies but also challenges specific forms of feminist thought and aesthetic practices. It is addressed as a question in this thesis, specifically posed to a text by feminist philosopher Simone de Beauvoir (1908-1986), and artworks by two artist/filmmakers, Chantal Akerman (1950-2015) and Eija-Liisa Ahtila (b. 1959).

In Chapter 1, I formulate ‘the Girl’ as an ontological question and a dimension of feminine subjectivity. I draw upon this philosophically in a close reading of the chapter on ‘The Girl’ in *The Second Sex* (1949) by Simone de Beauvoir, establishing the distinct temporality of her situation of becoming. In Chapter 2, I explore the relationship between the Girl and cinema in films by Chantal Akerman, analysing *Portrait d’une jeune fille de la fin des années 60 à Bruxelles* (1993) and *No Home Movie* (2015). For the Girl to be analysed I have created a concept for Akerman’s cinema: the *cinéfillette*, making the Girl a cinematic position in addition to a philosophical position. Focusing on the emergence in the 1990s of new forms of the moving image, in Chapter 3 I elaborate the distinctive relation between the Girl, the moving image and temporality by analysing a multi-screen installation artwork by Eija-Liisa Ahtila titled *If 6 Was 9* (1995). The chapter considers the relationship between philosophical and feminist theories of difference, duration and the moving image, situating the figure of the Girl as a critical agent for imagining the future in terms of radical transformation. The study aims to contribute to debates on the moving-image from a feminist perspective on the relationship between the Girl and durational aesthetic practices.

The Girl forms a thread which draws together this thesis by also tracing of theoretical genealogy from de Beauvoir’s historical inscription of the questioning of the feminine through

Akerman's cinematic exploration and then Ahtila's movement into new forms of philosophical and aesthetic processes. The thesis identifies a clear historical shift of thinking the feminine at the intersection with significant technological changes, where the context of our encounter becomes vastly different. To understand contemporary feminist practice in the moving image, these three instances that I examine register the shifts, reveal complexity and have far-reaching significance for the Girl to the question of the feminine and subjectivity addressed to moving image artworks as a site for exploring such becomingness.

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Preface

In an apartment room in Helsinki at dusk, five girls sit around a table. One girl, Tiina, speaks a memory aloud; it is a sexual fantasy, which Tiina remembers being particularly significant when she was a young girl. The eroticism of the memory she recalls is tempered by the setting—a domestic room where the girls are lit by a low hanging standing lamp. Addressing the camera as she divulges her tale, the group of girls sit beside her eating snacks and seeming remarkably unfazed by her bold revelations. It is as if this happened every day.

Almost three minutes into the ten-minute film I am struck by the strangeness of it all. Tiina speaks in Finnish, a language I do not understand, but beneath the large screens, which mean the image is cut into three parts, what is said is translated into English. Tiina and her companions seem to be around thirteen or fourteen but speak of memories and experiences as if they were grown women. They speak plainly but this only exacerbates the peculiarity. These are vivid sexual encounters and mundane days spent at home; childhood fantasies and daydreams of the future—but who are this group of girls, how have they got here and why do they speak in this way?

The large format of the screens stretches across the room, filling the wall on a cinematic scale, but much wider than normal and cut into three parts. While Tiina speaks, the three parts form a panoramic tableau of the room. A girl gets up to move from the left screen, through centre, to the right, meaning she is bisected by the cut between screen as she moves. A moment later as Tiina finishes her speech, the next episode begins. Black screens, fast edits and movement.

The scene I am describing comes from an artwork entitled *If 6 Was 9* (1995) by Finnish artist Eija-Liisa Ahtila, a multiple-screen moving image artwork made for gallery and cinema. The film is an intense examination of girl-characters, memory and sexuality by means

of the moving image on multiple screens. In the work the moving dimensions of the image are brought into contact with the girls, who are the only characters in the film.

The germ of this thesis arose from looking into different forms of moving image artwork made for the gallery during my MA studies at the University of Leeds in 2013. Through this search I encountered the work of Eija-Liisa Ahtila at the point where Mieke Bal had just published the major monograph *Thinking in Film: The Politics of Video Art Installation According to Eija-Liisa Ahtila*.¹ The book situated Ahtila's work as philosophically, aesthetically and politically significant in form and content as, for Bal, the moving image in the form of Ahtila's installations is a crucial site for engaging a form of political action.²

The collection of Ahtila's work on DVD, which had been released by the British Film Institute in 2004, allowed access to a broad selection of Ahtila's works from 1993-2002, before I later sought them out in exhibitions. Among the works that I encountered on the DVD, and even after seeing a broader selection of works in the gallery, it was the ten-minute, three-screen installation *If 6 Was 9* that still captured my attention. The relationship between the form (the multiplied screen onto which moving images were projected in the gallery) and the interaction of the girls intrigued me, insofar as both presented themselves as forms or figures that were difficult for me to get to grips with, resisting categorisation and demanding further attention.

It was, therefore, the question of moving image installation in the gallery which first drew attention to the figure that has sustained this thesis: the Girl. The girls in *If 6 Was 9* first posed the question of what the relationship between the moving image and the Girl might be.

¹ Mieke Bal, *Thinking in Film* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013).

² Bal, *Thinking in Film*, p. 5.

Introduction—Theories of the Girl and the Moving Image

Is the question *what* is a girl? Or is the question *who* is a girl? Or, is it neither because the very term, *girl*, is neither linguistically nor sociologically—let alone psychologically—capable of certainty. Is the *girl*, then, a question at all? To elaborate this issue critically, I have turned to the arena of cultural practice that inelegantly might be labelled moving image artworks. Abandoning the generic categorisation of art forms: cinema, video, photograph (let alone taking up notions of image or narrative, medium or practice) moving image artworks are themselves the problem to be addressed.

In this thesis, I address the Girl as a question (capitalising it to mark it as conceptual question not an age, stage or designation) asked in relation to moving image artworks and pose the form and process of moving image artworks as a site for exploring the becomingness that I shall argue is one means of thinking the Girl.

I will thus develop one of the key concerns addressed by scholars working in feminist film studies, namely, in what way do film and moving image artworks explore dimensions of, or inscribe modalities of, *feminine subjectivity*?³ This phrasing declares its origins in an earlier moment of engagements between feminist thought and practice and cinema (institution,

³ Significant texts from this classic era of feminist film studies that address this question include: Teresa de Lauretis, *Technologies of Gender* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987); Mary Ann Doane, *The Desire to Desire: The Woman's film in the 1940s* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987); Kaja Silverman, *The Acoustic Mirror: The Female Voice in Psychoanalysis and Cinema* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988); *Home is Where the Heart Is: Studies in Melodrama and the Woman's Film*, ed. by Christine Gledhill (London: British Film Institute, 1987); Tania Modleski, *The Women Who Knew Too Much: Hitchcock and Feminist Theory* (New York: Methuen, 1988).

apparatus) and film (form and genre)—strongly, but not exclusively, drawing on psychoanalysis as a resource for film analysis and theories of cinema.

The moment from which this thesis is written is shaped still by the legacy of classic feminist film theory, but it aims to engage critically with shifts within and border crossings of cinema with a hybrid form, the moving image, itself crossing other borders. With the moving image projected on often multiple screens, cinema enters the gallery—a space associated with static art forms. At the same time, the aesthetics and politics of video, appropriated as an art material and medium from the early 1960s, disseminates into other technological formats. These new digital formats expand the reach and outlook of cinema. Theorisations of film and moving image artworks crossover or even collide, generating a wider range of philosophical, rather than psychoanalytical, theorisations of time and the image. These multiple intersecting shifts have implications for the theorisation of feminine subjectivities and their aesthetic articulations in temporal, screen modalities.

At the beginning of this research, the correlation between the two aspects, feminine subjectivity and the moving image, constituted a vast and complex field. What was required was the demarcation of a space for the philosophical and aesthetic study of the relation of the moving image with a particular dimension of subjectivity and sexual difference. The space I have discerned and the intervention I am making concerns a figure, which is also a concept, and a problem: the Girl. In this thesis, the Girl is understood as a dimension of feminine subjectivity that amplifies but also challenges specific forms of feminist thought and aesthetic practices. The feminine is understood, here, neither as synonymous with women nor with social constructions of gender, but as a concept that guides us towards ways of thinking—indeed being a challenge for thought itself. Feminist theorists Drucilla Cornell and Elizabeth Grosz have, drawing on the philosophy of Luce Irigaray, understood the feminine through a paradox, it being both the negative other in the phallogentric order, and an as yet unmapped potentiality excessive to it, while inevitably shaped within its imaginary and symbolic

formations.⁴ Subsequently then, subjectivity, as a philosophical and psychoanalytic problematic is approached through a particular dimension—the Girl—in order to pose questions about sexual difference and its creative inscriptions. I am suggesting that the Girl is to be understood as at once an ontological, psycho-social and linguistic position, which cannot be grasped simply by terms such as adolescent, youth or teenager. My proposition is that it can be approached productively at the intersection of philosophy and aesthetic practices, involving the moving image in an expanded sense that can reconsider its precedents in feminist-inflected work in cinema.

While the question of ‘woman’ and her becoming has been a topic of concern for art, film and theory engaged in a feminist problematic for over sixty years, the specific philosophical and aesthetic issues raised by this dimension of feminine subjectivity has been generally overlooked, with some significant exceptions I shall discuss later. I want, therefore, to ask the following questions: How is it that we know so very little about this aspect of women’s lives and their cultural inscriptions? What kind of aesthetic practices might answer such questions? What is the relationship between the moving image and the dimension of subjectivity I am naming as the Girl? In this thesis, these questions are proposed in alliance with *The Second Sex* (1949) by feminist philosopher Simone de Beauvoir (1908-1986), and the work of two artist/filmmakers—Chantal Akerman (1950–2015) and Eija-Liisa Ahtila (b. 1959).

An analysis of the Girl as a philosophical concept must begin with de Beauvoir’s influential feminist text *The Second Sex*.⁵ The existential-phenomenological study allowed her to ask the question: ‘what is woman?’ propelling ‘the feminine condition’ [*la condition féminine*]

⁴ Elizabeth Grosz, *Time Travels: Feminism, Nature, Power* (Crows Nest: Allen and Unwin, 2005); Drucilla Cornell, *Transformations: Recollective Imagination and Sexual Difference* (New York: Routledge, 1993).

⁵ Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, trans. by Constance Borde and Sheila Malovany-Chevallier (London: Vintage, 2010).

into philosophy and a philosophical register.⁶ The famous line, correctly translated as, ‘One is not born, but rather becomes, woman’, introduced the concept of becoming, insisting that crucial to the question of woman is *how* exactly one ‘becomes’.⁷ We cannot understand how one ‘becomes’ woman without undertaking the task of understanding the Girl. Yet it is vital to insist, even at this preliminary stage of introduction, that ‘becoming’ does not register a simple process, a teleology of development. As an ontological problem, *becoming* renders the Girl specifically significant in any analysis of the feminine as a becoming and not a fixed terminus and a concept: woman.

The aesthetic practices and theories I engage with are not about knowing what the Girl ‘is’ in a manner seeking one definite answer. This study addresses itself to the intersection of philosophy and aesthetic practices in order to expand possible meanings of the Girl and to explore what might potentially register different moments of what de Beauvoir defined as lived experience of the becoming feminine subject.⁸ The Girl is an unruly concept, a slippery figure and a complex problem. My theoretical analysis of texts and films feeds upon the unruliness, slipperiness and complexity, exploring how aesthetic forms of the moving image might be suited to the task of envisioning the Girl.

Cinema and other cultural practices, what Teresa de Lauretis has called ‘technologies of gender’, are a crucial site of feminist contestation, both for feminist critique of patriarchal hegemonic discourses that, in de Lauretis’ terms, inscribe the non-presence of Woman, but also crucially for re-visioning technologies and the gender and representations they produce.⁹

⁶ De Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (2010) p. 17.

⁷ De Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (2010) p. 293. Before the recent translation of *The Second Sex* by Constance Borde and Sheila Malovany-Chevallier in 2010 English speakers only had access to a partially published version, abridged and translated by Howard Parshley in 1953.

⁸ The description of lived experience is de Beauvoir’s phenomenological-existential method in the second volume of *The Second Sex*, focussing on the question of existence beginning from the particularity of lived experience. See: de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (2010) p. 17.

⁹ De Lauretis, *Technologies of Gender*, pp. 9–10.

How do we free investigations of the feminine and subjectivity from the impossible burden of describing Woman? The archive addressed in this thesis represents texts, films and artworks that have resisted dominant feminist engagements with the object/subject Woman—focusing on young women and girls through creative inscriptions.

Belgian filmmaker, Chantal Akerman (1950–2015) produced a substantial body of cinematic work from 1968, when at eighteen she made her first film *Saute Ma Ville*, until her tragic death in 2015. This work has comprised a sustained feminist exploration of the boundaries of femininity and subjectivity, autobiography and fiction, shot and duration. Akerman's cinema, in particular the celebrated *Jeanne Dielman, 23 quai du Commerce, 1080 Bruxelles* (1975), provided feminist theorists from the 1970s with the resources to explore a new cinematic language, imagining cinema and women other than in the terms given to them by patriarchal culture. Over many years I have been repeatedly drawn to Akerman's work by its use of colour, sound, duration and her creation of the shot that produced particular narratives or ways of shifting cinematic experience. In the context of the Girl, her cinema made me completely rethink what a cinema of the Girl might be.

From the first, Akerman films display a distinct interest in the representation of young women on screen. In *Saute Ma Ville*, eighteen-year-old Akerman plays a young woman erratically performing domestic activities within the space of a small apartment kitchen. Six years later, Akerman plays another young woman in *Je, tu, il, elle* (1974). The characteristic long duration shots and minimalist formal style frame the journey of her character Julie, who, from solitary moments at home, embarks on a road trip meeting a truck driver and ending with a former girlfriend. The short film *J'ai faim, j'ai froid* (1984), one of Akerman's comedies, marks another instance where girls are a focus. It follows the escapades of two teenage girls in the city who are absorbed by their friendship, constant hunger and cold. *Portrait d'une jeune fille de la fin des années 60 à Bruxelles* (1993), is a commissioned film about *une jeune fille* exploring the boundaries of desire and freedom on the streets of Brussels—the filmmaker's

home city. *La folie Almayer* (2011), her re-imagination of Joseph Conrad's novel from 1895 of the same name, focusses on a girl named Nina's relationship to her father, Almayer.¹⁰

Girl-characters are figures to which Akerman's cinema returns to again and again. The significance of the Girl in Akerman's cinema, however, is not solely grounded in girl-characters who appear in the films. It extends towards the position of Akerman as filmmaker. In interviews, Akerman repeatedly narrates her discovery of cinema through her encounter with Jean-Luc Godard's *Pierrot le Fou* (1965) when she was fifteen and living in Brussels. Moreover, many scholars of Akerman's cinema have drawn conclusions from the connection they make between Akerman's biography and the narratives produced by her cinematic work.¹¹ Resisting the tendency to posit her films as stories about her girlhood, I want to argue that we might study her cinema to develop a theorisation of the Girl. Reversing this proposition, I also want to ask: can attention to the figuration of the Girl in Akerman's cinema reveal new perspectives on her work? The dimension in her work I am calling the Girl has neither been addressed adequately in the now considerable body of scholarship on Akerman's cinema, nor in feminist film theory.

Eija-Liisa Ahtila's (b. 1959) films and gallery installations are part of a distinct post-cinematic mode of moving image art. Told across multiple screens, her work comprises of fictional stories that address feminist issues of relationships, sexuality and subjectivity by examining how image, sound and narrative are constructed. Artworks such as *Today* (1996) deal with family relationships and shifts of identity. In *The Present* (2001) five episodes

¹⁰ *La niña* also means the Girl in Spanish.

¹¹ Around this discussion see: Alisa Lebow, 'Identity Slips: The Autobiographical Register in the Work of Chantal Akerman', *Film Quarterly*, 70 (2016), 54-60 and 'Memory Once Removed: Indirect Memory and Transitive Autobiography in Chantal Akerman's *D'Est*', *Camera Obscura*, 18, (2003) 35-83. See also: Maureen Turim, 'Personal Pronouncements in *I...You...He...She* and *Portrait of a Young Girl at the End of the 1960s in Brussels*' in *Identity and Memory: The Films of Chantal Akerman*, ed. by Gwendolyn Audrey Foster (Wiltshire: Flick Books, 1999) pp. 9-26 and Jennifer Barker, 'The feminine side of New York: travelogue, autobiography and architecture in *News from Home*' in *Identity and Memory*, pp. 41-58.

explore the shifts and borders of subjectivity and feminine experience through portraits of near-hysterical characters on the brink. Amid immaculately constructed stories, the Girl is a figure who appears repeatedly. The daughter in *Me/We, Okay, Gray* (1993) is followed next by five girls as the only characters that appear in *If 6 Was 9* (1995). More girl-characters appear in *Today* (1996) and *The Present* (2001)—both inscribed simply as ‘Girl’ in the scripts. In *The Wind* (2002) girls appear to mock the young woman plagued by a strange gale invading her apartment. Embodying in different ways the disruption of conventional representations of women and femininity, the artworks expands to multiple screens and new forms of image making to express and understand them.

Again, however, my interest in Ahtila’s work does not simply rest on the exploration of girl-characters. Her multi-screen gallery films have perplexed and fascinated me since my first encounter. Moreover, scholars have explored how Ahtila’s approach is invested in examining *how* images and narratives are constructed through their particular multi-screen formats. Layering and combinations of image, sound, screen and narrative are used as a critical tool upon themselves. I want to propose that Ahtila’s moving image gallery installations and films are distinctly also invested in a project of ‘thinking’ the Girl as part this critical examination. I also want to ask: how does examination of what the Girl or the moving image might be, through new durational forms of presentation, bear upon issues of temporality and difference as one key concern for feminist theory.¹²

The ten-minute three-screen film, *If 6 Was 9*, in particular, is central to this question. The film reworks notions of sexuality and embodiment, spatial and temporal co-ordinates and

¹² Feminist theorists, including Elizabeth Grosz, Rebecca Hill and Dorothea Olkowski, have shifted feminist philosophy to engage with philosophies of duration and difference often drawing on concepts developed in the writing of Gilles Deleuze, Luce Irigaray and Henri Bergson. See: Grosz, *Time Travels*; Rebecca Hill, *The Interval: Relation and Becoming in Irigaray, Aristotle, and Bergson*, (New York: Fordham University Press, 2012); Dorothea Olkowski, *Gilles Deleuze and the Ruin of Representation*, (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1999).

narrative cinematic forms. Girls are the only characters who appear, delivering estranged monologues about sexual experiences, memories and fantasies interspersed with landscape shots of the city of Helsinki.¹³ The relationship between temporality and femininity is addressed by the subjects of the film—girls who are thirteen to fifteen—and the form of the film itself, drawn into distinct rhythms and movement by the spatial and temporal format of the work.

In Ahtila's vision of what Alison Butler names for her as 'feminist film in the gallery', where the multi-screen installation format provides an arena for inscriptions of meaning and intensity, crossing borders of subjects and experience through layers of sound, image and duration, the *Girl* emerges as a productive site that has prompted this investigation.¹⁴ The *Girl* as a productive site of investigation leads back to a philosophical text that initiated a new phase of feminist interrogation of the question of woman and women's lived experience, to the cinema of Chantal Akerman, a key figure in the doubled histories of feminist cinema and feminist film theory in order to return to the work of Ahtila and the specificity of its mediation of this genealogy, through transformed possibilities of image and the philosophy of duration in her moving image art installations.

Before we can undertake these close textual and visual readings of three works by Simone de Beauvoir, Chantal Akerman and Eija-Liisa Ahtila, I want to examine closely the term *Girl* as noun, concept, figure and problem.

¹³ The estranged monologue refers to the girls who speak the memories and fantasies of older women. There is a strange disjunction between what is said and who is saying brought about by instances where what the girl says seems to jar with her age as a thirteen to fifteen-year-old, as a consequence of the experiences stemming from older woman.

¹⁴ Alison Butler, 'Feminist Film in the Gallery: *If 6 Was 9*', *Camera Obscura*, 20, 1 (2005), 1-30.

girl /gɜːl/ noun

The Girl is the central concept of this thesis. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, *girl* has several different meanings:

1. Chiefly in plural. A child of either sex; a young person. [...]
2. a. A young or relatively young woman. [...]
b. A woman of any age. [...]
3. A female child. The counterpart of *boy*. [...]
4. *colloq.* A sweetheart, a girlfriend; a wife. [...]
5. Used as a form of address to a girl or woman. [...]
6. A prostitute.¹⁵

By grouping the definitions, it appears that *girl* can mean almost anyone—except an adult man—and we discover a particular emphasis on age and positions women are able to occupy under a patriarchal social order which seem to define *girl* in her filial or sexual relation to a man. How, then, for our purposes here, do we define the word *girl*? Unlike French, the English language distinguishes between *girl* and *daughter* making it easier to discern a feminine position not related to patriarchal social roles—such as daughter, wife, mother and prostitute.¹⁶ In French *la fille* means both daughter and girl, derived from the Latin *filia*, a female child, alongside *filius*, a male child, both originating from *felios*—meaning suckling, describing the infant’s attachment to another. In Finnish (the spoken language in work by Eija-Liisa Ahtila), *tyttö*, meaning girl, is derived from *tytär*, meaning daughter. The etymology of *daughter* in English derives from Old English *dohter*, describing a young feminine person in a specific relation to her parents. By tracing these words, I am calling attention to the fact that there is no transparent transfer between languages but singularities and their differences that

¹⁵ ‘girl, n.’ *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, (2018) <www.oed.com/view/Entry/78475> [accessed 15 July 2018]

¹⁶ It should be noted, however, that definitions of ‘girl’ include girlfriend, wife, daughter and prostitute. The conflation of positions in the term ‘girl’ requires a feminist theorisation of subjectivity that provides a way of conceptualising feminine subjectivity that is not simply reducible or in reference to these positions.

make it possible to approach and interrogate the *girl*, and which prove to be particularly useful for my wrestling with the problems pursued in this thesis.¹⁷

In the chapters that follow, I engage with the problematic of terminology and *the Girl*, as conceptually, aesthetically, sexually and linguistically difficult to pin down. Etymologically this starts from the very beginning, as the definition of *girl* has ambiguous origins.¹⁸ While linguistic scholarship on the word identifies it as part of the core vocabulary of Modern English, it is, at the same time, as linguistics scholar Ursula Lenker describes, one of the most investigated words in English linguistics because of its etymological ambiguity.¹⁹ The puzzle of its etymology has given rise to several opposing theories. Historian and theorist of Old English, Fred Robinson has developed the most widely accepted theory, which derives *girl* metonymically from Old English *girela* or *gyrela* meaning ‘garment/apparel’.²⁰ The Girl emerges from the clothes she wears.

Developing in the thirteenth century, *girl* in Old English did not mean ‘a female child’, as in common usage today, but instead referred to a young person of either sex as a colloquial expression.²¹ Tracing the usage of the word, Lenker proposes that it was only later from the sixteenth century onwards that *girl* came to refer to a female child exclusively. Lenker also points out that the moment in which *girl* enters more common usage occurs at a specific cultural moment when a concept of childhood and a concept of adolescence manifested.²²

¹⁷ See: Joan Scott, ‘Gender: Still a Useful Category of Analysis?’ *Diogenes*, 57 (2010), 7–14.

¹⁸ *Chambers Twentieth Century Dictionary*, ed. by A M MacDonald (Edinburgh: Chambers, 1977), p. 550.

¹⁹ Ursula Lenker, ‘Gerles, girls, grrlz—Girl Power! Cultural Phenomena and the semantic changes of *girl*’, in *Words, Lexemes, Concepts- approaches to the Lexicon*, ed. by Wolfgang Faulkner and Hans-Jorg Schmid, (Tubingen: Narr, 1999) 7–22 (p. 7).

²⁰ Fred Robinson, ‘European Clothing Names and the Etymology of *Girl*’, in *Studies in Historical Linguistics in Honor of George Sherman Lane*, ed. by Walter W Arndt (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1967) 223–240.

²¹ Lenker, p. 13.

²² Lenker, pp. 10–11.

Thus, *girl* once referred to a young person of either sex but then saw its meaning specialised and refined. *Boy* emerged separately as the counterpart from its original meaning of servant—*boy* was the belated supplement to *girl*.²³

By the twentieth century, however, *girl* was fully integrated into binary structures of *girl/boy* and *woman/man*. Where in Old English *girl* did not refer to a specific gender but only to the individual's availability for marriage, in Modern English *girl* was positioned as the asymmetric opposition to *boy* and *woman*, lacking the qualities of both 'adult' and 'male'.²⁴ Despite *girl* being a noun under much etymological scrutiny, it also functions as a foundational example for teaching linguistics. Lenker writes, "The contrasts between *boy*, *girl*, *woman* and *man* are given in almost all textbooks on English semantics where they serve as prototypical examples for the introduction and exemplification of componential analysis."²⁵ In the study of semantic relations, *girl* supposedly represents an unquestioned cornerstone of meaning, tethered firmly to other terms functioning only as a negative value against the positive values of 'adult' and 'man'.²⁶ This transformation of usage effaces some of its etymological history. Tracing the fluctuating meanings and paradoxes of *girl*, including being different from *daughter*, provides a point of ambiguity, which this study takes advantage to push against the tendency to fix notions of the Girl in relation to patriarchal social roles.

²³ This is similar to the example of female and male, which is even more surprising due to the similarity of their spelling. Girl, boy, female and male are unrelated in their etymological origins. Female derives from a Latin root, *femella* (young woman) as a diminutive form of *femina* (woman). *Femella* was changed to female due to an erroneous alteration in the late fourteenth century to reflect the spelling of male. Male instead derives from the Latin *masculus*, meaning worthy of a man. The alteration of *femella* to female occluded the difference between female and male suggesting that the two words developed in tandem. Accordingly, the similarity of the spelling suggests that female is merely male + something.

²⁴ As issue, however, as de Beauvoir argues in *The Second Sex*, is the girl does not become an independent adult in patriarchal society. As daughter, she is to be exchanged, married and made into a mother. See also: Luce Irigaray, 'Women on the Market', *This Sex Which Is Not One*, trans. Catherine Porter and Carolyn Burke, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985).

²⁵ Lenker, p. 13.

²⁶ Although 'positive' values, both terms are still imprecise and neither *adult* nor *man* are spared the play of the signifier.

Despite their semantic pairing, the kind of linguistic and existential ambiguity the Girl inhabits is different from the situation of boys. The conditions under which one might be called *boy* are not symmetrical to the situations in which one might be called *girl*. While a grown man might be called *boy* in certain circumstances, it is much less common. To be called *boy* can and has signified a condition of servitude with often racialised connotations, for instance in the Southern States of America or in colonial and apartheid South Africa.

Being hailed as a *girl*, however, is much more common for grown women, as in ‘the girls’. *Girl* is also used for women of an advanced age as in ‘the old girl’. In another case, baby boys are affectionately called *little man* while no baby girl is deemed a *little woman*. In her discussion concerning word pairs for men and women, Linda Bebout writes: ‘[t]he terms *lady*, *woman* and *girl* are not used in reference to the same age ranges as the corresponding masculine terms—especially *girl*, which can refer to a much older person than a *boy*.’²⁷ Although both *boy* and *girl* might call up the image of a child, the temporal distinction between *girl* and *woman* is different not just chronologically but in quality to that of *boy* and *man*. If *girl* is the immature version of *woman*, then those living under the sign *girl* or *woman* are connected differently, if not forever, to notions of immaturity and dependence.

This analysis reveals a number of difficulties when thinking about these words, their categorisation and how they might connect to lived experience. What does living (or having lived) under the sign of *girl*, or ‘as’ a Girl, really mean?

After I had embarked on this research I became closer to the Girl, having ‘grown’ while writing this thesis and becoming entangled in the term, yet effectively moving further away from my own girlhood. In the latter half of my twenties I am no longer a girl, yet I might still occasionally be called one, or even call myself one. Moreover, the boundaries between ‘being’

²⁷ Linda Bebout ‘Asymmetries in Male-female Word Pairs’, *American Speech*, 59 (1984), 13–30 (p. 14).

a girl or woman, as I and others live it, are not so clearly demarcated and in fact can change between the different situations in which we find ourselves day to day.

Culture makes so much of the ‘transition’ of Girl to Woman yet understands so little about what this might mean.²⁸ As my research has progressed I have paid attention to the myriad of ways the Girl is invoked in social situations and produced in media and different artforms. Moreover, this study is also an intensely personal search for forms in which the Girl might be unveiled or inscribed differently, in what de Lauretis locates in *Technologies of Gender* as a feminist desire to produce or encounter that which is not represented in the dominant frame yet remains crucial for an expanded understanding of all subjectivities and their social situations.²⁹

In the titling of her chapters in *The Second Sex*, de Beauvoir makes a crucial distinction between ‘*Enfance*’ and ‘*La Jeune Fille*’. In Chapter 1 of this thesis I shall discuss the problem of translation in naming the chapter ‘The Girl’ in de Beauvoir’s *The Second Sex*, where the problem provides an opening for discussing ‘*la jeune fille*’ or ‘The Girl’ as a distinct ontological dimension of femininity. Following de Beauvoir, other terminologies which may describe a similar figure—*young woman, youth, coming of age, teenager, tween, adolescent*—fail to capture the complexity and significance of the Girl, a term that provides access to and challenges specific forms of feminist thought and aesthetic practices. *Young woman*, for example, qualifies itself against Woman. *Coming of age* sets up a framework in which one will have arrived at a certain age and maturity having passed through appropriate stages. *Teenager* is imbedded in a specific age, *-teen* meaning ‘ten more than’ being the element making numbers

²⁸ Catherine Driscoll writes: ‘Somewhere in the nineteenth century, such texts suggest, people started to talk about how a girl becomes a woman in new scientific terms that made it possible to better understand what happened to girls when they became women.’ *Girls: Feminine Adolescence in Popular Culture*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002) p. 3.

²⁹ Teresa de Lauretis, *Technologies of Gender*, pp. 24–26.

thirteen to nineteen.³⁰ Teenager find its origin in the 1940s, as a marketing term for adolescents who became newly visible in post-war American culture.³¹ While adolescent comes from Latin *adolescere*, meaning to grow up, come to maturity or ripen, G. Stanley Hall's book *Adolescence* (1904) is viewed by historians and psychologists as 'discovering' adolescence as an area of study and a typology with a particular psychological profile. Emphasising a distinct age, growing up, development or typologies, these terms resist the examination of, what de Beauvoir calls, a situation, focusing on the next stage, where one might arrive, or a particular age, rather than the lived experience of the Girl herself and without considering sexual difference.

'Feminine adolescence' is a term coined by cultural studies scholar, Catherine Driscoll in her influential book *Girls* (2002). 'Feminine' and 'adolescence' are combined to produce a useful explanatory category for analysing the meaning of girlhood in the twentieth century and the impact of girls in culture. Driscoll highlights the feminisation of terms such as adolescence and teenager in terms of their close association with dependence and disempowerment. Hall's famous study of adolescence, for example, draws strong analogies between *adolescence* and *woman*:

woman at her best never outgrows adolescence as man does, but lingers in, magnifies and glorifies this culminating stage of life with its all-sided interests, its convertibility of emotions, its enthusiasm, and zest for all that is good, beautiful, true and heroic.³²

As Driscoll argues, however, despite incorporating 'feminised' attributes, Hall neglects and dismisses girls themselves.³³ In response, her deployment of 'feminine adolescence' aims to capture the specificity of girls' lived experience and their representation in late-modernity.

³⁰ 'teenager', <https://www.etymonline.com/word/-teen#etymonline_v_7678> [accessed 20.08.2018].

³¹ Jon Savage, *Teenage: The Creation of Youth Culture*, (London: Pimlico, 2007) p. xiii.

³² G. Stanley Hall, *Adolescence: Its Psychology and Its Relations to Physiology, Anthropology, Sociology, Sex, Crime, Religion and Education*, Volume 2, (New York: Appleton, 1904) p. 624.

³³ Driscoll, *Girls*, p. 54.

In addition to Driscoll's approach, my use of the term Girl allows me to pose it as a concept, figure and problem. I have, furthermore, decided that it is necessary to distinguish between *the Girl*, as the position or concept, and *a girl*, as the embodied subject and individual of a certain age. This follows curator and writer, Taru Elfving who uses the capitalisation of *Girl* to mark a conceptual-lexical distinction in similar way as *Woman*, as sign and symbol, marked a difference from *women* as social and historical subjects.³⁴ In her discussion of moving-image installations by Eija-Liisa Ahtila, Elfving differentiates between the girl as a character versus the conceptual deployment the Girl. Building on this distinction allows me to analyse the Girl as a concept addressed to the intersection of philosophy and aesthetic practices, rather than girls as living beings who are an object of socio-cultural or psychoanalytical study. It also captures de Beauvoir's efforts to suspend the moment of the Girl as a concept in order to examine its wider ontological significance in her project to understand that one is not born woman, but becomes so.

Girl as Concept

A discussion of the Girl as a philosophical concept must begin with philosopher Simone de Beauvoir's foundational feminist text of the second half of the twentieth century, *The Second Sex*, published in 1949, which propelled the question of *woman* and the concept of becoming into philosophy and onto a philosophical register. Analysing and describing woman as spoken and defined in biology, psychoanalysis, historical materialism, art and myth, as does de Beauvoir in *The Second Sex*, was complemented in the second volume by a close study of the various moments at which sexual difference takes its hold. Identifying or rather pausing to delineate the condition of the Girl, de Beauvoir displaced the concept of woman in a different

³⁴ Taru Elfving, *Thinking Aloud: On the Address of the Viewer*, unpublished thesis, Goldsmiths, University of London, 2009.

way, and thereby made visible, as I shall argue, the Girl as a central ontological concept for feminist thought. De Beauvoir does this by providing an existential-phenomenological analysis of the moment of the Girl in order to identify a dimension of and in feminine becoming that, I shall also argue, is not to be misunderstood only as a stage.

Treating the Girl as a concept expands the horizons of what might constitute a study of girls. Key figures in the growing field of Girls' Studies, Mary Celeste Kearney and Catherine Driscoll have suggested, however, that *The Second Sex* only addressed 'youth' in order to understand adult women.³⁵ I want to complicate this perspective by showing the significance of naming and demarcating the chapter on 'The Girl' that renders the Girl a concept for de Beauvoir's philosophical contribution. By making the Girl, a philosophical question within the overall project of her investigation into woman, de Beauvoir opened the Girl to being analysed for its own complexity and far-reaching significance. *The Second Sex* has given other scholars permission to create Girls' Studies, which contribute to my research at the level of representation or social experience but translating her chapter into socio-cultural studies misses the philosophical issues of the Girl as an ontological question. Creating an age-group concept of girls is different from pondering what is the subject position that is neither Child nor Sexual Initiate, Lesbian, Married Woman, Mother—her other categories of 'lived experience'.

The Girl as a concept has been important for theorists and philosophers since de Beauvoir, particularly in relation to 'becoming'. In their chapter 'Sexual Differing', Rick Dolphijn and Iris van der Tuin connect de Beauvoir's theorisation of the Girl to Deleuze and Guattari's concept of becoming-woman:

³⁵ Mary Celeste Kearney, 'Coalescing: The Development of Girls' Studies', *NWSA*, 21 (2009), 1–28 (p. 11); Catherine Driscoll, *Girls*, pp.127–128.

Deleuze and Guattari appear to be very much inspired by de Beauvoir's materialist feminism of the flesh as they equate her becoming-woman with "the girl." It is a thoroughly vitalist concept that performs the hysteric reality of all bodies-to-come.³⁶

The Girl, in Deleuze and Guattari's *A Thousand Plateaus* (1987), is the exemplary figure of becoming woman, which is itself the key towards a new plane of becoming.³⁷

The girl is like the block of becoming that remains contemporaneous to each opposable term, man, woman, child, adult. It is not the girl who becomes a woman; it is becoming-woman that produced the universal girl.³⁸

Deleuze and Guattari's theorisation of the Girl lifts her out of a teleology of becoming headed towards a molar identity (such as woman) into a sense of becoming that troubles the primacy of the subject as a mode of being. The Girl is, 'an abstract line, or a line of flight. Thus, girls do not belong to an age group, sex, order or kingdom: they slip in everywhere, between orders, acts, ages, sexes.'³⁹ The body of the Girl is stolen first and becomes the place from where other molar identities emerge; thus, the Girl (as Girl becoming Woman) becomes the founding moment from which the dichotomous logic of representation proceeds. She may be the first casualty, but she is also, as Claire Colebrook describes, 'the becoming of becoming'.⁴⁰ She is the becoming of man's (the subject defined as *being*) other (woman) and who thus holds the potential to go beyond binary opposition. Deleuze and Guattari are not concerned with actual girls but use the Girl as a state of becoming necessary to pass through to resist dualistic theory and molar subjectivity—a movement away from identity, recognition and emancipation.

³⁶ Rick Dolphijn and Iris van der Tuin, 'Sexual Differing' in *New Materialism: Interviews & Cartographies*, ed. by Rick Dolphijn and Iris van der Tuin (Ann Arbor: Open Humanities Press, 2012) p. 149.

³⁷ Hannah Stark, *Feminist Theory After Deleuze* (London and New York: Bloomsbury, 2016) pp. 25–37.

³⁸ Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, trans. by Brian Massumi (London and New York: Continuum, 2004) p. 305.

³⁹ Deleuze and Guattari, p. 305.

⁴⁰ Claire Colebrook, 'Introduction', in *Deleuze and Feminist Theory*, ed. by Ian Buchanan and Claire Colebrook (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000) p. 2.

There is a considerable body of feminist readings and appropriations of Deleuze by philosophers such as Elizabeth Grosz, Claire Colebrook, Dorothea Olkowski and Rosi Braidotti, as well as a robust set of criticisms of his philosophy that I will not rehearse here.⁴¹ Feminist theorists have thoroughly examined the Girl in Deleuze's philosophy, in terms of becoming-woman but also the adoption of Alice in *The Logic of Sense* (1990).⁴² There are, however, other concepts in Deleuzian philosophy that are significant for feminism and feminist theory. Elizabeth Grosz has made a crucial intervention in philosophy by arguing for a radical shift in feminist attention to futurity. Drawing on the philosophical terms formulated by Deleuze, she suggests that most significant for feminism are the concepts of difference, the virtual and duration—namely those that engage with a transformative potential. She writes:

The project of radical politics, and thus of a radical feminist politics, remains directed at how to envisage and engender a future unlike the present, without being able to specify in advance what such a future entails. It is thus an investment in the power of the leap, by which the actual emerges and produces itself from its virtual resources, that generates the new, in both politics and theory.⁴³

It is, then, a task for feminism to reframe the relationship between politics and future by investing in processes, becoming and materialities without pre-given aims.⁴⁴

The Girl is tied by the implicit telos of the transition of a girl into woman as a stage in development, growing up, or maturing. Thus, the Girl is implicated in a notion of temporality that is oriented toward the future. As Grosz has argued, how we conceive of that future in

⁴¹ Alice Jardine's early reading 'Women in Limbo: Deleuze and His Br(others)', published in *SubStance* in 1984, and later also in *Gynesis* (1985) questions the concept 'becoming-woman' in which woman as a reality disappears. Luce Irigaray also criticises the concept in *This Sex Which Is Not One* (1977, translated in English 1985). Elizabeth Grosz, Claire Colebrook, Dorothea Olkowski, Patricia Pisters and many other feminist theorists are rereading Deleuze's writings more sympathetically.

⁴² See: Rebecca Coleman, *The Becoming of Bodies: Girls, Images, Experience*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009); Catherine Driscoll, 'The Woman in Process: Deleuze, Kristeva and Feminism' in *Deleuze and Feminist Theory*, ed. by Ian Buchanan and Claire Colebrook (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000) 80–94; Catherine Driscoll, 'The Little Girl', *Antithesis*, 8 (1997), 79–100; Anna Hickey-Moody, 'Deleuze's Children', *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 45 (2013) 272–286; and Stark, pp. 25–37.

⁴³ Elizabeth Grosz, *The Nick of Time* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2004) p. 182.

⁴⁴ See: Grosz, 'The Force of Sexual Difference' in *Time Travels*.

feminist terms is crucial. I am suggesting that the Girl can be theorised as both a concept for thinking this feminist future and a problem for feminist theory. She is oriented towards a future in which the potential of difference may be engendered yet, as a figure, the Girl is impinged upon by patriarchal social forces and representations that dictate a mode of becoming, which itself shuts down the possibility of difference, meaning the Girl remains a stage or a temporary social role. Grosz defines a politics of temporality that harnesses the concept of the virtual arising from Henri Bergson's materialist philosophy. Bergson's *Matter and Memory* is a key text I shall analyse in order to develop a feminist theorisation of temporality that emerges as a possibility by treating the Girl as a concept and a figuration in the temporal-aesthetic form of the moving image.

Girl as Figure

This thesis analyses the Girl and/in the moving image at the intersection of feminist film analysis and a philosophical enquiry. As a dimension of subjectivity, the Girl requires philosophical and aesthetic interventions to make visible the psycho-social and ontological significance of this moment of becoming that in a Deleuzian sense is not reflecting actual development but opens onto the virtual. By focusing on the Girl as a crucial concept for feminist enquiry, rather than as an object of representation or the production of identities, each chapter develops a distinct perspective on the Girl and the moving image. One of these perspectives is the notion of the Girl as figure or image.

In studies of art and cultural studies, scholars have examined the significance of images of girls in contemporary art or media practices as metaphors for the developing self, or for countering stereotypes of femininity.⁴⁵ In film studies, the focus on the Girl has addressed

⁴⁵ A key intervention is the edited volume *Girls! Girls! Girls! In Contemporary Art*, ed. by Catherine Grant and Lori Waxman, (Bristol: Intellect, 2011).

representations of girlhood in film or girl-audiences.⁴⁶ Film is positioned in these texts as integral to the cultural imagination of girlhood, while, as film theorist Gaylyn Studlar argues, attention to girls as viewers supports scrutiny of the overvaluation of the adult woman as the only feminine identifying position of spectatorship.⁴⁷ While the analysis of the ways in which films articulate girls, girlhood and girl-ness for different audiences is an important initiative, this thesis approaches the Girl and the moving image from a different perspective.

My own thinking and writing at the intersection of feminist theory and aesthetic practices has been informed and inspired by artist-historian, Carol Mavor's writing on girls, boys, the colour blue, fairy tales, photography and cinema.⁴⁸ In *Pleasures Taken* (1995) and *Becoming* (1999), Mavor's subject is the idea and representation of sexuality expressed and experienced through photography of girls *and* the meaning and figuration of the little girl or adolescent girl in culture. *Pleasures Taken*, for example, offers an incisive analysis on the paradox of the little girl in relation to sexuality:

As both sexual and not sexual, the body of the little girl marked her as simultaneously different from the male viewer and (according to cultural conventions) lacking the marks of true womanhood. As "pure little girl," she was supposedly not sexual. Yet, given the work of Freud and Foucault, the "cult of the little girl," the artistic treatment of her image, the uneasy law of the period, and so forth, we cannot read her as anything but sexual. She was thus both woman and not woman; she played safely *and* dangerously.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ See: Frances Gateward and Murray Pomerance, *Sugar, Spice and Everything Nice: Cinemas of Girlhood*, (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2002); Gaylyn Studlar, *Precocious Charms: Stars Performing Girlhood in Classical Hollywood Cinema*, (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2013); *International Cinema and The Girl*, ed. by Fiona Handyside and Kate Taylor-Jones, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016); So Mayer, *Political Animals: New Feminist Cinema.*, (London and New York: IB Tauris, 2015).

⁴⁷ Gaylyn Studlar, *Precocious Charms: Stars Performing Girlhood in Classical Hollywood Cinema* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2013) p. 16.

⁴⁸ To be guided through poetic reflections on these topics see Carol Mavor's *Pleasures Taken*, (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1995); *Becoming*, (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1999); *Reading Boyishly*, (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2007); *Black and Blue*, (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2012); *Blue Mythologies* (London: Reaktion Books, 2013); *Aurelia*, (London: Reaktion Books, 2017).

⁴⁹ Mavor, *Pleasures Taken*, p. 20–21.

The body of the little girl, according to Mavor is a problem in and for representation. The body is marked by femininity, but it does not (yet) embody aspects culturally attributed to woman as sexual.⁵⁰ The attempts by Victorian culture to maintain the little girl's non-sexuality, is shown by Mavor to produce a complex and contradictory dance between laws of decency, representation and sexual difference.

These magical veils dressed her in many guises so that she could be understood as determinedly sexed (there were laws to ensure this) as well as without sex (without the organs for reproduction, neither male nor female, as innocent), yet (because of endless discursive grazing) as also full-fed of sexuality.⁵¹

Mavor complicates sexuality's effects on social categories delineated by age, and the concept of the little girl produced as the innocent, eternal child. Focusing on photography by writer Lewis Carroll (1832–1898) and photographer Julia Margaret Cameron (1815–1879), Mavor understands the articulation of sexuality in the photographs depicting little girls to be ambiguous or, more specifically, *neutre*. As a concept borrowed from cultural theorist Roland Barthes and philosopher Louis Marin, *neutre* conceives of sexuality as ambiguous and an oscillation back and forth—as a play between poles of meaning.⁵² *Neutre* is neither one, nor the other, but a sustained movement between the two. The photographs Mavor's writing attends to inscribe sexuality as ambiguous, locating where, in terms of the little girl, it has been rendered invisible or repressed. Deftly weaving a way through the danger of reinscription as one or the other, the eroticism of Mavor's language enables her to evade leaving the little girl as the innocent or eroticised object. Instead, she sustains an oscillation through writing the little girl. She is neither purely sexual nor is she not sexual; she is the movement between the two.

⁵⁰ Even the aspects that embody women's sexuality in culture, such as breasts or pubic hair, are complicated by social conventions of femininity, notions of desire and regimes of representation.

⁵¹ Mavor, *Pleasures Taken*, p. 22.

⁵² Mavor, *Pleasures Taken*, pp. 20–21.

In the following book, *Becoming*, a study of photographs taken by Clementina Viscountess Hawarden (1822–1865), Mavor moves from the little girl to consider the ‘wavering, androgynous, fresh, irreverent’—namely, adolescent—dimension of Hawarden’s photographs. For Mavor, both Lady Hawarden and the contemporary photographer Sally Mann (b.1951) produce photographs in the manner she names ‘adolescent reverie’.⁵³ Adolescence, in Mavor’s reading, describes more than the subject of the photographs; it names their approach and effect *as photographs*. I, too, am arrested by these photographs reproduced in Mavor’s book. What does Hawarden want to capture by giving the Girl a moment, an image, with such extraordinary intensity? Mavor’s study raises the question of how we might understand looking, desire and sexuality met with images of feminine subjects on the cusp of *becoming* an adult woman, but without the language to adequately describe the experience either as the subject of the photograph or as the one looking on.

If ‘adolescent reverie’ discerns the paradoxical situation of feminine creativity and sexuality inscribed in and by the photography of Mann and Hawarden *and* which constitutes a method of reading the photographs themselves, I borrow from Mavor’s writing the possibility of my conceptualisation of the Girl to be another figure implicated in representation, rereading and encounter. Moreover, I work with the Girl as a figure who makes possible the crossing of boundaries and an encounter with aesthetic forms that seek to make intelligible dimensions of the feminine and subjectivity in a durational art form that itself involves the temporality of the film and spectatorship.

In Mavor’s reading, the queer eroticism of the photographic image is teased out through the wavering subjective model of the adolescent structure, a concept developed by

⁵³ Mavor, *Becoming*, p. 16. Mavor borrows the term from Kristeva’s chapter ‘The Secrets of an Analyst: On Helene Deutsch’s Autobiography’ in *New Maladies of the Soul* (1995). The chapter discusses *Confrontations with Myself: An Epilogue* by Helene Deutsch published in 1973.

Julia Kristeva. Kristeva proposes in ‘The Adolescent Novel’, first published in 1990, that adolescence is like novelistic writing; it is a way to interrogate oneself on the role of the imaginary. Adolescence is conceived as an open structure giving us access, through sound, vision and language, to fluctuations, including fluctuating identifications, which may occur.⁵⁴ As a structure, rather than a period of transition, adolescence can explore terms and identifications, such as the movement towards a normative heterosexuality, and a conception of femininity as passive, infantile and narcissistic. Kristeva’s methodology of attending to a structure, rather than a period, resonates with de Beauvoir’s own attempts to suspend the moment of the Girl to examine the set of forces acting within and without.

The adolescent structure is not a stage of development, but a structure that may be returned to at any age. It is also a way of thinking about cultural practices, particularly the novel, as a perspective from which to examine the psychic processes of the imaginary and for experimenting with desire while being protected by the ‘distance’ of the not-yet adult figure. If cultural practices, and the artist in particular, have a privileged position in regard to the open structure, as Kristeva suggests, it follows that the adolescent structure itself is a crucial aspect of the creative process.

At the conjunction of the psychoanalytic and aesthetic, feminist psychoanalytic theorist and artist Bracha Ettinger addresses the question of the feminine and subjectivity through the supplementation of Oedipal theories of sexual and subjective formation with her propositions of an additional stratum of subjectivity and sexuality she names *Matrixial*, which has significance for all subjects, yet adds significantly to our thinking about those subjects to be formed and shapes as feminine by the later Oedipal formation. Like Lacan’s Phallus, *Matrix* functions as a symbol but it shifts the sovereignty of phallic order and the phallus as the only

⁵⁴ Julia Kristeva ‘The Adolescent Novel’, *New Maladies of the Soul*, trans. Ross Guberman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), pp. 135-153, p. 139.

symbol forming human subjectivity. By its own logic, it cannot and does not replace the phallus as a signifier for the symbolic order and our accession to language as a system of meaning founded on a binary system. As a sphere or dimension of subjectivity, the theory of the *Matrixial* captures the legacy, in post-natal subjectivity, of the prenatal co-emergence and co-affection of the becoming-infant and the becoming-mother, which is to be understood as a proto-subjective and already transjective encounter.⁵⁵ The concept thus theorises a subjectivising process in the sensations and intensities that arise in this prolonged ‘aesthetic’ encounter and which are not accounted for in classic psychoanalytic theories of subjectivity initiated exclusively post-natally—i.e. after physical separation from the maternal body.

Ettinger has also written on the implications of the *Matrixial* in post-natal feminine subjectivity by formulating a concept of *fascinante* in her reading of the case-study of an adolescent hysteric, ‘Dora’ and the novel *The Ravishment of Lol V. Stein* by Marguerite Duras.⁵⁶ Here she provides a specific theorisation of the Girl in relation to adult femininity by arguing that one dimension of the formations of femininity arises from the becoming feminine subject’s need to gaze upon her adult other, the adult sexual woman she might become.

Fascinante is a form of gazing that involves duration out of chronological time: ‘[A]n aesthetic

⁵⁵ Transject and transjective are terms created by Ettinger to take the place of and differentiate the standard concepts used in post-natal psychoanalytical theory of relations between subjects and their objects. A transject is thus neither subject nor object, but still is an instance of a subjectivity-as-encounter *and* potential transformation through the encounter that occurs in a shared borderspace. Its modality survives beyond the separation from the pre-natal *Matrixial* to operate as an instance occurring beside the subject-object formations precipitated by the conditions of post-natal life for the newly separated and dependent infant. See: Bracha Ettinger, ‘Compassionate Co-responsibility, Initiation into Jointness and the link x of Matrixial Virtuality’, *Gorge(l): Oppression and relief in art*, Sofie van Loo, (ed.), 11–32, (MER, Paper Kunsthalle, KMSKA, Gynaika, 2007). See also: Bracha Ettinger, ‘M(O)ther Re-spect: Maternal Subjectivity, the Ready-made Mother-Monster and the Ethics of Respect’, *Studies in the Maternal*, 1 (2010), p. 2.

⁵⁶ It is of course significant that Freud’s contribution of psychoanalysis was initially based on his observation of young women analysands. The influential case study, ‘A Fragment of an Analysis of a Case Study of Hysteria’, was published the same year as Hall published *Adolescence*. For Catherine Driscoll, Freud’s hysterical girls are engaged in a process of ‘disavowing the adolescence they cannot pass.’ See: *Girls*, p. 60.

affect that operates in the prolongation and delaying of the time of encounter-event and allows a working-through of Matrixial differentiating-in-jointness and copoiesis.⁵⁷ It names the transformational potential of a reciprocal encounter (which can be virtual, i.e. with an image or text) which establishes and holds the *Matrixial* link to the originary trans-subjective encounter with feminine difference.

What interests me in the concept of *fascinace* is the possibility of a different way of theorising spectatorship in relation to this theory. *Fascinace* is to do with gazing and time. It is an attempt to theorise becoming woman by a subjective space of the Girl gazing on the one from which she wishes to learn about becoming a sexed subject, a process that can only come through time and hospitality of the object/scenario. The relationship between the Girl in a durational encounter of gazing, the becoming woman learning something of herself from another woman, is significant for thinking spectatorial positions. Moreover, *fascinace* radically disrupts the psychoanalytic notion that woman determines herself from the difference of man, i.e. castration. Seeing and being positioned in the gaze of *fascinace* in a dimension of femininity, according to Ettinger, are important instances for women, thus borrowing Ettinger's psychoanalytic concept of *fascinace* explores modalities in which cinema or moving image art are hospitable to transformations of desirability, subjectivity and difference with the Girl.

Girl as Problem

In the last two decades an academic field of study that has been named as 'Girls' Studies' has emerged alongside the increasing hypervisibility of girls in popular culture and global debates

⁵⁷ Bracha Ettinger, 'Fascinace and the Girl-to-m/Other Matrixial Feminine Difference' *Psychoanalysis and the Image: Transdisciplinary Perspectives*, ed. Griselda Pollock (Oxford: Blackwells, 2006), p. 61

about girls' social roles and behaviours.⁵⁸ Girl culture, girlhood and girls, however, were seen, until the 1990s, to be marginalised in youth research and feminist studies before the intervention of Girls' Studies became visible.⁵⁹ From this perspective, 1976 is registered as the moment when the Girl entered the scene of academic discussions. Angela McRobbie and Jenny Garber's influential essay 'Girls and Subcultures', published that year, highlighted the neglect of girls in youth studies by ignoring asymmetric structures of gender in analyses of cultural practices and lived experience.⁶⁰ Over the past three decades, literature and research on girls has grown and grown alongside the promotion of world-wide initiatives that seek, in many ways that remain problematic for feminist studies, to make visible and 'empower' girls for the supposed benefit of all.⁶¹

In her important study, *Girls*, cultural studies theorist Catherine Driscoll investigates how the concepts of Girl/feminine adolescence work and what they have been used to say.

⁵⁸ As an interdisciplinary subject area, Girls' Studies has gained increasing prominence, especially in cultural studies, sociology, media studies and education. The *Girlhood Studies* journal began in 2013 and 2016 saw the inaugural International Girls Studies Association Conference which convened in Norwich, UK.

⁵⁹ This saw a significant number of studies of girls and girlhood including: Angelia McRobbie, *Feminism and Youth Culture: From Jackie to Just Seventeen* (London: Macmillan, 1991); Susan Douglas, *Where the Girls Are: Growing Up Female with the Mass Media* (New York: Random House, 1995); Dawn Currie, *Girl Talk: Adolescent Magazines and their readers* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999); Sharon Mazzarella and Norma Pecora, *Growing Up Girls: Popular Culture and the Construction of Identity* (New York: Peter Lang, 2002); Valerie Walkerdine, Helen Lucey and June Melody, *Growing up girl: psycho-social explorations of gender and class* (London: Palgrave, 2001).

⁶⁰ Angela McRobbie and Jenny Garber, 'Girls and Subcultures', *Resistance Through Rituals: Youth Subcultures in Post-War Britain*, eds. Stuart Hall and Tony Jefferson, (London: Harper Collins, 1976).

⁶¹ The United Nations have promoted many initiatives like this — see, for example, their campaign 'Girl Up' that initiated the International Day of the Girl that is held annually on 11 October. This day aims to raise awareness of the situation of girls and incite support to remedy it with a focus on education and empowerment. What is evident, however, is that the proliferation of campaigns, reports and initiatives, which supposedly help girls 'achieve their potential', ultimately ignore the deep roots of the problem. Awareness of the situation of girls and support to get more girls into school is one political strategy, but all that is not enough for transforming the lives of girls. These organizations and initiatives, while being impactful on one level, ignore the possibility for real transformation and the potential of a radically different future.

A genealogy will not discover new knowledge about girls, and it will not discover new forms of girlhood, but it will discuss how knowledge about girls has shaped what it means to be a girl and how girls experience their own positions in the world in relation to diverse ways of talking about and understanding girls.⁶²

What makes Driscoll's approach to the question of the girl within the growing field of Girls' Studies distinct, is her theoretical focus on 'how we know about girls', rather than what a girl is or what a girl does.⁶³ The Girl is important in popular culture and cultural theory because of what the figure allows us to think, namely, a difference of which feminist theory must take account.

Although, as Driscoll recognises, girls have a striking visibility in late-capitalist culture and have been the object of many popular and critical studies in the growing field of Girls' Studies, she makes a strong claim for how feminist theory and practices have overlooked the girl.

Feminist practices (including feminist theory) are still dominated by adult modes of subjectivity presumed to be the endpoint of a naturalized process of developing individual identity that relegates a vast range of not only people but roles, behaviours, and practices to its immature past. As a future-directed politics, as a politics of transformation, girls and the widest range of representations of, discourses on, and sites of becoming a woman are crucial to feminism. Yet feminist discussions of girls rarely engage with feminine adolescence without constructing girls as opposed to or otherwise defining, the mature, independent woman as feminist subject.⁶⁴

Feminist theory's address homogenises the category of woman and cuts off a vital dimension of subjectivity from theoretical enquiry and political transformation. A lack of interest in the girl as girl produces the subject of feminism in terms that relate only to adult woman. She calls for feminist interventions that take 'interest in girls on their own terms', that is, in terms which do not use an enquiry into the Girl, understood merely as the past of woman who is

⁶² Driscoll, *Girls*, p. 4.

⁶³ Driscoll, *Girls*, p. 4.

⁶⁴ Driscoll, *Girls*, p. 9.

deemed the subject of feminism proper, nor as opposite to woman, as that which is not woman.⁶⁵

Although this thesis shares some similar concerns with research in the field of Girls' Studies, it is not, however, a cultural study of girls, as in, how they live and what they do. Girls or girlhood are not an object of analysis, but the Girl as problem for feminist theory is involved in formulating a way to understand *how* we can know the structures that relate to this dimension of feminine experience and what are the implications for questions of subjectivity and representation.

At the same time, I ask, what does it mean politically to stay or be a Girl? If we do not conceptualise the Girl as part of a stage on the way to becoming woman, then how can culture deal with this challenge to the social order? This aspect of women's lives and its aesthetic inscriptions remain important to analyse as both a repetition of a status quo and a figure of resistance. The Girl, I suggest, offers resources for feminist thought and practice, not because real life girls will continue to be born and grow up in the future, although surely this is motivation for feminist change, but because the Girl as a problematic provides a creative and theoretical guide amid uncharted approaches to the relationship of subjectivity, the feminine and their temporalities. Thus, I am not arguing for a more 'inclusive' field of feminist studies that pays more attention to the Girl, but rather, this thesis intervenes to propose that the Girl is a crucial part of a radical feminist politics oriented towards difference and transformation.⁶⁶

If we take the unfinished project of feminism seriously, then attending to the Girl at the

⁶⁵ For example, in *The Feminine Mystique*, published in 1963, Betty Friedan writes: 'Have not women who live in the image of the feminine mystique trapped themselves within the narrow walls of their homes? They have learned to "adjust" to their biological role. They have become dependent, passive, childlike, they have given up their adult frame of reference to live at the lower human level of food and things. The work they do does not require adult capabilities; it is endless, monotonous, unrewarding.' Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique*, (New York: Dell Publishing, 1984). Here the housewife is characterised as immature and unformed in a derogative sense, while the actualised feminist subject is figured as 'adult'.

⁶⁶ Grosz, *Time Travels*, p. 183.

intersection of philosophical and aesthetic practices is an important dimension of thinking difference.

Girl as Moving Image

The concept of the moving image defines itself initially as that which is in movement or presents the illusion of movement. Unlike the term ‘motion picture’ which is more classically aligned with a film in a movie theatre, ‘moving image’ speaks of how artists or filmmakers use film, video and digital formats. Usually appearing in the darkened space of the gallery and informed by various media, from performance to sculpture, they are unified by their fundamental temporality.⁶⁷ Unlike its predecessors, such as ‘expanded cinema’ or ‘artists’ film’, the term ‘moving image’ relinquishes ties to any particular medium.⁶⁸

In his introduction to the collection of essays entitled *Theorizing the Moving Image* published in 1996, film philosopher Noël Carroll outlines his preference for ‘moving image’ over ‘film’.⁶⁹

I prefer the idiom *moving images* rather than *film* because I predict that what we call film and, for that matter, film history will, in generations to come, be seen as part of a larger continuous history that will not be restricted to things made only in the so-called medium of film, but, as well, will apply to things made in the media of video, TV, computer-generated imagery, and we know not what. [...] Moreover, I prefer “moving images” to “moving pictures” since *pictures* imply recognizable representations, whereas by “images” I mean to signal that much of the art that concerns us has been and will be nonrepresentational and abstract.⁷⁰

Carroll’s preference is connected to a broadening of film into a wider context, as Carroll sees film as only one type in a particular class—that of the moving image. More significantly, he is drawn to moving image because of his loyalty to a form of anti-medium essentialism, whereby

⁶⁷ Although ‘moving image’ and ‘motion picture’ are compounds of synonyms, their usage differs.

⁶⁸ In doing so it also loses reference to the sonic element of film and video.

⁶⁹ The article was published in 1996, three years after Akerman’s film for television, *Portrait d’une jeune fille*, was first screened by ARTE and the same year as *If 6 Was 9* by Ahtila appeared in the gallery and cinema.

⁷⁰ Noël Carroll, *Theorizing the Moving Image* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996) p. xiii.

artforms cannot simply be comprised of one essential ‘medium’ and thus no art form can be said to arrive at an essence or telos.⁷¹ Although the specificity of different forms are not ignored, notions of cinematic essence, exceptionalism or uniqueness are rejected in this framework.

Carroll’s comments addressing the ‘ontology’ of the moving image arrive at a point where the concept was becoming more visible in discourses on art and film. From the 1960s until the 1990s there were three major fields of practice in North America and Western Europe: artists’ film, video art and experimental film. These art forms may have exhibited aesthetic differences, but a major contributing factor to their distinction was economic factors and infrastructure, including who the work was funded or bought by, or where and in what manner it was exhibited.⁷² From the 1990s however, as Erika Balsom has noted, technological and institutional developments changed the landscape and initiated various border crossings between the fields.

The adoption of large-scale projection from circa 1990 onward led to the waning of the category of video art and its merging with artists’ film, giving rise to now-common labels such as “artists’ moving image,” “artists’ cinema,” and “moving image art,” all of which avoid specific reference to a particular material support.⁷³

The adoption of moving image as a concept also acknowledged the increasing, yet also contentious, confluence of the once distinct fields of experimental film and the art world.

Those historically associated with avant-garde or experimental filmmaking, including Chantal Akerman, Agnès Varda and Chris Marker, moved into the structures of the art world’s

⁷¹ Carroll, *Theorizing the Moving Image* p. 49.

⁷² Alongside this the concept ‘expanded cinema’ was introduced in the United States in the mid-1960s in order to address different exhibition practices and other types of media such as television, video and other audio-visual forms.

⁷³ Erika Balsom, *After Uniqueness: A History of Film and Video Art in Circulation*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2017) p. 16. Balsom also identifies how the term ‘moving image’ has been taken up more widely in the UK context due to the influence of LUX, a distribution organisation supporting ‘artists’ moving image’. LUX formed in 1997 as the merging of London Video Arts and The London Film-Makers’ Co-operative.

exhibition and distribution economy.⁷⁴ At the same time artists, such as Eija-Liisa Ahtila, Salla Tykkä and Steve McQueen who began making moving image artworks in the early 1990s, increasingly exhibit in a cinema context, especially in film festivals which were once a dedicated space only for experimental film.

Moving image as I and others use it is, therefore, an awkward umbrella term for art forms in a diverse field, including what has been called avant-garde, experimental film, video and expanded cinema.⁷⁵ My use of the term moving image recognises it as a major form within contemporary art and within global culture, but also harnesses the flexibility of a term neither tethered to a particular medium nor telos, while acknowledging its fundamental temporality. Taking measures not to universalise art forms with historically distinct modes of production, it is necessary to give a name to the works with which I engage. Moving image is, therefore, the concept that sets in motion my questioning of the Girl.

My analyses in this thesis seek to perform the Girl as a moving image in form *and* content. To do this, I make the distinction of ‘the Girl’ and ‘the girl’. The girl, as it has been invoked here, opens a field of study that is broadly sociological insofar as it describes an age, stage and object/subject for analysis seen, for example, in the burgeoning field of Girls’ Studies. My concept of the Girl (capitalised) is taken up differently. It is a problem posed to/by feminist theory for thinking about a dimension of feminine subjectivity in relation to becoming. In reading de Beauvoir, the Girl is articulated philosophically through a mode of non-arrival, of failure, a becoming-ness that is not tied to conclusion. Navigating this shift

⁷⁴ Chantal Akerman is a key filmmaker to make this move. In the early 1990s Kathy Halbreich, then director of the Walker Art Centre in Minneapolis, invited Akerman was invited to make a work for a museum context. The work that was proposed would become *D’est* (1993) the film for cinema and *D’est, Au bord de la Fiction* (1995) the video installation comprised of 25 monitors in two rooms. Akerman went onto make many works for the gallery, often presenting an interesting relationship to her own ‘history’ as a filmmaker.

⁷⁵ See: Chrissie Iles, ‘Between the Still and Moving Image’, in *Into the Light* (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 2002) p. 35. This essay appears in the catalogue of the important exhibition ‘Into the Light: The Projected Image in American Art 1964-77’ at the Whitney Museum of American Art and curated by Iles in 2002.

between the girl and the Girl is crucial to distinguishing the concept and, as my analyses seek to determine, it is perhaps only in filmmaking that the potential of this position would be discovered and, as it were, performed.

Although I set up this distinction through the ‘fields’ of study mentioned above, they ultimately become overlaid by means of the moving image. My aim is to tease apart the girl and the Girl to open a space discerning the implications of moving image practice as hospitable to such forms in thought and representation. Put differently, the moving image is examined as the means by which the becoming-ness of the Girl/girl distinction can be explored, staging through form and content an encounter with a subjectivity that does not necessarily arrive at narrative conclusion, a figure who is sustained past the ‘stage’ of the girl. It is the relationship between the forms of the moving image, found differently in the work of Akerman and Ahtila, *and* the space of the Girl/girl that arises first in de Beauvoir’s *The Second Sex*, which becomes the focus of my analysis.

Methodology

This thesis is a philosophical and aesthetic study of the relation between feminine subjectivity and the moving image through a particular figure: the Girl. It contributes to feminist debates in philosophy, critical theory, film studies and contemporary art by analysing the Girl in the work of French feminist philosopher Simone de Beauvoir, Belgian filmmaker-artist Chantal Akerman and Finnish artist-filmmaker Eija-Liisa Ahtila.

The method I use is close reading of texts and film to hold the aesthetic and theoretical formulations in relation to the questioning of the feminine and the moving image. This approach seeks not to master meaning, or fix an interpretation onto the artworks, but rather engage in the method of reading to find out and understand what they might disclose in this process. Rather than posing philosophy as a master discourse to which art might be subjected, I have written from the premise that moving image art forms are themselves a form

of thought. By close reading of text, film and artworks, I develop concepts for the investigation of the Girl, sexual difference and its creative inscriptions. This method of close reading also facilitates further dialogue between texts and other relating critical concerns and scholarship.

The Girl forms a thread which draws together this thesis by tracing a theoretical genealogy from de Beauvoir's historical inscription of the questioning of the feminine through Akerman's cinematic exploration and then Ahtila's movement into new forms of philosophical and aesthetic processes. There is a clear historical shift of thinking the feminine, but also hugely significant technological changes and the context of encounter becoming vastly different. To understand contemporary feminist practice in the moving image, I propose these three instances are required to register the shifts, complexity and far-reaching significance of the Girl to the question of the feminine and subjectivity addressed to moving image artworks as a site for exploring such becomingness.

Structure of Thesis

The structure of this thesis does not mean that de Beauvoir functions as the theoretical text followed by two artworks to which I apply the theory. De Beauvoir's writing is itself a historical inscription of the questioning of the feminine, just as we can argue, as Mieke Bal has done, that artworks can be considered theoretical objects, generating an extended conversation with resources that will enable a reading of what they are doing.⁷⁶

My analysis of the chapter 'The Girl' significantly expands and refines our understanding of de Beauvoir's philosophical project in *The Second Sex*, a project which launched a fundamental challenge to the meaning of being and inaugurated the possibility of a

⁷⁶ Mieke Bal, *Louise Bourgeois' Spider: The Architecture of Art-Writing* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001).

feminist philosophy. This chapter contributes to feminist philosophical debates about the nature of being and becoming by showing that de Beauvoir's philosophical proposition 'what is woman?' is intimately connected to what she discovered by asking about this moment of feminine becoming she identified as 'The Girl'.

Chapter 1 formulates 'the Girl' as an ontological question and a dimension of feminine subjectivity which must be thought about *philosophically*. This is undertaken by a close reading of the chapter 'The Girl' in *The Second Sex* by Simone de Beauvoir. I turn, first, to address the origins of de Beauvoir's singular feminist intervention in philosophy that began with the question: 'what is woman?' and debates around translation and philosophical influence.⁷⁷ De Beauvoir's existential-phenomenological analysis of the lived experience of woman presents an account of 'The Girl' as a distinct dimension, yet still intimately connected to the situation of woman. My central contention is that we cannot understand how one 'becomes' woman without first/also undertaking the task of understanding the situation of the Girl. In order to understand the book's philosophical contribution, we need to understand the structure and the place of the chapter 'The Girl' within it. Drawing on the new translation of *The Second Sex* by Constance Borde and Sheila Malovany-Chevallier published in 2010, I pay particular attention to language, temporality and embodiment to explore how the Girl is a situation of becoming that remains a situation, rather than a phase, and thus lines or marks any other situation as woman one might occupy. It is not superseded but also not identical with other moments of femininity socially or psychically.

Having created the conceptual space in which the question of the Girl can be addressed, in Chapter 2, I explore the relationship between the Girl and cinema in films by Chantal Akerman. Three films that span Akerman's cinematic career—*Saute Ma Ville* (1968),

⁷⁷ De Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (2010), p. 5.

Portrait d'une jeune fille de la fin des années 60 à Bruxelles (1993) and *No Home Movie* (2015)—offer a space in which to explore inscriptions of the Girl elaborated through a concept I have created for her cinema: the *cinéfil*, making the Girl a cinematic position not just a philosophical position. This chapter asks: how do we understand the particularities of an Akerman cinema that is about girls? How do we prise it away from readings that situate her filmmaking as autobiographical and move against the tendency to read the filmmaker and her films as obsessed with her mother (as the obsessional daughter) or in arrested development (as the girl who cannot grow up)? My proposition is that in Akerman's cinema, the Girl aids formal and narrative exploration of how one might begin to imagine cinema as the only way in which to express cinematically, through formal procedures to be analysed, aspects of the feminine, creativity and a subjectivity that is coming into being.

I take this further by introducing psychoanalysis for reading these practices. The poetic and psychoanalytic dimensions of feminine subjectivity and sexual difference are drawn out in conversation with three texts by Julia Kristeva and Bracha Ettinger.⁷⁸ Kristeva's theorisation of feminine subjectivity as that which inhabits a sensuous and creative openness can be held in tension with Ettinger's *Matrixial* supplement despite the radical differences and Ettinger's critique of Kristeva's persistent allegiance to phallogentrism. Ettinger's concept of *fascinace* shifts the terms in which we have understood the gaze in cinema (voyeurism, sadism, erotic or even the pensive gaze) so that it offers a way by which to register the experience of watching Akerman's films. In Akerman's filmmaking we discern a durational encounter staged in the field of the cinematic gaze; I ask, therefore, whether the *Matrixial*

⁷⁸ These are: Julia Kristeva, 'The Adolescent Novel', *New Maladies of the Soul*, trans. Ross Guberman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995) and 'Experiencing the Phallus as Extraneous, or Women's Twofold Oedipus Complex', trans. Louise Burchill, *parallax* 3 (1998). Also: Bracha Ettinger, 'Fascinace and the Girl-to-m/Other Matrixial Feminine Difference', in *Psychoanalysis and the Image: Transdisciplinary Perspectives*, ed. by Griselda Pollock (Oxford: Blackwells, 2006).

process of *fascinace* might offer a vocabulary to understand this process in relation to the cinematic position of the Girl.

Connecting work on film in new forms, in Chapter 3, I concentrate on the distinctive relation between the Girl, the moving image and temporality in an artwork by Eija-Liisa Ahtila titled *If 6 Was 9* (1995) made just two years after Akerman's *Portrait d'une jeune fille*, featuring five girls. This is a short film, presented on three screens in two formats: split-screen 35 mm film for cinema and a triple-screen gallery installation. *If 6 Was 9*, is composed of fictional stories developed from research and accounts shared by women, including the artist herself. Past experiences are replayed back, that is 're-voiced', in the film's present by girls for whom such experiences are yet to come, while continuities of space and time are disrupted and reconfigured across three screens.

My proposition is that by employing a radical approach of undoing linearity, by layering moments of feminine experience through duration, narrative, sound and image, the moving-image discloses a dimension of temporality closely connected to the Girl. I elaborate the theorisation of temporality in the artwork in relation to Henri Bergson's concept of duration. The chapter considers the relationship between philosophical and feminist theories of difference and the moving image, situating the figure of the Girl as a key agent for imagining the future in terms of difference and the new and contributing to post-cinematic philosophical debates on the moving-image and representation from a feminist perspective on the relationship between the Girl and durational aesthetic practices. Ahtila's films are, I am arguing, significant works that open a space for aesthetic inscriptions of the Girl that entangle the issues of temporality and duration introduced by de Beauvoir in relation to the Girl with the specific effects and affects of framing, sound and image, which are themselves extending artworking beyond cinema.

In conclusion I articulate the key insights and contribution of this research, alongside where it points for further work.

1. ‘The Girl’ and Simone de Beauvoir’s *The Second Sex*

‘*Qu’est-ce qu’une femme?*’ or ‘What is a woman?’ is the question Simone de Beauvoir asks in the introduction of *Le deuxième sexe*—*The Second Sex* first published in French in 1949.¹ The question is a philosophical one, which is explored across two vast volumes: *Facts and Myths* and *Lived Experience*.² Despite the specific interrogative pronoun used here, scholars have argued that *The Second Sex* is in fact not about *what* woman is, but *how*.³ Still a philosophical question, it becomes one of a different order; namely, a feminist one that seeks to develop a philosophy of sexual difference.

Asking the question *how* rather than *what* makes sense following de Beauvoir’s existential-phenomenological framework, which takes the perspective that there is no essential truth of being to be discovered, and—since there is no truth to woman—we cannot ask *what* woman is. As such, ‘her writings’, Sara Heinämaa suggests, ‘introduce us into an

¹ Simone de Beauvoir, *Le Deuxième Sexe: I les faits et les myths* (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1949), p. 13; Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, trans. by Sheila Malovany-Chevallier and Constance Borde (London: Vintage, 2010), p. 5. *The Second Sex* was first published in 1949, when Beauvoir was forty-one. It is likely that she began researching this landmark study of woman sometime in June 1946, in the context of a post-war France where legislation allowing women to vote was barely a year old. Women in France had been considered legal minors until 1938 and could not engage in paid work or open a bank account without their husband’s permission until 1965. The right to contraception or abortion would not become legal until 1967 and 1974 respectively. In 1949 vast majority of women living in France had little control over their own finances, expressions of sexuality or choice of reproduction. It was in this socio-cultural landscape that *The Second Sex* intervened by making the question of woman a philosophical and existentialist concern.

² Others such as Toril Moi have argued that de Beauvoir was not a philosopher and did not see herself as such. In my view—following Nancy Bauer, Debra Bergoffen, Christine Daigle, Sara Heinämaa, Sonia Kruks, Eva Lundgren-Gothlin and Margaret Simons—*The Second Sex* must be read as a philosophical text and it is right that de Beauvoir is regarded as a feminist philosopher.

³ Kristana Arp, ‘Beauvoir’s Concept of Bodily Alienation’ in *Feminist Interpretations of Simone de Beauvoir*, ed. by Margaret Simons (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995), p. 161; Sara Heinämaa, *Toward a Phenomenology of Sexual Difference: Husserl, Merleau-Ponty, Beauvoir* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003), p. 68.

alternative understanding of philosophizing'.⁴ If *The Second Sex* engages with *how*, meaning 'by what means', then crucial to the question of woman is *how* exactly one 'becomes'. De Beauvoir emphasises that 'to be is to have become'.⁵ The second volume, *Lived Experience* [*l'expérience vécue*], begins with a statement on this: 'One is not born, but rather becomes, woman' [*On ne naît pas femme: on le devient*'], opening a section that examines experiences from child to adult.⁶ De Beauvoir's chapters in this section approach the question of becoming woman in different ways and by exploring different formative stages. Crucial for my purposes here is the second chapter of the second volume called '*la jeune fille*' or 'The Girl'.⁷

The Second Sex is, then, not only a book about the question of woman. It is also a book which initiates a space for *la jeune fille* or the Girl. The importance of the Girl lies not just in the project of existential-phenomenological description, which we find in the second volume, although this is important too. Sara Heinämaa writes that de Beauvoir's work 'is not simply founded on women's experiences, but includes also a philosophical question about the constitution of such a mode of experience'.⁸ One of the directions *The Second Sex* takes, Heinämaa continues, is to ask 'what the reality or existence of woman means'.⁹ The project of *The Second Sex* is to show how philosophical and scientific discourses have discounted the experience of woman, thus undermining their claims as philosophy.¹⁰

⁴ Heinämaa, *Toward a Phenomenology of Sexual Difference*, p. 4.

⁵ De Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (2010), p. 13.

⁶ De Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (2010), p. 293; Simone de Beauvoir, *Le Deuxième Sexe: II l'expérience vécue* (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1949), p. 13.

⁷ In the following chapter I use 'The Girl' to mark de Beauvoir's specific intervention, part of which is demarcating the chapter itself.

⁸ Heinämaa, *Toward a Phenomenology of Sexual Difference*, p. 24.

⁹ Heinämaa, *Toward a Phenomenology of Sexual Difference*, p. 24.

¹⁰ Heinämaa, *Toward a Phenomenology of Sexual Difference*, Nancy Bauer, *Simone de Beauvoir: Philosophy and Feminism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001).

Recognising the challenge that *The Second Sex* gave, and still gives, to the meaning of being and reality, in what follows I will focus on the elements that the situation of the Girl specifically contributes to de Beauvoir's theorisation of sex.¹¹ I ask: what is the specificity of the embodied lived experience of the Girl in *The Second Sex*? I argue that the differential of age, and the questions that the Girl raises according to her lived experience, must be considered in order to appreciate de Beauvoir's existential-phenomenological theory of sexed existence. Ultimately, I suggest that de Beauvoir's overall significance and philosophical contribution is intimately connected to what she discovered by asking about this moment of feminine becomings—the Girl. That is, we cannot understand how one 'becomes' woman without undertaking the task of understanding the situation of the Girl. I do this to suggest that, rather than follow the chronology of growing up, the concept of the Girl that *The Second Sex* suspends for our examination, in fact might express a relation to movement, perhaps a failure of movement, that is important for our engagement with the moving image.

Qui est la jeune fille?

Before beginning to explore this crucial aspect of *The Second Sex*, a few words need to be said regarding language. How can we talk about the space of *la jeune fille* or the Girl? A new translation of *The Second Sex* by Constance Borde and Sheila Malovany-Chevallier published in 2010 provides an opportunity for new investigations in English of de Beauvoir's landmark text. Yet, armed with this new translation we still encounter difficulty with terminology. The issues are twofold. First is a question of translation, or more accurately, of an original French text and two English translations. Second is naming 'The Girl'. What are we saying when we say *la jeune fille* or 'The Girl'?

¹¹ Situation here refers to the existential concept understood as the context of existence for an individual, with and against which freedom is asserted.

Crucial research by Margaret Simons in 1983 first highlighted the partial and inaccurate English translation of *Le deuxième sexe* by Howard Parshley, published in 1952.¹² Simons painstakingly identifies the extent to which materials from the original French edition were deleted and the integrity of historical, cultural and philosophical analyses undermined. Her discovery soon initiated a call for a new English translation, although this would not be undertaken for almost thirty years. Following Simons, Toril Moi's impassioned article, published some twenty years later, rightly argues that Parshley's translation is detrimental, not only to de Beauvoir's philosophical precision and intellectual reputation, but to feminist philosophy in general.¹³ Other articles followed in a surge which detailed further cuts and mistranslations in Parshley's *The Second Sex*.¹⁴

Even with a new translation, however, certain questions remain and a focus on 'The Girl' offers a compelling perspective on this issue.¹⁵ Looking at the two English translations, the chapter titles and section headings generally remain the same. The two exceptions, as they appear in the original, are *l'expérience vécue* and *la jeune fille*.¹⁶ Howard Parshley translates *la jeune fille* as 'The Young Girl', whereas Borde and Malovany-Chevallier translate it as 'The Girl'. What is significant about this difference? In their translators' note Borde and Malovany-

¹² Margaret Simons, 'The Silencing of Simone de Beauvoir, Guess What's Missing from *The Second Sex*?' *Woman's Studies International Forum* 6 (1983), 559-564; Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, trans. by Howard Parshley (London: Picador Classics, 1988).

¹³ Toril Moi, 'While We Wait: The English Translation of *The Second Sex*', *Signs*, 27 (2002), 1005-1035.

¹⁴ Elizabeth Fallaize, 'The Housewife's Destiny: Translating Simone de Beauvoir's "The Married Woman"', in *Cinquanteenaire du deuxième sexe*, ed. by Christine Delphy and Sylvie Chaperon (Paris: Syllepse 2002); Heinämaa, *Toward a Phenomenology of Sexual Difference*.

¹⁵ It should be noted that Toril Moi is highly critical of Borde and Malovany-Chevallier's translation, as she outlines in her review of the book published in the *London Review of Books*. Toril Moi, 'The Adulteress Wife', *London Review of Books* (2010), <<https://www.lrb.co.uk/v32/no3/toril-moi/the-adulteress-wife>> [accessed 9 July 2018].

¹⁶ Howard Parshley erroneously translated *l'expérience vécue* into 'Women's Life Today'. The poverty of this translation (which should read 'lived experience') is highlighted by Sara Heinämaa who observes how 'Women's Life Today' entirely erases the philosophical concept and the connection de Beauvoir is making to phenomenology and, in particular, the writings of Maurice Merleau-Ponty. The later translation rectifies this issue. See: Heinämaa, *Toward a Phenomenology of Sexual Difference*, p.1.

Chevallier highlight the difference between Parshley's translation of *la jeune fille* and their own.¹⁷ They state, quite simply, that it should read as 'The Girl' in English because the chapter deals with the period between childhood and adulthood. Although 'The Young Girl' is a literal translation, Borde and Malovany-Chevallier suggest it does not capture in English what *la jeune fille* does in French. The reasoning is not necessarily in dispute here, but—marked by its brevity—their case for 'The Girl' is lacking. There is more to 'The Girl' than their account outlines.

The difference in translation is an opportunity to consider the meaning of 'The Girl'. What is more, the original chapter title in French offers another set of considerations. *La jeune fille* is not the same as *une fille qui est jeune*, which suggests one reason why Parshley's translation was rejected in the later translation. *La jeune fille* articulates a specific position for a feminine subject. But of what order exactly? It does not have the filial connotations that *ma petite fille* evokes. *Nom de jeune fille* is the surname that serves the girl, supposedly, from birth until marriage. This suggests that being *la jeune fille* ends once she is married.

La jeune fille produces a certain figure that functions not just to describe a stage between child and woman, but a stereotype conjured with and against a specific configuration of patriarchal-social structures in the cultural imaginary. She is a virgin—certainly. Unmarried—without doubt. *La jeune fille* is a myth, in the Barthesian sense, besides being a well-worn French phrase not unfamiliar in an Anglophone context.¹⁸ If *la jeune fille* tries to define an age it does not just do this alone: it exceeds this remit by being an enduring icon and

¹⁷ Sheila Malovany-Chevallier and Constance Borde, 'Translators' Note' in de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (2010), p. xxii.

¹⁸ See: Carol Mavor, *Aurelia: Art and Literature through the Mouth of the Fairy Tale* (London: Reaktion Books, 2017). In *Aurelia* Mavor explores the myth of the child in relation to the poet Minou Drouet. In particular, she highlights Roland Barthes' comments on Drouet ('But a tree as expressed by Minou Drouet is no longer quite a tree...') in the concluding essay of *Mythologies* (1957) entitled 'Myth Today'. Also of note is the disappearance of the essay 'Literature According to Minou Drouet', in which Barthes reveals Drouet's 'nymphancy', in the English translation of the volume.

problem for cultural representation. She is seen as either overwhelming or chaste in the realms of sexuality, freedom and imagination. The word conjures paradoxes of identity and language as it oscillates between two poles of meanings. *La jeune fille* does not map neatly onto *girl* in English yet somehow, we must negotiate the different terminology. Understanding that the problem of naming 'The Girl' is not confined to English or French does not resolve the question of 'The Girl' and *The Second Sex*. There remains a gap between *la jeune fille* and 'The Girl' that can never be fully reconciled.

Origins of *The Second Sex*

During the months in which she wrote *The Second Sex*, de Beauvoir spent a significant period in the United States where she was invited to speak at a number of North American universities from January to May 1947. During her travels she met and began a passionate relationship with American writer Nelson Algren, spending time in Chicago and travelling to Latin America together. De Beauvoir's biographer Deirdre Bair writes,

It was with Algren with whom she first discussed her 'essay on women,' and it was he who initially encouraged her to think about expanding it into a book. They had discussed the situation of women when they were in New York in May [1947], sitting and smoking in the twin beds of their hotel after they made love; he was curious about the lot of French women and how she differed from most of them, and she wanted to know what he thought of her observations about American women.¹⁹

Algren's best known and critically acclaimed novel *The Man with a Golden Arm* was published in America the same year as *The Second Sex*. During her trip, de Beauvoir developed specific research into American women's experiences and a broader awareness of the situation of women and the African-American population in the United States. Her travels, chronicled in her book *America Day by Day* (1948), were spent trying to comprehend the deep structures of

¹⁹ Deirdre Bair, *Simone de Beauvoir: a biography* (London: Vintage, 1990), p. 353.

the American socio-cultural landscape. It was a context quite unlike the one she had come from in France.

As de Beauvoir scholars such as Margaret Simons, Ursula Tidd and Penelope Deutscher argue, the time spent in the United States was crucial for de Beauvoir's thought.²⁰ The experiences she had, the people she met and the ideas she was introduced to during this time helped develop key aspects of her research on racism and the situation of women.²¹ According to Deutscher, through recording America de Beauvoir's project on woman was transformed, she writes, '[b]y the time she returned to *The Second Sex* in 1948 Beauvoir had thoroughly rerouted her interest from a personal to a social analysis, apparently in the context of recording "America".²² For Deutscher, de Beauvoir's initial disinterest in a project concerned with the condition of woman shifted following her American trip. A new vigour for the question of woman as Other was inspired by conversations with new friends, different cultural experiences and an immersion in the analyses of racism by African-American novelist Richard Wright and Swedish sociologists Alva Myrdal and Gunnar Myrdal.

In letters to Algren, translated into English and published in 1999, de Beauvoir describes being struck by the racism experienced by black people in the United States.²³ On 1 December 1947, de Beauvoir writes to Algren to say that she is reading *An American Dilemma*, Swedish sociologist and economist Gunnar Myrdal's vast sociological study of racism in America that was published in 1944. She mentions the book several times in the letters to Algren, and through her correspondence we discover her admiration for Myrdal's project. The

²⁰ Penelope Deutscher, *The Philosophy of Simone de Beauvoir: Ambiguity, Conversion, Resistance* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008); Margaret Simons, 'The Second Sex: from Marxism to Radical Feminism' *Feminist Interpretations of The Second Sex*, ed. by Margaret Simons (University Park, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania University State Press, 1995); Ursula Tidd, *Simone de Beauvoir: Gender and Testimony* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

²¹ Tidd, p. 42; Simons, 'The Second Sex: from Marxism to Radical Feminism', p. 247.

²² Deutscher, p. 65.

²³ Simone de Beauvoir, *A Transatlantic Love Affair: Letters to Nelson Algren* (New York: New Press, 1988).

scale of the study impressed de Beauvoir as she read the large volume. It was not that it was simply a large and lengthy book, but the breadth of Myrdal's study was exemplary for how important social questions about the impact of racialisation, for example, might be approached. Margaret Simons suggests that de Beauvoir developed her method of so-called 'social-constructionism' from Myrdal's own formulations, which itself draws on an African-American intellectual tradition from W. E. DuBois.²⁴ A day after the previous letter de Beauvoir writes to Algren again:

Reading the *American Dilemma*, and my own little book about America [*America Day by Day* (1948)] being nearly over, I begin to think again about the other one, about women situation [sic]. I should like to write a book as important as this big one about Negroes. Myrdal points many very interesting analogies between Negroes' and women's status; I felt it already. Can you know, without breaking your back about it, if such a book as Myrdal's *Nation and Family* might be found in the USA? I am afraid it is written in Swedish.²⁵

Here de Beauvoir reveals how Myrdal's book and her own writing of America became significant in the formation of the project that would become *The Second Sex*. Her reflections in this letter reflect ideas found in the book's introduction. What is more, the scope of the book seems to have been changed, or at least have been influenced by Myrdal's study. De Beauvoir declares that she must write a book as 'important' to the study of sex as she deems Gunnar Myrdal's to be for examining the social impact of racism on black people in the USA. The letter recognises that the situation of woman required a specific, broad and in-depth study, the likes of which Gunnar Myrdal's book seemed to offer. She was already collecting together in her mind ways to approach it, searching for frameworks and language that would aid her endeavour in a meaningful way.

²⁴ Margaret Simons, *Beauvoir and The Second Sex: Feminism, Race and the Origins of Existentialism* (Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield, 1999), p. 171.

²⁵ De Beauvoir, *A Transatlantic Love Affair: Letters to Nelson Algren*, pp. 113-114.

According to Deidre Bair's popular biography, Algren had given de Beauvoir *An American Dilemma* as a gift. In de Beauvoir's correspondence to Algren, she requests that he search out another book.²⁶ The book she requests, *Nation and Family*, was written by Alva Myrdal (1902-1984), rather than Gunnar, and was published in 1941. Alva Myrdal was an acclaimed Swedish sociologist who was deeply interested in feminist questions of women's and children's rights and the family. Gunnar Myrdal was her husband and they worked together on projects and books such as *Crisis in the Population Question* (1934). Today they are considered in Sweden as the mother and father of the Swedish welfare state. We can be fairly sure from her letter to Algren that de Beauvoir had read the essay attributed to Alva Myrdal, 'A Parallel to the Negro Problem', which appeared as an appendix to *An American Dilemma*.²⁷ This is because the reference to this volume of other writing, *Nation and Family*, appears at the end of the appendix written by Alva Myrdal in Gunnar Myrdal's book.²⁸ In 'A Parallel to the Negro Problem', Alva Myrdal makes a comparison between the situation of black people in the USA and the situation of women. This analogy was to be frequently mentioned by de Beauvoir in *The Second Sex*. Indeed, she comments on the connection that she had 'felt it already'.²⁹ These connections became apparent while travelling around the United States, meeting Richard Wright and others, and then writing her book *America Day by Day*. Alva Myrdal's writing and her travels in America were crucial for nuancing de Beauvoir's position on individual freedom and the concept of situation in earlier essays.

²⁶ Bair, p. 364.

²⁷ Margaret Simons attributes the appendix to Alva Myrdal. See: Simons, *Beauvoir and The Second Sex*, p. 170.

²⁸ Alva Myrdal, 'A Parallel to the Negro Problem' in Gunnar Myrdal *An American Dilemma*, Vol. II, *The Negro Social Structure* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1964), pp. 1073-8.

²⁹ De Beauvoir, *A Transatlantic Love Affair*, p. 113.

Margaret Simons echoes some of these ideas. She suggests that Alva Myrdal's essay may have prompted de Beauvoir to develop her analyses of the situation of woman and the situation of black people in America and to draw parallels between the two.³⁰ Alva Myrdal and Gunnar Myrdal's writing not only gave de Beauvoir a broader vision of the scope of *The Second Sex* and imported ideas of 'social-constructionism' but allowed de Beauvoir to connect theorisations of race to the question of woman about which she was embarking on writing. Ursula Tidd also comments on the importance of thinking the question of race for de Beauvoir, observing that the same terms are used by de Beauvoir to describe the mode of alterity for the situation of black people in *America Day by Day* as the situation of woman in *The Second Sex*.³¹ This is a view also acknowledged by Penelope Deutscher in her discussion of *America Day by Day*.³² When Deutscher observes that de Beauvoir describes how women 'become' through formations, rather than immutable or essential characteristics, which enfold the person against themselves, she also points out that this is the same formulation through which de Beauvoir conceptualises the African-American situation.

The impact of theories of race are present at many moments of the text but they have a particular significance in relation to the question of becoming. At the end of *The Second Sex* de Beauvoir cites one of her key contemporaries, African-American writer Richard Wright's autobiography *Black Boy* published in 1945.³³ Vikki Bell and Margaret Simons have both noted the lack of engagement with Wright and de Beauvoir intellectual friendship and have sought to highlight the importance of this connection.³⁴ Wright's phenomenological approach, rejection

³⁰ Simons, 'The Second Sex: from Marxism to Radical Feminism', p. 247. Elsewhere Simons also notes that the analogy between race and sex had been made long before Myrdal and Beauvoir. Simons 'Richard Wright, Simone de Beauvoir and *The Second Sex*'.

³¹ Tidd, p. 40.

³² Deutscher, p. 77.

³³ De Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (2010) p. 753.

³⁴ Simons, 'Richard Wright, Simone de Beauvoir and *The Second Sex*', p. 176.

of essentialism and critique of Marxist economic reductionism all connect, according to Simons, to theoretical approach taken in *The Second Sex*. Simons' intervention situates Wright as one of the most important influences for de Beauvoir's philosophy: 'Wright, as the intellectual heir to W. E. B. DuBois, introduces Beauvoir to the concept of "double consciousness" of blacks under racism, which serves as a model for Beauvoir's concept of the Other in *The Second Sex*.'³⁵

De Beauvoir met Wright in Paris in 1946 and they spent a significant amount of time together during her US trip in 1947. Wright would later move to Paris, where he and de Beauvoir would maintain a close friendship. Many of Wright's essays, including a serial translation of *Black Boy*, were published in *Les Temps Modernes* in 1947, edited by de Beauvoir. As we see in her letters to Algren, Wright's writing and intellectual companionship was very important. The letters are interspersed with information about social events involving Wright but also reflections on his novel, autobiography and other writing. De Beauvoir discusses Wright's autobiography *Black Boy* at the end of *The Second Sex*.

Richard Wright showed in *Black Boy* how blocked from the start the ambitions of a young American black man are and what struggle he has to endure merely to raise himself to the level where whites begin to have problems; the blacks who came to France from Africa also have—within themselves as well as outside—difficulties similar to those encountered by women.³⁶

De Beauvoir suggests that the difficulties women experience in their situation can be compared to Wright's moving description of both psychic, embodied and social difficulties that a young African-American boy encounters in a society which marks him as Other. Wright's account of life approaches issues of racialisation in a way that spoke to the existential phenomenological approaches de Beauvoir was developing in *The Second Sex*. De Beauvoir's

³⁵ Simons, 'Richard Wright, Simone de Beauvoir and *The Second Sex*', p. 176.

³⁶ De Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (2010) p. 753.

description of *Black Boy* signals to the importance of childhood and adolescence as both Wright and de Beauvoir are concerned with the formative stages in which a subject experiences their situation marked as raced or sexed.³⁷ Across the texts, childhood and adolescence becomes a significant point from which analyses of race and sex can be thought. Wright gives his autobiography *Black Boy* the subtitle *a record of childhood and youth*. As Wright does for the experience of African-American man, de Beauvoir offers a 'record' of what it is to be woman and girl.

The Girl

The chapter in *The Second Sex* called '*la jeune fille*' or 'The Girl' points to the transition between childhood and adulthood, preceded as it is by the chapter 'Childhood' and followed by 'Sexual Initiation'. Penelope Deutscher argues that the demarcation of chapters in the second volume is significant.³⁸ We must understand this not in terms of marking a trajectory of a human lifetime, but for how the chapters indicate certain positions, or types of lived experience, that need to be lifted into representation and philosophical discourse. A simple linear trajectory cannot be mapped onto the chapters of the second volume. If this were the case, then 'Lived Experience' would surely end with old age and death. Instead, the second volume is constituted of fourteen chapters within four parts: *Formative Years*, *Situation*, *Justifications* and *Towards Liberation*. These parts address different concerns within the philosophical framework of sexed existence that de Beauvoir develops, marking 'the Girl' as not simply one in a sequence but a distinct kind of becomingness distinguishable from 'the girl'.

³⁷ Neither Wright, nor de Beauvoir fully examine the implication of being marked as raced and sexed in their writing of lived experience.

³⁸ Deutscher, p. 140.

Formative Years	Childhood The Girl Sexual Initiation The Lesbian
Situation	The Married Woman The Mother Social Life Prostitution and Hetaeras From Maturity to Old Age Woman's Situation and Character
Justifications	The Narcissist The Woman in Love The Mystic
Towards Liberation	The Independent Woman

Formative Years describes different forms of lived experience in which girls, while growing up, are propelled into a destiny of becoming woman. Her independence is examined through these positions alongside the modes in which her autonomy is curtailed. *Situation* examines the different roles available to adult women and argues that woman's situation is the cause of her character, her character is not the cause of her situation. In part three, named *Justifications*, de Beauvoir discusses three ways in which women shore up their dependency as the Other: as a narcissist, being in love and as a mystic. *The Second Sex* ends on a politically

rousing note against the continued objectification of woman: the single chapter 'The Independent Woman' nestled in the section entitled *Towards Liberation*.

We can see that de Beauvoir took considerable care demarcating the chapters in the second volume. Deutscher highlights the significance of this, since the experience described in each chapter in the second volume varies considerably.³⁹ Deutscher is also concerned, however, with the risks that arise when one considers the experiences of a group to be 'common'.⁴⁰ Distinguishing experience and applying it to a defined group risks homogenising and erasing the diversity of actual lived experiences within such a group. This is not the case in *The Second Sex*. As Sara Heinämaa argues, *The Second Sex* is a philosophical enquiry rather than a socio-historical explanation, as is so often assumed. Appealing to lived experience was one of the ways de Beauvoir challenged androcentric philosophical systems. She does not reconstruct an account of actual lived experience but investigates the relations of the sexed living body in the world. De Beauvoir raises the question of 'The Girl' philosophically; through which she becomes a figure to address questions about being and becoming more broadly. Raising the question, I would contend, is as important as the discussion that follows from it. The terms in which we speak of 'The Girl' is one aspect of this. Terminology for young women and girls describe various conditions or social relations, often external to themselves. The same terminology rarely describes the relations or experiences of the girl herself. De Beauvoir's intervention, then, is to ask the question: how does 'The Girl' exist herself? *The Second Sex* offers an investigation of the meaning of this kind of being and it is to this aspect of de Beauvoir's text that I now turn.

From the beginning, 'The Girl' was a crucial figure in the project that would become *The Second Sex*. In her third autobiography, published in 1968, *Force of Circumstance*, de

³⁹ Deutscher, p. 140.

⁴⁰ Deutscher, p. 140.

Beauvoir gives an account of the book's beginnings. She had planned to write about her own life but was prompted by a conversation with Jean-Paul Sartre to think more closely about her position as woman. Initially she did not think the question of what it meant to be woman needed much consideration. For her to be a woman, she writes, 'you might almost say it just hadn't counted'.⁴¹ Clearly it did count and by reflecting on girlhood she saw what needed to be investigated. Recalling Sartre's response, she continues:

"All the same, you weren't brought up in the same way as a boy would have been; you should look into it further." I looked, and it was a revelation: this world was a masculine world, my childhood had been nourished by myths forged by men, and I hadn't reacted to them in at all the same way I should have done if I had been a boy. I was so interested in this discovery that I abandoned my project for a personal confession in order to give all my attention to finding out about the condition of woman [*la condition féminine*] in its broadest terms.⁴²

Reflecting on her formative years made the problem of *la condition féminine* appear. The girl caused a 'revelation' in this respect. It is also significant that de Beauvoir had already written two unpublished novels in the 1930s, each focusing on the efforts of a girl to learn about life and overcome her situation.⁴³ In her second autobiography, *The Prime of Life* (1960), she even criticises herself while writing *She Came to Stay* (1943) for being 'compelled to describe Hélène's childhood' in such detail.⁴⁴ When she encountered Wright's work on childhood experiences, reading *Native Son* around 1940, she was already attuned to issues of the girlhood and interested how to think about it philosophically.

De Beauvoir also, of course, gave a full account of her own experiences as a girl in her first autobiography *Mémoires d'une jeune fille rangée*, published in 1958 and erroneously

⁴¹ Simone de Beauvoir, *Force of Circumstance*, trans. by Richard Howard (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books 1968), p. 103.

⁴² De Beauvoir, *Force of Circumstance*, p. 103.

⁴³ Margaret Simons, 'Beauvoir and Sartre: The Philosophical Relationship' *Yale French Studies*, 72 (1986) 165-79, (p. 176).

⁴⁴ Simone de Beauvoir, *The Prime of Life*, trans. by Peter Green (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1965), p. 542; Simone de Beauvoir, *She Came to Stay*, trans. by Yvonne Moyse and Roger Senhouse (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1954), p. 542.

translated a year later as *Memoirs of a Dutiful Daughter*.⁴⁵ Many of her formulations in the chapter on ‘The Girl’ in *The Second Sex* are expressed in this volume via her own experiences growing up in Paris. Across her philosophy and fiction, all of which addressed philosophical questions and themes, she again and again took up the position of ‘The Girl’ in her writing. These examples show that de Beauvoir was *always* concerned with ‘The Girl’.

Childhood was something to which de Beauvoir paid close attention and, according to Margaret Simons, this work paved the way for other philosophers, namely Jean-Paul Sartre, to see childhood as an important vector for understanding the individual.⁴⁶ Simons contrasts de Beauvoir’s philosophical interest in childhood in her novels and early philosophy with Sartre’s lack of engagement prior to 1950. She notes, ‘Beauvoir’s commitment to understanding the individual within the context of their childhood experiences is evident in all of her novels and short stories from 1931 through 1945’.⁴⁷ This can be extended to her philosophical works after 1945 as well. It was only after *The Second Sex* was published, in which de Beauvoir investigates the inhibitions of the Girl’s sense of autonomy and embodiment, that the implications of one’s childhood became a concern for Sartre. Simons’ project to ensure de Beauvoir’s philosophy is read as a singular intervention, rather than an echo of Sartrean formulations, certainly has a stake in this question of childhood.

Other scholars have touched upon ‘The Girl’ in the writings of Simone de Beauvoir. Emily Grosholz, for example, examines, from a literary perspective, the way girlhood and adolescence is described in *The Second Sex* and *Memoirs of a Dutiful Daughter*.⁴⁸ She emphasises

⁴⁵ Simone de Beauvoir, *Memoirs of a Dutiful Daughter*, trans. by James Kirkup (London: Penguin Books, 2001).

⁴⁶ Simons, ‘Beauvoir and Sartre: The Philosophical Relationship’.

⁴⁷ Simons, ‘Beauvoir and Sartre: The Philosophical Relationship’, p. 176.

⁴⁸ Emily Grosholz, ‘The House We Never Leave: Childhood, Shelter and Freedom in the Writing of Beauvoir and Colette’, in *The Legacy of Simone de Beauvoir*, ed. by Emily Grosholz (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

the moments where de Beauvoir turns to literary figures to portray 'The Girl' as tragic and hopeful. In doing so, she highlights certain aspects such as the transience of autonomy; a special connection to nature and also 'a youthful desire for the absolute'.⁴⁹ Grosholz, in fact, reads de Beauvoir's Girl (and de Beauvoir as girl) as a poet of modernity, who is full of creative potential but without the social form within which it can be cast. She sees the potential of 'The Girl' as yet to come and related to creative inscriptions that remain unintelligible within patriarchal limits. It is in examples from literature, namely novels, in *The Second Sex*, Grosholz highlights, that de Beauvoir is able to make such a statement for 'The Girl'. In the following sections Grosholz shifts from *The Second Sex* to focus on de Beauvoir's representation of her own girlhood via a comparison with Colette. Although de Beauvoir's writing seems to draw deeply on Colette's in many ways, Grosholz argues that de Beauvoir's account of her girlhood exhibits determination to leave her girlhood situation behind. Girlhood is figured, in Grosholz's reading, as her house and mother, whereas Colette finds refuge in the house and creative inspiration in the figure of the mother. In her analysis, the Girl who is a daughter is an important theme which leads Grosholz to suggest that de Beauvoir neglected to recognise the creative resources offered to her from her own mother and her 'literary mother' Colette.⁵⁰

Cultural theorist Catherine Driscoll offers an interesting perspective on de Beauvoir and 'The Girl'. She has argued that feminist theory tends to overlook the question of what it is to be a girl; that is, feminist discussions rarely consider girls, and if they do, it is almost never on their own terms.⁵¹ Such discourses use 'The Girl' in opposition to—or as a means to define—woman. Driscoll uses de Beauvoir as illustrative of this issue. In the case of *The Second Sex*, she suggests the arrangement of the fourth part of the book, *Formative Years*, excludes

⁴⁹ Grosholz, p. 177.

⁵⁰ Grosholz, pp. 190-191.

⁵¹ Catherine Driscoll, *Girls: Feminine Adolescence in Popular Culture and Cultural Theory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), p. 9.

girls from the situation of women's liberation by defining them as merely the process of formation. 'The Girl' is the mere process of becoming woman. To consider 'The Girl' as merely woman-in-process is not good enough according to Driscoll; 'The Girl' needs to emerge from these pages in her specificity. More recently she has worked through de Beauvoir's analysis of 'The Girl' to reassess terms used, or refocus current 'trends', in girlhood studies and feminist scholarship.⁵² For Driscoll, de Beauvoir offers an important directive of *what* we mean by 'The Girl' since she distinguishes 'The Girl' from childhood and attends to what marks this as different first from childhood and then from becoming woman. This suggests that there is a difference to being Girl, a distinction which Driscoll argues is either neglected completely or approached in the field of girlhood studies only via certain concepts, such as post-feminism or girl-power. By going back to de Beauvoir, Driscoll orients girlhood studies differently whilst also underscoring the cultural significance of this moment of becoming.⁵³

⁵² Driscoll's introduction to the edited volume *Girls' Sexualities and the Media* (2013) is an important example of this. Here she states the glaring question: why open a volume on contemporary girlhood and media by turning to de Beauvoir's existential-phenomenological project published way before Tumblr and YouTube existed? De Beauvoir is important in this context, not least, as Driscoll points out, because she was one of the first to show the power representation has over girls and young women. The social processes and embodied formations of the subject that de Beauvoir describes in the chapter on the girl are strikingly useful for approaching media technologies and contemporary girlhood. See: Catherine Driscoll, 'Forward' in *Girls' Sexualities and the Media*, ed. by Kate Harper, Yasmina Katsulis, Vera Lopez, Georganne Scheiner Gillis (New York: Peter Lang, 2013); Catherine Driscoll, 'The mystique of the young girl', *Feminist Theory*, 14 (2013), 285-294.

⁵³ Girlhood studies is a relatively new scholarly field that has grown predominantly from the disciplines of media studies and education. A reliance on certain concepts and forms of expressions has arisen in its wake. Driscoll's aim seems to be to complicate the narratives told of girlhood studies and offer a more critical and nuanced perspective that all the while offers new tools for understanding the question of the girl. At the inaugural *International Girlhood Studies Association* conference in 2016, Catherine Driscoll gave a keynote address which, amongst other things, highlighted de Beauvoir's writing on the girl and situated it within the genealogy of girlhood studies.

BB and Lolita

De Beauvoir is not often associated with cinema or the moving image. At the most, *The Second Sex* is considered simply as a foundational text for feminist thought; the political and social insights of which laid the basis for discussions that questioned the representation of women in visual culture. The problem of images of women, which de Beauvoir's discussion of myths speaks to, were investigated by feminist theorists of film and visual culture as well as artists and filmmakers. *The Second Sex* draws on several examples from film for its analysis, suggesting de Beauvoir saw cinema as an important component in the acculturation and representation of woman. In the chapter on 'the Girl', the example de Beauvoir mentions is *Mädchen in Uniform* (1931), directed by Leontine Sagan (1889-1974).⁵⁴ There are, however, only a small number of articles that read de Beauvoir's philosophy in relation to cinema and one edited collection that was published in 2012, *Existentialism and Contemporary Cinema: A Beauvoirian Perspective*, edited by Jean-Pierre Boulé and Ursula Tidd.⁵⁵

De Beauvoir, however, wrote one essay related to cinema titled 'Bridget Bardot and the Lolita Syndrome' that was published in *Esquire* magazine in 1959. Written a decade after the *Le deuxième sexe*, it is an intriguing counterpart to our discussion of 'The Girl'. In the article de Beauvoir examines the myth of Bridget Bardot, who she names BB, as a new model of erotic object who harnesses the power of adolescent charm. De Beauvoir argues that moves made towards egalitarianism has left masculine heterosexual desire looking for a new object for satisfaction. BB represents a new manifestation for masculine desire of an old mythic object—femininity.

⁵⁴ *Mädchen in Uniform* is a remarkable German language film set in a girls' boarding school that tells the story of a girl's, Manuela, love for her teacher, Fräulein von Bernberg. The film that used an all-female cast and was produced co-operatively with a share an equal share of profits.

⁵⁵ *Existentialism and Contemporary Cinema: A Beauvoirian Perspective*, ed. by Jean-Pierre Boulé and Ursula Tidd (Oxford: Berghan, 2012).

To say that ‘BB embodies the immorality of an age’ means that the character she has created challenges certain taboos accepted by the preceding age, particularly those which denied women sexual autonomy.⁵⁶

The new myth comes packaged as, what Simone de Beauvoir calls, the ‘erotic hoyden’, a figure who is embodied by BB. ‘Erotic hoyden’ is an unusual turn of phrase and it is unfortunate that the original French version of the article is unavailable (although a French version was published, translated from the English translation) so we cannot be sure of the original wording used by de Beauvoir.⁵⁷ Hoyden can be defined as ‘boisterous girl’ and could be translated as *garçon manqué*, but de Beauvoir also calls BB a ‘child-woman’ (*la femme-enfant*).⁵⁸ The problem with naming ‘The Girl’, or a certain type of woman, appears again in this context.

For de Beauvoir, BB represents a new twist on the vocation of femininity, emboldened by childish innocence, androgynous femininity and sexual availability. The ‘erotic hoyden’ therefore represents, not a challenge to the status quo, but merely its reinvention needing a new outlet after being hidden behind a veneer of so-called equality. Built on old myths, refashioned by adolescent style and childish demeanour, the only glimpse of subversion envisioned by de Beauvoir is in the articulation of sexual proclivity, and BB’s agency in sexual encounters.

Unlike her analysis of ‘The Girl’ in *The Second Sex*, a discussion of which follows, in ‘Bridget Bardot and the Lolita Syndrome’, BB—the child-woman and/or *garçon manqué*—represents something very different from ‘The Girl’ of our discussion. De Beauvoir’s concern in the later essay is the *new* myth and images produced by cinema and the media, which draw on certain arguments made in *The Second Sex*, in particular, the chapter on myths and the

⁵⁶ Simone de Beauvoir, *Bridget Bardot and the Lolita Syndrome*, trans. by Bernard Fretchman (London: First Four Square Edition, 1962), p. 58.

⁵⁷ See: Simone de Beauvoir, *Feminist Writings*, ed. by Margaret Simons and Marybeth Timmerman (Chicago: University of Illinois, 2012).

⁵⁸ Elizabeth Fallaize introduces the essay in the collection *Simone de Beauvoir: Feminist Writings*. She uses the phrase ‘*garçon manqué*’ and ‘tomboy child-woman’. Elizabeth Fallaize ‘Introduction’, *Feminist Writings*, ed. by Margaret Simons and Marybeth Timmerman (Chicago: University of Illinois, 2012).

question of the free woman. The question of women's lived experience, her situation and embodiment are not, in the *Esquire* article, the main concern.

De Beauvoir's analysis of BB discerns a new kind of eroticism, still figured by the woman's body, but which co-opts aspects of adolescence, becoming a product of a patriarchal imagination that tirelessly reworks its objects—namely, femininity—to suit new contexts. BB is an image, a representation that is produced, which uses the child-woman as an anchor to propose sexual availability as a new kind of femininity. BB borrows the adolescent manner, yet this is not a form of becomingness, the forms of which I am following in my analyses of 'the Girl'. The 'easy girl' is not the same as the 'free woman', yet de Beauvoir is drawn to the new freedom of sexuality that BB's figure describes. Appearing recently in the collection *Simone de Beauvoir: Feminist Writings*, the article remains an insight into de Beauvoir's appreciation and feminist critique of cinema by presenting an astute understanding of the role of images of women in relation to the desire of patriarchal culture.

The Ambiguity of Becoming

Earlier I introduced the notion that *The Second Sex* is not about 'what' woman is but 'how'. If 'how', understood as 'by what means', is that which concerns the book predominantly, then it is clear that 'The Girl' plays a significant role in understanding how one becomes woman. Heeding Driscoll's caution, however, I argue that the chapter on 'The Girl' explores more than becoming woman since it also interrogates the specificity of 'lived experience' [*l'expérience vécue*] from the perspective of 'The Girl' and her relations with the world. That is, her relations to the world and to herself are described as different from that of woman.⁵⁹ This is the

⁵⁹ The title of the second volume 'L'Expérience Vécue' or 'Lived Experience' comes from the phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty and his concept of the embodied subject and living body in the *Phenomenology of Perception* (1945).

interesting paradox of ‘The Girl’, since she is at the same time both being a girl and *becoming* woman. For de Beauvoir, ‘to be is to have become’ [*être c’est être devenu*].⁶⁰ This means that ‘The Girl’ is always becoming girl, having been a child, and simultaneously becoming woman. Both directions are present in *The Second Sex* and important for this discussion.

The concept of the body in *The Second Sex* is one way to trace how de Beauvoir’s philosophical contribution is intimately connected to ‘The Girl’. The body in *The Second Sex* is a contested area in feminist scholarship, one that has been examined from many angles over the last sixty years. This has produced innovative readings alongside a wealth of generalised and simplified assumptions. I suggest, nevertheless, that a focus on ‘The Girl’ lifts certain aspects of de Beauvoir’s philosophical project to the surface and might be a way to approach this question anew. With this in mind I will now outline my own reading of the concept of body in *The Second Sex*, and then offer a close reading of this concept in relation to ‘The Girl’.

The Second Sex is classically existentialist in so far as the body is always conceived as a situation. We need to deduce, however, de Beauvoir’s unique concerns in terms of the concept of the body. Kristana Arp and Sara Heinämaa both emphasise the concept of the body in *The Second Sex* through an existential-phenomenological framework.⁶¹ This acknowledges that the body is never an essence but always conceived in relation to its situation. As de Beauvoir maintains, one becomes through experience rather than essence. As we discover, the body is our limit but also the perspective from which we relate to the world. She writes: ‘However, one might say, in the position I adopt—that of Heidegger, Sartre and Merleau-Ponty—that is the body is not a *thing*, it is a situation: it is our grasp on the world and the outline for our

⁶⁰ De Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (2010), p. 13; de Beauvoir, *Le Deuxième Sexe: I les faits et les mythes*, p. 25.

⁶¹ Kristana Arp, ‘Beauvoir’s Concept of Bodily Alienation’ in *Feminist Interpretations of Simone de Beauvoir*, ed. by Margaret Simons (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995); Heinämaa, *Toward a Phenomenology of Sexual Difference*.

projects'.⁶² Both Arp and Heinämaa connect the writings of Merleau-Ponty in particular to de Beauvoir's concept of the body and argue that his concept of *corps vécu*, or living/lived body, influenced de Beauvoir's own formulation of the body as a subject of experience.⁶³ We, therefore, understand the body and subject as inseparable. This trajectory also marks a departure from Sartre's account of the body. Christine Daigle and Christinia Landry draw attention to de Beauvoir and Sartre's divergent approaches to transcendence and the immanent body, while Daigle also demonstrates Sartre's failure to heed de Beauvoir's instructive position on the question of embodiment.⁶⁴ Daigle concludes: 'he remains trapped in a dualist, sexist, macho view, despite Beauvoir's vigilance.'⁶⁵ Judith Butler also draws attention to this departure as she critiques how Sartre remains caught in remnants of dualistic thought.⁶⁶ Although de Beauvoir uses Merleau-Ponty's, not Sartre's, concept of the living body this is not without qualification as she reformulates and critiques its androcentricity. She

⁶² De Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (2010), p. 46.

⁶³ Heinämaa makes the point to translate *corps vécu* as *living body* not *lived body*. Arp uses *lived body* consistently in her essay. This connection is established in de Beauvoir's review of the *Phenomenology of Perception* by Merleau-Ponty, which she published in 1945 in *Les Temps Modernes*. In the review she clearly agrees with Merleau-Ponty and shows how his thought diverges from Sartre's. See: Simone de Beauvoir, 'A Review of *The Phenomenology of Perception* by Maurice Merleau-Ponty', in *Philosophical Writings*, ed. by Margaret Simons (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2004).

⁶⁴ Christine Daigle and Christinia Landry, 'An Analysis of Sartre's and Beauvoir's Views on Transcendence: Exploring Intersubjective Relations', *PhaenEx*, 8 (2013) 91-121; Christine Daigle, 'Where Influence Fails: Embodiment in Beauvoir and Sartre', in *Beauvoir & Sartre: The Riddle of Influence*, ed. by Christine Daigle and Jacob Golomb (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2009), p. 44.

⁶⁵ In 'An Analysis of Sartre's and Beauvoir's Views on Transcendence: Exploring Intersubjective Relations' Daigle and Landry demonstrate the different approaches to transcendence by Sartre and de Beauvoir by investigating their perspectives on intersubjective relations. Although they demonstrate how Sartre's perspective on transcendence and freedom proves problematic when considering the weight of oppression, as analysed by de Beauvoir in *The Second Sex*, they also identify different limitations in de Beauvoir's approach. According to their analysis, following de Beauvoir, emphasising the ambiguity of one's situation means that living authentically becomes, ultimately, problematic. See: Daigle and Landry.

⁶⁶ Judith Butler, 'Sex and Gender in Simone de Beauvoir's *Second Sex*', *Yale French Studies*, 72 (1986), 35-49.

writes: ‘woman is her body as man is his, but her body is something other than her.’⁶⁷ (*‘La femme, comme l’homme, est son corps: mais son corps est autre chose qu’elle.’*)⁶⁸ De Beauvoir’s response to Merleau-Ponty begs the question: if woman is her body and thus other than her self, what are the implications for her being in the world? This formulation also indicates a central principle de Beauvoir develops: woman is split between two senses of being.

In de Beauvoir’s account woman fluctuates between freedom and alienation; transcendence and immanence; subject-being and object-being. Since woman is her body, a body-in-situation, apprehending herself as separate from her body, as immanence, as object, diminishes herself in the world. ‘Woman’s drama [*le drame de la femme*] lies in this conflict between the fundamental claim of every subject, which always posits itself as essential, and the demands of a situation that constitutes her as inessential’.⁶⁹ According to Toril Moi this is ‘the single most important passage’ in *The Second Sex*.⁷⁰ The statement describes a fundamental mode of being to which every subject makes a claim, that of being the essential. Yet, the situation of woman mitigates or overrides this central claim of being. For Moi, this reveals a radical theorisation of sexual difference.⁷¹ The situation of woman produces a socially significant differentiation according to sex. *The Second Sex* suggests that there is—ontologically—conflict and ambiguity in every individual. Women are, however, fundamentally more conflicted and ambiguous as a result of their situation. De Beauvoir discovers another scene of ambiguity, which is expressed as a painful split between their autonomy and a culture in which woman are compelled to exist as the Other.⁷² Moi discerns

⁶⁷ de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (2010), p. 42.

⁶⁸ de Beauvoir, *Le Deuxième Sexe: I les faits et les myths*, p. 66.

⁶⁹ de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (2010), p. 17.

⁷⁰ Toril Moi, ‘Ambiguity and Alienation in The Second Sex’, *Boundary 2* 19 (1992), 96-112 (p. 98).

⁷¹ Moi, ‘Ambiguity and Alienation in The Second Sex’, p. 98.

⁷² De Beauvoir always uses this term in a capitalized form in the case of woman to distinguish from other types of otherness described. Something can be other, but only woman is Other.

two types of alienation from this account, ontological and social, with which she argues: 'the social oppression of women [...] *mirrors or repeats* the ontological ambiguity of existence'.⁷³ Remarkably, the situation of woman maintains itself over two analogous scenes of conflict. The double scene of conflict disposes the individual to a specific kind existence, one that compels woman to renounce themselves as the essential and to live their body as an object.

The double bind of conflict and ambiguity is significant here because it is in the chapter on 'The Girl' in *The Second Sex* that de Beauvoir returns to this issue, again and again, through the experience of 'The Girl'. Thus, when Moi calls our attention to the importance of the statement on 'woman's drama' she is first also pointing to the situation of 'The Girl'. Moi's perspective is useful for focusing our attention on the deep division that woman takes on. We need, however, a more nuanced understanding of what is meant by the 'social oppression' of woman as it interfaces with the notion of the body-as-situation for 'The Girl'. As it stands, an account of socialisation in this way neglects the deeply phenomenological analysis that, I argue, structures de Beauvoir's theorisation of becoming woman and marks the significance of the figure of 'The Girl'.

Judith Butler's article 'Sex and Gender in Simone de Beauvoir's *Second Sex*' offers a valuable theoretical support in this respect.⁷⁴ She argues that de Beauvoir's analysis provides an alternative to narratives of passive acculturation because the existential perspective emphasises the individual's active relationship to social regimes, conceptualised as 'becoming'. Butler writes, '[o]ver and against a less sophisticated view of "socialization", [de Beauvoir] is using the existential apparatus to understand the moment of appropriation through which socialization occurs'.⁷⁵ Taking *The Second Sex* as a theory of gender, Butler

⁷³ Moi, 'Ambiguity and Alienation in *The Second Sex*', p. 98.

⁷⁴ Butler, 'Sex and Gender in Simone de Beauvoir's *Second Sex*'.

⁷⁵ Butler, 'Sex and Gender in Simone de Beauvoir's *Second Sex*', p. 41.

elaborates how 'becoming' is itself ambiguous.⁷⁶ She argues through her reading of de Beauvoir that if one becomes woman, one is not just passively subjected to gender by culture.⁷⁷ Butler highlights the tension in the concept of situation, which we might express as: how one is produced as woman versus the creative aspect through which woman constantly produces herself in this way, but adhering to cultural norms and social pressures. Becoming a subject is an active process of interpretation and appropriation within the context of 'received cultural possibilities'.⁷⁸ The body is a 'nexus of culture and choice' rather than an essence, or pure acculturation.⁷⁹ For Butler this demonstrates a radicalisation of the Sartrean concept of freedom in *The Second Sex*. She writes: '[de Beauvoir's] theory of gender, then, entails a reinterpretation of the existential doctrine of choice whereby "choosing" a gender is understood as the embodiment of possibilities within a network of deeply entrenched cultural norms'.⁸⁰

Philosophical concepts developed by de Beauvoir are all too often compared to those of Sartre and here we find an important distinction.⁸¹ In his early philosophy Sartre argues that the situation cannot limit the individual since it is always articulated in relation to an individual's chosen projects.⁸² De Beauvoir pushes against this universalised view. According to Daigle, Sartre's philosophy was influenced by de Beauvoir, but on the issue of embodiment

⁷⁶ Sara Heinämaa has argued that de Beauvoir's is not a theory of gender and maintains that Butler misapplies a sex/gender distinction onto *The Second Sex*. Sara Heinämaa, 'What is a Woman? Butler and Beauvoir on the Foundations of the Sexual Difference', *Hypatia*, 12 (1997), 20-39.

⁷⁷ Butler's reading in 'Sex and Gender in Simone de Beauvoir's *Second Sex*' problematizes the sex/gender distinction: 'Beauvoir's theory seems implicitly to ask whether sex was not gender all along?' (p.46). We might argue, following Heinämaa, that Butler reinforces the distinction by applying it to de Beauvoir's philosophy where gender was not a concept to begin with.

⁷⁸ Butler, 'Sex and Gender in Simone de Beauvoir's *Second Sex*', p. 35.

⁷⁹ Butler, 'Sex and Gender in Simone de Beauvoir's *Second Sex*', p. 45.

⁸⁰ Butler, 'Sex and Gender in Simone de Beauvoir's *Second Sex*', p. 37.

⁸¹ The question of influence is taken up from a number of perspective and in great detail in Daigle and Golomb's edited volume *Beauvoir & Sartre: The Riddle of Influence* published in 2009.

⁸² Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, trans. by Hazel Barnes (Abingdon: Routledge, 2003).

he did not budge, marking a clear distinction between their philosophies.⁸³ De Beauvoir's corrective to Sartre's formulation develops an embodied notion of freedom that ultimately rejects the absolute freedom of individuals. For de Beauvoir, the freedom to act must be 'founded' in order to be realised and thus in order to do this some situations are privileged over others.⁸⁴ In her 1986 essay, Butler pushes the question of socialisation in de Beauvoir's work past constructionist narratives and actively refutes accusations of voluntarism.⁸⁵ Butler continues, 'the tension in her theory does not reside between being "in" and "beyond" the body, but in the move from the natural to the acculturated body'.⁸⁶ Dodging what Butler calls Sartre's 'Cartesian ghosts', in *The Second Sex* it follows that existence as a body-in-situation is to always, at least in part, also become a gender. De Beauvoir's corrective to Sartre's dualism is vital for Butler's own theory. Taking up the ambiguity of becoming via de Beauvoir, Butler extends the intervention to lift it into her framework of gender, leading toward her early conceptualisations of gender as performative.

Although her intervention enables us to discern the ways in which *The Second Sex* offers a nuanced existential and phenomenological account of becoming—one that is not just passive acculturation—Butler does not address another aspect of becoming which concerns me here. Namely, how *The Second Sex* explores the experiences of girls as a distinctive site of

⁸³ Daigle maintains that de Beauvoir's influence did shape and change many of Sartre's concepts, including a shift from his view of absolute freedom to a situated one which is one of the philosophical interventions *The Second Sex* develops. See: Christine Daigle, 'Where Influence Fails: Embodiment in Beauvoir and Sartre', in *Beauvoir & Sartre: The Riddle of Influence*, ed. by Christine Daigle and Jacob Golomb (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2009).

⁸⁴ See: Eva Lundgren-Gothlin, *Sex and Existence: Simone de Beauvoir's The Second Sex* (Hanover and London: University Press of New England, 1996), pp. 154-159.

⁸⁵ In her 1986 article de Beauvoir's corrective to Sartre's 'Cartesian ghosts' is an important part of her argument. Later, however, in *Gender Trouble*, published four years later, she seems to change her mind. She writes: 'Despite my own previous efforts to argue the contrary, it appears that Beauvoir maintains the mind/body dualism, even as she proposes a synthesis of those terms.' Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (London and New York: Routledge, 1999), p. 17.

⁸⁶ Judith Butler, 'Sex and Gender in Simone de Beauvoir's *Second Sex*', *Yale French Studies*, 72 (1986), 35-49 (p. 39).

becoming. This modality of existence, while not a chronological stage does have a temporal quality. Butler's account of gender offers something quite different.⁸⁷ This is clear in the following example where Butler outlines a theorisation of gender in respect of its temporal qualities. She writes: 'Although we "become" our genders, the temporal movement of this becoming does not follow a linear progression'.⁸⁸ What she means is there is no origin to gender, meaning it cannot follow a trajectory from one point to a fixed end. Gender is itself an 'originating activity' that takes place 'incessantly'.⁸⁹ It is a repeated gesture, and this is the temporality of gender as performative.

There are, nevertheless, questions about temporality and experience that de Beauvoir poses that remain outside Butler's scope. Butler is concerned with becoming genders (in the plural), rather than the space de Beauvoir opens up for the question of woman and how she becomes in relation to what I am calling the Girl. Considered only through the prism of Butlerian gender theory, becoming loses a perspective that de Beauvoir's writing attends to. The perspective and questions left unanswered are, namely, what occurs at the moment of 'The Girl'? Why is this such a decisive moment? Why does 'The Girl' never arrive as a transcendent subject? Butler's account of the ambiguity of becoming one's gender does not theorise the transition from child to woman, nor is she concerned with transcendence. It is not a question for her since the theory of gender she develops cannot presume an origin. It is, however, a question for de Beauvoir who discerns a need to investigate the different modalities of becoming a subject of experience, a subject whose body-as-situation exists in time and space, and which also has a future and a history.

⁸⁷ Butler, 'Sex and Gender in Simone de Beauvoir's *Second Sex*', p. 39.

⁸⁸ Butler, 'Sex and Gender in Simone de Beauvoir's *Second Sex*', p. 39.

⁸⁹ Butler, 'Sex and Gender in Simone de Beauvoir's *Second Sex*', p. 39.

Rick Dolphijn and Iris van der Tuin also question Butler's reading of de Beauvoir from the perspective of temporality and 'The Girl'.⁹⁰ Following Elizabeth Grosz and Luce Irigaray, Dolphijn and van der Tuin call for a feminism yet to come 'that works with sexual difference not as a paradox that needs to be solved, but rather as a virtuality'.⁹¹ In their analysis, *The Second Sex* maintains the virtuality and indecidability that Grosz and Irigaray advocate. The girl is significant insofar as she highlights the rethinking of ontology via these concepts. Thus, Dolphijn and van der Tuin locate the significance and potential of *The Second Sex* and feminism in the temporality of the virtual, that is, rethinking feminism otherwise than the framework of gender seen as limiting us to socio-historically established norms in the past, present and future. 'For it is no coincidence that de Beauvoir does not say that the girl becomes the woman. There is not a projection backwards of the woman of sexual binarism, onto the girl. The sexed body of the girl is not fully captured by the word "woman".⁹² If not a projection backwards, a different kind of movement is important for the Girl. They argue that Butler's framework closes down the opportunity for feminism to 'make a difference' by imposing the sex/gender distinction onto de Beauvoir's philosophy.⁹³ The Girl is important for Dolphijn and van der Tuin because she signals in de Beauvoir's writing to a naïve ethics, and vitalist aspects, which they connect to Deleuze and Guattari's becoming-woman. Dolphijn and van der Tuin's analysis carefully resituates de Beauvoir in a feminist materialist tradition, which departs significantly from the language of transcendence and immanence, objectivity and subjectivity, we have seen thus far. Via different means, they also question Butler's

⁹⁰ Rick Dolphijn and Iris van der Tuin, 'Sexual Differing' in *New Materialism: Interviews & Cartographies*, (Ann Arbor: Open Humanities Press, 2012).

⁹¹ Dolphijn and van der Tuin, pp. 141-142.

⁹² Dolphijn and van der Tuin, p. 149.

⁹³ Dolphijn and van der Tuin, p. 144.

reading of *The Second Sex* because of inadequacies regarding temporality and ‘The Girl’. Their perspective opens up the potential of thinking ‘The Girl’ as an ethical project for feminism.

Returning to the question of why ‘The Girl’ is a decisive moment and a significant site of becoming, we must, therefore, address the concept of becoming from a different perspective than Butler’s to take this into account, but without simply asserting an essential or chronological trajectory. In the final sections I will explore how the Girl’s experience of her body becomes an important site to investigate the means by which one becomes woman via phenomenological analyses of specific experiences and the injunction of other temporalities.

Gendered Becomings / Feminine Becomings

The chapters on childhood and ‘The Girl’ in the second volume, to a greater extent, discuss the girl’s experience of her body. Since we understand that, for de Beauvoir, physiological changes can only be considered important insofar as they are interpreted and reflected within culture, then it is not surprising that relatively little space is given to discussing these processes⁹⁴ The body matters for de Beauvoir insofar as it is a body as situation, therefore, it is how the girl becomes conscious of these facts of the body that have the most significance on her being in the world.⁹⁵ Nevertheless, the emergence of becoming woman coincides with the changes that occur during puberty, an experience of the body characterised by de Beauvoir as a crisis. She writes in the chapter on biology: ‘It is worth noting that this event has all the characteristics of a crisis; the woman’s body does not accept the species’s installation in her without a fight; and this fight weakens and endangers her’.⁹⁶ The weighty cultural meaning of

⁹⁴ It is also the case that de Beauvoir dedicates a chapter at the beginning of the first volume to a lengthy study of biological facts as one step to grasp the situation of woman. In the second volume, however, her concern is taking up lived experience, with and against the meaning of biological processes.

⁹⁵ De Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (2010), p. 354.

⁹⁶ De Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (2010), p. 40.

the female body's potential reproductive function also come to bear on the girl as she reaches puberty. The 'becoming female' of the body at this point coincides with 'becoming woman' as situation, inaugurating an increasingly difficult and chaotic experience of the body.

More important, however, for my purposes here are the social and psychic relations that converge with the *girl-as-situation*. For this *The Second Sex* opens a nuanced discussion of certain moments which address the distinctiveness of the situation of 'The Girl'. The complex machineries of being Girl, constituted by a nexus of choice and culture, accumulating lived experience and a future narrated before her, have a bearing on how we understand the concept of becoming. This can be further elaborated with the help of an example:

For the girl [...] there is a divorce between her properly human condition and her feminine vocation. This is why adolescence is such a difficult and decisive moment for woman. Until then, she was an autonomous individual: she now has to renounce her sovereignty. Not only is she torn like her brothers, and more acutely, between past and future, but in addition a conflict breaks out between her originary claim to be subject, activity, and freedom, on the one hand and, on the other, her erotic tendencies and the social pressure to assume herself as a passive object. She spontaneously grasps herself as the essential: How will she decide to become the inessential? If I can accomplish myself only as the Other, how will I renounce my Self? Such is the agonizing dilemma the woman-to-be must struggle with.⁹⁷

The paragraph situates the chapter on 'The Girl' as a prime area of concern because it throws into focus the incompatibility of the styles of being available as woman, or when one becomes as such. I have argued, following Toril Moi, that the situation of 'The Girl' is one of the most important places across the two volumes where the conflict of being-subject and being-object; transcendence and immanence is foregrounded. Here we see that ontological ambiguity is hinted at, but more pressing is the conflict that the situation of becoming woman produces within herself.

Pausing on this paragraph we also notice the specific phraseology 'vocation' used to describe femininity here and consistently throughout the chapter on childhood and 'The Girl'.

⁹⁷ De Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (2010), p. 359.

Despite the threat of the vocation of femininity yet to come, the little girl has existed herself as an autonomous subject—as do little boys. Etymologically, ‘vocation’ comes from the Latin *vocare* which means ‘to call’ or ‘invoke’ and *vox* meaning ‘speech’ or ‘voice’. Femininity might thus be described as a calling. It calls upon ‘The Girl’, becoming a common refrain that demands her to take up a certain mission or attitude. This also means it is relational, thus not essential within oneself, since to be called requires a position elsewhere from which one is addressed. Femininity is therefore not conceived of as an essential quality, but as a future destination that frames the little girl’s existence and directs her from without. ‘Vocation’ also suggests a type of work and especially a life-long dedication to one of a particular kind. Perhaps an individual is particularly suited—destined perhaps—for this work; they might even have a ‘natural’ talent for it. In this context the word also summons religious connotations. If we consider the etymology of *vocare*, one of the first meanings is spiritual calling, or, calling as consecration. Nuns, of course, describe their situation as a calling. Given de Beauvoir’s position toward religious faith, we can determine that it is in a manner of critique that ‘vocation’ is employed.⁹⁸ The use of this word also holds the trace of old social systems in which a girl who did not want to marry would have to become a nun. As a nun she would not be *la femme* but *la bonne sœur*. One calling is replaced by another, but the alternative saves her from becoming wife/woman—*la femme*. Femininity as vocation helps to grasp the different forces and positions available to woman to which *The Second Sex* addresses itself in the second volume in particular.

From this analysis we can discern the following: de Beauvoir does not conceive of a ‘young femininity’ specific to the little girl, instead femininity calls upon her from the start of her life, waiting for her to take up its procedures. This means that there must be a point at

⁹⁸ In *Memoirs of a Dutiful Daughter* (1958) de Beauvoir describes her strong Christian faith as a girl, at one point deciding to become a nun. Later, in her early teenage years de Beauvoir experienced an intense crisis of faith leading to her becoming an atheist for the rest of her life.

which femininity impinges on an individual in such a way that it becomes more than just a future vocation but becomes the reality. As de Beauvoir's chapter on childhood suggests, the little girl moves with and against a myth of woman as a future. It entices and repulses her, but she is not caught in its formation. In this sense she is incited as a woman to come and not as Girl. Thus, to be Girl is to be something else than woman, from which we might argue that 'The Girl' exists as a resistance to this position but also the position from which woman is made possible. The chapter on 'The Girl' attunes us to this paradox. Adolescence is a 'decisive' moment, yet, as de Beauvoir emphasises, this is a conflict which will never really be settled. It becomes the structure of her being, or rather, it is the movement with and against herself that becomes the structure of her becoming. This is the problematic of 'The Girl', suggesting that the situation of 'The Girl' is not dependent on a chronological stage but expresses a phenomenological constant that is initiated in the moment of 'The Girl'. The formation of 'The Girl' through this problematic persists past the time of girlhood. This is what I turn to now.

A Temporality of Becoming?

Even if femininity, a 'vocation' according to de Beauvoir, has been constantly imposed on girls from birth, the individual is still not prepared for the shock which the situation of becoming woman precipitates. The issue of how a girl is compelled to become woman still remains.

Kristana Arp writes, 'the young girl, the pubescent woman does not make her body into a thing on her own account. It is with surprise that the young girl discovers that her body is this strange and curious object'.⁹⁹ What, then, are the conditions that dispose a girl to apprehend her body, with such surprise, as an object? Arp continues, 'A living body can become a thing

⁹⁹ Arp, p. 171.

only under the gaze of another', recalling that de Beauvoir, like Sartre, determines the look as objectifying.¹⁰⁰ *The Second Sex* gives many examples in which an experience of a look or similar intervenes in the girl's sense of self, some of which I shall address now.

We can identify different issues or modes of being that are central to the situation of women and girls. Through literary and real-life examples de Beauvoir interrogates the conflict between the 'originary claim as subject', 'erotic tendencies' and the 'social pressure to assume herself as passive object', which were outlined in the long quotation in the previous section. The conflict between these positions or urges is represented by de Beauvoir in different contexts that express the difficulty they bestow upon the individual.

I know some girls, far from shy, who get no enjoyment strolling through Paris alone because, incessantly bothered, they are always on their guard: all their pleasure is ruined.¹⁰¹

In another example we learn:

Proud to capture masculine interest and to arouse admiration, woman is revolted by being captured in return [...] men's gazes flatter and hurt her at the same time; she would only like to be seen to the extent that she shows herself: eyes are always too penetrating.¹⁰²

A further example is given:

'At thirteen, I walked around bare-legged in a short dress,' another woman told me. 'A man, sniggering, made a comment about my fat calves. The next day my mother made me wear stockings and lengthen my skirt, but I will never forget the shock I suddenly felt in seeing myself being *seen*'.¹⁰³

¹⁰⁰ Arp, p. 171. It is important to distinguish, however, that the look that is invoked in these examples differ from Sartre's concept of 'le regard'. In particular, we do not find the quality of a looked-at-look, so central to Sartre's concept in *Being and Nothingness*, in *The Second Sex*. It is, therefore, crucial to recognize that de Beauvoir stakes out a distinctly different account of the field of vision and its corporeal consequences. This originates, I suggest, from her more nuanced conception of the lived body. See also, Debbie Evans analysis of de Beauvoir and Sartre via the look, in Daigle and Golomb (2009).

¹⁰¹ De Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (2010), p. 356.

¹⁰² De Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (2010), p. 375.

¹⁰³ De Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (2010), p. 331.

In many ways these moments are mundane, fragmented everyday occurrences but de Beauvoir identifies them as meaningful scenes through which we can grasp how the situation of woman impinges at the nexus of being/becoming Girl. What, then, is the structure of these experiences? De Beauvoir suggests that these experiences are cumulative and iterative, and it is clear that initial experiences of shock and horror, which become normalised and internalised, fundamentally shift how the girl or young woman experiences herself in the world. Sara Heinämaa observes:

The idea of repetition is central to the solution de Beauvoir offers to the problem of sexual hierarchy. The core of her extensive discussion is the claim that women's subjection is a human formation founded on and sustained by nothing else than repeated acts of devaluation and oblivion.¹⁰⁴

This notion of repetition and devaluation is central to why these experiences are important, but they do not help us understand the specific quality of this experience for 'The Girl'. It is not as simple as just wearing the girl down. Something else happens that compels her to live her body differently, which has a lasting impact on the condition of her existence. These experiences might accumulate; they also must acquire meaning beyond the event and are reinscribed corporeally and psychically on the girl in conscious and unconscious ways. De Beauvoir shows how the inevitable discomfort or unsafety felt in other moments, such as the experience of girls in public on the street, compels the body to become a site of ambiguity and conflict because she is forced to recognise, and try to reconcile, the split between the different positions of subject and object. Asked in retrospect, women recall these situations where their position as becoming-object, or as the inessential, was revealed to them, marking the moment of the Girl.¹⁰⁵ This is the form of 'The Girl'; the phenomenological-existential account of the living body, rather than a physical or psychological change.

¹⁰⁴ Heinämaa, *Toward a Phenomenology of Sexual Difference*, p. 103.

¹⁰⁵ I defer to Fiona Vera Greys' philosophical and empirical study *Men's Intrusion, Women's Embodiment* (2017) for a detailed analysis of the impact of men's intrusions on women and girl's lived experiences.

The way that de Beauvoir's analysis approaches how woman is compelled to live her body as an object suggests a temporal dimension since *The Second Sex* suggests that woman did not always live her body as an object. Woman 'becomes' through certain formations, which according to de Beauvoir, divide and bend her against her autonomous self. Taking this further, then, we can connect the events described above to a specific mode of temporality to theorise these moments, conceived as the event of an intrusion of another person. This is where de Beauvoir reveals a further temporal dimension to being 'The Girl' to which I now turn.

In the schema of development outlined in *The Second Sex*, a boy-child will become an adult, but the girl-child becomes something else—she will become woman. Elsewhere in the chapter the experience of 'The Girl' is characterised through language that explicitly and implicitly conjures a sense of waiting: a 'frozen existence'; 'her youth is consumed by waiting. She is waiting for man.'; 'she is still suspended between the moment of childish independence and that of feminine submission.'¹⁰⁶ The Girl is a mode of becoming that is suspended, which refuses the flow of time, achieving a sense of atemporality. Conceived less as arrested development, and more as a loss of hope and confidence in her body-as-situation, 'The Girl' stays put since there is nowhere meaningful to take herself. Her urge to freedom is curtailed by the vocation of femininity. Yet the suspension of the Girl, and the persistence of this existential moment makes it an especially significant moment for feminine existence. 'The Girl' becomes a concept by persisting past girlhood, producing a difference in relation to the girl and allowing later experiences to recall this situation.

¹⁰⁶ De Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (2010), pp. 351-359.

Alongside what appears to be a pause in being, or perhaps to explain such a state, the chapter reveals a unique temporality associated with 'The Girl'. Commencing from an event in which a look shocks and dislocates the girl's existence, a different sense of being is asynchronously, or allochronically, installed; one that all too conveniently follows the conditions implied by femininity as a vocation. What this means is that on a certain level 'The Girl' is positioned as the object she anticipated becoming, compelling her to become what she was not already but what she was told she always was. This is similar to what Penelope Deutscher has described as 'a corporeal, and preemptive, temporal asynchrony' and a 'dislocating temporal becoming'.¹⁰⁷ In my reading of this chapter, I understand Deutscher's notion of a 'dislocating temporal becoming' as precisely related to the Girl's position distinct from child and woman. Before now the little girl has lived her body as autonomous. Even with the social direction imposed by the 'vocation of femininity', her mode of being and relating to the world was not fundamentally different from that of the little boy. Moving from childhood to 'The Girl', naiveté and autonomy are positioned in a struggle against a body-in-situation perceived simply as flesh.

As I have suggested, *The Second Sex* argues that through accumulative experience lessons of difference and Otherness are slowly internalised, but de Beauvoir's analysis suggests something more is going on. Deutscher emphasises, in reference to the many examples of girlhood experiences in *The Second Sex*, 'a seemingly sudden, a moment of punctual, instantaneous shock'.¹⁰⁸ She continues, '[a] narrator seems to depict a sudden moment of being jolted from one state of being to another'.¹⁰⁹ Deutscher connects this with the writing of African-American Sociologist W. E. Du Bois and suggests, as Margaret Simons

¹⁰⁷ Deutscher, pp. 147-148.

¹⁰⁸ Deutscher, p. 149.

¹⁰⁹ Deutscher, p. 149.

had previously, that Du Bois' thinking is indirectly referenced in *The Second Sex*. We know that de Beauvoir definitely encountered Du Bois' important analysis of race through Gunnar Myrdal's *The American Dilemma* but it seems very likely that she also read Du Bois writing directly. Deutscher specifically makes a connection between the way de Beauvoir and Du Bois attend to the question of alterity and aging through a 'crisis' precipitated by a look. Deutscher observes that de Beauvoir and Du Bois similarly describe a child's aging 'as seeming to embody the acquisition of a refigured self-consciousness, involving devastating crisis in which one is taken out of one's skin'.¹¹⁰ Both describe the shock of been seen, all of a sudden, as different, speaking to a complex temporality of alterity and consciousness that both articulate in their theories. The sense of quickness and lack of warning contrasts with the sense of waiting that also characterises 'The Girl', but it also has an atemporal quality of being out of time.

In these scenes transcendence is prohibited by the racist or patriarchal gaze, literally and metaphorically. The shock of the look temporally dislocates the individual. The look instantaneously punctuates the consciousness of the individual in this moment and the accumulation of the individual's sense of being raced or sexed is thrown violently into focus. Both accounts suggest that there is a time before one is conscious of such subordination, but it is more that he or she cannot name it and, as Deutscher observes, it 'constitutes a comprehension to come'.¹¹¹ We recall the woman who remembers her own shock at being seen. Cast under a look, this instantaneously punctuates and reconfigures her feeling of autonomy. In the case of the girls, described in *The Second Sex*, whose desire to roam the streets was extinguished, we see the same thing. They are forced into the uncomfortable position of becoming object by the intrusion of a stranger in public. Their desire to walk the streets and see the city is smothered as a result. Even the girl's sense of eroticism is fractured by this. In

¹¹⁰ Deutscher, p. 148.

¹¹¹ Deutscher, p. 149.

other words, in the dislocating moment of shock, sexual difference forces itself to emerge via a look or an action. If a look is all it takes to reveal her body as object, then it is a devastating look. The shock motivates a crisis—how can I live like this? Her body is a given, but a given in a situation that compels her to renounce freedom.

To return to what Deutscher describes as 'anticipatory' and 'asynchronous', femininity, here, is characterised as a force that, accumulating silently, sweeps in to reconstitute a wholly different sense of self. The experiences described above offer scenes where the fact of being sexed is thrown violently into focus for an individual. De Beauvoir suggests that this occurs as a rupture, or a pause, in which the Girl's sense of being shifts into a radically different state, which can only happen in so far as the Girl has already been induced to apprehend this mode of existence so at odds with her ontological status as subject but not yet caught fully in the formation of woman in exchange. The social pressures exerted under childhood has meant that being woman was anticipated but not existed. Now, 'she knows the agitation of the body becoming flesh, the first revelation of woman as woman'.¹¹²

As I have said, this shock of being revealed as becoming flesh never leaves the individual. When things of a similar nature happen in later life one is taken back to this moment of being-Girl caught in the objectifying look of another, this is the trace of the Girl persisting in the present. Thus, if the situation of 'The Girl' precipitates a double division of her being, it also forges a temporal link, suspending the situation of 'The Girl'. If 'The Girl' holds within her the woman she will become, then, the woman always carries within her 'The Girl' she once was. The Girl's asynchronous temporality forms a significant kernel for our study by outlining the distinction of the girl and Girl that is, as developed in the following chapters, intimately connected to the temporalities of the moving image.

¹¹² De Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (2010), p. 376.

This demonstrates that the conflict through which de Beauvoir understands the situation of woman is precipitated at the moment of 'The Girl'. De Beauvoir does not suggest that girls are complicit with her oppression, but she does acknowledge there can be a desiring engagement with the process of becoming-object on the side of 'The Girl'. This is only because this is the only way 'The Girl' has relative access to power or autonomy, in an upside-down manner. De Beauvoir writes, 'she understood the charm of passivity; she discovers the power in it'.¹¹³ It is one of the paradoxes of her situation, that only by submitting herself as an object will she attain some value as woman. These sudden events described in the chapter on 'The Girl' represent one important aspect of the means by which one becomes woman, while also examining the conditions of the girl's existence itself. This means that, yes, the vocation of femininity is significant, but not without phenomenological pressures initiated in the situation of 'The Girl' that compel her to live her body otherwise, which is to say: to become woman.

Conclusion

The Second Sex is perhaps best known for the phrase, 'One is not born, but rather becomes, woman'.¹¹⁴ As this chapter takes up the questions of how one becomes woman, posed by and through the figure of 'The Girl' in *The Second Sex*, I want to emphasise the significance of de Beauvoir's attention to this figure. Although the discovery that one becomes woman insists upon the importance of 'The Girl', the key question that she raises still remains to be fully appreciated.

Focusing on 'how' one becomes in the chapter on 'The Girl' raises important insights for de Beauvoir's philosophy. Attention to 'The Girl' as another site of becoming shows how de Beauvoir's philosophy is not one of construction or socialisation. Instead it examines the

¹¹³ De Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (2010), p. 360

¹¹⁴ De Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (2010), p. 293.

corporeal, social and temporal particularity of 'The Girl' for a unique account of subjectivity and being. For de Beauvoir, 'The Girl' does not just take on a gender (as Butler would say) but she takes on a division at the level of her existence. Formulations that only consider socialisation as a way one becomes dismiss the conflict of existence that de Beauvoir's philosophy develops with and against the body-as-situation.

I have argued that the moment of 'The Girl' is more than chronological. We have to understand the significance of 'The Girl' by means of a phenomenological constant, a suspension of being, whose ontological effects, while arising at a certain moment, exist way past girlhood. Eva Lundgren-Gothlin critiques de Beauvoir's philosophy in *The Second Sex* for developing a view of female biology and femininity as a hurdle for the subject to overcome for historically and individually situated transcendence.¹¹⁵ When we consider 'The Girl', however, femininity comes into play with a different quality; as a dissolution of autonomy rather than an obstacle to overcome. From my perspective, it is not a question of girlhood as an obstacle to overcome or a rite of passage to pass through. It is, instead, a question of understanding the structures and relations that implicate 'The Girl' in her own division and alienation. The problem 'The Girl' faces is not one that can be overcome by arriving as a subject, or as woman, but a constant fissure, and a double bind, of conflict and ambiguity.

¹¹⁵ Lundgren-Gothlin, p. 197.

2. Between Girls: Chantal Akerman and the *cinéfille*

In a film made in 1993 titled, *Portrait d'une jeune fille de la fin des années 60 à Bruxelles*, Chantal Akerman produces a vibrant portrait of Michèle, a fifteen-year-old girl played by Circé Lethem, who rebels from the confines of school and family in search of freedom on the streets of Brussels, the filmmaker's home city.¹ The film is set twenty-five years earlier in April 1968, a setting that Patricia White describes as a 'position of not quite, not yet', it being 'not quite' Paris in '68 and 'not yet' May '68.² 'Not quite' and 'not yet' may also evoke aspects attributed to the generic subject of the title: '*une jeune fille*'.³ Is 'not yet', however, *only* a step on the way to something else? Or is it, as Jacques Derrida has understood, the future as the 'not yet' of the never has been, what he calls a 'messianicity without messianism'?⁴ Is the film a portrait of a (young) girl who has not arrived and if she has not arrived where was she even going? Though we are not quite sure what she wants, or where she is going (but nor is she), the series of not-quites and not-yets evoked by the setting is pursued through the film.

Portrait d'une jeune fille was commissioned by the French national arts channel ARTE as part of a nine-part television series in which contemporary filmmakers were invited to respond to the series title *Tous les garçons et les filles de leur âge*.⁵ Each filmmaker was to

¹ Hereafter called *Portrait d'une jeune fille*.

² Patricia White, 'Lesbian Minor Cinema', *Screen*, 49 (2008), 410-425 (p. 417). In relation to 'not yet' and 'not quite' it is worth asking at this point if 'May 68' actually exists in a way that 'April 68' doesn't? Or, is it an *a posteriori* construction?

³ This is in the sense of 'not yet' woman or 'not quite' woman, but is there ever a 'yet', especially if put in terms of 'woman'? What is more, as Catherine Driscoll has highlighted, the 'not yet' and 'not quite' is commonly associated with the girl, or adolescent. She argues that by association with this form of temporality, the girl's specificity is neglected. Driscoll, *Girls*, p. 48.

⁴ See: Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx: The State of Debt, the Work of Mourning, & the New International*, trans. by Peggy Kamuf (New York: Routledge, 1994), p. 181.

⁵ The filmmakers were André Téchiné, Chantal Akerman, Claire Denis, Olivier Assayas, Laurence Ferreira Barbosa, Patricia Mazuy, Émilie Deleuze, Cédric Kahn and Olivier Dahan.

produce an hour-long film for television, shot on 16 mm film, related to the theme of adolescence. Each film was set at different times between 1960s and 1990s, and each included a party scene and music from the era.⁶ In *Portrait d'une jeune fille*, the title sequence informs us that the film is set in April 1968, the invocation of the period is underscored by anachronism. For example, there is a scene where Michèle visits a record store filled with compact discs, prevalent in 1990s Brussels but not in 1968. The scene lends itself to a sense of being out of time, or between times and in this way, the film refuses to 'look back' in a straightforward manner. Although it says it is April 1968 in the opening titles, the loose evocation of this moment remains open to different temporalities that permeate the film.

Across a day and a night, Michèle skips school to explore the city where she meets a young Army deserter from Paris, Paul (Julien Rassam). Together they walk the city, kissing occasionally but mostly talking, discussing everything from family, politics to philosophy. Towards the end of the film, Michèle has sex with him for the first time, travelling afterwards to a party with her best friend, Danielle (Joëlle Marlier).

Although ostensibly Michèle and Paul's relationship is the focus of the narrative, throughout the film, Michèle's interaction with Paul is qualified by her friendship with Danielle. Despite quitting school, Michèle's day is punctuated by Danielle's school routine. They meet at lunch, after school and later in the evening to go to a party together. Michèle relishes time spent with Danielle and it is her unspoken desire that forms the palpable undercurrent of the film. *Portrait d'une jeune fille* ends, not with the expression of her desire, but by Michèle taking Danielle in the early hours of the morning after the party to meet Paul, introducing her friend to a man who will, as she says, 'suit' Danielle and save her the trouble of searching any longer. Danielle's pursuit of romantic encounters with young men they meet in

⁶ My first viewing of the film was at a screening held as part of a Chantal Akerman retrospective at the ICA in 2015, programmed by the London film collective *A Nos Amours*.

bars or at parties is the main topic of their conversation at the party and throughout the day. The final moments of the film depict Michèle, a lone figure against the blue light of morning, retracing her steps through the empty field from which she and Danielle had come moments before.

Commissioned for television, the film was first broadcast in November 1994. Since then it has not featured on any DVD collection of Akerman's films and has had limited screenings, although it appeared on French television at least once more since the initial broadcast.⁷ With this in mind, the film has had a rich but limited engagement from feminist film scholars who tend to consider the film to be 'about' Akerman's adolescence and put it in conversation with earlier works by Akerman such as *Saute ma Ville* (1968), *Je tu il elle* (1974) and *J'ai faim, J'ai froid* (1984).

For film theorist Maureen Turim, the film 'poses a fascinating return to adolescent sexuality and friendship as a fully philosophical enquiry' combining 'highly personal revelation with an artistic self-consciousness.'⁸ For her, the film foregrounds the questioning of sexuality and intimacy posed by the structures of desire between the three-young people. Although she raises the notion of the film as a philosophical enquiry, in her analysis of *Je tu il elle* and *Portrait d'une jeune fille* Turim uses a psychoanalytic framework to understand how both films examine adolescence. Adolescence is conceived as a rewriting of the self through, what she calls, 'personal pronouncements' on screen that act as a focal point for elaborating aspects of subjectivity and self-representation.

⁷ Scenes from the film appear in *Chantal Akerman par Chantal Akerman* released in 1997. The film, commissioned for *Cinéma de notre temps* by ARTE, is part self-portrait and part study of Akerman's work presented through a montage of clips from previous films. As this film is more widely screened and available on DVD, many of the scenes analysed in writing on *Portrait d'une Jeune Fille* cite this film as the basis of their close analyses.

⁸ Maureen Turim, 'Personal Pronouncements in *I...You...He...She* and *Portrait of a Young Girl at the End of the 1960s in Brussels*', in *Identity and Memory: The Films of Chantal Akerman*, ed. by Gwendolyn Audrey Foster (Wiltshire: Flicks Books, 1999), pp. 9-26, p. 22.

The tension in Akerman's cinema between the authorial voice and characters' desires, is explored by means of 'personal pronouncements', a concept Turim develops for Akerman's cinema that addresses the complexity in which the films, she says, 'conjoin autobiography and enunciation to point towards a revelation of the intimate.'⁹ Autobiography is a creative construction of an individual's past or formation, whereas the concept of cinematic enunciation, which comes to Anglophone film theory in 1975 through the translation of 'The Imaginary Signifier' by Christian Metz, defines the spectator as a textual construct whose function is crucial in the production of meaning through exchange.¹⁰ The meaning of the cinematic text only comes to bear in the context of it being received so that fantasies on screen are the product of the spectator's desires, which, for classical cinema, depend on the suppression of the marks of enunciation.¹¹

The authority of the 'pronouncement' is crossed by the intimacy of the 'personal'. The first person register of autobiography collides with cinematic enunciation's position of address—from where and to whom it speaks. Turim is particularly interested in the moments in both films where the address of reading and writing becomes part of the narrative. For example, the character reads-aloud a letter she is writing or recites from a book. Julie in *Je, tu, il, elle* and Michèle in *Portrait d'une jeune fille* both read aloud, sometimes as they write. Turim comments: 'The direct first-person voice-over that would cement autobiography is replaced by first-person articulations belonging instead to a character writing letters'.¹² Neither autobiography nor fiction, 'personal pronouncements' enable us to link the resources of Akerman's biography—Brussels, history and family—to the creative elaboration of a cinematic

⁹ Turim borrows the term from its use as the initial English title of *Je, tu, il, elle* on the film's first US release. Turim, p. 9.

¹⁰ Christian Metz, 'The Imaginary Signifier', trans. by Ben Brewster, *Screen*, 2 (1975) 14-76.

¹¹ For example, the camera remains invisible and attention is not drawn to its presence.

¹² Turim, p. 9.

form without psychologising the filmmaker or reducing everything to autobiography and personal history.

Akerman's films explore, through form, sound, image and duration, what a personal pronouncement might be in the slippage between fiction and non-fiction, between character and filmmaker. This situates the 'self' as a product of the work, rather than an existence prior to it, further complicating authorial positions and emphasising the significance of paying attention to cinematic marks of enunciation. Turim writes: 'stated differently "the portrait of the artist as a case history" is a superannuated approach and one that is bound to ignore how a film confronts a too certain desire simply to decipher, to know.'¹³

Through the lens of the 'personal pronouncement', Turim focuses on *Portrait d'une jeune fille* as a film of adolescent self-discovery, where characters meet different kinds of desire through the framework of a coming-of-age narrative. In a different manner, Judith Mayne highlights the journey of adolescence through the lens of a coming-of-age-coming-out narrative, where the desire for another girl, pushed through experiences of heterosexual cultural initiation into femininity, is an unexpected mechanism that sustains the narrative.¹⁴

If Danielle and Michèle are adolescent girls who are being acculturated into the conventions and codes of heterosexuality, the very process of acculturation provides the ironic basis for their own connection, their own erotic bond, their own possibilities for detachment from the presumed expectations of the world around them.¹⁵

The girls talk about experiences (always unsatisfactory) with young men after the fact, yet underneath these moments of 'chit-chat' is an intensity of feeling when talking together. For example, as Mayne highlights, Michèle tells Paul in the cinema that she kissed him, not

¹³ Turim, p. 22.

¹⁴ Judith Mayne, 'Girl Talk: *Portrait of a Young Girl at the end of the 1960s in Brussels*', in *Identity and Memory: The Films of Chantal Akerman*, ed. by Gwendolyn Audrey Foster (Wiltshire: Flicks Books, 1999) pp. 150-161.

¹⁵ Mayne, p. 156.

because she wanted to, but because ‘it was to be able to talk about it’.¹⁶ Paul and Michèle then discuss how she might retell the story of their meeting at the cinema. We later realise that these stories are saved for Danielle, offering a space, according to Mayne, within and against their inculturation into femininity for the girls to be close to one another.

Focusing on the role of the city and drawing on scholarship by feminist geographers and philosophers concerning bodies and space, a recent article by film theorist Nicoleta Bazgan calls the film a ‘coming-of-age story’ in which the city becomes a site for Michèle to explore her identity before moving on to a new stage in life.¹⁷ ‘Off the beaten path, they come to an understanding of their changing identities through lengthy walks in the streets, and choose to have their first sexual encounters before they step out of the frame and move onto a new, undecided stage in their life.’¹⁸ She highlights how uncertain the future is at this pivotal moment, reading the city as embodying both the gendered limits and promise of freedom. The act of walking in the city is the expression of a search for identity.

The three articles mentioned highlight the figure of adolescence, coming-of-age and coming out as the focus of *Portrait d'une jeune fille*. These categories, however, suggests a narrative in which one must grow up and out of a stage. A journey—a term used by Mayne—suggests that there is somewhere to arrive. For Patricia White, however, a ‘coming-out’ story, and its related terms, do not capture what the film is about.¹⁹ This is true, insofar as conceptualising the film through the category of adolescence leaves us unable to locate the

¹⁶ Mayne, p. 156.

¹⁷ Nicoleta Bazgan, ‘Girls in the City: Chantal Akerman’s *I Am Hungry, I Am Cold* (1984) and *Portrait of a Young Girl as the End of the 1960s in Brussels* (1993)’, *Quarterly Review of Film and Video*, 32 (2015), 287–300.

¹⁸ Bazgan, p. 287.

¹⁹ White, p. 411. White argues that *Portrait d'une jeune fille* is part of a body of work she names as ‘Lesbian minor cinema’. Drawing on Deleuze and Guattari’s use of the term ‘minor’ in *Kafka: Towards a Minor Literature* (1975) White plays on its various meanings and associations but defines it most straightforwardly as: ‘making use of limited resources in a politicized way’ especially strategic resourcefulness from those unfavourably situated.

significance of the Girl as a distinct ontological moment (as de Beauvoir argues) or, as I will develop here, as a psycho-social position that solicits a dimension of feminine subjectivity expressed in an encounter with cinema. Akerman's does not simply invoke adolescence, but captures the moment between 'girl' and 'Girl' (and their slippage) in the form of her filmic language. We need, therefore, to approach the film with a concept of the Girl.

Cinéfile

Portrait d'une jeune fille is a film about a girl. It is not, however, a story of Chantal Akerman's girlhood, and the extent to which Akerman's work is situated as autobiography in this context is problematic. In her book *Ma mère rit* (2013), a reflective text blending photography, fiction and autobiography, Chantal Akerman shares a memory of her undeclared love for an older girl at school that perhaps recalls the same unspoken desire encountered in *Portrait d'une jeune fille*.²⁰ Marion Schmid writes, however, that: 'In Akerman's work 'je' is resolutely 'une autre', even if her oeuvre accumulates references to her family and her personal life.'²¹ Although the city of Brussels and her family provide sustenance and curiosity that propel films made by the filmmaker, they are not, as such, biographical accounts. Nor is the film a thematisation of adolescence, which would leave aside questions of the feminine and subjectivity and their creative inscriptions on screen. The film theorises the Girl as a psycho-social position—not limited to age—that requires a feminist psychoanalytic approach to discern the aesthetic modalities that disclose aspects of the feminine, desire and subjectivity in cinema.

²⁰ Chantal Akerman, *Ma mère rit* (Paris: Mercure de France, 2013).

²¹ Marion Schmid, 'Between Literature and the Moving Image: The Cinematography of Chantal Akerman?' *Critical Review of Contemporary French Fixxion* (2013) < <http://www.critical-review-of-contemporary-french-fixxion.org/rcffc/article/view/fx07.06/752> > [accessed 19.05.2018] (para 12 of 18).

Chantal Akerman's cinema has a relation to the Girl that is intimately connected to her style and form of filmmaking, not just the subjects or content of the films.²² I elaborate the relationship between this dimension of the feminine and subjectivity through a concept I have created for her cinema: the *cinéfille*, making the Girl a cinematic position, not just a philosophical position, and thus highlighting the special relationship between the Girl and the moving image.²³ My use of the term *cinéfille* does not suggest cinema or the Girl are either young or underdeveloped. Akerman's films are neither minor works, nor are they marked by arrested development. Instead, the *cinéfille* names a cinematic position that, extending Turim's concept of 'personal pronouncements', allows us to think about the specificity of a pronouncement in terms of a dimension of subjectivity that we might call the feminine. What is more, it is only in filmmaking that the potential of this position would be discovered and, as it were, performed.

Cinéfille is both conceptually similar and different from its near homophone, *cinéphile*: a noun and adjective that describes a lover of cinema and a state of enchantment or seduction in front of film. *Philia* is often translated from the Ancient Greek as (brotherly) love but in Latin, however, *filia* also means daughter. In common Anglophone use, cinephile identifies an individual who loves cinema, perhaps sometimes with an air of pretentiousness, who has developed a keen understanding of cinema through avid film-going and participation in film

²² Although it has been noted in the introduction that many of her films are explicitly concerned with characters who are young women sometimes played by the filmmaker herself, the significance of the Girl exceeds this fact.

²³ Literally translated as cinema-girl or the girl of cinema. My use of the term for this concept is inspired by Nicole Brenez's contribution to senses of cinema that uses this term as a subtitle in: Nicole Brenez, 'Chantal and Some Comrades. Fragments', *Senses of Cinema*, 2015, <<http://sensesofcinema.com/2015/chantal-akerman/fragments/>> [accessed 31.08.2018] (para 4).

communities.²⁴ The term, therefore, suggests not only love but also watching films to find out what cinema is and taking pleasure in such exercise.

The polemic article, 'The Decay of Cinema', written by Susan Sontag in 1996 and published in *The New York Times*, suggests that the 'decay' of cinema is intimately connected to an end of cinephilia, something she laments as happening with movie-goers in New York. Cinephilia, for Sontag, was the whole culture around movie-going that was created by and from a distinctive kind of love in response to watching films:

The love that cinema inspired, however, was special. It was born of the conviction that cinema was an art unlike any other: quintessentially modern; distinctively accessible; poetic and mysterious and erotic and moral—all at the same time. Cinema had apostles. (It was like religion.) Cinema was a crusade. For cinephiles, the movies encapsulated everything. Cinema was both the book of art and the book of life.²⁵

Writing in the 1990s, Sontag is troubled by the encroaching absence of cinephilia. Cinephilia, in her account, first arose in the 1950s in France alongside the cinema of the New Wave and popular film magazines and journals, not least, *Cahiers du Cinema*. Going to the cinema was a way of life, and, for the cinephile, cinema was what made life worth living:

The 1960's and early 1970's was the feverish age of movie-going, with the full-time cinephile always hoping to find a seat as close as possible to the big screen, ideally the third row center. 'One can't live without Rossellini,' declares a character in Bertolucci's 'Before the Revolution' (1964)—and means it.²⁶

According to Sontag, the special desire for cinema encapsulated by cinephilia was lost from the late 1970s, attributed to the degradation of the material forms of production and dissemination; the shift toward profit; shorter lengths for cinema release and the dreaded

²⁴ According to Thomas Elsaesser, the term 'cinephile' migrated into the English language in the 1960s. See: Thomas Elsaesser 'Cinephilia or the Uses of Disenchantment', *Cinephilia: Movies, Love and Memory*, ed. by Marijke De Valck and Malte Hagener (Location: Amsterdam University Press, 2005), pp. 27-44 (p. 27).

²⁵ Susan Sontag, 'The Decay of Cinema' *The New York Times*, February 25, 1996, <<https://archive.nytimes.com/www.nytimes.com/books/00/03/12/specials/sontag-cinema.html>> [accessed 27.06.2018] (para 2).

²⁶ Sontag, para 7.

‘straight-to-video’ form. The ubiquity of images, the lack of concern for their presentation and the dissolution of the cinema-house as the site of film-watching all contribute in her account of cinema’s inability to inspire the kind of love named as cinephilia. The way people watched films had irrevocably changed.

Central to Sontag’s notion of cinephilia is the sense of nostalgia and loss that is evoked in the fleeting moment of pleasure while watching a film. For Sontag, ‘All of cinema is an attempt to perpetuate and to reinvent that sense of wonder.’²⁷ Wonder is comprehended as a desire to know (about cinema) and a feeling of amazement or admiration in the pleasure of images. Sontag diagnoses that the space of reflection which carried cinema has been lost.

Film theorist Thomas Elsaesser stresses that cinephilia has always been an anxious love. The impact of anxiety on memory and temporality is central to theorising two types of cinephilia, a first generation and a second generation, developed in the chapter ‘Cinephilia or the Uses of Disenchantment’—published almost a decade after Sontag’s essay in 2005.²⁸

According to Elsaesser, cinephilia is an anxious love because of its attachment to deferral.

Cinephilia, then, wherever it is practiced around the globe is not simply a love of the cinema. It is always already caught in several kinds of deferral: a detour in place and space, a shift in register and a delay in time.²⁹

Understood in this way, the cinephile of the first generation is caught in the search for a unique time and place, such as the first release or single retrospective screening. This is also a search for that which has already passed, making the cinephile doomed to repetition in the desire for plenitude within the perfect cinematic experience.

Elsaesser traces the waxing and waning of the term cinephilia. He points to developments in film theory in the 1970s and 1980s, in the journal *Screen* in particular, which

²⁷ Sontag, para 3.

²⁸ Elsaesser, pp. 27-44.

²⁹ Elsaesser, p. 30.

deconstructed cinema and cinephilia: 'the love of cinema was now called by a different name: voyeurism, fetishism and scopophilia.'³⁰ Thinking about Laura Mulvey's text 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema' published in *Screen* in 1975, Elsaesser suggests that feminist film theory unveiled cinephilia as a masculine position, problematising the question of pleasure and desire in cinema. Noting, despite Mulvey's call for the eradication of pleasure in her article, that feminist film remains caught in a provocative bind in critiques of pleasure and cinema, Elsaesser does not comment on any possible reformulation of the notion of the cinephile in relation to feminist interventions into film and film theory.³¹ If cinephilia denotes a masculine position, then what does a feminine position do to the question of cine-love?

Sontag and Elsaesser have different perspectives on the state of cinephilia at the time of writing. The article by Sontag concludes by reiterating the importance of desire and wonder in cinema. Her position suggests that what makes cinema 'alive' is the spectator, who is more important to her than directors, actors or the film itself. In her elevation of the cinephile, however, she is not hopeful about the future:

If cinephilia is dead, then movies are dead too...no matter how many movies, even very good ones, go on being made. If cinema can be resurrected, it will only be through the birth of a new kind of cine-love.³²

Although the question of the decline, death or resurrection of cinema is most central in the article, it is the significance of wonder and the potential of new kinds of cine-love that are important for our discussion. Elsaesser offers an account of a new kind of cine-love evoked by Sontag. He describes a second generation of cinephiles whose relationship to cinema is not predicated upon the uniqueness of the fleeting cinematic moment experienced in the revered

³⁰ Elsaesser, p. 32.

³¹ For example, Claire Johnston's article 'Women's Cinema as Counter Cinema' (1973) and Teresa de Lauretis's book *Alice Doesn't: Feminism, Semiotics, Cinema* (1984) both advance arguments for the reconstruction of different kinds of pleasure in cinematic spectatorship.

³² Sontag, para 11.

hall of the cinema. He characterises this new type of love as a cult fandom where individuals, feeding on the nostalgia of cinephilia, are interested in collecting objects of cinema that arise in new technologies, such as the DVD or download. The second generation cinephile has a new role as the archivist or collector of cinema in its many forms.

While such a love fetishises the technological performativity of digitally remastered images and sounds, it also confers a new nobility on what once might have been mere junk. The new cinephilia is turning the unlimited archive of our media memory, including the unloved bits and pieces, the long-forgotten films or programs into potentially desirable and much valued clips, extras and bonuses, which proves that cinephilia is not only an anxious love, but can always turn itself into a happy perversion.³³

This 'happy perversion', however, is extended into viewing. No longer in the cinema amongst strangers, viewing happens at home and, most importantly, you can stop, start, rewind, or fast-forward in a way that completely changes what it means to watch or love cinema. Laura Mulvey has named the kind of spectators as 'the possessive spectator' who has a fetishistic relation to the image of the body in cinema, that arises from this new context of viewing, which she calls 'delayed cinema'.³⁴

The fetishistic spectator, driven by a desire to stop, to hold and to repeat these iconic images, especially as perfected in highly stylized cinema, can suddenly, unexpectedly, encounter the index. The time of the camera, its embalmed time, comes to the surface, shifting from the narrative 'now' to 'then'.

Mulvey's focus on the still frame and the delay of cinema through new technologies raises questions about the relation between past and future, which is very present in the nostalgia-anxiety of the cinephile.

For Sontag, it is unlikely that the uniqueness of the time and place which produced the desire and wonder encapsulated by the cinephile could ever be reimagined or reproduced. She is both anxious and nostalgic for a kind of lost cinephilia. Elsaesser, several years later,

³³ Elsaesser, p. 41.

³⁴ Laura Mulvey, *Death at 24x a Second: Stillness and the Moving Image* (London: Reaktion Books, 2006), pp. 161-180.

sees a new relationship to cinema that still evokes the anxious love of the first generation, but with a more conscious awareness of such attachments to the lost object.

In Akerman's cinema, where I include her television films and gallery installations all of which are 'cinematic', I feel something—perhaps wonder, or at least a feeling close to it—being pursued when encountering the works. Yet my experience as an avid watcher of these works is not quite the first or second generation cinephilia described in Elsaesser's terms of cult-fandom or anxious nostalgia. What about a cinema that solicits a kind of cine-love that is not anxious, whether self-conscious of its anxious desire or not? Is it possible to conceive of the love of cinema in terms of looking back without feeling loss? Can a particular form of cinema solicit a love for it that is not about recuperating the past, but a different relationship altogether?

The second of the previous three questions is posed by Catherine Fowler in her article 'Remembering Cinema "Elsewhere": From Retrospection to Introspection in the Gallery Film' published in 2012, where she addresses the act of 'looking back' in gallery film from the 1990s. Fowler opens the article by discussing Akerman's contribution to the Forty-ninth Venice Biennial in 2001, *Woman Sitting after Killing*, a seven monitor installation that 'replayed' the ending of *Jeanne Dielman, 23 quai du Commerce, 1080 Bruxelles* (1975). The interest in Akerman revisiting her own (cinematic) past through reframing cinema in the gallery space, is used by Fowler to set up her main argument about the reuse of cinema's past by artists.³⁵

The artists 'looking back' at cinema's past, Fowler argues, represent a challenge to the mode of looking back at cinema history constituted by nostalgia, hostility or loss. Artworks discussed, such as *L'Ellipse* (1998) by Pierre Huyghe and *Zoo* (2006) by Salla Tykkä, advance instead, she suggests, 'a fundamental re-enchantment with cinema's past; consequently, the

³⁵ Catherine Fowler, 'Remembering Cinema "Elsewhere": From Retrospection to Introspection in the Gallery Film', *Cinema Journal*, 51 (2012), pp. 26-45 (p. 26).

purpose of the look back is to remind us of the ways in which cinema has taken and continues to take hold of us.³⁶ Fowler contrasts the dominant model of retrospection with a ‘look back’ that is involved in introspection and circumspection instead. She does this by extending the meaning of ‘looking back’ from the visible image track of cinema’s past to the activity of memory during the viewing experience. Watching a film, Fowler emphasises, always involves memory in a non-linear manner. We remember the film and piece it together in different ways that extends past the organisation of real screened images. Cinema’s past is always in conversation with our subjective memory processes.

Those gallery films that re-enact and remake take images and imagery, spin out scripts and production contexts, expand on a blink-of-an-eye moment, and remind us of how we felt, what we thought, and what we want from a visit to the cinema. Consequently, the notion of cinema’s past is extended from the “there” to include the “elsewhere” of the viewing process.³⁷

The artworks that Fowler is interested in reinsert the subjective ‘mnemonic acts’ that film and film studies, she argues, has elided. This provides the shift from the ‘there’ of cinema history, to the ‘elsewhere’ of the viewing process, reinvigorating the past with personal resonance and new meaning.

The resurfacing of remembered images in gallery film is symptomatic of cinema, the technology of the twentieth century, being not merely in *the past* but more importantly in *our pasts*. [...] I would argue, then, that the dominance of retrospection in the look back means that Film Studies has missed out on a vital part of the way in which cinema takes hold of us.³⁸

For Fowler, the emphasis on memory in cinema does not always mean loss and nostalgia, as it does for Elsaesser, because it is also constituted by a past ‘elsewhere’ that is outside of where film studies and the movie theatre have found it to be.

³⁶ Fowler, ‘Remembering Cinema “Elsewhere”’, p. 28.

³⁷ Fowler, ‘Remembering Cinema “Elsewhere”’, p. 36.

³⁸ Fowler, ‘Remembering Cinema “Elsewhere”’, p. 38.

I am interested here in the emphasis that Fowler puts on the role of memory and enchantment in forms of cinema, ‘the way in which cinema takes hold of us’.³⁹ Introspection does not entail the sense of loss but a meaningful relation to the past, which she puts in more subjective terms. ‘In place of loss we find a sense of being captured and held once more.’⁴⁰ I connect the *cinéfil* to the introspective gesture of being captured and held by images that lead us back to ourselves—to ‘elsewhere’— that in the case of Akerman’s work, as Fowler’s opening comments demonstrate, are not ‘elsewhere’ from cinema history but fundamentally part of it, yet still articulated on the ‘personal’ level.

It is a well-known and well-rehearsed anecdote that in 1965 fifteen-year-old Chantal Akerman decided to become a filmmaker after sneaking underage into a screening of *Pierrot le fou* (1965) by Jean-Luc Godard. She says:

We were just going to the movies to kiss and eat ice cream and eventually look at the movie. But I didn’t care. I was much more interested in literature; I wanted to be a writer. Then I saw Godard’s film, *Pierrot Le Fou*, and I had the feeling it was art, and that you could express yourself. It was in 1965, and you felt that the times were changing. He was really representing that, and freedom and poetry and another type of love and everything. So as a little girl, I went out of that place, the cinema, and I said, ‘I want to make films. That’s it.’⁴¹

Akerman’s comments draw attention to the overlapping of 1) the historically ‘adolescent’ moment in Western society in the 1960s, the times changing and sense of future possibility, and 2) the actual adolescent age of Akerman and then of the character in her cinema, and 3) a kind of coming of age of this art form, cinema, imbued with freedom and new types of love, in the French New Wave at the same time.⁴² This is, therefore, not just one example among others. We can discern a strange reality-effect: a chronological moment that happens only

³⁹ Fowler, ‘Remembering Cinema “Elsewhere”’, p. 38.

⁴⁰ Fowler, ‘Remembering Cinema “Elsewhere”’, p. 45.

⁴¹ Chantal Akerman, ‘Interview: Chantal Akerman’, *The A.V. Club*, (2010) <<https://film.avclub.com/chantal-akerman-1798218996>> [accessed 23.06.18] (para 2).

⁴² Although arguably there’s a kind of reverse temporality with the notion of 1960s society as ‘adolescent’, going from the old rigid parents’ culture to a new, free young-peoples’ culture.

once in the life of a personal actually takes place, only once, in the ‘real world’ of history and of cinema history.

Cinéfil, insofar as it draws on the love of cinema we get from cinephile, fits neatly with Akerman’s new-found interest in Godardian cinema as a girl of fifteen. *Pierrot le fou* showed her what cinema could be as a form of expression, as a work of art that tells stories and makes you feel something. As well as rewriting the conventions of a coming-of-age narrative, Mayne argues that *Portrait d’une jeune fille* is an extended meditation on French Cinema in the 1960s revisited by Akerman.⁴³ ‘At various times during her journey, Michèle embodies a range of figures from French films of the 1960s.’⁴⁴ She continues:

[W]hile most of the directors associated with the development of New Wave cinema were men, their films showcased—problematically perhaps, but showcased nevertheless—the journeys of female character as embodiments of the desires of the directors.⁴⁵

The *cinéfil* connects to Akerman’s originary encounter with cinephilia but with a difference. Cinephilia is restaged and evoked in *Portrait d’une jeune fille* through the cinematography, the locations, aspects of the narrative that conjure the cinema of the 1960s and also the temporality of the ‘not yet’.

I deploy the concept *cinéfil*, however, to primarily name a position in film, or a relation to cinema, and not a viewer, character or filmmaker. In its relation to the Girl, *cinéfil* is not just who or what the film is about, but it is inscribed at the level of film form as well. It is, unlike the cinephile traced by Elsaesser, a position that may make possible the elaboration of feminine difference in relation to cinema and also a different relation to concepts such as memory, temporality, desire and subjectivity. In Christian Keathley’s study *Cinephilia and*

⁴³ Mayne, p. 153.

⁴⁴ Mayne, p. 158.

⁴⁵ Mayne, pp. 158-159.

History, published in 2006, he characterises cinephilia as a kind of looking that takes in what goes past in a panoramic fashion by an enthusiast for cinema who wants to know more.⁴⁶ The panoramic gaze suggests a desire and ability to ‘see all’. *Cinéfille* gives rise to the potential for another dimension of looking.

In addition, the *cinéfille* is not just a relation toward cinema but a way of theorising how a cine-love can permeate all aspects: the viewer, the filmmaker and the film itself. It is that which propels the cinema that Akerman makes and is also intimately related to that feeling that first arose when she saw *Pierrot le fou* but articulated in relation to a different kind of subjectivity. *Cinéfille* also gestures to the strange temporalities at work: the ‘not yet’ of the Girl and of *Portrait d'une jeune fille*, and the various forms of looking or thinking back, whether nostalgic or not, full or not.

Cinéfille is a concept I have created for Akerman’s cinema that helps to explore a relation between cinema and feminine subjectivity that is held open to inspire and solicit attention and responsiveness from the viewer, a sense of wonder and intensity that emerges in the durational aesthetic form. Different from cinephilia, which is ‘the quest for plenitude, envelopment and enclosure’, *cinéfille* is evoked by the kind of filmmaking that seeks a response by being open to the viewer and filmmaker. *Cinéfille* borrows from our discussion of the Girl and the girl a more complicated and extensive sense of temporality. Rather than return to the past as nostalgia, as a history, Akerman examines moments in film as a lens to explore their meaning and significance as durational aesthetic inscriptions.

Others have also been interested in the relationship between the Girl and cinema in Akerman’s films. In an interview with Akerman and film scholar Nicole Brenez in 2010, Brenez

⁴⁶ Christian Keathley, *Cinephilia and History, or The Wind in the Trees*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press: 2006), pp. 41-49.

asks Akerman about the focus on *la fille* in her self-description and the characters portrayed on screen.

NB: You always talk about yourself in terms of a *fille*, girl, daughter; one of your self-portraits is titled *Portrait of a Young Girl in Brussels at the End of the '60s*, and the main female character in *Almayer's Folly* is named Nina, *petite fille* or little girl. *Fille* signifies youth but most of all a filiation, a heritage. For you does *fille* mean not to be a *femme*, a woman?

CA: Possibly. Probably. I don't know. I never grew up. I was always an overgrown child. Almayer is a father who has a dream for his daughter and maybe for himself in regard to her. I never followed my father's dream, to have a family. I stayed a girl, the daughter of my mother. In the end, I don't know. My sister, yes: she started a family in Mexico. She has two beautiful, intelligent children. My niece is getting married soon and the line will continue. Sometimes I regret not having kids. Maybe I would have gone from a daughter to a woman—but whether that was possible for me, I don't know. Probably not.

NB: So you determined to remain the girl.

CA: I wouldn't say determined. But it's what happened.⁴⁷

In this exchange there is an implicit assumption of the positions which women occupy socially in the patriarchal order. Brenez draws out some of the meanings of what *la fille* or girl/daughter can mean, emphasising less the Girl as a temporal stage, focussing instead on the other aspect of *la fille*: a filiation and a relation to the family. There is also a sense that change comes to a woman when she is placed in relation to a new generation, 'had kids', and come to share a position with the mother as mother. If you stay outside this move to wife and mother, in French you remain *la fille*, or *la vieille fille*, meaning old maid or spinster. The literal fact of maintaining a 'filiation or not' or of 'having kids or not' is both a reality and (only) a metaphor for a bigger question of being, remaining or not in the *fille* state: clearly Akerman's niece is also her daughter by also continuing the 'line', which is to say there is no absolute definition of filiation.

⁴⁷ Chantal Akerman, Nicole Brenez, 'Chantal Akerman: The Pajama Interview', *Lola* (2011) <<http://www.lolajournal.com/2/pajama.html>> [accessed 31.08.2018].

Chantal Akerman also clearly did not follow her father's dream in more ways than literally not having children; indeed this literal non-compliance is really only a metaphor for some deeper break, or remaining the Girl. The notion of not following the father's dream is described by remaining 'the daughter of my mother', which is contrasted with the girl becoming or replacing her mother (woman). This also underlines that it is not a question of age but of position within this linguistically defined exchange system. Brenez asks her: 'does *fille* mean not to be a *femme*?' In response Akerman says: 'I don't know.' To stay outside the terms produces a position without a name, a grown woman—a creative adult but in a critical way—who is linguistically unnamed as woman.

Of course, woman is not reducible to wife or mother. The notion of the *cinéfille* demarcates the position from which Akerman's cinema expresses this dimension. Doing so allows for a relation to emerge, not only for the dissident figure who does not grow up, but also for the Girl as a site that holds space for the investigation of what feminine subjectivity might be. It is, therefore, not just a position of resistance, nor a scene of perpetual adolescence, but a positive creative engagement with the possibility of new forms of being, relating and encounter.

A Portrait of a Young Girl

In *Portrait d'une jeune fille* one scene stands out at the end of the film by its striking use of a close-up. In analysing this scene, I aim to demonstrate its relation to the *cinéfille* and thus the compelling interplay between the girl and Girl in Akerman's film. Michèle and Danielle are at a party engaged in a group dance, which soon disperses when the song changes. It is at this moment that, in an extraordinary long duration close-up, Akerman presents a captivating image of Michèle. Although a signature of Akerman's filmmaking has been a refusal of the close-up, the introduction of the shot in *Portrait d'une jeune fille* is used as a means to connect to Michèle at important points of the narrative. This moment, which the close-up marks, is

intimately connected to the figure of the Girl and the advent of a creative future. There are several points where the close-up appears in *Portrait d'une jeune fille* and they are of interest to our discussion because they call attention to the gaze that solicits our attention, makes us linger on the face while never bringing us too close or intruding so that we cannot 'see' the character before us. The close-up evokes emotion, close attention to details of the face and the passage of time, yet an aspect remains inexplicable and remote.⁴⁸ The close-up remains remote in the sense that the rest of the scene, or more specifically the action of the scene, is obscured and pushed back in the shot. Michèle's face is what we are given to 'read'. What, then, are the effects of these long duration close-ups? What do we see and hear? How do we see and hear? How do they resonate with the position of the *cinéfille*?

The scene opens with a group of young people dancing in a circle, in the centre of which a couple are dancing. Michèle and Danielle have travelled to a party together, after Michèle has spent the day with Paul where Michèle and Paul end up, we assume, having sex in an apartment belonging to Michèle's cousin. The party where Michèle and Danielle (without Paul) arrive is lively and full of movement and music. Amongst the jubilations of the party *mise-en-scène* the camera holds specific positions and traces movements that lay preparations for, and begin to stage, the devastating separation of Michèle and Danielle at the end of the film. At the same time the scene is where we glimpse the articulation of a figure I am naming the Girl-as-artist.⁴⁹ At the opening of the scene, the camera is positioned inside the circle, so that the central couple drift in and out of shot while the others slide across the mid-space of

⁴⁸ Mary Ann Doane provides an interesting discussion of the close-up in film theory and history in 'The Close-Up: Scale and Detail in the Cinema', *differences*, 14 (2003) 89-111.

⁴⁹ I will expand on this notion later in the chapter. For now, it is worthwhile pointing out that I use the term artist, here, rather than filmmaker for two reasons. The first is to make the connection to *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916) by James Joyce who is also rethinking in his own way autobiography and art. Like Michèle, the character of Joyce's novel, Stephen Dedalus, also decides to cast off societal and familial constraints to devote his life to writing. Second, although Akerman is primarily a filmmaker, she also make cinematic works for gallery and thus I use the term artist loosely to connect to various forms of creative work, therefore connecting others not just working in film.

the background. A tall brunette young man in the centre immediately chooses Danielle as his partner as she enters the frame. He spins her into the centre of the group. Instead of following Danielle and her new partner, the camera stays where it is and finds Michèle, linked by arms as part of the group circling around Danielle and the young man. Remaining fixed on Michèle, the camera moves as she turns as part of the outer circle. The medium close-up invites us to consider, not the action in the room, but Michèle's expression as she looks on at Danielle. We 'see' what is happening through the mediation by Michèle as proxy. Where we might expect a cut to an eye-line match, the absence of such editing gives time to register Michèle's expression that is first stoic and then, seeing Danielle, more open. The frontal shot, which moves with her, establishes a connection to what she is looking at without showing us what it is she is looking at. The indirect form of 'showing' what is happening and the resistance to cut creates an enigmatic scene, which establishes itself to be repeated later in the film.

Michèle, of course, cannot help but look at the scene before her of Danielle dancing with the young man. During this time, she smiles occasionally when, we assume, she makes eye contact with Danielle. Danielle and the young man appear briefly in the frame, then disappear as the circle keeps turning. The next time Michèle smiles, we immediately find out why; Danielle has chosen her to dance in the centre. They meet with real joy, their eyes locked on one another. When Danielle returns to the circle, the camera cuts to a reverse-shot, a close-up of Michèle's face looking out at the people in the circle as they move around her. She assesses the scene, taking time to choose, slowly turning three-hundred and sixty degrees before us. As she comes to face the camera once more, her expression changes from concern to a smile: she has chosen Danielle. Danielle's expression displays concerned bewilderment at first, since this is not the way the game goes, but she soon relaxes back into the dance as the camera loosely circles their movements. It is as if the camera and Michèle's intense gaze have willed Danielle back into her orbit. They continue to dance together until the end of the song, Trini Lopez's *La Bamba* (1963). The song ends and the next one begins.



Figure 1 - *Portrait d'une jeune fille de la fin des années 60 à Bruxelles* (1993) Chantal Akerman



Figure 2 - *Portrait d'une jeune fille de la fin des années 60 à Bruxelles* (1993) Chantal Akerman



Figure 3 - *Portrait d'une jeune fille de la fin des années 60 à Bruxelles* (1993) Chantal Akerman

In the pause, the circle of young people disperses until the next song starts to play. The song is slower and heavier than the previous upbeat dance tune. The opening refrain plays, and couples pair off in the background while the young man from earlier sweeps into frame and takes Danielle into an embrace. As the strings of the song's introduction dynamically sound, Danielle and her partner turn out of frame, spinning like before but now holding each other more intimately. Behind them, like before, the camera finds Michèle. The scenario seems to repeat itself, except unlike before, Michèle does not have the chance to choose Danielle. Her expression is inscrutable at first glance. A slow zoom to frame Michèle's face finds its final position at the same moment as the first lyric of the song—*It's a man's world* performed by James Brown (1966)—declare itself as part of the simmering groove.

The melodramatic tone, the change of mood and the separation of the group are propelled by the poignant first lyric of the song that speaks profoundly to Michèle's situation. We become suspended in the close-up, attempting to reconcile the different dimensions of the scene. As the camera holds its position framing Michèle, we share a sense of what is unfolding around her. There are couples, each a boy and a girl, dancing close together,

registering what her separation from this world really means. The lyrics of Brown's song imbue the scene with a heavy pathos, as Michèle's gaze looks out steadily at what, positioned out of frame and behind the camera, would be Danielle dancing with a boy. As Michèle holds her gaze outwards, the camera lingers on her face in three-quarter profile. The refrain goes: 'This is a man's world, this is a man's world / But it wouldn't be nothing, nothing without a woman or a girl.'⁵⁰ In these lyrics sung by Brown we feel the weight of the scene pressed down on Michèle. Her position outside the heteronormative structures of patriarchal society is evoked as much as a sense of resignation at the limits that are necessarily part of the 'outside' position.



Figure 4 - *Portrait d'une jeune fille de la fin des années 60 à Bruxelles* (1993) Chantal Akerman

The close-up is held for over a minute without movement. The shot extends long past a conventional reaction shot, allowing us to register Michèle's expression and building an imagined picture of the scene that we do not see. It is an incredibly powerful performative cinematic effect that forces us to participate as/like Michèle: a feeling of being stuck, frozen,

⁵⁰ James Brown, *It's a Man's Man's Man's World*, Betty Jean Newsome and James Brown (1966).

forced to see but not participate, tightly framed or hemmed-in with no possible escape (from heteronormative phallographic patriarchy), both seeing without interruption possible, and blind.

In the final scene of *Jeanne Dielman, 23 Quai du Commerce, 1080 Bruxelles* Delphine Seyrig who plays the titular character, Jeanne, sits for seven minutes in silence in the aftermath of murder. Like this film, *Portrait d'une jeune fille* creates the moment for intense duration, perhaps intended for reflection or perhaps not. The long duration moment is overlaid with the sound of Brown's song that seems to act as a signal of warning or registers a level of resignation.

Michèle looks off screen to our left and we notice a series of micro-movements. A lick of her lips, then pursed together, a shrug of the shoulders, evoking the same feeling as a sigh. Steeling herself in this moment, she keeps looking. Each blink of her eyes draws the viewer in to focus further and we even notice the small movement of her pupils from right to left as she looks on at the scene. The time we are given becomes intensified in the prolonged shot and unfolding music. It feels as if Michèle could look forever, so could we, but the anguish which we sense this causes, and which we also feel, makes it difficult. The camera remains in position during the long, drawn out minute, until the moment that Michèle turns and finally leaves to go outside.

For Patricia White, the long duration close-up holds us at a distance and yet still 'speaks' to the viewer: 'For me these shots are not primarily about identification with the protagonists' subjectivity or interiority; they keep us at a distance even as they address us.'⁵¹ The close-up does not reveal much about Michèle as an individual, yet in this moment, which exceeds notions of interiority, a shift happens that releases her from her final tie to school,

⁵¹ White, pp. 422-423.

family and Brussels—namely Danielle. Art critic Amy Taubin, also writing about this close-up, comments: ‘we are watching Chantal Akerman at the moment she discovers her vocation as a filmmaker.’⁵² Taubin, who argues that the film is partly autobiographical, understands that in the pathos of this moment of Michèle’s profound aloneness and social exclusion we also find the kernel of her ‘vocation’, not in femininity as analysed by Simone de Beauvoir, but as I argue, in the vocation of a filmmaker. She discovers a relation to the *cinéfille*.

Here, I do not want to simply equate isolation and exclusion as the ground from which one realises that they can and wish to become a filmmaker, and of course, this is not an autobiographical account in a conventional sense. That being said, *Portrait d’une jeune fille* is a pronouncement on, as White writes, ‘how a young girl at the end of the 1960s in Brussels came to make “Chantal Akerman’s films” and to establish through them a unique and renewable relation with a “public” itself still in the making’.⁵³ Thus, it is also a pronouncement on the relation between a girl and the Girl, articulating the failure of becoming a girl becoming woman and instead advocating for a different form of becomingness. In this moment we can trace the marks of the *cinéfille*. The deployment of the close-up becomes a singular gesture that signifies change, emotion and the move towards the figuration of the girl-as-artist through extended duration and the framing of the face of Michèle. I use the term girl-as-artist with the aim to evoke a relationship to creativity, the feminine and subjectivity, which is not reducible to social identities where woman is exiled from culture but remains open to creative thought.

Following Taubin’s comments, we realise that *Portrait d’une jeune fille* is not a coming-of-age story but a formal and narrative exploration of how one might begin to imagine cinema as the only way in which to express aspects of the feminine, creativity and a subjectivity that is

⁵² Amy Taubin, ‘Teen spirit’, *The Village Voice* (14 January 1997), p. 70.

⁵³ White, pp. 418-419.

coming into being. Michèle searches for freedom, for modalities of creative expression and a life not liveable if only relegated to the social positions of daughter, wife or mother. We are, as Taubin says, watching a moment of discovery, but it is only through the particular duration of the moment, staging the scene with a powerful performative effect for so long, that the revelation meets itself in the circle of becoming the *cinéfil*. This can be put into conversation with the question that Griselda Pollock asks of Akerman's cinema: 'Is the autobiographical the ground for or the discovery made during filming?'⁵⁴ Transposed into the question driving this thesis the question becomes: is the Girl the ground for or the discovery made during filming? Within this question, a circular and strange temporal logic is discernible. Does the scene reveal its own conditions of possibility? Was it only through making *Portrait d'une jeune fille* that Chantal Akerman discovered a dimension of filmmaking intimately connected to her being-a-girl-becoming-a-filmmaker-artist?

Outside in the cool moonlight, Michèle walks alone across the grass. Around her there are countless couples amorously nestled in parts of the garden. Out of place amongst them, she keeps on walking. Then Danielle appear, and Brown's heavy tune fades out. They discuss the recent events, including Danielle's dance with the young man. Like before in the bar, this was not 'it' for Danielle. The young man could hardly contain his excitement dancing against her. Walking in front of the of couples kissing against the trees, Michèle and Danielle discuss his particular failings and propose another young man at the party who might be more suitable. Suddenly, Michèle changes approach and suggests Danielle meets Paul, who is waiting to meet her after the party. Michèle struggles with articulating what this means for her.

Michèle: You won't have to tell me about things. I won't have to watch you searching. I'll be able to go back to living as before.

⁵⁴ Griselda Pollock, *After-affects / After-images: Trauma and Aesthetic Transformation in the Virtual Feminist Museum* (Manchester & New York: Manchester University Press, 2013), p. 328.

Michèle gets as close as she can to speaking her desire. She expresses this in terms of relations of looking and searching. She says, 'I won't have to watch you searching'. It is unclear what makes Michèle think Paul is the answer to the search, since throughout the film the girls have kissed other men and each time have resigned that 'that wasn't it'. Maybe these kisses will never be 'it'. Michèle's statement is also a reflexive comment for the viewer, since it is us who have, for the past hour, watched Michèle watching Danielle search for whatever 'it' is. The camera has carefully tracked Michèle looking at Danielle looking for a partner. The close-up, then, is about staying with this kind of looking, the Girl who is looking at the Girl searching for something that remains, perhaps, unknown. The close-up frames the enigma between them.



Figure 5 - *Portrait d'une jeune fille de la fin des années 60 à Bruxelles* (1993) Chantal Akerman



Figure 5 - *Portrait d'une jeune fille de la fin des années 60 à Bruxelles* (1993) Chantal Akerman



Figure 6 - *Portrait d'une jeune fille de la fin des années 60 à Bruxelles* (1993) Chantal Akerman

The next scene shows their parting. At dawn in a field flanked by trees, an extraordinary extreme long-shot depicts Michèle and Danielle slowly walking towards the camera. The whole image is washed in an exquisite morning blue not seen in any of the

previous images. We hear their conversation as they approach. Both begin to cry. It is the pinnacle of emotion, but neither Michèle nor Danielle quite know what the outburst of emotion means. Reaching the foreground Danielle leaves off-screen to meet Paul. Michèle turns, not to walk off, but to return the way she came by retracing her steps through the long grass in the field away from the camera. The film ends and Michèle and Danielle have parted.



Figure 7 - *Portrait d'une jeune fille de la fin des années 60 à Bruxelles* (1993) Chantal Akerman



Figure 8 - *Portrait d'une jeune fille de la fin des années 60 à Bruxelles* (1993) Chantal Akerman

Between Three Girls

In 1993 Chantal Akerman made *Portrait d'une jeune fille*—a ‘personal pronouncement’ to use Turim’s phrase—in which we can discern not only ‘*une jeune fille*’ but the *cinéfil*le. *Portrait d'une jeune fille* is a key film because it explores an aspect of ‘Chantal’ as an artist through the guise of Michèle.⁵⁵ In this discussion I have stressed that *Portrait d'une jeune fille* is neither simply the story of the filmmaker as a young girl, nor is it a coming-of-age narrative in the conventional sense. The film imagines the girl as someone who wants freedom but who is caught in a tangle of desire and limitations impinging on her from without. Akerman returns to 1968 (the year she made the explosive *Saute Ma Ville* and the year she left her family home to go to Paris) to restage and enquire into that moment of a young creative exploration and separation twenty-five years later in the early 1990s.

⁵⁵ I am using the first name in quotation marks to distinguish ‘Chantal’ and ‘Natalia’ as instances of the girl who emerge in various cinematic works by Akerman—cinematic figurations of the Girl—from the historical individuals Chantal Akerman and Natalia Akerman who lived lives in a way that we cannot know. Although linked to one another, they do not correspond.

What relation, then, does this film have to Chantal Akerman's cinema? *Portrait d'une jeune fille* has an important connection to two films: *Saute ma ville* (1968) and *No Home Movie* (2015)—the first and last film made by Chantal Akerman. This chapter works through the concepts of the Girl and the *cinéfille* between these three films, focusing on *Portrait d'une jeune fille* and *No Home Movie*, to theorise a relationship between the Girl and cinema. My question is: in what way is the Girl a position that the moving image as an art form can both narrate and investigate, or, instantiate and interrogate. How does this position move with or against the girl as a character? This question is also asked in the other direction: in what way does the Girl reveal aspects about the cinema made by Akerman? Does the Girl have a unique, special relationship to film? Before I turn to introduce *No Home Movie* and *Saute Ma Ville*, I will first expand upon the background and approach to the chapter by introducing readings of two other significant artworks by Akerman, *D'est: Bordering on Fiction* (1995) and *Marcher à côté de ses lacets dans un frigidaire vide* (2004), and a diary belonging to Akerman's grandmother that features in the latter work.⁵⁶

In the text 'The Fridge is Empty. Let's Fill it Up' Akerman briefly considers the moment of 1968. 'I spoke up in a definitive way in '68, the perfect moment to so.'⁵⁷ Although not part of the Paris events in May 1968, films made by Akerman during the late 1960s and 1970s engaged with (and were also engaged by) the seismic social-political shift precipitated at this point. Instead of pointing to the broader political milieu, however, Akerman's thoughts continue to a different moment before 1968. She continues:

⁵⁶ Hereafter named *D'Est* and *Marcher*.

⁵⁷ Chantal Akerman, 'The Fridge is Empty. Let's Fill it Up', in *Chantal Akerman: Una Autobiografía*, (Malba-Colección Constantini, Museo de Arte Latinoamericano de Buenos, 2005), pp. 117-154, p. 126.

My grandmother, my mother's mother, couldn't speak up in public so she used to write in her notebook, the Tagebuch that came from Vienna. My mother often tells me, you resemble my mother. She also wished to do something about her life. My mother says so without the slightest pathos. Like a statement.⁵⁸

Her maternal grandmother, Sidonie Ehrenberg, later Sidonie Leibel, aspired as a young woman to be an artist, something which became a focus for Akerman in her work, in part because Sidonie Ehrenberg's aspirations were never realised. The diary in which Sidonie Ehrenberg, aged fifteen, had written and painted, is the only object that remains with the family after she was murdered in Auschwitz-Birkenau in 1942. It reads:

I am a woman!

So I can't speak all my desires and thoughts in a loud voice. I can only suffer in hiding. Then this, my journal, is for you, I'd like to tell you at least some of my thoughts, my wishes, my suffering and my happiness, and I'm sure you'll never betray me because you'll be my only Confidant.⁵⁹

The diary was given to her bereaved daughter, Natalia Ehrenberg (later Akerman) when she returned from Auschwitz through Germany, having survived horrors of the camps.⁶⁰ Given the diary (although she cannot remember how it came to her), Natalia Ehrenberg at the time inscribed a message to her lost mother:

This is the diary of my poor mother who disappeared so early, at the age of 40. I will never forget her young girl's life. I will always think of her as the best mother who ever lived. I am sorry I did not love her more and love her better than I loved her. She was so good and so understanding that she will remain in my heart always, singular and unique, and no one will ever replace her for me. My dear little mother, protect me. Nelly.

Thus, it was in the form of a diary entry that Chantal Akerman would later encounter 'Sidonie'—the lively voice of the girl who had written her thoughts and feelings in the diary,

⁵⁸ Akerman, 'The Fridge is Empty. Let's Fill it Up', p. 126.

⁵⁹ Transcribed in: Akerman, 'The Fridge is Empty. Let's Fill it Up', p. 130.

⁶⁰ In an interview with Nicole Brenez, Akerman says: 'My mother, when she was 15 in the camp, worked nights manufacturing battle supplies for Krupp. A soldier from the Wehrmacht visited the camps and said, 'it's not normal for children to be working at night', and he moved her to the day shift—but everything else, the imprisonment, the exploitation, the death, all this he found normal! My mother and her aunts were taken care of by an older woman who would save them a bit of bread so they could stay alive.' Akerman and Brenez, 'Chantal Akerman: The Pajama Interview'.

which were clearly marked with the pathos of her situation as a young woman facing a world that silences the voices of women in countless different ways. But it was in these pages that Chantal Akerman also encountered ‘Natalia’, a figure arrested by grief and trauma writing back to her lost mother who appear before her as ‘Sidonie’, the girl in the diary. The diary thus becomes the depository of traces of these girl figures that, in different ways, call upon our notion of the Girl.

Chantal Akerman connects the tightly tangled knot of 1968 (a moment of liberation, awakening and transformation in the social history of the West; in the history of women/the Women’s Liberation Movement; in the history of cinema and in the ‘history’ of the Girl) to two other figures who are connected but relate differently to the Girl. In Akerman’s cinema we meet different versions of ‘Chantal’ and ‘Natalia’ in the form of characters—different personas or ‘personal pronouncements’—that lend themselves to explorations and storytelling as an enquiry into these figures. These are not the Chantal Akerman or Natalia Akerman who autobiography fixes as the daughter and mother in a story of their lives, about which in truth we know nothing. ‘Chantal’ and ‘Natalia’ become instantiations of the Girl, figures whose resonances Akerman’s films are constantly seeking to discern. This is, therefore, not an analysis of ‘the Girl’ in general, but of a particular moment in thinking about/by ‘the Girl’ or certain Girls. Film becomes the means by which the Girls of the diary are performed/revealed to Chantal Akerman and the viewer.

Resonances of Memory

Writing about *D’Est* (2003), a work produced by Chantal Akerman as a documentary film and as a gallery installation titled *Bordering on Fiction*, film theorist Alisa Lebow theorises its

meditation on memory through her concept called ‘transitive autobiography’.⁶¹ Although the film is ostensibly a documentary about a journey to Eastern Europe, Lebow’s reading situates this cinematic reworking of memory and intersubjectivity in relation to (Akerman’s) Jewish identity.

The concept of postmemory, first coined by Marianne Hirsch in the 1990s, is a cornerstone in Lebow’s reading of *D’Est*. Postmemory describes a different mode of transmission than ‘normal’ memory. It is the transmission of what is essentially untransmissible. Hirsch writes:

Postmemory describes the relationship that the generation after those who witnessed cultural or collective trauma bears to the experiences of those who came before, experiences that they ‘remember’ only by means of the stories, images, and behaviours among which they grew up. But these experiences were transmitted to them so deeply and affectively as to *seem* to constitute memories in their own right. Postmemory’s connection to the past is thus not actually mediated by recall but by imaginative investment, projection, and creations. To grow up with such overwhelming inherited memories, to be dominated by narratives that preceded one’s birth or one’s consciousness, is to risk having one’s own stories and experiences displaced, even evacuated, by those of a previous generation. It is to be shaped, however indirectly, by traumatic events that still defy narrative reconstruction and exceed comprehension.⁶²

As Hirsch describes, postmemory names the consequences of a traumatic history as it persists and shapes the present through the second generation. It is an effect of the experienced trauma that often remains unspeakable or unrepresentable. Postmemory is not the same as memory—of being witness to a traumatic event—but it distinguishes itself as the affective intensity that arises in those who remain in proximity to the experience of trauma. The notion of memory and autobiography is thus indirect and displaced in postmemory, neither being memory nor autobiography at all.

⁶¹ Alisa Lebow, ‘Memory Once Removed: Indirect Memory and Transitive Autobiography in Chantal Akerman’s *D’Est*’, *Camera Obscura*, 18 (2003), 35-83.

⁶² Marianne Hirsch, ‘The Generation of Postmemory’, *Poetics Today*, 21 (2008), 103-128 (pp. 106-107).

Akerman has called this affective intensity the ‘nothing’ with which she works: ‘there is nothing to say, said my mother. And it is with this nothing that I work.’⁶³ Nothing is connected to what Natalia Akerman cannot say. Lebow, following Margulies, recognises that *D’Est* is concerned with following the traces of the problematically displaced ‘personal’ history.⁶⁴ These traces, the un-transmissible that is transmitted, is the ‘nothing’ that emerges in *D’Est*. Akerman has said:

When it is internalized, experience is given without speaking, transmitted as a spectral presence; you cannot separate yourself from it. In the film *Lá-bas* the notion of the “Other” takes on a greater complexity, because it’s both the same side and the other side, and the inside too. I try to connect to that internalization because it’s something you have to live with, that lived there before you. But it’s hard. The reason is that I touched another limit: myself.⁶⁵

The ‘spectral presence’, on the borders of there and not there and an aspect of the Other, Chantal Akerman suggests, becomes an unknowable aspect of yourself. Chantal Akerman is specifically interested, Lebow says, in images that relate to a traumatic personal history belonging to Natalia Akerman. A personal history unable to be narrated, but through the ‘transmission’ of *postmemory* and attention to the marks of trauma’s enunciation, also becomes Chantal Akerman’s own. Lebow writes:

D’Est constitutes a transitive autobiography of a past life, lived vicariously through her mother’s memories and revealed indirectly through the face(s) of others. This face of the other, it turns out, may indeed stand in for the face of the mother, who in turn stands in for Akerman herself.⁶⁶

Lebow suggests that, in this circuit of displacement, Akerman meets unfathomed dimensions of herself displaced twice over. These are figures who stand in for the other, appearing in the

⁶³ Akerman, ‘The Fridge is Empty. Let’s Fill it Up’, p. 19.

⁶⁴ Lebow, ‘Memory Once Removed’, p. 46; Ivone Margulies, ‘Echo and voice in *Meetings with Anna*’, in *Identity and Memory: The Films of Chantal Akerman*, ed. by Gwendolyn Audrey Foster (Wiltshire: Flicks Books, 1999), pp. 59-76, p. 62.

⁶⁵ Chantal Akerman and Elisabeth Lebovici, ‘Lose Everything That Made You a Slave’, in *Too Far, Too Close* ed. by Dieter Roelstraete and Anders Kreuger (Antwerp: Ludion M HKA, 2012), pp. 95-103, p. 96.

⁶⁶ Lebow ‘Memory Once Removed’, p. 47.

faces of actual others represented in the long tracking shots—the ‘corporeal forms’ formed as landscapes—of *D’Est*.⁶⁷ Identifying how postmemory informs Akerman’s cinema, Lebow says, ‘Akerman binds herself to a memory not her own yet integral to the formation of her own identity.’⁶⁸ Yet, as Akerman notes herself, there are limits that are both constituted by and outside the paradoxical ‘structure’ of postmemory, against which the search for images and the creation of cinema pushes up. The limit is herself.

As Lebow suggests, *D’Est* acknowledges the imbrication of past and future, where displacement and belatedness of ‘history’ become layers that move toward the surface of the present, producing ripples and distortions.⁶⁹ When Akerman realises ‘that’s it’ again appearing in the film, what ‘that’ is, is the problem of the untransmissible transmission, a ripple rather than form.

The Girl-as-Artist

The diary, discussed earlier, owned by Sidonie Ehrenberg would form part of two works: a fiction film *Demain on déménage* (2004) and the art installation *Marcher à côté de ses lacets dans une frigidiaire vide* (2004).⁷⁰ More specifically, rather than just the diary, these works were both informed by an impromptu piece of footage involving the diary filmed by Akerman’s assistant and friend, Renaud Gonzalez, on one Sunday afternoon in 2003. Filmed on a small digital camera, we encounter the footage reworked into a dual screen projection so that the image of Chantal Akerman and Natalia Akerman is doubled, two black and white low-resolution images. Natalia Akerman has been presented with the diary belonging to Sidonie Ehrenberg by

⁶⁷ Lebow ‘Memory Once Removed’, p. 58.

⁶⁸ Lebow, ‘Memory Once Removed’, p. 48.

⁶⁹ Lebow, ‘Memory Once Removed’, p. 57.

⁷⁰ The ‘research’ footage was scripted and performed by actors Aurore Clément and Sylvie Testud in *Demain on Déménage* (2004) and reworked into *Marcher à côté de mes lacets dans une frigidiaire vide* to be exhibited in Marian Goodman’s Gallery in 2004 in Paris and New York.

Chantal Akerman. Natalia Akerman begins to read in Polish from the diary, faltering over the language as she discerns the words of ‘Sidonie’, translating them aloud to the camera. Chantal Akerman and Natalia Akerman spend time trying to pin down dates—when was it written and when was she born? As Natalia Akerman reads, Chantal Akerman appears in frame next to her, leaning in.



Figure 9 - *Marcher à côté de mes lacets dans une frigidaire vide* (2004) Chantal Akerman

The figure of ‘Sidonie’, narrated via the diary and Natalia Akerman’s memories of her, presents a creative young woman—an artist—who painted portraits with big beautiful eyes. The diary includes a watercolour portrait of a young woman. Making a connection between Sidonie Ehrenberg and Chantal Akerman’s creative talents, Natalia Akerman reflects that it is only Natalia Akerman who, being one of what Chantal Akerman calls ‘the sacrificed generation’, could not fulfil her creative ambitions at all.

The ‘sacrificed generation’ are those who, having survived the camps, had to sacrifice their dreams to ensure the continuity of daily life. Ambition marks a desire for the cultivation of the self but for Natalia Akerman, for example, to ensure survival she needed the support of her husband, a leather merchant. Getting married was the only option to survive. Although Chantal Akerman seems to be evoking a single historical generation, the notion of ‘the sacrificed generation’ is also the other side of the always-already yet-to-come. The notion of ‘not yet’ that we see in *Portrait d’une jeune fille* is replaced here by ‘not ever’. The radical interruption of life arrests the individual at the moment of trauma. Natalia Akerman is

arrested, her girlhood spent in the camps. The barely alive young woman was given the only object that remained of her mother—her girlhood diary. Shifting our gaze to ‘Sidonie’, the girl in the diary, and her arresting opening statement: ‘I am a woman’, the sacrifice of dreams necessary to ensure the continuity of daily (read domestic) life is given a different character, closer to the notion of femininity as vocation and the non-arrival of the Girl as subject. In this sense, the sacrifice is shifted to also mean her situation in the de Beauvoirian terms of becoming woman. In *Jeanne Dielman* this is present as we experience the repetitions and duration of activities that Jeanne undertakes to keep the household together.

In the filmed sequence which became *Marcher*, it appears that what is shared between them is a recognition of what could have been. We are told of Natalia Leibel’s great creative potential. Yet, the desire to become a woman who engages in creative expression and dialogue, remains an undisclosed dimension because of the sheer impossibility of this part of life in the aftermath of the Shoah. Nevertheless, the creative dimension remains a resource, gathered together so that its traces emerge in a gesture of compassion when Chantal Akerman wanted to leave home and become a filmmaker. This was Natalia Akerman’s ability to recognise the necessity for, and to have the strength to, let Chantal Akerman go and become a filmmaker, despite her husband’s anxieties and protestations. In Chantal Akerman’s early film *News From Home* (1977) when we hear Natalia Akerman’s anxious, yet hopeful letters to her daughter far away from home in New York, read aloud by Chantal Akerman over meditative shots of New York, we must see this as an ethical gesture for the Girl.⁷¹ Natalia Akerman let her go, in a gesture of compassion, which is also a recognition of the demand for her to explore creativity and freedom, to become what I am calling the Girl-as-artist. Rather than

⁷¹ I intentionally leave ‘who’ the Girl is here (Natalia Akerman or Chantal Akerman) open.

follow her father's dream, Chantal Akerman left and, as she says, became the daughter of her mother.

The Maternal Kiss

In the chapter 'Pathos formula as transport station of trauma' in the book *After-affects / After-images* published in 2013, Griselda Pollock provides a crucial reading of one of the most poignant and affecting moments in the video footage that would become the artwork *Marcher*—the maternal kiss.⁷² Pollock reads the kiss as a shared moment that registers the traumatic past and a passage to words. The newly found flow of words between Natalia Akerman and Chantal Akerman registers a change which, Pollock argues, makes intelligible the historical ground that fundamentally inflects the ethics and aesthetics of Akerman's cinema.

In the film, having read through the paragraph of the diary quoted here in the previous section, Natalia Akerman stops translating the words aloud and continues reading silently to herself. We do not know what she is reading, but the emotion of the words makes her turn to touch and then kiss Chantal Akerman's cheek. The film does not reveal what is written there. We learn elsewhere that what has prompted this kiss are two messages written below her own. The first is by Chantal Akerman at ten years old in 1960.

Dear Mama, You can't imagine how I felt reading what you wrote in those few lines. I hope you feel protected and loved by all and that you are happy. Chantal.

After this message, the youngest daughter, Sylviane Akerman, also finds the diary and writes her own note:

Dear Mama, I also felt something in my heart reading what you had written. No one can replace your dear Mama, I would have loved to know your beloved mother. Your daughter who loves you so much. Sylviane.

⁷² Pollock, *After-affects / After-images, Trauma and aesthetic transformation in the virtual feminine museum* (Manchester & New York: Manchester University Press, 2013) p. 337.

These words left by two young daughters, two girls, in response to their mother's grieving note provoke Natalia Akerman in the present of filming to weep and to offer the gesture of a kiss. For Pollock the caress and kiss are profoundly ethical and affective gestures:

In *Walking* the tears and the kiss are wordless; they are a response that returns to gesture as the movement towards, but also with and beside another, and returns to the touch, to a moment of affect and contact that does not dissolve difference but marks a shared moment and creates a surface of meeting, a space of connection.⁷³

Pollock is suggesting that the gesture constitutes a significant movement towards and beside the trauma inhabited by Natalia Akerman. Registered and transformed in the gesture of the kiss, this being different from the untransmissible transmission of post-memory, the different contours of their memory and experience meet in 'a space of connection'.

Watching the work for the first time, I felt then and in a Benjaminian flash as if an entire career had been undertaken, movie after movie and, since 1995, art installation after art installation, to arrive at that possibility, that moment, that gesture, captured not by the film-maker looking through the lens at the world waiting for its disclosures, but as its recipient, the skin brushed by the touch of the mother's hand and lips. That gesture was what I can only name as Warburgian *pathos formula*: a *form*-ulation for feeling in which the body and its gestures eloquently enact what cannot easily be said.⁷⁴

We can discern that, for Pollock, after the gesture of the kiss captured on film, Akerman's cinema becomes legible as being necessarily grounded in a particular aesthetic and ethical relation to the historic and traumatic events that, before now, were not necessarily readable as such.

In the remarkable lineage of daughters writing in almost the very space/body of their mothers' trauma-at-the-trauma-of-their-mothers, this becomes a moment when the mother/daughter can respond, across time and space, probably across death, from the surviving mother to the Girl. The Girl, written in the diary and evoked in the moving image, becomes the form in which this response can take place. The wordlessness is necessarily like

⁷³ Pollock, *After-affects / After-images*, p. 337.

⁷⁴ Pollock, *After-affects / After-images*, p. 336.

an echo of Sidonie Ehrenberg's silent response to Natalia Liebel's finding and writing in the diary. It is as if it were necessary that Natalia Akerman respond-without-responding in order to include Sidonie Ehrenberg in the exchange.

Between Three Films

In 2015 Chantal Akerman released what would tragically be her final film, *No Home Movie*, a documentary study of Natalia Akerman at the end of her life.⁷⁵ The film is sustained by the filmmaker's interest in Natalia Akerman and in this sense, it is an extension of the footage that became *Marcher*—yet profoundly different insofar as it is Akerman, not her assistant, who filmed every moment we see on screen.

The film is explicitly about the relationship between Chantal Akerman and Natalia Akerman, yet it is not a portrait of a mother and daughter in the conventional sense. In the film, poetic and precise articulations of shots, which forego the cut of conventional editing, are brought together with singular sounds and images that have an uneven, low-fi quality—as if from a home video. Chantal Akerman films her mother in her apartment on a small hand-held camera as Natalia Akerman wanders through the rooms, looking out the window and attempting to eat meals. When they are apart, Chantal Akerman films their Skype conversations to keep Natalia Akerman in the frame, the technologies of a digital camera, mobile phones and laptops are mobilised for these means. As the film progresses, the increasing frailty of Natalia Akerman each time the daughters/sisters, Chantal Akerman and her sister Sylviane Akerman, return becomes painfully clear. The technologies of the audio-

⁷⁵ Akerman was assisted by Claire Atherton and Clémence le Carré in editing twenty hours of footage into *No Home Movie*. The film premiered at the Locarno Film Festival on 10 August 2015. Chantal Akerman committed suicide on 5 October 2015 in Paris, in the middle of a tour of screenings for *No Home Movie*. Many reviews of the film see it through the lens of her suicide, as if her death is a point from which we can review the trajectory of her work. The conflation between her death and *No Home Movie* needs to be resisted if we are to engage seriously with *No Home Movie*.

visual intimately register this situation. The film is stripped back of all the accoutrements of film production, yet it is a bruising and tender cinematic experience. Akerman watches intently and shows us images of the everyday that are hospitable to the viewer. Our gaze does not intrude on the scene, yet the images irrevocably move the viewer not only by showing the decline of Natalia Akerman, but more significantly by opening a space for the gaze as an intense, necessary and transformative experience.



Figure 10 - *Saute ma ville* (1968) Chantal Akerman

In November 1968, the year in which *Portrait d'une jeune fille* takes place, Akerman completed her first film *Saute Ma Ville* (1968), leaving Brussels Film School (INSAS) after only a few months. The short film is an extraordinary eruption against domesticity.⁷⁶ *Saute Ma Ville* features a Girl-figure (played by Chantal Akerman not quite a girl at eighteen) engaged in various domestic activities such as cooking, cleaning, washing the floor and, strangely, shoe shining her legs with shoe polish. The film does a lot of work to hold the energy and gestures of Akerman's performance as the girl failing at domesticity. The location is not a girl's bedroom but the kitchen—a room that will become a recurring space in this oeuvre and which is commonly associated not with girlhood but with the mother. Alongside the erratic activities

⁷⁶ Akerman shot the film in her parent's kitchen.

we hear a girl's voice humming and vocalising with increasing vigour on the audio track. At the end, the girl turns on the gas on the oven, rests her head on the top and lights a flame. The image becomes still for several seconds, then with an explosion, the scene cuts to black. More sounds of explosions and the title, 'blow up my town', comes true.⁷⁷ Once the scene blows up, the voice of the girl (and Girl) emerges once again, ecstatically singing to herself after the image has been extinguished.

Akerman has called *Saute ma ville* 'my queerest movie' in an exuberant figuration of the Girl who, in equal comic and tragic measure, fails to properly perform the duties of domesticity. Appearing in the kitchen, alone and with no concern for the proper preparation of food, drink or cleaning, which would signify her proper preparation for the vocation of femininity, the exuberant, curious Girl holds sway by resisting heteronormative and patriarchal conventions. Akerman has said:

Saute ma ville, to me, is the opposite of *Jeanne Dielman*: the story of a girl who talks back to her mother, who explodes the norms that confine women to womanly tasks, who breaks everything in the kitchen and does everything in a crooked way—and yet, for all that, it is a love story: the film is dedicated to someone.⁷⁸

Saute ma ville is a defiant response to the structures that hold down 'daughter', 'mother' and 'wife'. The opening begins with a tower block emerging from the fog. The title appears with the small subtitle '*pour Claire*' appearing on the bottom right—Akerman's dedication of love. It is amongst the declarations of love and exploding of conventional femininity that the Girl emerges. She is not placed in a coming-of-age sequence, nor a coming-out story, but articulated within the expanded field of 'queerness' and 'the Girl'. She passes through stories of femininity never to arrive at them. The Girl she presents is different, a girl but also a

⁷⁷ The verb *sauter* also suggests 'to skip' or 'to leave' my town as well as the more shocking 'blow up my town'. The English translation loses the nuance of the double meaning. Although the film clearly takes one route, the other meaning still resonates with the situation of the girl in the film as well as the filmmaker at the time, who would shortly leave Brussels for Paris.

⁷⁸ Akerman and Lebovici, p. 97-98.

resistance or failure to be enclosed in the social strata. Thus when the Girl blows up, the image turns to black. Akerman's cinematic career literally begins with the death of the Girl. Nevertheless, erupting in the explosion of *Saute ma ville* is the very possibility of the *cinéfil*—a love story.

Having set up a dialogue between Akerman's films and the *cinéfil*, I now briefly turn away from Akerman's cinema to consider the psychoanalytic theory by Julia Kristeva and Bracha Ettinger that each elaborates a questioning of the 'feminine' and the Girl that are theoretical supports for our study. In 'The Adolescent Novel', first published in 1990, Kristeva proposes that adolescence, experienced as an 'open structure', is like novelistic writing and makes a strong connection between psychic openness in relation to aesthetic practices.⁷⁹

The Adolescent Novel

Using literary theory and psychoanalysis, in 'The Adolescent Novel', Julia Kristeva moves from novels from the fifteenth century to that of the nineteenth, outlining aspects of their 'adolescent structure' as an open structure. Adolescence is conceived not as a stage in development but as a psychic structure.

The adolescent structure opens itself to that which has been repressed. At the same time, a tremendous freeing-up of the superego permits it to initiate a psychic reorganization of the individual, a reorganization that is followed by the onset of pregenitality and an attempt to integrate it into genitality.⁸⁰

In this psychic structure the primary process of pregenitality, that is, an upsurge of the oral, anal and phallic impulses, is awakened and the adolescent is newly receptive to that which has been repressed. This structure also suggests a resurgence of pre-symbolic or imaginary material, which destabilises his or her subjective identity and questions the existing

⁷⁹ Julia Kristeva, 'The Adolescent Novel', *New Maladies of the Soul*, trans. by Ross Guberman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), p. 136.

⁸⁰ Kristeva, 'The Adolescent Novel', p. 136.

identifications. For Kristeva, the adolescent structure negotiates subjectivity through a porousness of boundaries and expresses a fundamental conflict at this juncture. To speak of the adolescent is thus not to speak of *an adolescent* but is instead an inquiry into the role of the imaginary and a newly flexible open structure.

In Kristeva's account, the adolescent provides a way of thinking about cultural practices, particularly the novel, as a perspective from which to examine the psychic processes of the imaginary—processes that have already occurred for the subject, but that the open structure opens onto.

The adolescent, like the child, is a mythical figure of the imaginary that enables us to distance ourselves from some of our failings, splitting of the ego, disavowals, or mere desires, which it reifies into the figure of someone who has not yet grown up. Moreover, the adolescent allows us to see, hear, and read these subjective fluctuations.⁸¹

The adolescent gives us access, through sound, vision and language, to the fluctuations that occur in the 'open structure'. It is a way to interrogate oneself on the role of the imaginary. In the novels Kristeva analyses, she identifies a similar framework in action. Narrative genres such as the Bildungsroman follow a line through which a character can safely explore their desires, working through them to emerge as the fully grown subject.

Following her work on the semiotic in *La Révolution du langage poétique* in 1974 [*Revolution in Poetic Language* (1984)], Kristeva understands aspects of the adolescent psychic structure as analogous to writing. 'I would tend to see writing as a semiotic practice that facilitates a renewed organisation of psychic space—a process that precedes an idealised maturity.'⁸² In naming the adolescent structure, we are given a form for thinking about the novel as a way of working through subjective processes and for experimenting with desires while being protected by the distance of the not-yet adult figure.

⁸¹ Kristeva, 'The Adolescent Novel', p. 135.

⁸² Kristeva, 'The Adolescent Novel', p. 138.

Turning to novels from different periods, Kristeva identifies several features that are significant for thinking about the novel as an adolescent structure. The first is the figure of the page boy in novels such as *Le Petit Jehan de Saintré* (1456) by Antoine de la Sale, where the loss and betrayal of love by and of the young page becomes a key feature of the genre that Kristeva names as ‘the adolescent novel’. The second feature is an ambiguity or fluidity of sexual identity. The third is a filial relationship and the ambiguity of the father-son relationship, the love-hate, found in the example of *The Adolescent* (1874-75) by Fyodor Dostoevsky. As to the final feature, Kristeva reads the tendency for the adolescent to seduce the ‘writer’ in novels such as *Lolita* (1958) by Vladimir Nabokov or *Trans-Atlantyk* (1950) by Witold Gombrowicz. For Kristeva, this is an example of the writer’s identification with the adolescent structure, a ‘metaphor of that which is not yet formed—a mirage of pre-language or an indecisive body.’⁸³ These features suggest quite different ways the adolescent can be figured in or by a novel. In the adolescent novel, the writer is given an arena to re-elaborate her/his psychic space, while the authorial character functions as an ordering principle to protect the writer from the full effects of this flexibility and the resurgence of the repressed.

Although Kristeva sees the novel as the adolescent structure *par excellence*, it is the connection to the imaginary that matters: ‘an adult could be entitled to this imaginary only as a reader or spectator of novels, films or paintings—or as an artist. For that matter, what if not an “open structure” could motivate someone to write?’⁸⁴ Kristeva suggests that cultural practices, and the artist in particular, have a privileged position in regard to the open structure. Moreover, the structure itself is a crucial aspect of the creative process. Drawing on Kristeva’s writing, Carol Mavor argues that photographs by Lady Hawarden and Sally Mann

⁸³ Kristeva, ‘The Adolescent Novel’, p. 151.

⁸⁴ Kristeva, ‘The Adolescent Novel’, p. 139.

are both constituted by and can be read through the mode of ‘adolescent reverie’.⁸⁵ By drawing on the open structure of adolescence, which maintains uncomfortable contradictions between the position of adult or child, Mavor makes an important distinction between the notion of the eternal child-artist and the artist as adolescent.

But while we have reverence for the man-child artist, even when he is a father (whether he is Pablo Picasso or Julian Schnabel), we do not like mothers to become children. This is one reason we become so uncomfortable when a mother makes art, for in doing so the mother becomes also child.⁸⁶

Following Mavor, we cannot posit the notion of the artist and creativity without also considering sexual difference and the gendered aspect of social roles, of which mother and artist are perceived as cultural opposites. If modernity has conflated the notion of the artist with the child-figure, then the mother cannot be an artist without transgressing cultural boundaries.

The adolescent is a different kind of position that is open to the possibility of thinking about artist-child-mothers and girls-becoming-women. Chantal Akerman is not the ‘mother’ and Natalia Akerman is not the ‘artist’, but there is a connection between each term and individual through the notion of the Girl. We could read Akerman’s work as interrogating the threshold of the Girl which Mavor characterises as a correspondingly transgressive position: ‘there is a sense of violence when the girl crosses over that certain threshold into adolescent life.’⁸⁷

Kristeva’s celebratory analysis of the homology between the adolescent and the novel presents us with an insight into psychic and narrative structures. Her analysis, however, also presents us with a problem. The flexibility that characterises the adolescent novel is in fact a kind of double-play, which is also characteristic of the feminine. The adolescent novel, the

⁸⁵ Mavor, *Becoming*, p. 25.

⁸⁶ Mavor, *Becoming*, p. 25.

⁸⁷ Mavor, *Becoming*, p. 28.

character and authors in the text, are masculine subjects. Save for one line addressing the specificity of the writers who are women, whose ego-ideal is based on the incestuous father rather than the maternal grandfather, and the example of a patient, Anna, who writes a series of love letters, the adolescent novel is never qualified as speaking to feminine adolescence.

This is a problem, according to queer feminist theorist Renée Hoogland, who says:

By not considering any female-authored adolescent novels, [Kristeva] is able conveniently to gloss over the fundamental contradictions marking female sexuality from its earliest stages onwards. Such contradictions, while ingrained in the normative process of female heterosexuality as a whole, would appear to make themselves felt with a vengeance during the adolescent crisis.⁸⁸

In Hoogland's view, Kristeva's analysis ignores the rupture which would be caused by the re-emergence of the trauma of the oedipal crisis, understood as the girl's abandonment of her first love object and her constitution as lack through identification with the position of the mother. Thus, Hoogland suggests that feminine adolescence has a different relationship to the structures that Kristeva outlines, and warns that the subject is more susceptible as it is marked by the 'fundamental contradictions [of] female sexuality'.⁸⁹

Feminine sexuality puts pressure on the adolescent psychic structure in ways that Kristeva does not address in the text. In an essay that would appear a few years later, however, she presents a discussion of feminine sexuality that illuminates and may supplement aspects of this debate to help us theorise the Girl.

The Double Oedipus Complex

In her text 'Experiencing the Phallus as Extraneous, or Women's Twofold Oedipus Complex' (1998) Kristeva outlines two aspects of the title: the implications of women's adherence to the illusory character of the phallus, and the little girl's double Oedipus complex. These readings

⁸⁸ Renée C. Hoogland, *Lesbian Configurations* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997) p. 69.

⁸⁹ Hoogland, p. 69.

render a specifically feminine relationship to the phallic order, which, as more open, enduring and plastic than the masculine framework, insists upon a female bisexual psychic structure.⁹⁰ This structure, according to Kristeva, has a relationship to aesthetic experience which is instructive, following the discussion above, for thinking about art, film and literature. Kristeva says, ‘Might female bisexuality not indeed be the object *par excellence* of literature and art?’⁹¹ Echoing her comments on the creative dimensions of the adolescent structure in relation to the novel, she reads female bisexuality as a psychic structure that is open to creative inscriptions.

According to Kristeva the phallic signifier is crucial for both sexes insofar as the subject is formed by the ‘phallic Kairos’—a ‘mysterious encounter with meaning and desire’ at a particular moment, which is the phallic stage.⁹² Sexuality and thought, at this particular moment named, co-produce the expression of the subject as ‘speaking-cum-desiring-being’.⁹³ The ‘mysterious encounter’, which is the phallus becoming the signifier of lack and symbolic law, then creates consequences in the future that the subject bears as the marker of all meaning and difference. The primacy of the phallus and the recognition of one sex, one libido and one symbol is, Kristeva explains, ‘a residue of *infantile* phallocentrism’.⁹⁴ It is the playing out of a co-presence of the development of thought and sexuality that is the constitution of subjectivity. She says: ‘Phallic monism can be understood as an infantile *illusion* that subsists as an unconscious *reality* serving to structure the psyche.’⁹⁵ Although Kristeva is certainly not

⁹⁰ Kristeva, ‘Experiencing the Phallus as Extraneous, or Women’s Twofold Oedipus Complex’, trans. by Louise Burchill, *parallax*, 3 (1998), 29-43 (p. 31)

⁹¹ Kristeva, ‘Experiencing the Phallus as Extraneous, or Women’s Twofold Oedipus Complex’, p. 39.

⁹² Kristeva, ‘Experiencing the Phallus as Extraneous, or Women’s Twofold Oedipus Complex’, p. 31.

⁹³ Kristeva, ‘Experiencing the Phallus as Extraneous, or Women’s Twofold Oedipus Complex’, p. 31.

⁹⁴ Kristeva, ‘Experiencing the Phallus as Extraneous, or Women’s Twofold Oedipus Complex’, p. 31.

⁹⁵ Kristeva, ‘Experiencing the Phallus as Extraneous, or Women’s Twofold Oedipus Complex’, p. 31.

the only one to suggest that the primacy of the phallus rests on anything but illusion, here, femininity's relation to the illusory quality opens the symbolic to ongoing transformation.

The aspect of Freud's theory of sexuality that Kristeva names as the phallic Kairos, is a point where she can elaborate the specificity of the girl and the phallic in terms of estrangement. As I have already mentioned, Kristeva is interested in two aspects of this: the extraneousness of the phallus and the twofold Oedipus complex (Oedipus-1 and Oedipus-2). Oedipus-1, understood as infantile masturbation and desire for the mother as the primary object, occurs for both sexes but, Kristeva notes, it has a different quality for the girl in relation to the phallic because of her sense of relation to the illusoriness of the phallus.

What is interesting in the specific relationship of the girl to the phallic is the structural dissociation between the sensible and the signifier, which is where Kristeva directs our attention. Theorising the dissociation enables Kristeva to posit its illusory nature.

[I]nasmuch as the girl's phallic pleasure finds both its real and imaginary 'support' in the clitoris, that more inconspicuous organ, she is, at once, *dissociated* from the phallus, understood as a *privileged signifier* in that conjunction of Logos/Desire that I have named the phallic Kairos.⁹⁶

The variance between her sensuous experience, imaginary support and the signifier arises from the pre-oedipal bond with the mother and the real forms of pleasure that allow the girl to evaluate the imaginary fantasy and sensual satisfaction versus symbolic valorisation. The fissure between the sensible and signifier presents the girl with a relation to the phallic that determines it as illusory.

While the phallic gives the feminine subject access to many things, including language, thought and law, all that is given is ultimately '*but a game*.'⁹⁷ Kristeva uses the term 'illusory'

⁹⁶ Kristeva, 'Experiencing the Phallus as Extraneous, or Women's Twofold Oedipus Complex', p. 33.

⁹⁷ Kristeva, 'Experiencing the Phallus as Extraneous, or Women's Twofold Oedipus Complex', p. 33.

that comes from the Latin etymology *ludere*, meaning ‘to play’, to give us *illudere*, ‘to make fun of’ or ‘to mock’. What does the girl make of the illusory phallus?

It’s not entirely nothing, but it’s not the be-all either, even were this to be veiled, as the Phallic mysteries claim it to be. But simply, there is something else... an undefinable, ineffable something else; and as to the phallus, well, by cathecting the phallus, I become a subject of language and of the law; which is what I am. So I play the game: I want my part of the action too. But it is just a game, just a role that ‘I’ play; a case of play-acting, of make-believe, which, indeed, for the female subject, is all the so-called truth of the signifier or of the subject-of-speech boils down to.⁹⁸

The subjective position from which one speaks in the first person as an ‘I’—as Kristeva does here—is perceived by the feminine subject as based on an illusion, making all that is promised by the phallic part of the illusion. There is a demystification of the fixity of the law. Women are disillusioned by this psychic position, but the belief in the illusion, in a sense their ability to perceive it, allows them to do all that needs to be done to speak and act in the world. They can play the game. The ‘something else’ that Kristeva describes is female homosexuality based on the semiotic link to the archaic maternal. The consequences of the structure based on the notion of the illusory phallus can be positive or negative, but overall it displays what Kristeva calls a ‘detached efficiency’ while functioning in the social order. You can speak it, but not really believe it.

The belief in this character of the phallus, or the lack of belief in the phallus as really what it claims to be, is, for Kristeva, the index of female psychic bisexuality. The other aspect of the configuration of female psychic bisexuality is the twofold Oedipus complex. Oedipus-1, as we have noted, is important for both sexes and involves the structuring of the subject. Oedipus-2 is a complex that, in the girl’s case, complements the first. Rather than the trauma of castration faced by the boy, this is a continuous “re-working” or repetition of the Oedipal

⁹⁸ Kristeva, ‘Experiencing the Phallus as Extraneous, or Women’s Twofold Oedipus Complex’, pp. 33-34.

organisation that, for this very reason, is open-ended or “interminable”.⁹⁹ The experience of phallic extraneousness reinvigorates the relationship with the maternal as an archaic sensorial experience which continues to be revisited throughout life. From this prior experience the little girl still cultivates her position as a subject (with her adherence to its phallic illusoriness) by changing objects to take on the mother’s desire— ‘the father’s love’.¹⁰⁰

As I have said, Kristeva ends her article by suggesting a connection *par excellence* between the structure of female bisexuality just outlined, and art and literature. Aesthetic forms become a passage through which to traverse the phallic order through an estrangement to it. This paradoxical investment signifies the search for ‘something else’ while the symbolic order can never fully symbolise the desire for the lost object. The account of feminine subjectivity, as an open-ended organisation linked to the aesthetic, is helpful for understanding the resources that might be on offer within a phallic framework. Kristeva encounters creativity in the girl through the sensuousness which persists in the phallic mode in relation to feminine sexuality. Creativity and female bisexuality are figured in this account as open to different forms. Kristeva offers a way of understanding dimensions of Michèle’s character, for she inhabits the creative dimensions and detached efficiency which Kristeva attributes to female bisexuality. Michèle wants to be writer. She can recite philosophy, discuss Sartre and likes going to the cinema. She plays the game, going on dates, kissing boys and so on, but something else is going on behind the façade.

Although useful, this does not give us a way to account for what I have set up as important in Akerman’s cinema. How can we theorise, for example, the extraordinary form of duration performed as a close-up in *Portrait d’une jeune fille*? Also, what if we do not accept the

⁹⁹ Kristeva, ‘Experiencing the Phallus as Extraneous, or Women’s Twofold Oedipus Complex’, p. 35.

¹⁰⁰ Kristeva, ‘Experiencing the Phallus as Extraneous, or Women’s Twofold Oedipus Complex’, p. 36.

account of feminine sexuality based on these formulations that adhere to phallic monism? In the next section I will examine the concept of *fascinace* first developed by theorist, artist and psychoanalyst, Bracha Ettinger, in ‘*Fascinace* and the Girl-to-m/Other Matrixial Feminine Difference’.¹⁰¹ I turn to the concept of *fascinace* to see if this resource enables us to account for aspects of the aesthetics of Akerman’s cinema, and our investigation of ‘the Girl’ in relation to the *cinéfille*, that remains out of reach within phallic thought.

Fascinace

Two years after Kristeva published ‘Experiencing the Phallus as Extraneous, or Women’s Twofold Oedipus Complex’, Bracha Ettinger presents a version of ‘*Fascinace*’.¹⁰² In ‘*Fascinace* and the Girl-to-m/Other Matrixial Feminine Difference’, Ettinger explores other possibilities for theorising feminine sexual difference through her concepts of the *Matrixial* sphere and the gaze. The text is a response to Kristeva’s reading of the Girl through the lens of the phallic and Ettinger briefly comments on Kristeva’s article, citing it in the opening paragraphs of her article. The *Matrix*, or *Matrixial*, is a psychoanalytic concept that supplements the phallus and phallic order. It supplements or shifts, but does not replace, the phallus as a signifier for the symbolic order and our accession to language as a system of meaning founded on a binary system. It is a dimension of subjectivity that explores aspects of pre-natal and pre-maternal

¹⁰¹ Bracha Ettinger, ‘*Fascinace* and the Girl-to-m/Other Matrixial Feminine Difference’, in *Psychoanalysis and the Image: Transdisciplinary Perspectives*, ed. by Griselda Pollock (Oxford: Blackwells, 2006), pp. 60–93.

¹⁰² Ettinger first presented the ideas in the text in a lecture titled ‘Plaiting a Being-in-Severality and the Primal Scene’ at J.A. Miller’s seminar on 7 June 2000. This was later published in *Almanac of Psychoanalysis* in 2003. Developing the text further. Ettinger notes, ‘This essay develops three new concepts: the matrixial trans-individual braid; the woman-to-woman matrixial feminine difference; and *fascinace* as a feminine shift of Lacan’s concept of *fascinum*.’ Ettinger, ‘*Fascinace* and the Girl-to-m/Other Matrixial Feminine Difference’, p. 93.

coexistence as a proto-subjective and already transjective encounter.¹⁰³ The concept theorises a subjectivising process in the sensations and intensities that arise in this prolonged ‘aesthetic’ encounter and which are not accounted for in psychoanalytic theories of subjectivity as initiated exclusively post-natally—i.e. after physical separation from the maternal body. Griselda Pollock describes the implications and significance of Ettinger’s theory for making possible a theorisation of feminine sexual difference:

Ettinger’s radical innovation is to allow us to imagine that all of us, men as well as women, straight as well as homosexual, psychically glean grains of sensation and intensities from the later stages of our intra-uterine sojourn and that this delivers into human possibility a specifically feminine dimension of subjectivity whose phantasmatic and later symbolic structure is premised on an *encounter*, on threshold or transmission, rather than the phallic logic of presence/absence and the cut of the subject from the object that lies at the basis of the paradigm of castration.¹⁰⁴

The *Matrix* introduces a notion of sexual difference as the difference between partial subjectivities, in severality, in the co-affecting and co-emerging encounter of the pre-natal space. The subjectivities are several because they are neither one, nor two, instead, the borders are transgressed, in what Ettinger calls borderlinking, to make a trans-subjective encounter that in fact initiates the mode of differentiation-encounter between a (later) I and a partner in subjectivity non-I, as opposed to the not-I of the phallic order of subjectivity.

Sexual difference in the *Matrixial* sphere is not a difference between masculine and feminine, the result of oedipal differentiation occasioned by castration, that is, a difference

¹⁰³ Transject and transjective are terms created by Ettinger to take the place of and differentiate the standard concepts used in post-natal psychoanalytical theory of relations between subjects and their objects. A transject is thus neither subject nor object, but still is an instance of a subjectivity-as-encounter *and* potential transformation through the encounter that occurs in a shared borderspace. Its modality survives beyond the separation from the pre-natal Matrixial to operate as an instance occurring beside the subject-object formations precipitated by the conditions of post-natal life for the newly separated and dependent infant. See: Bracha Ettinger, ‘Compassionate Co-responsibility, Initiation into Jointness and the link x of Matrixial Virtuality’, *Gorge(l): Oppression and Relief in Art*, ed. by Sofie van Loo, 11–32, (MER, Paper Kunsthalle, KMSKA, Gynaika, 2007).

¹⁰⁴ Griselda Pollock, *Encounters in the Virtual Feminist Museum: Time, Space and the Archive* (London and New York: Routledge, 2007), p. 189.

from the masculine. *Matrixial* sexual difference is the relation everyone who has been born has in a space-time to a corporeal sexual subjectivity of the female body—which is, however, always already subjectivised and sexual because of the process the pre-maternal partner has herself undergone post-natally. It arises from the fact that the originary space of encounter with another transforms both, but differently, in a shared moment. Thus, the *Matrixial* defines the sexual specificity of the feminine while being a dimension of subjectivity significant for all born individuals.

The possibility of the subjectivising dimensions of the pre-natal and pre-maternal encounter—where two unknown, asymmetrical and partial subjectivities transform one another—differentially may become a basis, post-natally, for dimensions within subjectivity not entirely defined by the phallic signifier or the cut of castration. The economy of phallic desire, of loss, substitution and desire, means desire *for* an object to make good a lack in being. Without appreciating the originary severality, and its conditions of co-emergence and co-affecting, within the *Matrixial* sphere, Ettinger argues that all we have to think with is the phallic signifier whose subject-object relations and Symbolic are based on a cut and separation that define who is I and who is not-I as the only basis of subjectivity.

Ettinger suggests that this cannot be all. The *Matrixial* supplements and shifts the phallic to say that a level of subjectivity, beyond and before imaginary and symbolic ordering of subjectivity via the phallus, registers specifically on the aesthetic level of sensation, intensity, sound, etc. We may benefit from thinking matrixially in order to be open to an encounter with these aesthetic forms.

I have set up the notion of the *Matrixial* as a concept in psychoanalysis for reconceptualising elements of feminine subjectivity and sexual difference, but what are the differential implications of the *Matrixial* for those who become phallically post-natally feminine subjects? Is there an excess because of a relation to the *Matrixial* possibility?

Ettinger has also written on the implications of the *Matrixial* in post-natal feminine subjectivity by formulating a concept of *fascinace* in her reading of the case-study of an adolescent hysteric, 'Dora' and the novel *The Ravishment of Lol V. Stein* (1964) by Marguerite Duras. Here she provides a specific theorisation of the Girl in relation to adult femininity by arguing that one dimension of the formations of femininity arises from the becoming feminine subject's need to gaze upon her adult other, the adult sexual woman she might become.

In the text, Ettinger is concerned with two figures: Dora, the analysand discussed by Freud in his case study *Fragments of an Analysis of a Case of Hysteria* (1905) and Lol, the titular character in the novel *The Ravishing of Lol V. Stein*.¹⁰⁵ Ettinger asks: what are Dora and Lol searching for? They are searching, according to Ettinger, for access to *fascinace*, a form of gazing that involves duration out of chronological time: 'an aesthetic affect that operates in the prolongation and delaying of the time of encounter-event and allows a working-through of *Matrixial* differentiating-in-jointness and copoiesis.'¹⁰⁶ *Fascinace* names the transformational potential of a reciprocal encounter (which can be virtual, i.e. with an image or text) that establishes and holds the *Matrixial* link to the originary trans-subjective encounter with feminine difference.

The term *fascinace* marks a feminine shift from Lacanian notion of the gaze as *fascinum*, understood to be the part of the image that freezes movement and life.¹⁰⁷ *Fascinum*, meaning spell or hex, also means phallus of phallic emblem, highlighting the relation of the *fascinum* to the gaze and castration in the phallic order. If *fascinum* is a gaze within an image

¹⁰⁵ Chantal Akerman is also interested in Dora. In an interview with Elisabeth Lebovici she says: 'I remember being fascinated by Dora.' Akerman and Lebovici, p. 99. Also, see Adriana Cerne's discussion of the final seven minutes of Akerman's *News from Home* (1977) in relation to the 'scene' of 'Dora's' fascinated two hours before Raphael's *Madonna* in Dresden.

¹⁰⁶ Ettinger, 'Fascinace and the Girl-to-m/Other Matrixial Feminine Difference', p. 61

¹⁰⁷ Jacques Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, trans. by Alan Sheridan (New York: Norton, 1981), pp. 105-119.

that has an arresting, mortifying power, *fascinace* offers different possibilities that are not based on the model of mortification. Mortification is preceded and exceeded by the potential for *transformation*, which is the potential of the *Matrixial* sphere. Yet, as we shall see, *fascinace* may not find its necessary duration and support, and at risk of turning into *fascinum* when a phallic split intervenes.¹⁰⁸

Fascinace is, first, a relation between a girl who has not yet established her subjectivity as sexual subject, her desirability in this sense, and a woman who is a desiring subject with a compassionate openness to the girl's interest that makes *fascinace* possible. Ettinger gives these figures several names to discern in language the kinds of subjectivising processes and transformational encounters that emerge. This is in part because in the encounter there is a transgression of subjective borderlines.

The matrixial feminine difference is inscribed in the tension and the passage along such psychic unconscious erotic strings when traces emanating from the same vibration along the frequency emitted by the woman are exchanged between the different but now co-subjectivising agencies of the Woman-beneath-the-Girl, the Girl-beneath-the-woman, the m/Other-beneath-the-Woman and the Woman-beneath-the-Mother, all these different positions of Girl and Woman-m/Other present and trans-relating in crossed relations in a web of strings between the individuals who participate in the encounter.¹⁰⁹

In this passage Ettinger explores how unconscious traces of the pre-natal and pre-maternal encounter, an encounter of partial subjectivities who transform each other by co-affecting and co-emerging, are transmitted in later encounters that have a *Matrixial* co-subjectivising potential. The terms she uses describe the complex relation of time, processes of becoming and the intensity of the traumatic in the real via the phallic or *Matrixial* sphere. The *Girl-beneath-the-woman* signals to the woman's memory of what she was, which offers the possibility of hospitality to the girl searching for a partner in encounter. The *Woman-beneath-*

¹⁰⁸ Ettinger, 'Fascinace and the Girl-to-m/Other Matrixial Feminine Difference', p. 61.

¹⁰⁹ Ettinger, 'Fascinace and the Girl-to-m/Other Matrixial Feminine Difference', p. 73.

the-girl identifies a dimension of her becoming. The *m/Other-beneath-the-Woman* is the position of every feminine subject's relation to the *Matrixial* in the real. *Woman-beneath-the-m/Other* discerns that woman is not synonymous with *Matrixial m/Other* (nor the phallic Mother) yet her subjectivity has a relationship to her own becoming and possibility of conception. We find in this constellation of 'co-subjectivising agencies' the possibility, to she who becomes the feminine, to have the resources for sameness and difference. *Fascinace* becomes the durational encounter-event in which these differences and transformations are held. *Fascinace* is to do with gazing and time, and is an attempt to theorise becoming woman by a subjective space of the Girl, gazing on the one from which she wishes to learn about becoming a sexed subject, a process that can only come through time and hospitality of the object or scenario.

An important aspect of this process is the hospitality of the Woman-m/Other. In the examples of Dora and Lol, it is only because of the Woman-m/Other's openness and reciprocal fascination that the passionate transformational encounter might occur. 'The girl needs to find ways, and many times she fails again and again to find them, for sharing in the secrets of femininity with a m/Other whose fascination she must catch in/for their shareable space.'¹¹⁰ Dora finds the gaze that will accommodate her fascination in the Sistine Madonna—a painting in a museum. Lol searches for an opportunity where she will be recognised in an encounter. The novel stages, first of all, Lol's arrested attempt at *fascinace* in an incredibly cinematic encounter.

¹¹⁰ Ettinger, 'Fascinace and the Girl-to-m/Other Matrixial Feminine Difference', p. 67.

Lol looked and looked, but she was torn away from the image too soon. An instance of differentiation on the long path of transformation from girlhood to womanhood was arrested. Lol's passion was fixated into a permanent desire to turn the catastrophic resulting *fascinum* into *fascinace* again and to release its transforming potentiality to complete the subjectivising move. From then on, she repeatedly seeks a similar image/scene that holds a similar fascinating-fascinated gaze.¹¹¹

Although in Duras' novel Lol became a wife and mother she still searches for a way to reconstruct the scene of *fascinace* from which she was pulled away too soon. Lol is arrested in the moment of the Girl: 'she remained a girl along the feminine-matrixial differential axis, unable to close the gap between these two poles: the girl's and the woman's.'¹¹²

Lol's attempts to close the gap are seen when she watches Tatiana Karl and her lover at the window. An encounter is restaged in which the transgression of subjective borders produces, 'an aggregated subjectivity or what I [Ettinger] call *subjectivity-of-the-several in encounter-event*'.¹¹³ The triangle here is certainly not oedipal. Lol, the Girl, is fascinated by the woman; Tatiana, is caught in a reciprocal desiring relationship with a man also included in the scene. *Fascinace* is, however, a necessary step for the Girl to desire a man in this framework. Thinking matrixially, both Dora and Lol are interested in a relation to another woman that is non-oedipal. They need to find out about a dimension of themselves—their femininity and desirability—by proxy, through another woman who manifests the desirability in herself and holds space of compassionate hospitality for the Girl to share in.

Ettinger's theory of *fascinace* explores the question: '*what does a woman want from a woman?*'¹¹⁴ She suggests that this question must be sustained through the ethical framework of compassionate hospitality, alongside the desire to know about desirability, while also being susceptible to someone else. Thus, the co-affecting and co-emerging dimensions of the

¹¹¹ Ettinger, 'Fascinace and the Girl-to-m/Other Matrixial Feminine Difference', p. 62.

¹¹² Ettinger, 'Fascinace and the Girl-to-m/Other Matrixial Feminine Difference', p. 63.

¹¹³ Ettinger, 'Fascinace and the Girl-to-m/Other Matrixial Feminine Difference', p. 73.

¹¹⁴ Ettinger, 'Fascinace and the Girl-to-m/Other Matrixial Feminine Difference', p. 61.

Matrixial, transmitting transsubjectively in this moment, mean that Lol can be ravaged by this encounter as much as she is ravished. In the *Matrixial* sphere, the Girl is not a social role, but a figure engaged in a search for an encounter. The Girl is therefore not subject to time, but a subject who actively desires a particular durational encounter (a time out of time) suspended in a gaze in order to become part of the circuits of desirability, a move towards sexuality, that the *Matrixial* sphere is able to support.

Cinema of Fascinance, or *Fascinéance*?

Ettinger's proposition of a supplement to the phallic in the notion of a *Matrixial* gaze offers resources for thinking about Akerman's cinema.¹⁵ The *Matrixial* sphere of *fascinance* might help us to understand the unique qualities of Akerman's cinema which I have evoked through the concept of the *cinéfillle*. In Akerman's filmmaking we can discern a desire to stage a particular durational encounter in the field of the cinematic gaze, performing the Girl in her difference from the girl. It is a desire to know about a dimension of femininity, by staging, again and again, scenarios in the search for an openness and connection to what the specific woman/other, who happens to be her mother, cannot say.

In fact, it is the dimension of Natalia Akerman's girlhood—figured as 'Natalia' alongside an arresting traumatic lacuna—that Chantal Akerman returns to investigate. Rather than relegate this search as an obsession with her mother, Ettinger's psychoanalytic concepts provide a way to explore what happens when cinema is engaged with a different relationship to desirability, subjectivity and difference via the Girl.

¹⁵ This connection is also explored in: Pollock, *After-affects/ After-images*, pp. 323-328; Adriana Cerne, 'Fragment(s) of an Analysis: Chantal Akerman's *News from Home* (or a Mother-Daughter Tale of Two Cities)', in *Psychoanalysis and the Image: Transdisciplinary Perspectives*, ed. by Griselda Pollock (Oxford: Blackwells, 2006), pp.194-222; and Alison Rowley, 'Between Les Rendez-vous d'Anna and Demain on Déménage: m(o)ther inscriptions in two films by Chantal Akerman', *Studies in the Maternal*, 2 (2010), 1-15.

In addition to this, Akerman's cinema prompts us to consider a different dimension of *fascinace* in terms of the figures, to which her cinema's durational gaze attends. In an interview with Elisabeth Lebovici, Akerman comments: 'I remember being fascinated by Dora'.¹¹⁶ Akerman's fascination with Dora—the hysteric girl who sought the transformational encounter with the Sistine Madonna but who is also the 'Girl' *par excellence* of psychoanalysis—might be posed in this scenario as a possible partner in an encounter-event. Dora is a figure of interest because she may, by proxy, offer a passage towards knowing about the subject-as-Girl. Searching to close the gap between the unspeakable dimension of Natalia Akerman's girlhood, Akerman's cinema discloses the possibility of a *Matrixial* relation between a girl and the Girl. This is, of course, neither *identification with* nor *desire for* the other. It is the longing for a transformational encounter-event, the meeting of two temporalities, under the sign of the Girl, through a scenario broached by means of ethical and aesthetic artistic practices in duration.

Fascinace is also a means by which to theorise the Girl. The Girl becomes a part of thinking about cinema's relation to feminine subjectivity and creativity in duration. I ask: in three instantiations of the Girl we have already encountered— 'Sidonie', 'Natalia' and 'Chantal'—does the *Matrixial* provide a form for understanding how Akerman's films trace a desire to know what one woman cannot say about her girlhood, her relation to the Girl? Akerman's cinema requires us to explore engagements with images of the Girl by means of cinema fashioned out of the New Wave she encountered when she was fifteen—an encounter with *Pierrot le Fou* (1965) by Jean-Luc Godard.

Proposing *fascinace* as a cinematic form, how do we encounter a gaze, intensity, sound or resonance produced by Akerman's cinematic language and articulated through

¹¹⁶ Akerman and Lebovici, p. 99.

positions of shots and their duration? *Fascinace* shifts the terms in which we have understood the gaze in cinema (voyeurism, sadism, erotic or even the possessive or pensive gaze) so that it offers a way to register the experience of watching Akerman's films, being included in the scenario when certain shots seem to open themselves, through no aspect we can pinpoint exactly, to affective intensities felt by the viewer.¹¹⁷

Cinéfille connects to *fascinace* in the sense of being held in duration, a mode of curiosity on the fringes of love and desirability that is not structured in terms of phallic desire. Recalling Catherine Fowler's reading of introspection as a way of looking back at cinema, but being held by cinema through its working of memory rather than invocation of loss, then *fascinace* becomes a useful cinematic concept that evokes aesthetic forms which one needs not to look back, or forward, but exist in, as Ettinger describes, a 'time out of time', in what is 'the prolongation and delaying of the time of encounter-event'.¹¹⁸

The notion of the *cinéfille*, conceived as a kind of cine-love that speaks to a dimension of the feminine, but which also recalls the position of the Girl as a subject within cinematic structures, relates to the aesthetic affect and effect of *fascinace* as a way of holding, prolonging and delaying in the duration of a *Matrixial* encounter-event. Ettinger writes: 'An image can carry a transformative potentiality for a subject when the subject enters into relations of *fascinace* with its site (or time-space) of *fascinace*.'¹¹⁹

¹¹⁷ The term 'pensive' is used by Raymond Bellour in the essay 'The Pensive Spectator' from 1987 and taken up by Laura Mulvey in *Death 24x a Second* from 2006. See: Raymond Bellour, 'The Pensive Spectator', *Wide Angle*, 9 (1987) 6-7, and Laura Mulvey, *Death 24x a Second* (London: Reaktion Books, 2006).

¹¹⁸ Ettinger, 'Fascinace and the Girl-to-m/Other Matrixial Feminine Difference', p. 61.

¹¹⁹ Ettinger, 'Fascinace and the Girl-to-m/Other Matrixial Feminine Difference', p. 72.

Considering the significance of *fascinace* in light of what follows from the maternal kiss in *Marcher*, Griselda Pollock describes how Akerman's cinema stages the time-space passage of *fascinace*.

Thus instead of the biographical model in which we might confine Chantal Akerman, her mother and her grandmother, the cinema of Akerman can be read as a prolonged, durational, often incomplete and sometimes stymied staging of the time-space for a necessary *fascinace* addressed in a structural sense of the other who offer grounds for feminine subjectivity and sexuality and in a historical sense to the lost artist-grandmother and the survivor-daughter-become-mother. *Fascinace* might help understand the unique affective quality of attention and duration in Akerman's cinema, ambivalent in its tones of love and violence and what was finally encountered in the little filming in Brussels.¹²⁰

As Pollock argues, arriving at a cinematic notion of *fascinace* in the cinema of Akerman may offer a way of understanding the profound affective dimensions of the work and their necessary structural and historical grounding in relation to, and alongside, *Matrixial* feminine others. Building on Pollock's work, however, I want to introduce the specificity of the Girl into the discussion. With the *cinéfille* it is the Girl with and for whom Akerman's cinema stages a time-space that seeks out a relation to 'Natalia' and 'Sidonie' in forms of attention and duration in film. The Girl, unlike a girl, may not become woman, but reading with Ettinger we realise the profound necessity for her to know the 'other woman'—or the other Girl.

After the maternal kiss and the words which flow before the camera that finally allow Pollock to discern aesthetic and ethical dimension of Akerman's cinematic work, we arrive at *No Home Movie* a film that, unlike the short footage shot for *Marcher*, was filmed by Akerman herself and comprised of hundreds of hours of footage. What do we encounter in this final film? I finish by returning to *No Home Movie*, using the resources offered by Bracha Ettinger's *Matrixial* theory of *fascinace* to address the solicitation of the gaze in film. Can we think about *fascinace* in Akerman's cinema as the gaze between the girl and another Girl: the fascinating gaze in the field of the *cinéfille*?

¹²⁰ Pollock, *After-affects / After-images*, p. 342.

A Long Take

Chantal Akerman was to leave for a month-long trip to Israel when Natalia Akerman died in April 2014. On her return, her editor, Claire Atherton, began to edit hours of footage sourced from Akerman's phone, hand-held digital camera and SD cards, constructing *No Home Movie* from footage shot by Chantal Akerman while she was working away on trips or while spending time visiting and caring for Natalia Akerman at her apartment in Brussels.

As a 'no home movie', or a 'no home movie', depending on the emphasis, the title alludes to the status of exile and Jewishness, evoking and refusing family connotations in the same gesture. The hand-held, low definition quality serves the intimate form of the film which evokes the 'home movie' without ever becoming just that. The accumulation of footage (over forty-hours) is radically different from the twenty minutes of footage filmed by Akerman's assistant and which came to form *Marcher*. Akerman says: 'I've been filming just about everywhere for years now, as soon as I see a shot.'¹²¹

No Home Movie is an intimate documentary film shot by Chantal Akerman, featuring Natalia Leibel Akerman and the filmmaker herself. It is a meditation on closeness and the strain of distance explored as a tender portrait with scenes of the women together, apart or talking on Skype. I first saw *No Home Movie* on 30 October 2015 at its London premiere at Regent Street Cinema at the end of a long day spent visiting the exhibition *Chantal Akerman: NOW* at Ambika P3.¹²² The exhibition included a selection of Akerman's video installations, including *Now* (2015), a five-screen installation, where footage of the desert appears, frantic,

¹²¹ Chantal Akerman 'Filmmaker's Statement', *Doc and Film*, 2015, <<http://www.docandfilm.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/1709.pdf>> [accessed 01.09.2018].

¹²² *Chantal Akerman: NOW* at Ambika P3 ran from 30 October—6 December and was curated by A Nos Amours (Joanna Hogg and Adam Roberts) with works from 1995 until 2015 shown for the first time in the UK. The exhibition included the following works: *D'est* (1995), *The Mirror* (1971/2007), *A Voice in the Desert* (2002), *Tombée de nuit sur Shanghai* (2007), *Maniac Shadows* (2013), *Now* (2015).

loud and urgent. The images of the desert appearing in *Now* are the very same ones that appear in *No Home Movie*.¹²³



Figure 11 - *No Home Movie* (2015) Chantal Akerman

The film opens with a remarkable static shot of a tree in the desert that lasts for four minutes and nine seconds. The tree in the foreground flutters woefully in the strong wind with the green half stripped from its branches. The sound of the wind batters the audio track, a forceful judder that does not diminish throughout the duration of the shot. The loudness tells us nothing in terms of narrative but expresses the physicality of the space. The elemental power battering the tree is extended in time, elongated and infused with force through sound and image. The opening shot incites our attention, not through spectacle but through the affective form of the image and sound prolonged into long duration. The tree, although battered, remains in place under the force of the desert wind which becomes discernible in the tree's movement and the intense rush of sound. We keep on watching. Peering into the distance a white dot that might be a small vehicle moving through the landscape appears.

¹²³ During the precise work of condensing and cutting hours of footage to make *No Home Movie*, Akerman completed two installations: *De la mèr(e) au desert* (2014) and *Now* (2015). *De la Mèr(e) au desert* was shown in Mamuta Centre, Jerusalem in July 2014. *No Home Movie* was shown as a work in progress at the opening. *Now* formed part of the Venice Biennale, *All The World's Futures*, curated by Okwui Enwezor, opening in June 2015.

Then our gaze turns to fixate on the blustering branches once more. A level of tension is sustained that carries the viewer through the duration of the shot, but which leaves traces on the rest of the narrative by its non-narrative force. The image of the desert stays with us, as if the prolongation of the scene slowly deposits itself as part of the image and becomes an extended part of our experience of viewing.

Shots of the desert, which also appear much later in the film, are either static framings of a landscape with a relatively long depth of field or blurred in extreme proximity and movement being shot from the window of a moving car. Filmed in the desert of Israel on a Blackberry mobile phone from a hotel window, the desert landscape is the first image of several that punctuate the apartment scenes in which Chantal Akerman films interactions with Natalia Akerman. The texture of the different sounds and images interrupts the protected interior space of Natalia Akerman's apartment, which the film spends much of its time inhabiting. These images of the desert function structurally, as the film progresses, as the necessary other space away from the apartment.

After four minutes and nine seconds that constitute the opening shot, the desert gives way to a bright green park in Brussels where an older man sits with his back to us on a bench. The same-size white dot, which was a vehicle travelling on a desert road in the distance, reappears as a butterfly. The relief after the tension of the first shot is realised retrospectively as the sound shifts to the ambient noise of people and birds. The two images evoke a huge difference between them. One point, the Israeli desert, and the other, a park in Brussels. The arduous intensity of the previous scene—that for me is felt right in the middle of the chest—subsides to an extent. The wind has ceased, and the grass is green.



Figure 12 - *No Home Movie* (2015) Chantal Akerman

Alisa Lebow has written that the duration of the shots in films by Chantal Akerman are dictated by their own internal time and a precise sense of timing. ‘A shot, whether moving or static, is always allowed to run its course, to come to its own conclusion, or inconclusion’.¹²⁴ Lebow draws attention to the ability of shots to extend themselves in durations that do not depend on fixed notions of time but attends to their own logic. The articulation of this kind of shot demands the filmmaker and editor pay attention to what the shot is ‘doing’, and thus to have a sense of timing that is open to such images. In the opening shot of *No Home Movie* the scene of the desert needs to be held long enough for its intensity to prolong past its actual end so that it inflects the two hours which follow. This is not a chronological time but an affective passage that is produced by its duration.

The intimate sense of timing—of when to cut and when to hold back—is a mark of Akerman’s cinema. In *I Don’t Belong Anywhere: Le Cinéma de Chantal Akerman*, directed by Akerman’s producer Marianne Lambert and released in 2015, Chantal Akerman and Claire Atherton discuss how, in the editing process for *No Home Movie*, any attempts to cut the opening shot in order to make it shorter resulted in the shot failing entirely. Four minutes and

¹²⁴ Lebow, ‘Memory Once Removed’, p. 63.

nine seconds, they came to understand, was the amount of time needed for the affective and aesthetic processes to be disclosed. Yet, of course, the amount of time counted in minutes and seconds is meaningless in and of itself. Over four minutes and nine seconds the wind noise on the microphone rumbles with enough modulation to keep our attention. At the same time, the tree blows in the foreground against the wind. Again, nothing ‘happens’ but the movement and sound sustains an intensity throughout the minutes that pass. Once the film cuts to the next shot, we realise that what seemed like almost nothing before us had been built to such a degree that now in the scene of the park we are left with the aftermath of its intensity, with its traces deposited throughout our viewing. The significance of this lies, then, not in the length of the shot in which a notion of time is used functionally for certain effects. Rather it is the ability of Akerman (and Atherton) to comprehend and enact the conclusion (or inconclusion) of each shot—to give space to the duration of each shot as a particular space-time—to allow the possibility of further passages of duration and image to be registered through the process of watching. The form and duration cannot be paraphrased as each shot yields and holds the viewer only at these precise durations.

Lebow’s articulation of the Akermanian shot resonates with a cinematics of *fascinace*. The opening shot of *No Home Movie* initiates an encounter in duration, that deposits its own intensities, but that does not necessarily have a conclusion. As we encounter the scene, being held in a relation with the film, the question of narrative or formal conclusion or inconclusion is able to be left open. In a similar move, as a process of encounter and transformation, *fascinace* provides a passage towards co-subjectivisation, a weaving and plaiting that, in the novel by Duras, is stopped prematurely by Lol’s mother. The passage to a dimension of feminine subjectivisation through the encounter with the Other as Woman-m/Other-encounter is halted for Lol. She cannot become in the position of desiring subject because of the premature rupture of the scene. Later, Lol, arrested as the Girl, still desires to know about her own desirability in order to close the gap between Girl and woman, and searches for

opportunities open to the time-space of *fascinace*. Lebow's articulation of the internal temporal logic of the shot does not consider the aspect of transformation that is central in Ettinger's theorisation of *fascinace*. Nevertheless, thinking with Lebow and Ettinger we can still ask: is it possible to understand Akerman's cinema in the terms of a perpetual *fascinace* of the *cinéfille*, that is, a desire for a feminine subject to know herself in a feminine that is not caught in the model of *la femme* but is related to the Girl?

Technologies of Fascinace

Arriving at *No Home Movie*, how might we discern a cinematics of fascinace in relation to my concept of the *cinéfille*? *No Home Movie* is an expressive statement that reveals, finally, the kind of searching with which Akerman's filmmaking is perhaps always engaged—a searching for a relationship to Natalia's girlhood that remained an unspoken intensity for so long. *No Home Movie* is also a portrait of Akerman's fascination with Natalia, but also about how you engage, cinematically, a modality of the gaze so that it is open toward the viewer to be included.

Akerman's filmmaking is acutely interested in a dimension of Natalia Akerman's history and subjectivity, but it has never admitted this so directly. In a recent article published in 2016 in the flurry of writing following Akerman's tragic death, Lebow comments on this aspect.

[W]hile it is true that Akerman's films have, from the start and throughout, been motivated by and obsessed with the figure, present or absent of the mother, prior to this last film audiences had hardly ever been admitted into the tense and impossible dynamic itself, only to its substitutes and its effects.¹²⁵

Lebow asks an important question about what happens when Akerman's indirect form of filmmaking approaches the figure of 'Natalia', and the traumatic history of her survival of the camps, head-on rather than obliquely.

¹²⁵ Alisa Lebow, 'Identity Slips: The Autobiographical Register in the Work of Chantal Akerman', *Film Quarterly* (2016), 54-60 (p. 55).

Lebow writes that *No Home Movie* is one of Akerman's most significant films. '*No Home Movie* ultimately reveals within itself all of the film-maker's earlier attempts to reframe the (m)other as self-portraits in an un-*heimlich* (one interpretation of the "no home" of the title) and devastating metempsychosis'.¹²⁶ Drawing on psychoanalyst André Green's theory of 'the dead mother' (which Akerman, as well as Lebow, Janet Bergstrom and Griselda Pollock have referred to in relation to Akerman's films) Lebow emphasises the complete slippage of subject-object relations—an unmooring of the 'I' and the boundary of the other—that is figured in cinema through Akerman's unconscious workings.¹²⁷ Building on her previous work, Lebow suggests there is a slippage not only between the memories of Natalia Akerman that Chantal Akerman somehow seeks to inhabit as her own in her work, but also the subjectivities of the two individuals in their expression in different works in text, voice or on screen. My suggestion is a little different, that instead of a slippage we are witness to a passage broached toward the other through the gaze.

No Home Movie poses the question of the gaze of one woman at another woman. We cannot pose this just at the level of daughter and mother because, although Natalia Akerman is the mother, the interest is not in her as the Mother in the phallic register. The film reaches toward 'Natalia', looking at her in ways that seek to discern an instantiation of the Girl sought out by the filmmaker, soliciting the viewer through such a search. Again, it is only through the form of the moving image that this relation could be produced or, as it were, performed.

In *No Home Movie* we see Akerman utilising audio-visual strategies for keeping her mother in the (post)cinematic frame and thus trying to sustain an encounter between 'Natalia' and 'Chantal' and the camera/screen. This includes technologies such as Skype. There

¹²⁶ Lebow, 'Identity Slips', p. 54.

¹²⁷ See: Janet Bergstrom, 'Invented Memories', in *Identity and Memory: The Films of Chantal Akerman*, ed. by Gwendolyn Audrey Foster (Wiltshire: Flicks Books, 1999), pp. 94-117; Lebow, 'Identity Slips', p. 55; Pollock, *After-affects/ After-images*, pp. 332-334.

are two scenes in *No Home Movie* that show us the interaction of Chantal Akerman and Natalia Akerman on Skype. In the first sequence, Chantal Akerman films the laptop on which Natalia Akerman appears and speaks with a handheld camera. Behind the camera, filming her laptop on which we see Natalia Akerman's face, we hear Chantal Akerman's voice and see the small square avatar of her embedded in the mother's image. Unlike other technologies of communication, the online communication software Skype (a name which is now also used in the verb form—*to skype*) provides an audio-visual connection between at least two people.

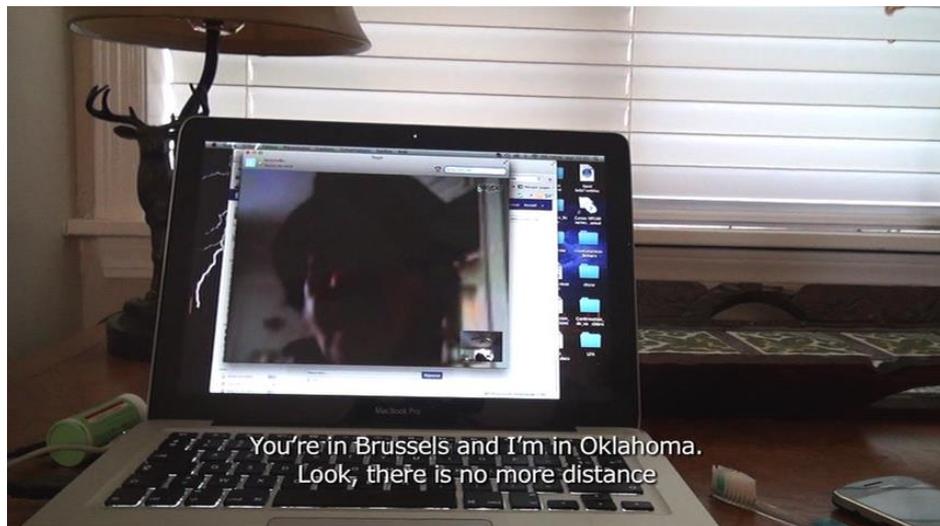


Figure 13 - *No Home Movie* (2015) Chantal Akerman

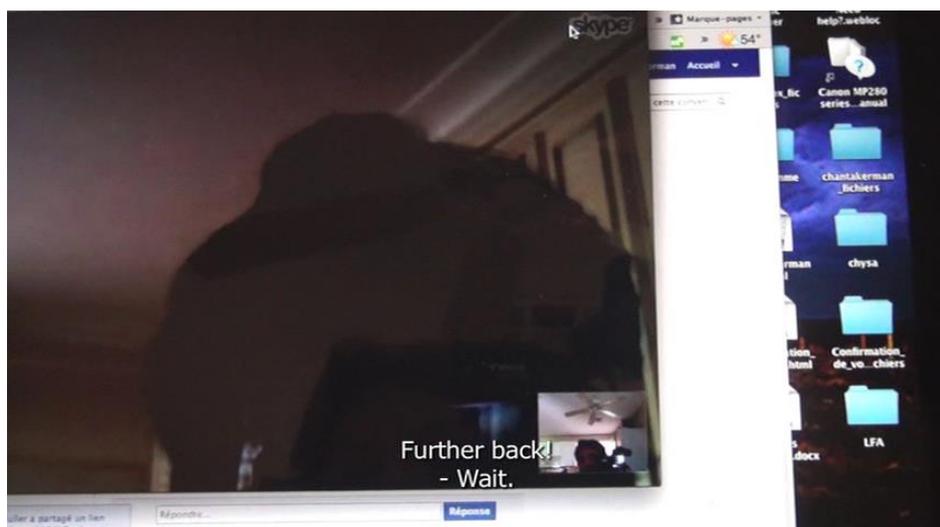


Figure 14 - *No Home Movie* (2015) Chantal Akerman

The method of filming the laptop registers a sense of distance and proximity through the mediation of Skype. The technology registers the 'apartness' of the two women as they call

each other to keep 'in touch' because Akerman is away working in the United States. Loose hand-held filming captures the image of the laptop and the detritus of the room: a toothbrush and some medication. Keeping in touch seems important for both parties, as they share sweet names and the everyday events which still go on when they are apart. In a sense they do not say much, but their image and their voice create a feeling of being connected. On the one hand, the two scenes on Skype suggest a distance that can never really be overcome, despite Akerman's apparent desire to show the opposite. Yet the technology also annuls distance by creating a temporary passage between the two. Natalia Akerman and Chantal Akerman can hear and see each other. They gaze at each other as if they were there, but it is very different from if they *were* there—there being Natalia's apartment.

Akerman's cinema pays loving attention to details of things unsaid or unseen and her attention to the poetics and technics of Skype is no different. Unlike a telephone call, Skype can be filmed in a more visual manner. As a video technology, it offers limited options for framing the individual on screen as it generally uses a webcam attached to the laptop screen. The result is a static frontal shot of the individual in close-up, framed by two screens, the viewers and the laptop. The attention to the face and less common form of the 'Akerman close-up', discerned earlier in *Portrait d'une jeune fille*, are evoked in these scenes. Although Natalia Akerman's face is sometimes partially out of the frame, or too close to the screen, or too dark for lack of light, Akerman's camera still attends to her face in a tender and intimate manner. The handheld camera dips low, bringing the keyboard into frame rather than the laptop screen and we hear Akerman raise her voice in attempt to tell Natalia Akerman about her visit to a lake. The inclusion of the problems of communication that seem specific to Skype (not being able to hear or see properly) becomes part of paying attention to this everyday exchange.

Mediated through the three cameras (the handheld camera, and the two laptop webcams) we begin to sense the intimate and complex channels that need to be held open if

any kind of sense of being together is to be achieved. What this kind of technologically mediated encounter (and indeed any encounter) demonstrates is that there are only different mixes of togetherness-and-apartness, openness-and-closed-offness. So, what one needs to look for is which mixes feel more meaningful or satisfying, more innovative or touching. We realise that it is not necessarily about ‘seeing’ her face—and for the viewer Natalia Akerman’s face is more often too dark or obscured to see—rather, it is the effect of staging the moment of encounter (which includes dialogue) to keep Natalia Akerman present in the cinematic scenes toward which Chantal Akerman’s films are drawn and produce. It is the longing to discern aspects of ‘Natalia’ through the cinematic medium that sustains such a level of attention.



Figure 15 - *No Home Movie* (2015) Chantal Akerman

There is a long moment in the second scene on Skype where the viewer becomes lost in the pixelated screen that is presenting Natalia Akerman’s face. Chantal Akerman and Natalia Akerman are trying to say goodbye, but the conversation cannot stop. Natalia Akerman has leaned into her webcam too close and we can see only her eyes, heavily pixelated and blurred in proximity to the camera on the laptop screen. In response, Chantal Akerman zooms in on her handheld camera. Both have come ‘too close’ to their respective screens. Chantal Akerman’s reflection becomes just visible on the screen over the blurred eyes

belonging to Natalia Akerman. We can hear their conversation continue, but we are intimately joined in this closeness that is also the absence of closeness.

The scenes on Skype underline constantly how distant they are as Skype emphasises the distance much more than an audio-only phone call. Skype video calls use live video that places someone 'there', not 'here'. There is also a new kind of intimacy that is admittedly bound up with this very insistent distance, but that is genuinely different (and therefore incredibly precious) from, say, the intimacy-distance of the notes added and read in the Sidonie Ehrenberg's diary.

Seeing and being positioned in the gaze of *fascinace* in a dimension of femininity, according to Ettinger, are important instances for women. Thus, borrowing Ettinger's psychoanalytic concept of *fascinace*, I am exploring modalities in which cinema or moving image art are hospitable to transformations of desirability, subjectivity and difference alongside the Girl. Ettinger's Girl, of which Lol is the key example, is engaged in a specific kind of cinematic looking and being looked at, marking once more the Girl as a cinematic position and drawing attention to the alliance of the Girl and moving image. Filming an encounter via Skype presents one aspect of the set of relations of meeting and enacting that might provide a perpetual exercise in *fascinace*: a search for an encounter suspended in a gaze. The scenes on Skype open a cinematic passage through which Chantal Akerman searches for the possibility of a transformational encounter (in the *Matrixial* sense). She uses all the technology to hand to keep filming Natalia Akerman, returning to the cinematic scenario, in order to foster a time-space hospitable to the meeting of the Girl with an other-Girl, necessary for the subjects and their becoming. The film thus becomes legible as a search for the Girl, by a Girl-artist, through the cinematic form.

Apartment Looking

Akerman composes in a way that is both very controlled and also open to something random or aleatory. She also creates a space through framing, duration, body and gesture that opens onto a way of watching what Natalia Akerman does. The scenes which take place in the apartment are primarily comprised of hand-held shots where Chantal Akerman is moving around the apartment and long static tableaux that are proposed with acute attention to composition, figure and duration. This is a specific cinematic gesture, which deconstructs the traditional jittery hand-held 'snapshot'-type, informal and intentionally accidental framing and the carefully calculated composition of a (typically static) shot. Details emerge as we observe the curve of a chair leg, or listen intently for the rustle of something that might just enter into the frame.

In the final quarter of the film, a particularly intimate scene stands out as elucidating a cinematic *fascinace*, that is, concerned with seeing and being positioned in the gaze of *fascinace*. A third of the screen is taken up by a wooden dresser, lit vividly by the light from the window at the back of the room. Looking into the room, past the dresser, Natalia Akerman is reclining heavily, appearing fragile and fatigued, in an armchair in the centre of the shot. She is framed on the left by the dresser and an indoor plant on the right. The light coming into the room from the large windows casts her figure in partial shadow, meaning that the pattern relief on the dresser stands out to the viewer more than Natalia Akerman at first. The light from the window behind Natalia Akerman hits the floors casting a bright blue reflection that catches our eye. These are points of intensity that register after which we 'see' Natalia Akerman appear in the centre. The shot resembles another in the first quarter of the film, where, from a slightly different angle, we see her sitting up straight in the armchair reading, the dresser bisecting the screen as a rich dark-brown panel. Rather than producing the sense that the camera is prying, the placement of the camera in relation to the dresser and Natalia Akerman spatialises the image so that we are both there, in the image, and apart.

In the scene, a figure, who we recognise to be Chantal Akerman, walks in front of the camera to duck around the side of the dresser. As she moves the brightness changes momentarily as the white balance of the camera shifts to adjust automatically. Although the scene is static, the play of light marks her movement in the space. Chantal Akerman's head and feet are cropped out of the shot, but we can just about see that she is holding a camera through which she is looking at Natalia Akerman. We watch Chantal Akerman, camera in hand, as she sits or stands nearby looking through the viewfinder of the camera that is trained on Natalia Akerman. We engage in looking at the act of looking.



Figure 16 - *No Home Movie* (2015) Chantal Akerman



Figure 17 - *No Home Movie* (2015) Chantal Akerman

We hear, Sylviane Akerman, who is offscreen, and Chantal Akerman, obscured in part by the dresser, call out with requests for stories and tales of the day to Natalia Akerman in an effort to get her attention and keep her awake. More significant, perhaps, the static shot, trained on the room, captures Chantal Akerman's doubled attempts to produce a scenario in which Natalia Akerman is connected to her through the cinematic gaze. We are unmoored from the traditional gaze and introduced to the possibility of a post-cinematic *fascinace* that is mobilised alongside, rather than replacing, the cinematic form. The careful spacing of figure and camera, of looking at looking, creates a field of the gaze appropriate to the *cinéfille*. This scene, more than others, registers within the frame the act of filming—the search for a meaningful scenario for the encounter for which Chantal Akerman is searching.

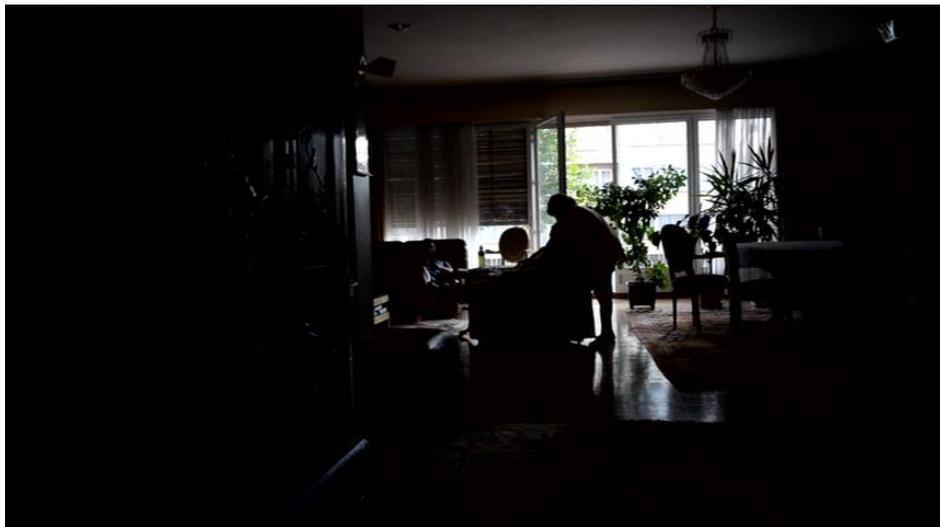


Figure 18 - *No Home Movie* (2015) Chantal Akerman

Two scenes later, the same room is cast in extreme shadow. Set further back from before, Chantal Akerman is seen crossing the room, while Natalia Akerman is still in the armchair. After several moments the shadowy figure of Chantal Akerman walks over to the chair to embrace Natalia Akerman from behind.

Natalia Akerman: I want to see you everyday.

Chantal Akerman: We'll see each other on Skype and I'll be back in a month.

Natalia Akerman: We can't be cut off like that. Nowadays we're much closer than before. In this...new society.

Chantal Akerman walks toward the balcony, where her outline appears before the bright white light streaming in from outside, which creates a panel of whiteness in the frame.

Natalia Akerman: Where is Chantal?

In this exchange we grasp the significance of their interactions via Skype and in the apartment. It is necessary for Chantal Akerman to produce these cinematic scenarios in order to register the failed attempts to discover a dimension of 'Natalia', namely the Girl, that has remained the enigma between them. It is also necessary for Natalia Akerman to register a relation to Chantal Akerman as the creative artist, for whom she is central in the latter's creative inscriptions and in the discovery of the *cinéfil*.

Conclusion

The scene discussed above is the final scene in which we see Natalia Akerman. What follows is a slow montage of empty scenes: a handheld rush of movement from inside the apartment to outside where we are met by a blinding white light. Shots of the desert appear, then back to the apartment where Chantal Akerman finally ties her shoelaces and pulls the curtains together in the room where she would stay when visiting the apartment.



Figure 19 - *No Home Movie* (2015) Chantal Akerman



Figure 20- *No Home Movie* (2015) Chantal Akerman

Another shot from the hall is quiet, tidy and so exquisitely composed that the underlying realisation that Natalia Akerman is gone is held just below the surface as the static shot goes on for one minute and forty-five seconds. It feels a lot longer than this and we remember the persistence of the desert image that opened the film. The experience of watching the shot of the desert returns to echo in experience of viewing the empty space of the hall. Outside sounds gradually rise and we hear the shuffle of Chantal Akerman alone in the apartment. We are invited to bear witness to what is left in the space, the same space but irrevocably changed. In turn the image seems to have changed. We wait for someone to appear in the shot, but nobody will.

By means of an extended analysis of *Portrait d'une jeune fille* and *No Home Movie* I have addressed the relationship between the Girl and Akerman's cinema. The tightly wound temporal knot that constitutes the film, *Portrait d'une jeune fille*, provided layering of histories and 'personal pronouncements' allowing me to draw apart the girl and the Girl to propose the concept of the *cinéfille* as a cinematic position for Akerman's cinema. As neither coming of age story, nor autobiography, I have suggested that *Portrait d'une jeune fille* is a formal and narrative exploration of how one might begin to imagine cinema as the only way in which to express cinematically aspects of the feminine, creativity and a subjectivity that is coming into being.

Cinéfille, as I have suggested, can also give rise to the potential for a solicitation of a gaze or mode of spectatorship that depends on an intimate form of duration, of looking or being held in a gaze. Psychoanalysis offered a lens for reading these practices. Kristeva's theorisation of feminine subjectivity as that which inhabits a sensuous and creative openness was held in tension with Ettinger's *Matrixial* supplement. The notion of the *cinéfille* was connected to the aesthetic affect and effect of *fascinace*, itself a theorisation of the Girl, as a way of holding, prolonging and delaying in the duration of a *Matrixial* encounter-event. In reading *No Home Movie*, I discerned a desire to stage a particular durational encounter in the field of the cinematic gaze. Duration in Akerman's cinema, I argue, is not only a shot that takes a long time, but, as in the case of *No Home Movie*, it provides an affective registration of intensity that sustains through the rest of the film until the end where the empty hallway returns the viewer to the feeling of the desert landscape where the film began.

3. Girls as Image: *If 6 Was 9* by Eija-Liisa Ahtila

The question I am investigating in this chapter is: what is the relationship between the duration of moving image work and the atemporality of the Girl as an instance of feminine subjectivity? This question arises when cinema enters the gallery with new forms of the moving image, which in this chapter is addressed specifically to and by a short film, that is also a multi-screen gallery installation, entitled *If 6 Was 9* (1995), made by Finnish artist Eija-Liisa Ahtila (b.1959) and which features five girls. It is a work that makes a crucial distinction between the Girl and woman by addressing temporality; in doing so it makes the Girl ‘appear’ from the girl.

Moving image artwork and Ahtila’s work in particular have attracted analyses that draw on concepts of duration arising from the writing of philosopher Henri Bergson (1859-1941) for the reason of it not being cinematic time in its classic form. This produces a distinctive kind of moving image and context of encounter to be analysed. In the shift from traditional cinematic narrativity in *If 6 Was 9*, structural facets, such as the articulation of space and time, continuity editing or establishing shots are recast within the work because of its particular form. The technology becomes a form, which we might inelegantly describe as multi-screen, itself having a relation to the thinking of the Girl as moving image. This chapter is a feminist reading of the relationship between the moving image and the Girl as founded on an atemporality that produces a figure for ‘thinking’ feminine subjectivity in a becomingness that is distinct in its duration and thus not becoming woman.

The artwork under discussion, *If 6 Was 9*, can be presented in two formats, as split-screen 35 mm film for cinema or triple-screen gallery installation. In the gallery, three synchronised projected images are presented side by side across one wall forming a widescreen divided into three sections that measure at least seven meters across. The

tripartite format has numerous precedents in art and film but for the artist evokes the format of advertising billboards. Three screens also recall the triptych panel painting of early Christian art divided into three sections to be folded shut or displayed open and the early film format 'polyvision', a format that was devised for the final reel of Abel Gance's epic silent film *Napoléon* from 1927.¹



Figure 21- *If 6 Was 9* (1995) installation shot. Courtesy of Crystal Eye and Eija-Liisa Ahtila

If 6 Was 9 concerns five girls, Päivi, Satu, Tiina, Anne and Elsa, played by thirteen to fifteen-year-olds who are the exclusive characters of eight episodes set in Helsinki.² Päivi, the first girl who appears, is the focus of two episodes. In the first scene, she waits outside a supermarket to meet her friend Satu. Päivi's voice-over describes aspects of her day, including a book she has read about a cannibal eating a young woman, which causes her to wonder if

¹ *Napoléon* (1927) stages the life of Napoleon Bonaparte from childhood until his marriage and first Italian campaign. Ahtila must have been aware of Gance's film although it is unlikely she saw the full version which was only digitally restored and released in a complete version in 2016. Of the many experimental and innovative techniques used in *Napoléon* one of the most memorable is the triptych projection. Moving from a single projection, the film opens out to a triple projection for the climax of the film. As the first cinematic use of the triptych form, Gance's film is interesting for its experimental techniques, including the triple projection, that remains incredible striking and inventive.

² The title of the film references the song 'If 6 Was 9' (1967) by Jimi Hendrix, which feature in the film *Easy Rider* (1969). Actors: Ellisa Korpijärvi, Pihia Mollberg, Maria Mäkinen, Mila Vainio, Eeva Viikkumaa.

someone might write a book about her someday. Satu is the focus of the following scene in a kitchen where she is alone making breakfast, buttering toast and boiling the kettle. Bored and facing an uneventful day, she describes how unsatisfied she is with her looks and the weather. Following Satu, Tiina, now in a living room sat among the other girls, boldly describes a childhood fantasy where she was examined and injected by a doctor in her backside. She finishes her recollection by saying: ‘at that stage I knew nothing about the pussy’. Gathering pace, in Päivi’s second episode she describes a memory of a View-Master toy that told the story of the Pied Piper of Hamelin. Anne and Elsa appear in one episode each. Anne is assertive and gives an account of her experiences with men at a club and the reactions of other women towards her as a result. Elsa causes more disruption, declaring herself to be thirty-eight years old yet also a girl playing team sports at the school hall. Satu’s second episode is the penultimate of the film, where she describes seeing a pornographic image series of a young man being penetrated by an older man. The focus is her fascination and repulsion at the images, a result of the way each frames the body, more than the content itself. Finally, Tiina, who is busy collaging from photo images that we recognise are images from earlier in the film itself, tells the viewer about an article she read a couple of years ago about ‘24 places in the city where people make love outdoors’: a phone booth, the stalls of a swimming stadium and the YMCA doorway.

If 6 Was 9 opens on three black screens. On the audio-track voices of girls produce erotic vocalisations and speak sexual innuendos in Finnish that are also translated into English subtitles at the bottom of the screen.³ These are voices of girls speaking experiences stemming from older women—fictional stories developed from research and accounts shared by women, including the artist herself. In each episode, a girl replays a significant memory,

³ In installation format the subtitles appear on each screen separately, but in split-screen film format they appear only once across the bottom.

story or fantasy, whether this is an unbearably dull day at home, or sexual fantasies of an intimate bodily examination. Sex and other experiences are explored in the work, but not as experiences generated by the girls who appear before us. The estranged monologues are comprised of experiences spoken by the girls that—some more evidently than others—are not their own. Intimate topics are boldly recounted in ordinary scenarios, surrounded by others or else alone and addressed only to the viewer.

The episodes are set in different locations, the first being outside a supermarket, then in an apartment kitchen. Later there is a school sports hall and then also a room with a piano on which a girl plays. Several of the episodes take place in a living room where the girls sit around looking bored, eating snacks or playing card games. The domestic scenes are interspersed with fourteen different shots from different parts of the city. A frosty blue shoreline, then a park, a series of tunnels and an empty stadium. The film ends on the city skyline lit up in the dark. These location shots, some of which later we realise refer to the twenty-four places in the city people have sex outdoors, punctuate the domestic interiors where the girls address us, functioning also as moments of transition between one episode and the next.

If 6 Was 9 has a distinctive editing style where edits across and within screens are elaborated in rhythm and patterns that shape the viewers experience and attention to space, time and continuity. Sometimes, the editing is so fast that distinctions between places and figures are hard to make out. Black leader, usually the strip of black film attached to the head or tail of a roll of film, is frequently inserted into the edits creating aporias that structure the movement of images. Two screens turn to black momentarily in order to focus our attention on the remaining image. Suddenly, the extreme widescreen cut into three parts becomes one single image. The use of black leader also profoundly structures the patterns of images that produce other visual effects. For instance, in a scene where Päivi is describing a memory of a View-Master toy, the black leader produces a pattern between images that drive the viewer's

gaze (and to an extent their body) in one direction, only to be drawn back the other way a moment later. Throughout the work similar or different images appear on the screens, multiplying and repeating or disappearing into black screens in quick and successive arrangements. A transition sequence between episodes shows the same grey-blue wide shot of rooftops overlooking part of the city three times. Music or diegetic sounds produce a strong rhythm that leads the edits between screens, rather than have the action or characters leading the editing. In the middle section in which the sound of piano speeds up the montage, the melody prompts the images to change ever more quickly, causing landscape shots of the city outside to be cut between fleeting clips of Tiina, in slow-motion, throwing clothes and cutlery about her. The slow-motion image contrasts with the speed of the music and the ferocity of Tiina's actions. The music is like a call to action, accompanied declarations where the girls raise their own worries about the future or counsel others as voice-over. Satu says 'we have a future', to which Elsa responds, 'but I've been there already: Educate yourself.'

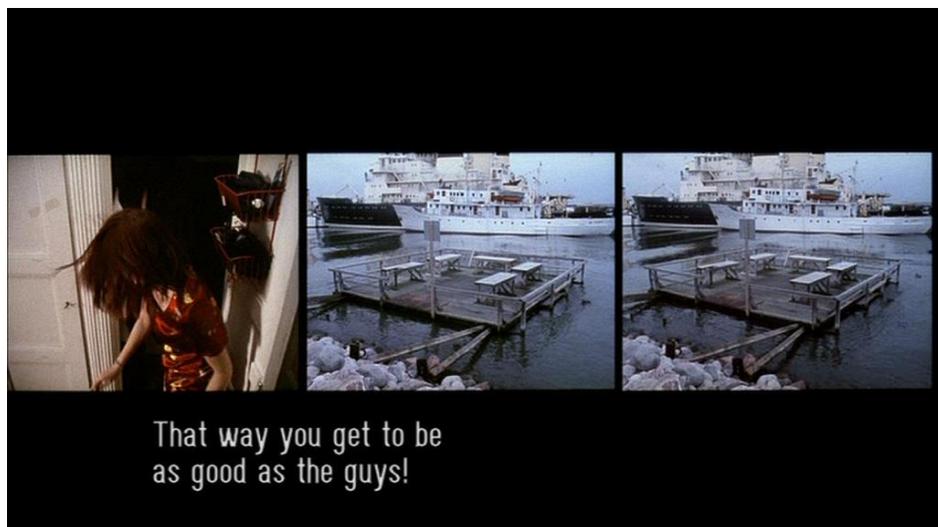


Figure 22 - *If 6 Was 9* (1995) Eija-Liisa Ahtila

In another scene that draws attention to different forms of movement, Päivi appears on the left screen speaking to camera and recalling the memory of a View-Master toy, a form of stereoscope that belonged to her when she was younger. The toy presents the story of the Pied Piper of Hamelin through a series of images that are run through the viewfinder. As she recalls this memory, the images become visible on the other screens and we even hear the

click on the audio track as the View Master, or Päivi's memory of it, progresses to the next slide. What is significant in Päivi's retelling is not the story of the Pied Piper leading the children of Hamelin away to be disappeared forever, but the experience of viewing the story through the View-Master and how a 'story' is put together. The significance is reflected in the form the images and sound take in the installation.

Like the format of three screen installation, the View Master operates differently than cinema or photography with the act of viewing. This is extended to the progression of narrative and the function of the image. The device provides each eye with a lens with pairs of film transparencies on a disc. Each pair of images in front of the lenses produce a stereoscopic image when viewed, which is advanced to the next image by the viewer. It is a technology where the pair of images are configured as one image by perception. The name of the toy itself is concerned with looking, specifically, a suggestion of the mastery of vision. Transposed into installation format, however, the movement of the images that replay the Pied Piper narrative are organised according to Päivi's memory, repeating certain moments, returning to an earlier image or skipping forward to the end. As she narrates on the left screen, the images she describes appear adjacent.



Figure 23 - *If 6 Was 9* (1995) Eija-Liisa Ahtila

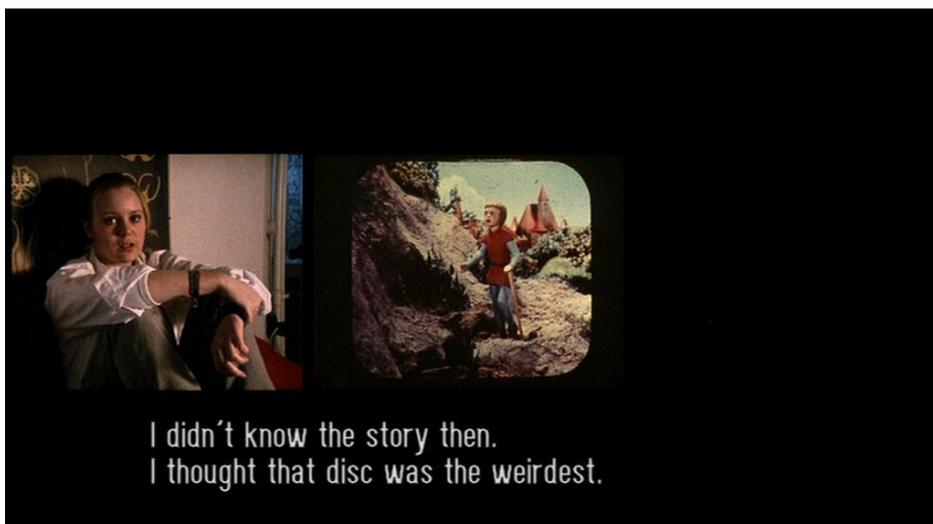


Figure 24 - *If 6 Was 9* (1995) Eija-Liisa Ahtila

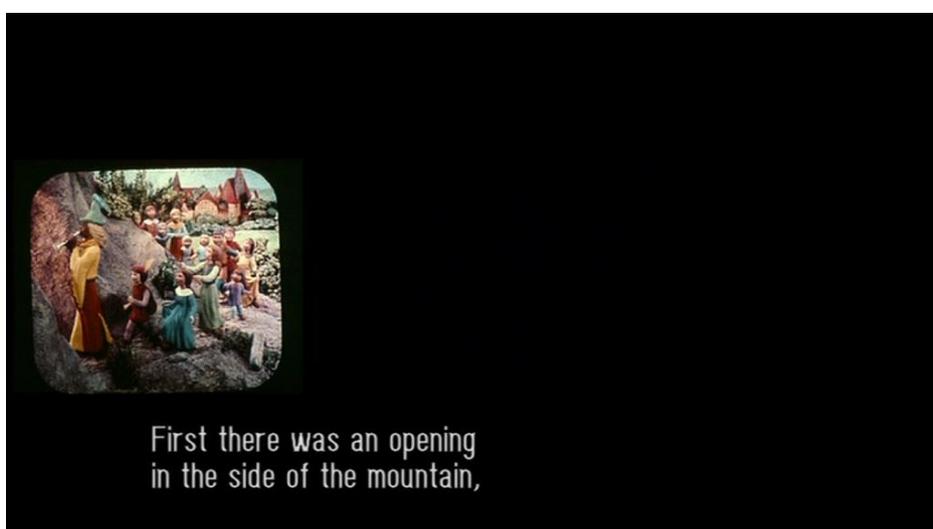


Figure 25 - *If 6 Was 9* (1995) Eija-Liisa Ahtila

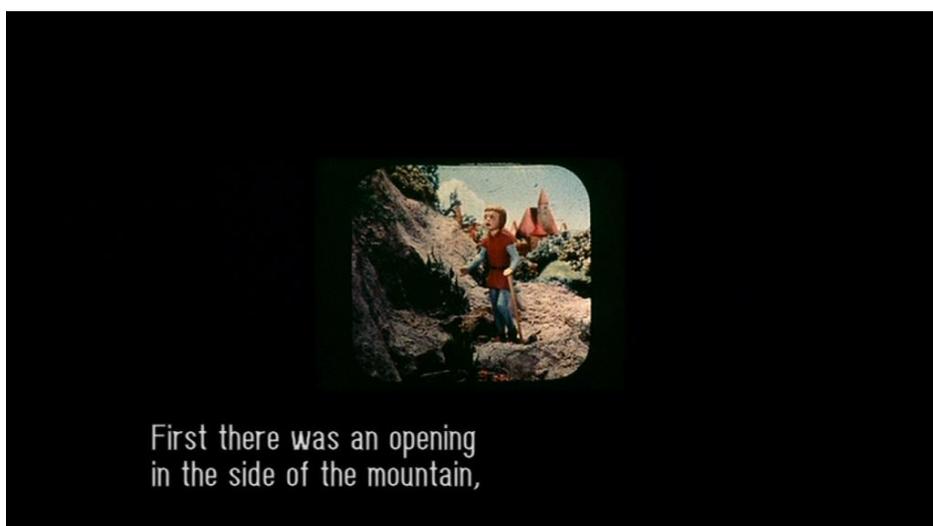


Figure 26 - *If 6 Was 9* (1995) Eija-Liisa Ahtila

Unlike a View Master, however, in which two images become one replaced by another two-in-one image immediately following, in the installation two images appear and disappear, one after the other, on the left and centre projections. It is almost as if we are closing one eye and opening the other, as you might test out with the stereoscope, as two images switch from screen to screen becoming spatialised and split from their optical illusion. How long each image appears on screen seems to be dictated by Päivi who is describing the movement and is the imagined operator of the device. Yet the viewer is also the imagined operator, seeing the images projected in the installation. Narrating as this happens, Päivi says:

I didn't know the story then. I thought that disc was the weirdest. Someone told me that the Piper led children inside a mountain which then closed. I ran the pictures back and forth: First there was an opening in the side of the mountain, and then there was no more. It was amazing. It was equally amazing to see in a porno magazine that men have no hole behind their testicles⁴

Rather than be concerned with what happened to the children of Hamelin, we become captivated by the process of the hole disappearing and reappearing before us. This is realised by a repetition of images appearing, disappearing, appearing, disappearing and the click of the View-Master mechanism that guides the movement onward. The 'story' of the episode becomes about Päivi's desire and fascination with images of holes, which also becomes our own fascination thanks to the movement and rhythm of the edits across the screen. The movement is used to emphasise a visual connection between the Pied Piper illustration and a pornographic image. As the two images of the Pied Piper and the mountain flicker back and forth, a final image appears serving as a 'conclusion'. The image shows a naked man leaning forward shot from behind. The extreme width of the screen pushes the rhythm of the images so that we expect a third and final image to appear on the right screen. This makes the revelation of the pornographic image both a comic yet reasonable and satisfying conclusion. The shock of the Girl showing us such an image is allayed by the way the film connected it to

⁴ Eija-Liisa Ahtila, *If 6 Was 9*, (1995).

the other images. The movement of images on the extra-wide screen become translated into the necessary movement of the spectator's body trying (and failing) to see across all at once.

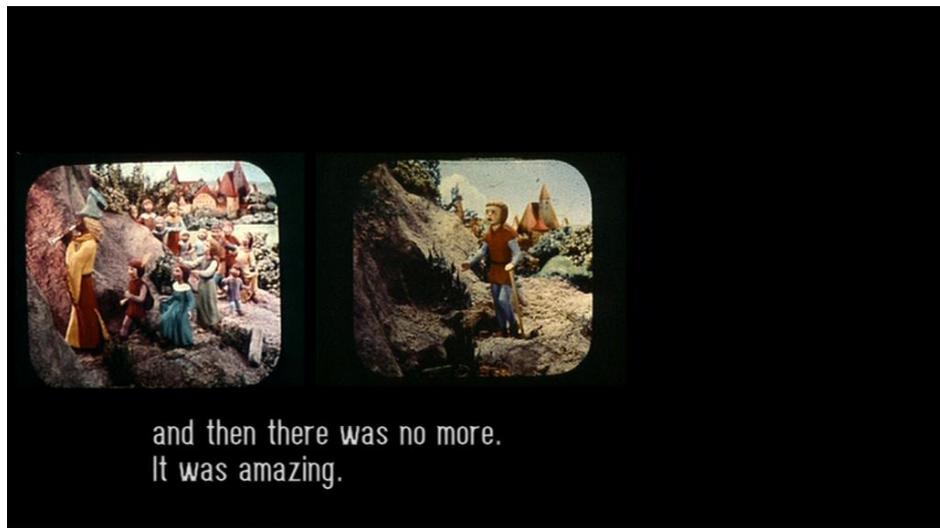


Figure 27 - *If 6 Was 9* (1995) Eija-Liisa Ahtila



Figure 28 - *If 6 Was 9* (1995) Eija-Liisa Ahtila

Another distinctive aspect of *If 6 Was 9* is the way in which experiences ‘replay’ themselves, as when a girl, Anne, who appears to be around fourteen, speaks confidently about adult sexual experiences she had with a man she met at a club: ‘His dick was so cute, sort of...so I did it with him.’ The experiences of older women become ‘re-voiced’ in the film’s present by girls for whom such experiences are yet to come. This produces a set of formal inconsistencies within the experience of viewing, the most pronounced being the moments when the girls describe experiences beyond their age. Elsa says she is thirty-eight years old.

Satu describes a porn actor as ‘only a year younger’ than her. Päivi says sleet is falling, but outside, where she is standing, the sky is dark but clear.

The formal and narrative inconsistencies are part of a broader refusal of chronological time, but also a way of emphasising the difference between Girl and woman, a gap formed in the work at the junction of replayed experience and the incongruity of who speaks. The girls who appear in the work are individuals of a certain age who visually and aurally signify adolescence, yet what they say is incompatible with their appearance to us ‘as girls’. The tension of this produces the interplay of the girl and Girl, a tussle between the kinds of movement and modes of becoming aligned with each. The use of voice-over plays a significant role in this process. Girls’ voices are different from older women’s voices since the larynx and vocal cord tissue do not mature until the late teens and thus, usually, girls have a higher pitched voice that sounds ‘immature’ to our ear. When *If 6 Was 9* opens on black screens, we hear the voices of the girls, recognisable as girls’ voices, imitating different kinds of sexual experiences. They produce erotic moans or clichéd phrases muttered during sex. Listening intently, we might assume the girls are playing a game. The voices of the girls, contrasting with the overt adult sexuality that they speak, as well as their appearance before us as actual girls, is a constant dissociative link between what is said and who is saying that insists on the difference between the girl and woman, then Girl (appearing as concept) and girl (appearing before us). Speaking the experiences stemming from older women also shifts the relationship between past and future. The past is presented as memory yet to come. The work suggests that the experiences that are spoken are in fact important for those that are speaking. The memories revoiced are often very intimate, something not easily shared, but they now are connected to someone else, a girl who shares in what is said, whether fantasy or memory, by speaking it. What is being said is significant for the girls, but it is a past from elsewhere that is also a possible future that lands in the present.

A scene featuring a girl named Elsa is a central moment that challenges the implicit telos of developmental narratives that take hold of the girl and are resisted in *If 6 Was 9* by making the Girl appear through an atemporality, a different duration, the specifics of which I will return to later. The scene opens with Elsa outside a school sports hall, before moving to a longer sequence inside the building where she is spectator to a game of basketball. Elsa talks about sex and other experiences, expressing more strongly than the other characters the paradox of her own position as the G/girl. She describes the limits of the girl becoming woman and how women are limited in terms of the right to their own desire and ambition. Early in the sequence, outside the sports hall, she describes how ‘progression’ from girl to woman does not always go as planned and that her desires have caused significant disruption to work and relationships. Her partner left her for wanting too much sex; while at work she is told to wait and be nice. Black screens on left and right focus our attention on her statements and gesture as she describes the ambiguity of her body, her girl-like appearance and her woman’s breasts, emphasising the incongruity of knowing/not-knowing how a grown woman should behave, or look, or even when/if one is woman at all.



Figure 29 - *If 6 Was 9* (1995) Eija-Liisa Ahtila



Figure 30 - *If 6 Was 9* (1995) Eija-Liisa Ahtila

Elsa's narrative is emblematic of *If 6 Was 9*'s project that investigates temporality and movement in relation to feminine subjectivity because it fundamentally disrupts a developmental logic and produces the Girl as an embodied figure sustained by a non-chronological, atemporal becoming. 'Here I am', is the first thing she says to camera. This statement is an affirmation of her existence and serves to situate her, spoken in the present tense, in the moment of address to the viewer. Elsa jumps down from the railing and, as she does, she buttons her pink jacket as if getting up to leave, saying: 'In fact I'm thirty-eight years old'.

Delivered with utter seriousness and composure, almost as if her advanced chronological age was not unusual in the slightest, the revelation is alarming insofar as it denies a normative framework that understands that girls must become women as a 'natural' progression of time. What she says then casts doubt—is she really thirty-eight years old? Can this girl really be a woman? Curator and writer Taru Elfving comments: '38 years old and still a girl—does she just look like one, an eternal youth, or is she a girl even as a woman?'⁵ For Elfving, Elsa evokes a problem of categorisation and representation that is implicit in the

⁵ Taru Elfving, 'The Girl', in *Fantasized Persons and Taped Conversations*, ed. by Maria Hirvi (Helsinki: Crystal Eye, 2002), pp. 209-213, p. 209.

Girl—she does not fit. Presenting a huge disruption to developmental logic, Elsa’s revelation becomes a strange eruption out of time, itself a kind of conceptual or intangible movement as the viewer is forced to try and make sense of what is going on. She says: ‘I was a pianist for many years, but then I screwed up. And I guess that’s why I ended up with girls again.’ Consequently, Elsa’s frustration, agitation and aspirations, in fact, provoke a change in her situation. She is sent back to be with the girls again, a space is imagined in images in the artwork as a city of empty streets, phone booths, swimming stadiums, rooftops, or mid-sized rooms where girls congregate to meet.

Elsa’s episode moves from outside the school sports hall inside: ‘it’s raining outside, but in here the air is sweaty and full of passion.’ Around her girls are playing basketball. According to Elfving, Elsa returns to the sports hall—a space from the past, but also a space where girls can be competitive and active—because this is where her ‘questions’ that troubled her ‘as a grown up’ originated, it is a space too rigidly defined for the Girl.⁶ The sports hall surrounded only by girls, the space which Elsa now inhabits, could be seen as a punishment for her transgressions, but it is also sanctuary as it is the only place in which she fits. The installation stresses this literally as Elsa concludes her monologue by running onto the court to join the match. She says: ‘Besides, I have always been short and thus easy to classify as a girl again.’ Her height means she is able to occupy spaces the girls do, but she also, ironically, calls attention to the complete failure of such categories to delineate ‘what’ a girl (or Girl) is. The arrangement of shots complements this by foregrounding Elsa and her perspective. The form of the moving image in this arrangement foregrounds the displacement of the girl and, in turn, the appearance of the Girl. The sounds of the court are loud; the ball is passed or bounced, and the team of girls shout and cry. She is framed in the left image, but the other screens

⁶ Elfving, ‘The Girl’, p. 209.

depict shots that are almost reflections of this position. They each present the same point of view shots (Elsa's point of view) on centre and right screen. Like Päivi's scene with the View-Master earlier, in this arrangement the viewer both sees the girl speaking and sees the image she is seeing, her point of view become as/like her.



Figure 31 - *If 6 Was 9* (1995) Eija-Liisa Ahtila

If 6 Was 9 operates at the intersection between the girl and the adult (i.e. the sexual woman that these girls are not yet), in order to examine the Girl as a durational dimension of subjectivity. It also operates as a form of moving image that is constituted differently from cinema, since it is an artwork made in two forms divided into three screens. When I first saw *If 6 Was 9*, it offered a provocation on the Girl in difference from the girl in relation to new forms of moving image, which from the early stages fundamentally shaped my research concerns. Most importantly, as it addressed philosophical questions of temporality and embodiment, it drew attention to the Girl as a distinct dimension of feminine subjectivity. Nevertheless, I encountered difficulties when attempting to analyse the work. I was unsure how to approach the dense and complicated gallery installation. My initial approach was to break it down into its constituent parts.⁷ I broke it down into every shot and every edit, making the moving image still in order to track the way it moved and noting use of diegetic sound, voice-

⁷ See appendix.

over and music. Although useful for tracking the details of each scene, I soon realised that the significance of the work lay in its form and duration. As a moving image artwork in a gallery it conceptually needs time, not cinematic narrative time, but a different kind of time, which is also embedded in the atemporality of the Girl. In order to explore the issue of feminine subjectivity and its temporality as it is raised in *If 6 Was 9*, I am proposing a line of enquiry that draws on concepts developed by philosopher Henri Bergson that reframe philosophy according to duration, bringing them to bear through a feminist reading on the question of the Girl.

Duration

In her crucial intervention in feminist theory and its questioning of the future, Elizabeth Grosz has called for the exploration of sexual difference in terms of matter, force and duration. Doing so, she suggests, shifts concepts and frames that feminism has been bound to, such as identity, to questions that are posed by force and matter that may be more suited to articulating the future in terms that radically diverge from the present. The aim is to make thinking difference possible for feminism and its futures, of which becoming is an implicit part.

Instead of exploring the phenomenology of—the experiential, autobiographical, and subjective ingredients of—sexual difference, what it is like to live as a woman or a man, a lesbian or a heterosexual, as black or as white (which the feminist investment in psychoanalysis and phenomenology, in autobiography and memoir has privileged for the last three decades or more), it may be time to explore instead what such approaches leave out, what we might understand as the *physics* or matter of sexual difference, its materiality, its force, its ontological weight, and above all its time.⁸

Grosz's attention to matter and force is propelled by her view that existing philosophical frameworks that think about sexual difference and the future are inadequate. In order to understand the matter of sexual difference, Grosz turns to the concept of duration—a distinct

⁸ Elizabeth Grosz, *Time Travels* (Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin, 2005), p. 172.

notion of temporality as force—arising from Henri Bergson’s materialist philosophy.

Bergson’s *Matter and Memory* (1911) is a key text I shall analyse in order to develop a reading of temporality connected to the durational force of feminine subjectivity that emerges as a possibility in the conjunction of image, movement and duration in *If 6 Was 9* and the Girl. I will first take us through a number of Bergsonian concepts in order to understand what a philosophy of duration means in the context of my research.

In his book *Matter and Memory*, Bergson began a study of the relationship between mind and matter by radically questioning *how* to address them as philosophical concepts. He writes: ‘Questions relating to subject and object, their distinction and their union, should be put in terms of time rather than space.’⁹ Over and above spatial issues, namely, distinctions of inside and outside as the traditional philosophical formulation of mind/body dualism, Bergson brings the relation between past and present, a temporal question, to the fore of his concerns.

The title of the book, *Matter and Memory*, signals to the importance of time in this project, since memory connects to the past. For Bergson, though, it is through duration—a fundamental aspect of time conceptualised as force—that the question of matter and mind must be put. The basic fact of duration is what produces consciousness and also memory as a condition of consciousness. The Bergsonian approach of thinking time instead of space radically restructures—or even shatters—many Western philosophical frames obsessed with factors of space that, according to his line of questioning, severely limit the reaches of thought.

⁹ Henri Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, trans. by Nancy Margaret Paul and W. Scott Palmer (Mansfield Centre: Martino Publishing, 2011), p. 77.

Images

For developing a vocabulary that displaces the stubborn logic of dualistic and spatialised thought, Bergson develops a number of concepts that trace, instead, the *relation* between mind and matter. Matter, he argues, is composed of images, a strange term that is used to argue against the idea that perception is subjective:

Matter, in our view, is an aggregate of ‘images.’ And by ‘image’ we mean a certain existence which is more than that which the idealist calls a *representation*, but less than that which the realist calls a *thing*, —an existence placed half-way between the ‘thing’ and the ‘representation’.¹⁰

The whole universe is made up of images, but these images do not fall into appearance, on the one hand, or materiality, on the other.¹¹ Said to appear to perception, they nevertheless also exist even when not perceived. Bergson counters the materialist and idealist positions, which *thing* and *representation* mark, beginning in *Matter and Memory* by disproving the assumption that grounds both perspectives, namely, that perception serves knowledge. Proposing instead that perception serves action, Bergson argues that we can only *act* on the world, we cannot know it. Perception serves action and action in turn is produced as movement. Action produced as movement unrolls in duration.

This is a shift in our understanding of perception. Perception, according to Bergson, happens ‘outside’ the body and is material. We do not add anything to an object by perceiving it, in fact it is diminished by perception by being a selection from the flux of images that make up the world.

With this in place we can propose that images, which are all that make up the universe, are present, not as *representations*, but as *existences*, which are in a constant dynamic

¹⁰ Bergson, p. vii.

¹¹ Although Bergson did not find much material relevant to his theory of perception in early cinema, which was in its infancy exactly at the moment Bergson was writing, he characterizes the external world as a universal flux of images that are *existences*, rather than things/objects or representations.

movement of action and reaction occurring in duration. To explain this, consider the relation of one image to another. If the universe is a system of images that exist and act on one another, then materiality is reconceived as images that are influenced by and transmit movement. Moreover, according to Bergson, all life acts and reacts according to a basic model of perception based on action. Perception in fact always means eventual action. Consequently, all living matter reacts in dynamic movement that is both active and passive; it is open to the acts of external images as much as it also acts upon those images. There is a simultaneous action and reaction. The same process applies across vastly different forms of life. Basic organisms react to touch in an automatic way and thus perception, in a basic form, is the interval between the stimulus and the movement. In more complex vertebrates, perception functions in the same way, differing only in degree according to what Bergson calls a greater or lesser 'zone of indetermination'.¹²

The zone of indetermination amounts to the complexity of the organism's nervous system and corresponds to a *delay* instigated between the interval of stimulus and the action. Delay is crucial because it introduces choice from which arises consciousness as a function of duration. The zone of indetermination interferes with the automatic response of an action and instigates choice, cutting through the flow of images and allowing the selection of an action among many possible virtual actions. For our concerns, the possibility of choice is especially significant because it makes possible new actions rather than an outcome already predetermined.

With the world comprised of images as the basis of materiality, what does Bergson make of the body? He suggests, that the body is an image like any other, except I know my body from the outside by perceiving it as well as from inside myself by affections. More

¹² Bergson, p. 23.

significant, however, it is also a centre of action, meaning it can affect and change systems of images:

I see plainly how external images influence the image that I call my body: they transmit movement to it. And I also see how this body influences external images: it gives back movement to them. My body is, then, in the aggregate of the material world, an image which acts like other images, receiving and giving back movement, with, perhaps, this difference only, that my body appears to choose, within certain limits, the manner in which it shall restore what it receives. [...] *My body, an object destined to move other objects, is, then, a centre of action; it cannot give birth to a representation.*¹³

The body is a special image, whereby the zone of indetermination acts as a filter for selecting facets of images from the universal flux according to its own capacities and interests. The body, as an image and a centre of action, thus moves through the world orienting perception toward what interests it. What this means is perception presents a discontinuous encounter that is individualised to our body. ‘They allow to pass through them, so to speak, those external influences which are indifferent to them; the others isolated, become ‘perceptions’ by their very isolation.’¹⁴ Not quite subjective, since this would suggest a concept of ‘the mind’ that Bergson does not follow, it nevertheless is particular and individual to that body in the world.

Having put in place images, action and the body, leads us to discover what is a central insight of Bergson’s philosophy, namely, that perception does not create a picture of the world in our minds, nor is the brain an organ that functions to retain knowledge or dictate action. The brain and nervous system are merely the receiver and transmitter of stimulation and responses. ‘In our opinion, then, the brain is no more than a kind of central telephonic exchange: its office is to allow communication or to delay it. It adds nothing to what it receives’.¹⁵ The brain does not make a representation of the external object, which would

¹³ Bergson, pp. 4-5.

¹⁴ Bergson, pp. 28-29.

¹⁵ Bergson, p. 19.

constitute adding to the object something. We know that perception, being 'outside' the body, works on images in the opposite manner:

To obtain this conversion from the virtual to the actual, it would be necessary, not to throw more light on the object, but, on the contrary, to obscure some of its aspects, to diminish it by the greater part of itself, so that the remainder, instead of being encased in its surroundings as a thing, should detach itself from them as a picture.¹⁶

Perception is thus something constituted in and by the material world. Having set up the shift that Bergson's philosophy undertakes to understand the nature of perception and matter, we can think about the key concept for consciousness and duration—memory. To understand memory is to understand time and the relationship between past, present and future.

Memory

Consciousness is temporal, it arises from the fact of duration and the potential for hesitation given by the conjunction of the body (an image) and the world (a flux of images) as the interaction of two kinds of images, which we call perception.

All perception involves some degree of duration and, therefore, some degree of memory. There are two types of memory: what Bergson understands as automatic memory, or habit memory, in service of the body and a different memory formed of images serving imagination. The two types work together to support actual memory.¹⁷ For actual memory, two features are crucial to grasp: the first is that memory is fundamentally different from perception and the second is that memory mixes with perception all the time. Memory is rooted in the past and perception is always situated in the present as action—this being the ultimate difference between them for Bergson.

¹⁶ Bergson, p. 28.

¹⁷ Bergson, pp. 89-90.

Thinking in time—as Bergson’s method insists we do and the approach I take here—outlines how the fundamental separation allows memory and perception to work together all the time, as durational layerings that are entwined.

Our perceptions are undoubtedly interlaced with memories, and inversely, a memory, as we shall show later, only becomes actual by borrowing the body of some perception into which it slips. These two acts, perception and recollection, always interpenetrate each other, are always exchanging something of their substance as by a process of endosmosis.¹⁸

Memory is the survival of past images in a virtual capacity. That is, memory is real, but only exists outside the realm of consciousness and action. In each moment of the present, the past is there, not realised in actual space but virtual in its most contracted state. The past is virtual until it mixes with the present and certain memory images from the past are actualised. Actualisation means they can act in the present through this process.

In *Matter and Memory*, the relationship between memory and perception is described in various ways. Bergson compares it to a closed circle, rather than a straight line, both images ‘career[ing] one behind the other’.¹⁹ He also describes perception as a kind of preliminary sketch in which memory, when attention appeals to it, calls upon the past to flood with specific images to form the detail. ‘A sketch is thereby furnished to us, into which we put the right details and the right colouring by projecting into it memories more or less remote.’²⁰ If perception proceeds by movement which is a reflection of an object, then memory, when presenting similar memory images, fills the frame perception had originally sketched out. Memory is projected into the frame. Thus, the past actualising itself in the present is also a process of the past *becoming present*. Elizabeth Grosz describes the coexistence and interplay of memory and perception as a kind of sharing and loss of constituent parts of memory and

¹⁸ Bergson, p. 72.

¹⁹ Bergson, p. 126.

²⁰ Bergson, pp. 130-131.

the present image. Each is necessarily different and partial, making their combination necessary for consciousness.

Memory thus donates to the object the potentiality or virtuality of the past, which helps restore to it or replaces for it what perception must necessarily strip away. In exchange, the memory-images that function to highlight or illuminate the object from unexpected angles abandon part of their virtuality in order to actualize themselves through their attraction to present perception and its accompanying movements.²¹

Memory furnishes what perception strips away and memory acquires access to the present through perception. Grosz articulates the dynamic interpenetration of the virtual and the actual, which grounds heterogeneity, insofar as the influence of memory-images, as a virtual resource, motivates different potential action in the world.

Having addressed key concepts and terminology necessary to understand Bergsonian duration and resist the colonisation of what he calls ‘spatialized time’, I turn to literature on the moving image and specifically artworks by Ahtila that have developed these concepts further. I begin with Mieke Bal’s monograph on Ahtila’s gallery installation works entitled *Thinking in Film* (2013), which proposes that Ahtila’s installations provide a space that rework the relation between image and meaning.

Girl as Image

Although the title first recalls Deleuzian film-philosophy, in *Thinking in Film* Mieke Bal engages with philosophical concepts developed by Bergson, namely, affect and image. Addressed to the affective and political capacity of moving image installations by Ahtila, including *If 6 Was 9*, but also more recent works such as *The House* (2002), *The Hour of Prayer* (2005), *Where is Where?* (2008) and *The Annunciation* (2010), her study explores the question: ‘what is a moving image and how does it move us?’ as a question of the bond between meaning

²¹ Grosz, *The Nick of Time*, p. 175.

and affect.²² By analysing Ahtila's work, Bal understands movement as both artistic practice and affect: 'This moving quality [of the moving image] is activated in space and mediates effects that are not bound to the traditional ways of meaning making. It is in the intersection between movement and space that the political potential of figuration resides.'²³

The doubled sense of moving—moving image and being moved (affected, but also moved as in compelled into thought)—is connected to the unique situation of the moving image gallery installation, where both movement and space are key elements to be analysed in order to discern their potential as what Bal names 'contact spaces' where she proposes genuinely democratic acts are performed.²⁴ 'Because moving images move us, we are compelled actively to think in film while inside the space of installation.'²⁵ In distinction from psychoanalytic models of spectatorship that foreground the spectator as passive subject of the film text, Bal elaborates a notion of encounter whereby the viewer is between active and passive, embodied, and incited by the moving image.

Recalling that, for Bergson, affect is different from perception in that it occurs inside the body rather than outside (absorbing an external action), affect is also necessarily mixed in perception.²⁶ Perception, Bergson says, 'measures our possible action upon things and thereby, inversely, the possible action of things upon us'.²⁷ Being separated by an interval, this becomes

²² Mieke Bal, *Thinking in Film* (London and New York: Bloomsbury, 2013) p. 6.

²³ Bal, *Thinking in Film*, p. 5.

²⁴ Bal *Thinking in Film*, p. 5. Bal defines democratic acts by drawing on Wendy Brown's concept of 'political spaces'. Bal writes: 'These are spaces where people (the *demos* of democracy) can be together, learn new things that break with everyday routine, recognize and acknowledge the unreflective habits of others, and then talk on an equal footing, which includes the possibility to disagree.' *Thinking in Film*, p. 7.

²⁵ Mieke Bal *Thinking in Film*, p. 10.

²⁶ Bergson, pp. 62-63.

²⁷ Bergson, p. 29.

the expression of a virtual action.²⁸ Affect, on the other hand, locates the object to be perceived coincident with the body. It is real action but concerned with itself. Bergson says:

[W]e have to take into account the fact that our body is not a mathematical point in space, that its virtual actions are complicated by, and impregnated with, real actions, or, in other words, that there is no perception without affection. Affection is, then, that part or aspect of the inside of our body which we mix with the image of external bodies; it is what we must first of all subtract from perception to get the image in its purity.²⁹

Affection, then, is another important meeting point intersecting perception's trajectory.

Rethinking the bond between meaning and affect not only forges different, non-traditional, non-semiotic, ways of making meaning, but the affective encounter with film installation provides the conditions for 'thinking in film'.

Thinking in film is theorised by Bal as the expression of aesthetic practices that 'think'; an expression that compels thought. In a literal sense this means that the art works make the viewer think 'in' them, but also that film 'thinks' in terms of audio-visual movement. Thinking in film also means the mediation of affection and meaning, producing a mode whereby the viewer is held in an aesthetic situation that creates the possibility to respond. The viewer watching can be both affected, while also maintaining a critical distance in which their space to act in the work is maintained.

Shifting from her focus on the *dispositif* of the installation, I want to now focus on Bal's reading of the Bergsonian concept of the image, which she equates with the moving image. Outlining that the image and the moving image are analogous in function (movement) she also suggests the moving image can be conceptualised in a shift away from representation. Bal explains:

²⁸ Bergson, p. 57.

²⁹ Bergson, p. 58.

Bergson's conception of the image [is] synonymous with the moving image. Because the image—as a collation of both perception in the present and memory of the past—is necessarily in movement, the question Ahtila raised (“What is a moving image?”) is not simply a more specific version of W.J.T Mitchell's “What is an image?” The movement of the image in film is a technical concretization, or even an embodiment, of the movement inherent in the image as such. And if we add to this the second meaning of movement as emotionally—or, as I will argue, affectively—engaging, we can see that the artist's question already partially answers itself.³⁰

Bal finds resonance between Ahtila's analytical-aesthetic approach—using images to find out how images work—and the action of movement of Bergsonian images.³¹ If the moving image embodies the qualities attributed to the Bergsonian image, then it must also tap into the difference marking the image as ‘halfway’ between being less than a thing and more than a representation. This suggests the moving image cannot be appreciated in terms of spatialised time (representationalism) and we can position it as oriented towards action, rather than knowledge. Also, if the moving image is like the image, an aggregate of images, it calls upon the movement of the past (in the film) in the present (the time the viewer encounters it). The moving image is the concretisation of the interpenetration past and present.

Bergson's model recognises that perception and memory are not within the spectator or the film, but in the interval between. If there is no representation *of* matter but only the movement of images, Bal argues that once the connection between the image and the moving image (as ‘a technical concretisation’) has been established, we cannot speak of the moving image as being representational—it is not illustrative of anything. Instead, it actualises ideas around and through its differently ‘moving’ parts. It puts meaning into motion, or rather it

³⁰ Bal, *Thinking in Film*, p. 16.

³¹ Ahtila has a distinct approach and set of questions and urgencies shared in and by her artworks: ‘my approach to film is more about how to express something through the medium of the moving image [...] How to express sadness in images? Can a feeling be expressed without its opposite? How is understanding related to time, and a matter of identifying the links between images, sounds, rhythms, light, characters, and words and using them to approach and construct the story.’ Eija-Liisa Ahtila and Chrissie Iles, ‘Thinking in Film: Eija-Liisa Ahtila in Conversation with Chrissie Iles’, *Parkett*, 68 (2003), 58-64, (pp. 58-59).

actualises it. Thus, film does not represent thought, but actualises it through the modality of moving image installation in encounter with a viewer.

In the third chapter 'Installation', Bal examines *If 6 Was 9* as a 'theoretical object to understand installation', making a number of explicit connections between Girls and Bergsonian images.³² First of all, Bal draws on the work of curator and writer Taru Elfving who has written on the figure of the Girl in Ahtila's work by drawing attention to the Girl's potential as a figure of resistance against phallogentric and binary structures of representation. Using Deleuze and Guattari's concept of becoming in *A Thousand Plateaus* (1988) as a theoretical support, Elfving is interested in the Girl conceived as the unmarked condition for other subject positions and as a positive difference in herself. In *A Thousand Plateaus* becoming marks an ontology of change, a leaving behind of preconditions (of history) in order to become something new. Theorising the Girl in terms of a Deleuze and Guattarian notion of becoming allows Elfving to propose that the Girl is a figure outside of linear progression and as something other than the opposite of boy. 'They cannot be reduced to the fixed lines of becoming a woman/mother, but stand on their own, demanding attention to their specificity as Girls, as unmarked or as no-thing.'³³ In this manner, she suggests the Girl in Ahtila's films is the mediator of past and present because she refuses molar becoming: 'she is the present in the sense that the present does not exist as a moment, a definable point in time. It is in constant flux, always already gone or about to come. It is where past and future meet'.³⁴ For Elfving the moving image helps configure this situation so that the Girl is the disruptor of representation, but also the link connecting new forms of temporality.

³² Bal, *Thinking in Film*, p.120.

³³ Elfving, 'The Girl', p. 210.

³⁴ Elfving, 'The Girl', p. 210.

Drawing on Elfving's analysis of the Girl as mediator of past and present, Bal briefly makes a connection between the appearance of the Girl and the image, she writes:

This tension [of the girl as mediator of past and present], rather than the adolescent age of the girls, is the point of their appearance. The girls embody the moving quality (and the quality to move us) that Bergson imputes to the image.³⁵

Embodying movement, towards action and reaction, in duration—and not their chronological age—is what makes *Girls in If 6 Was 9* so important. Embodying duration means embodying a non-chronological time, becoming past-present-future, relinquishing linearity and proposing new forms of meaning inscribed by the aesthetic modalities specific to the moving image. The tension wrought through their relation to temporality is, as Bal says, the point of their appearance, but it is also, I am suggesting, the ground of their possibility: it makes them appear.

Towards the end of the chapter, Bal makes an even more explicit statement about *Girls* as images: 'The girls *are* images; but not stable, immutable representations.'³⁶ Using Bergson's phraseology, the Girl is understood neither as object, nor representation, neither unchanging nor essential. Bal continues:

With their volatile behaviour and talk they seem to embody the definition of the Bergsonian image. The way they move, disappear, and reappear out of the blue—or the black, or the seams—sometimes looks like the absurdity of a dream. The viewer can only make sense of this because the image-girls move (us).³⁷

Bal, troubled by displaced memories and the Girl's disappearance off-screen, suggests that their embodiment of images account for such disjuncture. If the Girls are images, they are images among other images who act and react upon each other and the viewer. Following Bal, the image is like the moving image, thus also making it analogous to the Girl. The Girl must be thought about in terms of duration, rather than fall into the spatialised confines of object or

³⁵ Bal, *Thinking in Film*, p. 137.

³⁶ Bal, *Thinking in Film*, p. 163.

³⁷ Bal, *Thinking in Film*, p. 163.

representation. They are *existences*—not directed towards knowing but directed towards action. Once we make this distinction, our analysis is neither tied to subject/object distinctions, nor cause and effect—i.e. a linear causal relationship between girl and woman. Girls are the movement of the moving image. Their actions, and movement, then, are not attributable either to their age or character, or to what a girl should be like. As what Bal calls ‘image-girls’ they are existences in flux. Via Bergson and Ahtila we arrive at the formulation of the Girl as moving image in dynamic movement, providing an encounter with subjectivity without narrative conclusion, but inscribing a different form of becoming that arises from this meeting.

Bal’s reading, however, does not take up the question of the Girl as a dimension of the feminine as I am doing here. Durationality, as a distinct temporal force, is proposed as a way of understanding the Girl as image, but it must also, through a feminist reading, be a part of understanding this dimension of the feminine constituted through differentiation, which *If 6 Was 9* as a durational work proposes by examining the Girl as neither object of study nor representation of girls. The question of sexual difference, which will now be examined, has been most radically addressed by philosopher, linguist and psychoanalyst Luce Irigaray (b. 1930), whose philosophical concepts have been put into conversation by feminist philosophers with that of Bergson.³⁸ I now turn to an early text by Irigaray from her book *This Sex Which is Not One* where the question of sexual difference, temporality and formation of ‘woman’ is put to the structures of patriarchal culture with particular significance for the Girl. In particular, I am interested in Irigaray’s drive to found sexual difference, not as a difference from, or a difference between, but a radical difference opening a space to hold what/who/how we name or think the Girl and woman.

³⁸ See: Elizabeth Grosz, *Time Travels: Feminism, Nature, Power* (Crows Nest: Allen and Unwin, 2005); Rebecca Hill, *The Interval: Relation and Becoming in Irigaray, Aristotle and Bergson* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2012).

Women on the Market

In the chapter ‘Women on the Market’ in *This Sex Which Is Not One*, Belgian-French philosopher Luce Irigaray analyses how the logic of commodification affects the way we conceive of feminine embodiment and sexuality. One of the key concerns in Irigaray’s philosophy, and a significant insight in this present chapter, is the logic by which patriarchal culture ignores sexed bodies, producing positions for women that merely reflect a relation to masculine desire. Her philosophy calls for the elaboration of two sexes and a specificity of feminine embodiment in its own symbolic and imaginary terms—whatever it might be—and which consider sexual difference that is not a difference from, or between, masculine and feminine but a more radical difference without this relation. She argues that the body of woman is the unacknowledged foundation of culture and not present in representation without completely transforming the symbolic order as we know it. ‘For, without the exploitation of the body-matter of women, what would become of the symbolic process that governs society?’³⁹ At the same time she advocates for the cultivation of images and representations—a feminine imaginary.⁴⁰ Margaret Whitford has emphasised the importance of this task: ‘The imaginary vehicles our most powerful passions and emotions; to leave it with no images in which these emotions could be embodied, or with images of women-for-men, leaves intact the power of the dominant systems of representation.’⁴¹

³⁹ Luce Irigaray, *This Sex Which Is Not One*, trans. by Catherine Porter with Carolyn Burke (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986), p. 85.

⁴⁰ The complexity of Irigaray’s negotiation of the ‘imaginary’ has not always been sufficiently understood. Lacan, who gives the imaginary a major role in his theory, introduced by his article ‘The Mirror Stage as Formative of the Function of the I as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience’, is the primary figure with whom the notion of the imaginary is associated. Margaret Whitford, however, shows how Irigaray’s deployment is related to a range of associations including phenomenology, psychoanalysis and Marxism. While I will not, however, enter into these debates here, for some of the most sustained and suggestive discussions see: Moira Gatens, *Imaginary Bodies: Ethics, Power and Corporeality*, (London: Routledge, 1996) and Margaret Whitford, *Luce Irigaray: Philosophy in the Feminine* (London: Routledge, 1991) pp. 53-73.

⁴¹ Margaret Whitford, ‘Irigaray’s Body Symbolic’, *Hyppatia*, 6 (1991) 97-110 (pp. 97-98).

'Women on the Market' is a rereading by Irigaray of the foundational text for economics, politics and materialist thought, *Capital* (1867) by Karl Marx, in which Irigaray analyses how social positions available to women are expressed through their figuration as objects circulating in a patriarchal economy whose sole aim is to shore up relations between men.

*Commodities, women, are a mirror of value of and for man. In order to serve as such, they give up their bodies to men as the supporting material of specularization, of speculation. They yield to him their natural and social value as a locus of imprints, marks, and mirage of his activity.*⁴²

Our exploration of the girl/Girl has existed in tension with a patriarchal system where, blurred with daughter, she is to be exchanged, married and made into a mother. Part of a chronological formation is to become woman so as to enter into a process of exchange.

Irigaray, however, extends this further:

But there is no possibility whatsoever, within the current logic of sociocultural operations, for a daughter to situate herself with respect to her mother: because, strictly speaking, they make neither one nor two, neither has a name, meaning, sex of her own, neither can be 'identified' with respect to the other.⁴³

At the same time, the language of commodification under discussion speaks to the spectacularised visibility of the girl in late-Capitalist culture as a sure concealment of what Irigaray later calls the *déréliction* of woman and the girl in relation to symbolic and imaginary dimensions.⁴⁴ By distinguishing Girl from girl, my aim is to hold open a space to forms of relationality and difference with which Irigaray's notion of sexual difference engages.

The concept of the commodity form is, Irigaray proposes, the figuration of the position of woman as the basis of society.

⁴² Irigaray, *This Sex Which Is Not One*, p. 177.

⁴³ Irigaray, *This Sex Which Is Not One*, p. 143.

⁴⁴ See: Luce Irigaray, *Sexes and Genealogies*, trans. by Gillian C. Gill (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993) p. 14 and Luce Irigaray, *An Ethics of Sexual Difference*, trans. by Carolyn Burke and Gillian C. Gill (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993).

The commodity, like the sign, suffers from metaphysical dichotomies. [...] A commodity—a woman—is divided into two irreconcilable 'bodies': her 'natural' body and her socially valued, exchangeable body.⁴⁵

In French, *la marchandise*—meaning commodity—doubles the sense of woman as commodity (used interchangeably in Irigaray's quotation of Marx) that is lost in the translation into English. In the commodity, the natural form consists of the use value and the social body as the exchange value and, as commodity, woman only has value in her exchange not in herself.

The 'enigmatic' aspect of woman resides in this juncture:

*Women-as-commodities are thus subject to a schism that divides them into the categories of usefulness and exchange value; into matter-body and an envelope that is precious but impenetrable, ungraspable, and not susceptible to appropriation by women themselves; into private and social use.*⁴⁶

The social use of the body is ungraspable, it becomes a mysterious envelope of value; value that arises in the process of exchange. Value, therefore, is not located in, or does not arise from, any specificity that woman engenders as subject but occurs in the exchange of her as object.

The logic of commodification disavows a culture of sexual difference insofar as *la marchandise* does not represent herself but is the means by which the 'hom(m)osexual' culture of relations between men are represented. This is what Irigaray calls the phallic economy, a system whereby woman can only take up positions or social roles that correspond to her possible value for the relations between men.

Mother, virgin, prostitute: these are the social roles imposed on women. The characteristics of (so-called) feminine sexuality derive from them: the valorization of reproduction and nursing; faithfulness; modesty, ignorance of and even lack of interest in sexual pleasure; a passive acceptance of men's "activity"; seductiveness, in order to arouse the consumers' desire while offering herself as its material support without getting pleasure herself . . . Neither as mother nor as virgin nor as prostitute has woman any right to her own pleasure.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Irigaray, *This Sex Which Is Not One*, pp. 179-180.

⁴⁶ Irigaray, *This Sex Which Is Not One*, p. 176.

⁴⁷ Irigaray, *This Sex Which Is Not One*, p. 186-187.

Social roles do not refer to feminine embodiment or the desire of women themselves. Any desire is subordinated to their value. Here, the virgin is pure exchange value as the ‘envelope’ that acts as a cover up. The position of virgin—often conflated with girlhood itself—is an object-position whose signification obscures contours of the sexually indifferent relations of culture. The cultural idealisation of girl-daughter-virgin as innocent and unspoilt is the representation of what she will be exchanged for, her ability to be exchanged and the value of that future relation. Within these social roles the articulation of pleasure specific to feminine experience is obliterated. Irigaray makes it clear: to speak of desire outside of hom(m)osexual culture, we need to find ways to engender sexual difference according to the proposition of their being at least two sexes.

Destruction and loss caused by the logic of commodification emerges as the objectification of the feminine body and the impossibility of an ethics of sexual difference, namely, of relating to the other in a subject to subject relation that acknowledges their irreducible difference. This, moreover, has a temporal aspect. In a chapter given the same title as Irigaray’s published in 2008, feminist literary theorist Ewa Plonowska Ziarek outlines the temporal implications of the logic of commodification: ‘time becomes abstracted from discontinuous and unpredictable becoming by being reduced to the mathematical units of measurement.’⁴⁸ All particularity, whether it be particularity of an object’s materiality, subjectivity or temporality, becomes erased and reduced to abstract economic equivalence. The discontinuous temporality of the body, namely, the body that is not inert or unchangeable essence, as Irigaray and Ziarek affirm, is grounded in a temporality of becoming that require imaginary and symbolic support that go past the ‘one’. Unpredictable becoming as a mode of

⁴⁸ Ewa Plonowska Ziarek, ‘Women on the Market’, *Rewriting Difference: Irigaray and “the greeks”*, ed. by Elena Tzelepis and Athena Athanasiou (New York: Suny Press, 2008), p. 206.

temporality is the site of potential difference when articulated through Irigaray's concept of being in two, a concept of difference yet to be thought.

Abstracted by the logic of commodification, however, time becomes a basis for social roles that are expressed as stages in the progression of development so that the Girl is reduced to a stage in development, a measurement, a telos. Irigaray's emphasis on *difference* rather than *difference from* displaces the notion of femininity as essence and attempts to theorise an unbounded becoming of feminine embodiment. A critique of the patriarchal logic of commodification, thus, needs also to refigure the expression of temporality as progression, stage and measurement. What might temporalities of becoming be if sexual difference were able to be taken into account?

A temporality of becoming linked to the emergence of radical otherness and the becoming of bodies as temporalised and open to the future—a 'sort of expanding universe to which no limits could be fixed and which would not be incoherence nonetheless'—needs to be addressed at the complex intersection of phallogocentric logics of commodification where the Girl is represented as virginal envelope.⁴⁹ Under these regimes, how can we think sexual difference as a crucial question oriented to the future and account for the temporality of the feminine body in order to contest the violent objectification of women's bodies and their subjection to 'value'? How do we open new forms of temporal becoming for different subjectivities that would themselves be open to the future?

Future Feminisms

Elizabeth Grosz defines a politics of temporality that harnesses the concept of the virtual arising from Henri Bergson's materialist philosophy. Her intervention in feminist philosophy argues for a radical shift in our conceptualisation of futurity through the virtual. Virtuality

⁴⁹ Irigaray, *This Sex Which is Not One*, p. 31.

means a mode implicated in the emergence of newness, of change. For Bergson, thinking in time creates a difference between virtual images, which hold the non-representational past as virtual element, and actual images which are actualised in the present. The virtual is that which constantly reflects itself into the present perception, moving into actualisation, and which in duration is the continual elaboration of the absolutely new. Grosz's feminist philosophy is invested in the potential of duration as a heterogeneous, discontinuous and indeterminate, that is, a radically different modality for conceptualising the future no longer tied to a predetermined path. To understand the Girl in terms of the becoming of feminist futures we need to rethink our forms of temporality and the future.

Writing in *The Nick of Time* (2004) Grosz emphasises the political significance of putting the relation of the past and the present in the terms that Bergson gives us:

The past, in other words, is always already contained in the present, not as its cause or its pattern but as its latency, its virtuality, its potential for being otherwise. This is why the question of history remains a volatile one, not simply tied to getting the facts of the past sorted out and agreed on. It is about the production of conceivable futures, the future understood not as that which is similarly contained in the present, but rather, as what diverges from the present, what produces a new future, one uncontained by and unpredicted from within the present. This indeed is what I understand feminist politics—at least at its best—to be about: the production of futures for women that are uncontained by any of the models provided in the present.⁵⁰

It is, then, a task for feminism to reframe the relationship between politics and the future by investing in processes, becoming and materialities without pre-given aims.⁵¹ If the past is virtual in the present and not its precondition, then exploring the dimension of the virtual is a productive course for futures that diverge and are uncontained within current conditions. The past is not a thread leading into the present and out to the future. Neither are we ignoring, nor

⁵⁰ Grosz, *The Nick of Time*, pp. 254-255.

⁵¹ See: Grosz, 'The Force of Sexual Difference' in *Time Travels*.

are we overvaluing the past. In duration, temporality is heterogenous and remains unpredictable. Grosz writes:

One of the most challenging issues facing any future feminism is precisely how to articulate a future in which futurity itself has a feminine form, in which the female subject can see itself project beyond its present position as other to the one. Which may, ironically, mean that this future feminine may render itself obsolete or the object of profound and even inhuman (or imperceptible) becomings rather than rest itself on the forms of femininity as they have been represented and idealized within sexual indifference, within patriarchy as it has existed up to now.⁵²

Implicit in any future feminism is becoming, but the terms, Grosz argues, of such becoming must be redefined. If we understand the problem of sexual difference, as Grosz does, in relation to Irigaray's critique of sexual difference, then, sexual difference is, too, a virtuality. Grosz argues that the persistent problem of thinking the feminine for feminists can be put in terms of the virtual to be elaborated without recourse to existing forms of femininity. The future of feminism, for Grosz, is a complexity that must remain non-calculable. The concept of the virtual enables us to conceive of the past (of feminism, or the Girl) as virtual resource for future feminisms or subjectivities yet to come. The Girl is placed in relation to a durational becoming that is not pre-determined.

Girl Speaking Woman

Driven by their curiosity about adult sexuality, in *If 6 Was 9* the girls are girls who speak of experiences stemming from adult women and these experiences are made the focal point of each episode. In Päivi's second episode featuring the View-Master toy, feminine sexuality is given a powerful figuration through the editing of images so that the dominance of masculine sexuality is displaced. As we remember, the Pied Piper story is projected as if viewed through the View-Master. The hole in the mountain appears on screen, moving according to Päivi's

⁵² Grosz, *Time Travels*, p. 177.

interests.⁵³ The hole, however, is also a figuration of the sexual act from the masculine perspective. The hole/masculine sexual aim is overlaid by the influence of Päivi's own gaze and her memory of the images. Päivi says: 'First there was an opening in the side of the mountain, and then there was no more. It was amazing. It was equally amazing to see in a porno magazine that men have no hole behind their testicles.' The visual connection between the pornographic image and the image of the closed hole in the mountain is played out from the left screen across to the right screen. The viewer is led by the movement of images across the screen to the final image of a man's backside. The closed hole and the man's lack of second hole make 'sense' in the sequence of images presented on screen choreographed in precise movements across the whole width. Päivi's own gaze is foregrounded and overlaid on any existing or residual meaning.

Whatever significance the hole in the mountain had, it is displaced by her alternative reading of the man's body lacking. The question of sexual difference posed only as the magnification of the small anatomical differences between masculine and feminine bodies, is reworked according to a different logic, two holes become one. The game of numbers and holes, of having and not having, invokes Irigaray's project for the elaboration of the two, rather than the one. The act of looking at the stereoscopic image, where two images become one through a perceptual illusion, is placed alongside images of disappearing holes, where two also become one.

As we encounter the force of a different desire put onto screen, the inappropriateness of girls speaking and showing us images of experienced adult sexuality is overlaid on top of the girls' desire to know about sexuality.⁵⁴ In a scene with Anne, she delivers a frank description of

⁵³ Of course, it is not Päivi's own memory but she is the character who mediates the images.

⁵⁴ In Ahtila's casting notes she describe girls as between thirteen to fifteen, placing the girls just below the age of consent in Finland. This is not to create moral or legal outrage that the girls dare to speak these experiences, but to make clear the distinction between adult consensual sexual experiences which they do not have access to yet.

sexual encounters, which makes her 'Girl-ness' become visible, a discrepancy between the visuals and the discourse. A single image is projected on the centre screen as Anne begins to recount her memories of finishing school and meeting men at nightclubs. The camera commences a slow zoom to frame her more closely, sat in a living room facing the camera in a comfortable armchair. What Anne shares is clearly a memory beyond her years, yet her straightforward manner of delivery stops the scene from being completely absurd.

Ahtila harnesses the virtuality of memory, of sexual encounters and lives lived, and transposes it into a new frame: the Girl. These memories are significant but remain virtual resources until spoken and actualised in the present. This becomes the interaction of past and present in the work. The relationship between Girl and woman, as it is configured in *If 6 Was 9*, constitutes a different temporal relation than a developmental schema. Memory, following Bergson, is radically different from present perception, which reflects into the present becoming the possibility of newness in what is to come. With an emphasis on memory at the junction where they meet, the difference between woman and Girl is constituted in the difference between what is said and who appears, which, in *If 6 Was 9*, is a difference founded in duration. Simultaneously, out of this arises the interplay of girl (speaking) and the Girl produced as a form of becoming in the meeting of past and present.

For Anne, this is not a slow becoming but the past projected into the future. She appears as the Girl by speaking woman and being able to speak 'a difference' revealing the Girl. The significance of the duration of their becoming, of duration versus development, makes this possible and so *If 6 Was 9* helps us to hold on to a form of becoming that is not the becoming of woman in a manner we have not yet fully encountered. The way Ahtila has done this is through the durationality of the Girl and the moving image. The simultaneous disjuncture and collision of girl and woman in the moving image produces different means of mapping the past and the present that is full of new connections and divergences. The interaction of past, present and future as heterogenous is inscribed as a key structure of the

Girl. Duration, although still tangled in the spatialised thought of chronological time, is what makes the Girl appear.

The question is, then, not just how do we make sense of the relationship between the Girl and what she says, but what does this collision make us experience in such an encounter? If we are less concerned with the visibility of girls conceived as the neoliberal desire for more representations of girls as so-called agents in the world, and more concerned with articulating new kinds of duration that may engender the elaboration of new kinds of subjectivities and their durational becoming, then it is precisely the collision of Girl and woman, a past that is also heterogenous future unrolled in the present, which we need to think about. The girls' voices become the site of articulating difference, rather than the erasure of the voices of individuals.

The Girl, Unmarked

What I am laying out here is different, but builds on, curator and writer Taru Elfving's Deleuzian and Irigarayan reading of the Girl in Ahtila's work. In a contribution to an exhibition catalogue *Fantasized Persons and Taped Conversations* which accompanied the major retrospective exhibition of Ahtila works entitled *Real Characters, Invented Worlds* in 2002, Elfving evokes the Girl as a fissure in the way representation 'thinks'.⁵⁵ Posited as an unruly figure who occupies a threshold, or rather, produces the threshold where conventional modes of representation are disturbed she says: 'the pictured girls resist this positioning [of signifiers of femininity against masculinity] and send tremors through the oppositional system of representation demanding new ways of looking, reading, relating.'⁵⁶ Her suggestion is that the

⁵⁵ *Eija-Liisa Ahtila: Real Characters, Invented Worlds* opened at Tate Modern from 30 April – 28 July 2002.

⁵⁶ Elfving, 'The Girl', p. 210.

Girl emerges as a fissure in representation; neither constructed identity, nor social category, but a figure inscribed on screen, functioning to trouble the visual field.

In her writing, Elfving distinguishes the Girl from girls through a conceptual-lexical distinction which I have followed in my own writing. By capitalising Girl, Elfving makes an intervention similar to that made by de Lauretis in her important work of feminist film theory, *Alice Doesn't* (1984). There, de Lauretis highlights the tension between and conflation of 'Woman' as representation and 'women' as historical subjects, the small difference of Woman and women marking the huge gap of their non-coincidence.⁵⁷ The distinction between Girl and girl acknowledges the non-coincidence of girls and the Girl, but it also expresses a difference between the Girl and woman that makes the Girl the possible site of disruption in Elfving's analysis. For us it also makes her appear by means of her particularity.

The central insight of Elfving's argument is the proposition that the Girl problematises binary structures: 'The Girl, her sexuality and subjectivity, functions as a historically and culturally specific weak hinge in the binary logic of the same, where everything is reduced to pairs of opposites.'⁵⁸ Rather than replicate the basis on which culture reproduces itself in the patriarchal order, as Woman as sign engenders, the Girl, according to Elfving, is the crisis in this production.

The Girl as something other than as opposite and negative can be understood as a non-sign, a non-site or a no-thing that defies the representational logic of the real and the copy based on solid entities and sameness—whether in the signifying systems of language or of images.⁵⁹

Elfving is interested in the strategies for disruption that the Girl makes possible because of her connection and resistance toward the sign/position/body of 'Woman' elaborated in patriarchal culture.

⁵⁷ Teresa de Lauretis, *Alice Doesn't: Feminism, Semiotics, Cinema* (London: Macmillan, 1984).

⁵⁸ Elfving, 'The Girl', p. 210.

⁵⁹ Elfving, 'The Girl', p. 210.

Rather than produce new interpretations, for Elfving the Girl becomes a site of mediation of new connections of time, space, narrative and encounter through the form of Ahtila's artwork. Elfving proposes this by reading the opening chapter in *Speculum of the Other Woman* (1985) by Luce Irigaray, where Irigaray proposes a radical critique of Freud's theory of feminine sexuality by exposing the phallogentric logic of Freud's theory, which makes the little girl merely a reflection of the boy.⁶⁰ Elfving deploys the position of non-identity that Irigaray suggests is all the little girl represents in Freudian discourse, as when Irigaray says, 'So we must admit that THE LITTLE GIRL IS THEREFORE A LITTLE MAN. A little man who will suffer a more painful and complicated evolution than the little boy in order to become a normal woman!'⁶¹ Elfving repositions the 'no-thing' that the little girl represents in this framework as a positive aspect when considered through Irigaray's strategy of mimesis. 'Ways to imagine a different radical position may emerge when creatively repeating the position given to the Girl as lack, nothing (to be seen), but a fullness that has not been and cannot be given solid form or marked borders.'⁶² The playful repetition, Elfving says, is produced in the Girl as a figure appearing across Ahtila's different works.

By foregrounding a Bergsonian approach, however, I am building on Elfving's analysis of the Girl but shifting it to say that the Girl is not just a figure *for* challenging representation through different strategies, but duration must be understood as a structural aspect of how we understand the Girl and the moving image. Framed through the possibility of innovation and invention that form of duration produces, a different connection between Girl and Woman, and Girl and Image, appears.

⁶⁰ Luce Irigaray, *Speculum of the Other Woman*, trans. by Gillian C. Gill (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985).

⁶¹ Luce Irigaray, *Speculum of the Other Woman*, p. 26.

⁶² Elfving, 'The Girl', p. 211.

Becoming/Woman

In her article, 'Feminist Film in the Gallery: *If 6 Was 9*' (2005), Alison Butler argues that *If 6 Was 9* 'travels alongside' Deleuzism.⁶³ By this she means that the work draws on, or appropriates, Deleuzian concepts but also transforms them through inscriptions that pay attention to feminism and feminine subjectivity in a way Deleuzian concepts arguably do not. Although having traced a number of these concepts, from deterritorialisation to the interval, Butler finds the limit of Deleuzian concepts when arriving to examine the Girl and the concept of becoming-woman. Butler's proposition is the Girls in the film are not *becoming* according to a Deleuzian framework, but rather in a de Beauvoirian one that, as we have seen, privileges the conflicted relationship between existence and femininity that expresses itself in the temporality of 'the Girl'.

Ahtila's girls struggle against becoming woman, not in a Deleuzian sense, but in the sense that Simone de Beauvoir had in mind [...] The girls in *If 6 Was 9* are not so much becoming-woman as unbecoming-woman by means of a Deleuzian time machine. Their conflicted relationship with femininity and their easy access to the androgyny of infancy enable them to function as figures of transformation.⁶⁴

The girls in *If 6 Was 9* do not become in terms of the molecular becoming-woman. They become, according to Butler, in a different manner that evokes more closely the temporal ambiguity and existential force of femininity, described by de Beauvoir, which impinges on the girl as a particular ontological moment.

Elsa's sequence, the girl who is thirty-eight years old, strongly articulates the force of femininity as vocation in the sense of having been forced into the formation of woman. She has been 'punished' for not playing by the rules, for wanting fulfilling sex and a successful career. She is the conflicted figure of Girl having been woman, but what do we make of her

⁶³ Alison Butler, 'Feminist Film in the Gallery: *If 6 Was 9*', *Camera Obscura*, 20, 1 (2005) 1-30, p. 26.

⁶⁴ Butler, 'Feminist Film in the Gallery', p. 22.

becoming Girl again? Butler calls this a form of ‘unbecoming-woman’.⁶⁵ The invocation of a non-Deleuzian sense of how one becomes woman, through division and ambiguity, is connected to what Butler calls ‘a Deleuzian time machine’.⁶⁶ Her appeal to this term suggests that we need to ‘think’ the Girl and her temporality through cinema which, in Deleuzian film-philosophy, speaks of notions of time, the force of time and difference, and the activation of thought. This is different from thinking the Girl in terms of becoming-woman.

In his study of Deleuze’s two books on cinema, *Gilles Deleuze’s Time Machine* (1997), D. N. Rodowick highlights the significance of cinema in Deleuzian philosophy. It is a time machine: ‘For Deleuze, the cinema of time produces an image of thought as a nontotalizable process and a sense of history as unpredictable change.’⁶⁷ Rather than becoming-woman ‘unbecoming-woman by means of a Deleuzian time machine’, as Butler outlines, concerns thinking (in the moving image) about the temporality of feminine becomings and their future articulations. This must be understood alongside de Beauvoir’s existential model, as Butler says: ‘Ahtila bridges the gap between sedimented history and pure possibility’.⁶⁸ The inflection of the actual history of one’s lived experience and the unbounded newness of the virtual are brought in close proximity in the Girl.

Technology and Form

In the 1990s, Ahtila was awarded grants from the Promotion Centre for Audio-visual Culture (AVEK) and Centre for the Promotion of Visual Art (VISEK) as well as other foundations, such as the Finnish Cultural Foundation, which facilitated her move into 35 mm film, as well

⁶⁵ Butler, ‘Feminist Film in the Gallery’, p. 22.

⁶⁶ Butler, ‘Feminist Film in the Gallery’, p. 22.

⁶⁷ D. N. Rodowick, *Gilles Deleuze’s Time Machine*, (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 1997) p.17.

⁶⁸ Alison Butler, ‘Feminist Film in the Gallery: *If 6 Was 9*’ *Camera Obscura*, 20, 1 (2005) 1-30, p.22.

as travel and training.⁶⁹ She says: ‘The plan was to give up visual arts, but that didn’t happen—I got stuck somewhere between the two traditions.’⁷⁰ From 1990 until 1996 she took up studies in film and video at London College of Printing and then at UCLA and the American Film Institute in Los Angeles, California. This was when she conceived of the project that would become *If 6 Was 9*.

I planned [*If 6 Was 9*] when I was still living in L.A. I saw a series of billboard advertisements made of huge black-and-white photos showing models standing in a composite of several images, and you could see the cut between them. I thought the split screen suggested the idea of girls growing up.⁷¹

The billboard constitutes a large scale, highly visible, but quickly digested form of image which uses a spectacular visual language of bodies, divided into formally arranged space, for the purpose of selling products where the bodies of young women who appear in the advertisements are as much ‘on sale’ as the product. Formally, however, the billboard is also a static tableau with multiple images on a large scale that stage an interaction between one image and another—a form of montage.

⁶⁹ In the 1980s and 1990s, new kinds of infrastructure, such as practical training, gallery spaces and arts organizations concerned with video, film and media art were emerging in Helsinki and other parts of Finland to support artists working in these mediums. In 1981, curator Asko Mäkelä began screening a programme of European film and video art in the art gallery of the Old Student House (the Student Union building) in Helsinki. A year later he organized an exhibition of new Finnish video art at the Sara Hildén Art Museum in Tampere which included the *Earth Contacts* (1982), a video that is mythically heralded as the first work of video art made in Finland. In 1983 the ARS 83, Finland’s recurring biennial exhibition, provided a platform for significant works by international artists in Helsinki such as Dara Birnbaum, Nam June Paik, Martha Rosler, Joan Jonas and Doris Chase. Video workshops (modelled after British community arts video workshops run by groups such as Centreprise and Art Labs) were developed first in the city of Kuopio and then in Helsinki in 1984 alongside KSL an organization for adult education. The Promotion Centre for Audiovisual Culture (AVEK) and Centre for the Promotion of Visual Art (VISEK) were established in 1987 as charitable foundations that used a share of copyright remuneration to support artists with grants. In the same year, MUU RY, an artists-led organization, now a well-established exhibition space in Helsinki, was explicitly founded to promote media, sound and video art. Today, AV-Arkki, the Distribution Centre for Finnish Media Art, is a crucial organization that works alongside international film festivals, art galleries and museums to show media art made in Finland. The organization was founded in 1989 to support media art created by artists in Finland and promote it internationally; this was the same year the now-defunct Helsingin Elokuvapaja (Helsinki Filmmakers’ Co-op) was established.

⁷⁰ Eija-Liisa Ahtila and Chrissie Iles, ‘Thinking in Film’, *Parkett*, 68, (2003), p. 58.

⁷¹ Ahtila and Iles, p. 63.

In the interview the artist focuses on the significance of the human figure in the advertising image, alongside, what Ahtila describes using editing terminology, as ‘the cut’ between images.⁷² The ‘cut’ of the billboard becomes the cut between screens in *If 6 Was 9*, which is extended to the cut between shots within screens and the connections that arise by their relation to one another. Ahtila explains that multiple screens, inspired by the static form of the billboard, have particular significance for her interest in the Girl. ‘I tried to use the split screen as metaphor of the teenage girl’s identity.’⁷³ The story of the conception of *If 6 Was 9*—inspired by billboards and their relation to the situation of girls—suggests that the three-screen form of the work has something to do with ‘thinking’ the Girl. Is the form of the work, however, more than a metaphor for girls’ identities?

Discussing her work, Ahtila says she deploys feminism in a particular way: ‘Instead of just getting characters to talk about feminist issues, I wanted to incorporate feminism deeper in the structure of the works.’⁷⁴ Leaving feminism at the level of content, or thematising feminism, limits a feminist project by suggesting feminism becomes self-evident or represented by ‘this’ or ‘that’ type of image or form. Mary Kelly’s theorisation of a ‘feminist problematic’ in 1977 critically defines the use of ‘feminism’ or ‘feminist’ in such contexts which is then critical for our situating Ahtila’s intervention. In ‘Art and Sexual Politics’ a text that was first a presentation given at the conference ‘Art and Politics’ in 1977, Kelly suggests that a feminist problematic operates as a critical tool raised in response to the use of *feminist* simply as an adjective for art.⁷⁵ Two main concerns drive her analysis. First, how does making

⁷² While Ahtila’s interview does not reveal whether the models in the advertisements were men, women, boys or girls the prevalence of images of young women, and the connection she makes to the situation of girls leads me to read the models she refers to here specifically as young women.

⁷³ Ahtila and Iles, p. 63.

⁷⁴ Eija-Liisa Ahtila quoted in Samantha Ellis, ‘Eija-Liisa Ahtila’, *Make*, 92 (2002), p. 48.

⁷⁵ Mary Kelly, ‘Art and Politics’, in *Imaging Desire* (Cambridge and London: The MIT Press, 1998), pp. 2–10. This was a paper presented at the Art and Politics conference, AIR, London, 1977. It was published in several places including: *Art and Politics*, ed. by Brandon Taylor (Hampshire: Winchester School of Art

artwork address itself to patriarchal structures? That is, how do artworks allow us to think about the social and psychic construction of sexual difference? Rather than impose the question ‘What is feminist art?’ Kelly highlights that such a question, at its core, is problematic, since using *feminist* as an adjective suggests *feminism* is content or theme. By maintaining that feminism is not something to be evident in art, that is, we cannot make a judgement on whether art is or is not feminist, Kelly suggests a shift in term that means we can think about art practices *in relation to* a feminist problematic and not *as* feminist.

A feminist problematic asks about the aesthetic structure of artworks and the relation of such structures to questions that are posed by feminist theory and politics. Moreover, insofar as feminism is not represented in a work, it is, however, an *effect* of representation produced through certain aesthetic forms or structures that can be analysed. Feminist effects are thus produced by a structure, not a content or theme.

I think the notion of the [feminist] problematic resists the prescriptive answers required by the father/daughter duet “*what is revolutionary/feminist art?*” It requires formulating the problem of representation as the product of a practice of signification which will generate questions like “*How do the means of signification in a given art practice function?*” and only then “*What is signified and with what political consequences?*”⁷⁶

Insisting that we pay attention to how an artwork functions within ideological frameworks, a feminist problematic aims to discern the forms in which an artwork produces feminist effects. Ahtila’s work does not simply represent ‘feminist issues’, insofar as feminist becomes an adjective. Ahtila says she imbeds feminism ‘deeper in the structure’, posing a feminist problematic that remains, not at the level of issues—say, the ‘issue’ of girlhood—but at the level of structure, as in the structures which are precipitated by ‘thinking’ the Girl. Ahtila is only interested in thinking about how the moving image addresses itself to questions raised by

Press, 1980), pp. 66-75; and in *Framing Feminism*, ed. by Roszika Parker and Griselda Pollock (London and New York: Pandora, 1987), pp. 303-312.

⁷⁶ Mary Kelly, ‘Art and Sexual Politics’, *Imaging Desire* (Cambridge and London: The MIT Press, 1998), p. 10.

feminism, such as the Girl, rather than saying something ‘is feminist’, for example, it being about girls. *If 6 Was 9*, therefore, is not a filmic study of the lived experiences of girls, but a moving image artwork that ‘thinks’ with the Girl as a feminist problematic in the form of the moving image. It raises the question of the Girl, inscribed at the level of form and content, to be performed by/as the moving image across the many screens.

The Space Off

The moving image, as it overlays sound, image and time, may inscribe forms expressing dimensions of subjectivities or notions of feminine difference that have special significance for our concept of the Girl. A question driving this thesis has been in what way do film and moving image artworks explore dimensions, or inscribe modalities, of feminine subjectivity? *Technologies of Gender*, a book published by feminist film theorist Teresa de Lauretis in 1987, has been a crucial part of feminist debates on this question in terms of thinking the connection of gender and representation.⁷⁷

I turn to de Lauretis’ writing here to think about the form of the moving image and its inscription of gender as a technology. Drawing on Foucault’s concept of sexuality as a technology, de Lauretis theorises gender as a representation, drawing attention to the centrality of representations in understanding the production of subjectivities. In the opening chapter of *Technologies of Gender*, de Lauretis makes an important theoretical move by arguing that gender is primarily a *representation*.⁷⁸ Moreover, gender as a system of representation, perpetuates itself, reproducing all the time. This occurs through social technologies—

⁷⁷ De Lauretis, *Technologies of Gender*.

⁷⁸ De Lauretis, *Technologies of Gender*, p. 3.

including cinema, theory, fiction—whereby gender, meaning a representation of a social relation, is constructed through the effects and self-representations produced in them.⁷⁹

Gender is the effect of representation made to us and of the self-representation we make of ourselves, which is assimilated from culture but also reworked. Powerful social technologies such as cinema, affect how gender is internalised and constructed by individuals, but our self-representation also impacts on the social construction of gender. This discovery firmly places de Lauretis' work, writing in the 1980s, within a new field of feminist film theory insisting on agency within dominant discourses, rather than viewing these discourses as uniformly oppressive. Despite the dynamic of representation and self-representation, de Lauretis asks: *'If the deconstruction of gender inevitably effects its (re)construction, the question is, in which terms and in whose interest is the de-re-construction being effected?'*⁸⁰ The continual representation of gender means that there is an opening for change at the point which it is (re)constructed by those who are representing (and represented by) it. There is a tension in de Lauretis' essay, however, where the analysis of hegemonic masculine narratives, which recontain and reconcile difference, meets the theorisation of the radical possibility of something different lurking on the margins as the excess. The problem is in part to do with intelligibility. Representations that articulate something outside conventions are not recognisable as representations, despite being produced all the time. Where do we go, then, for difference to emerge, and what strategies can we use to 'recognise' what is not immediately available as such?

De Lauretis indicates a space of work, not outside of culture but outside the dominant frame. She articulates this by suggesting a new kind of subject named as the subject of feminism.

⁷⁹ De Lauretis, *Technologies of Gender*, p. 19.

⁸⁰ De Lauretis, *Technologies of Gender*, p. 24.

By the phrase ‘the subject of feminism’ I mean a conception or an understanding of the (female) subject not only distinct from Woman with the capital letter, the *representation* of an essence inherent in all women (which has been seen as Nature, Mother, Mystery, Evil Incarnate, Object of [Masculine] Desire and Knowledge, Proper Womanhood, Femininity, etcetera), but also distinct from women, the real, historical being and social subjects who are defined by the technology of gender and actually engendered in social relations. The subject of feminism I have in mind is one *not* so defined, one whose definition or conception is in progress, in this and other feminist critical texts; and, to insist on this point one more time, the subject of feminism, much like Althusser’s subject, is a theoretical construct.⁸¹

The subject of feminism is not a homogenous subject, but a position of change constituted by a movement in and out of representation and intimately connected to the way feminist practices have constructed themselves ‘between the lines’ or ‘against the grain’.⁸²

Now, the movement in and out of gender as ideological representation, which I propose characterizes the subject of feminism, is a movement back and forth between the representation of gender (in its male-centred frame of reference) and what the representation leaves out or, more pointedly, makes unrepresentable.⁸³

The frame declares itself as cinematic vocabulary, which de Lauretis extends to describe the space of feminist work outside the dominant frame. The cinematic concept of the ‘space-off’ is an apt analogy for gender’s representation because it describes the theorisation of off-screen space, is a mechanism for thinking about visibility and invisibility, containment and fragmentation and concerns the issue of how to shift the conceptualisation of a ‘frame’ altogether.

Noël Burch’s foundational text *The Theory of Film Practice*, translated into English in 1973, devotes a chapter to two different kinds of space in film, namely, that included in the frame and that outside which ‘haunts’ it—the space off-screen.⁸⁴ Burch describes off-screen space divided into six segments: the four borders of the frame, behind the camera and the

⁸¹ De Lauretis, *Technologies of Gender*, pp. 9-10.

⁸² De Lauretis, *Technologies of Gender*, p. 26.

⁸³ De Lauretis, *Technologies of Gender*, p. 2.

⁸⁴ Noël Burch, *The Theory of Film Practice*, trans. by Helen R. Lane (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981) p. 17.

space existing behind the set.⁸⁵ Burch takes us through the ways in which off-screen space is opposed to screen space in a study of Jean Renoir's *Nana* (1926), he says: 'It is important to realise that off-screen space has only an intermittent or, rather, fluctuating existence during any film, and structuring this fluctuation can become a powerful tool in a filmmaker's hands.'⁸⁶ The off-screen space of the space-off has a strange absence/presence, which can be exploited by the filmmaker. It is both there and not there.

De Lauretis is fascinated by the concept of off screen space for thinking about gender as representation and how it would be addressed by feminist analysis. She describes how it functions in the example of two kinds of cinema.

In classical and commercial cinema, the space-off is, in fact, erased, or, better, recontained and sealed into the image by the cinematic rules of narrativization (first among them, the shot/reverse-shot system). But avant-garde cinema has shown the space-off to exist concurrently and alongside the represented space, has made it visible by remarking its absence in the frame or in the succession of frames, and has shown it to include not only the camera (the point of articulation and perspective from which the image is constructed) but also the spectator (the point where the image is received, re-constructed, and re-produced in/as subjectivity).⁸⁷

The notion of the space-off, which is not simply a question of what is not seen but is a concept that gives an account of how dominant discourses displace or enclose what is not acceptable within the dominant frame, articulates the drive of feminist theory towards creating new things, new ideas and new representations. The method of working in the margins also provokes the necessity for such work to continue. De Lauretis writes:

⁸⁵ Burch, p.17.

⁸⁶ Burch, p. 21.

⁸⁷ De Lauretis, *Technologies of Gender*, p. 26.

If in the master narratives, cinematic and otherwise, the two kinds of spaces are reconciled and integrated, as man recontains woman in his (man)kind, his hom(m)osexuality, nevertheless the cultural productions and micropolitical practices of feminism have shown them to be separate and heteronomous spaces. Thus, to inhabit both kinds of spaces at once is to live the contradiction which, I have suggested, is the contradiction of feminism here and now: the tension of a twofold pull in contrary directions—the critical negativity of its theory, and the affirmative positivity of its politics—is both the historical condition of existence of feminism and its theoretical condition of possibility. The subject of feminism is en-gendered there. That is to say elsewhere.⁸⁸

If we are not to stay within the limits of a patriarchal frame, cinematic or otherwise, the examining the space-off is an important site of work. De Lauretis's contribution is to call for a movement in and out of representation's dominant frame. Her project maintains a constant critical view onto representation and self-representation, gathering itself in all directions and contradictions. It does so for the subject of feminism to be worked out in process and be engendered in multiplicity, to be represented and self-represent differently than that which the current terms allow.

Continuity Girls

We can use de Lauretis's theorisation of the space-off to analyse aspects of *If 6 Was 9* that, in our encounter in the installation, are acquired as a way of provoking us beyond the familiar experiences of cinematic conventions, as an estrangement of sorts, which draws on existing technologies and forms of representation. In the first sequence of images that opens the work, the movement of girls between screens is a complex choreography. Eight different shots depict figures appearing and disappearing out of the frame and between screens. Päivi is waiting outside a supermarket and she describes the scene to the viewer with a commentary on her thoughts and feelings from the day. Shot from a low angle, Päivi appears in close-up in front of the luminescent glow of the supermarket signage. Something gets her attention and

⁸⁸ De Lauretis, *Technologies of Gender*, p. 26.

she turns her head, moving out of shot, off-screen, becoming lost from view from all three screens for several moments. Although we still hear her voice on the audio track, the images move quickly and the screen does not cut immediately to reveal where she has gone. The right screen changes to a close-up of a map of the supermarket on which we read in Finnish: 'you are here'. In these initial moments, each perspective does something different. The left screen focuses on Päivi but pauses a few beats too long on her profile as she anxiously surveys the space about her. Initially, the centre and right screens depict two wide shots of the outside of the supermarket, each from a slightly different position. The middle screen cuts to the supermarket doors opening and closing where Päivi's friend Satu appears. Watching closely, you catch Päivi appearing for a beat onscreen before a car moves across the foreground blocking her from view.



Figure 32 - *If 6 Was 9* (1995) Eija-Liisa Ahtila



Figure 33 - *If 6 Was 9* (1995) Eija-Liisa Ahtila



Figure 34 - *If 6 Was 9* (1995) Eija-Liisa Ahtila

Presented across three projections, the space outside the MAXI supermarket is fragmented and multiplied despite the map's declaration in Finnish of the opposite. Each screen changes. Two remain on black, while the right projection presents a new low-angle perspective of Satu. Päivi walks into the shot so that the girls are decisively united in one frame. The ability for the characters to walk across screens, appearing somewhere (or disappearing altogether) subtly unhinges our expectations of what comes next. The angle of shot changes, so does the camera's position in space and on which screen it is projected.

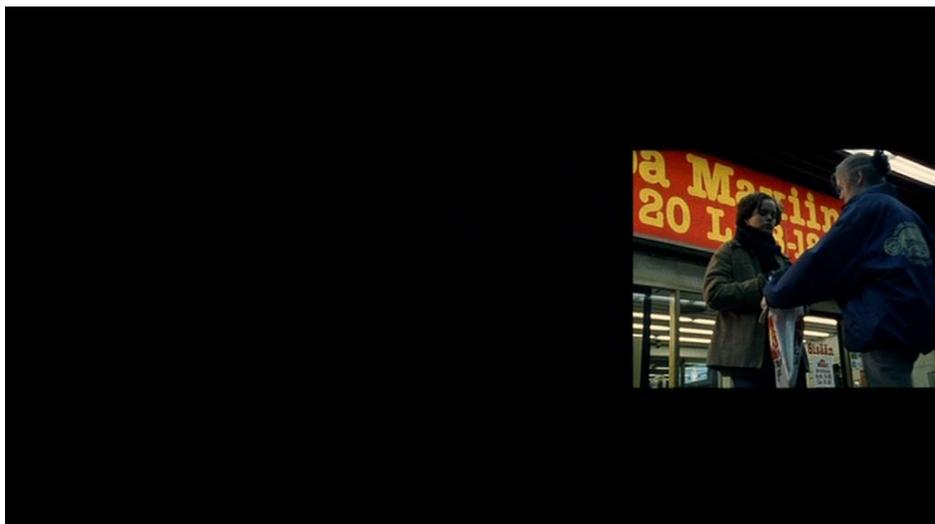


Figure 35 - *If 6 Was 9* (1995) Eija-Liisa Ahtila

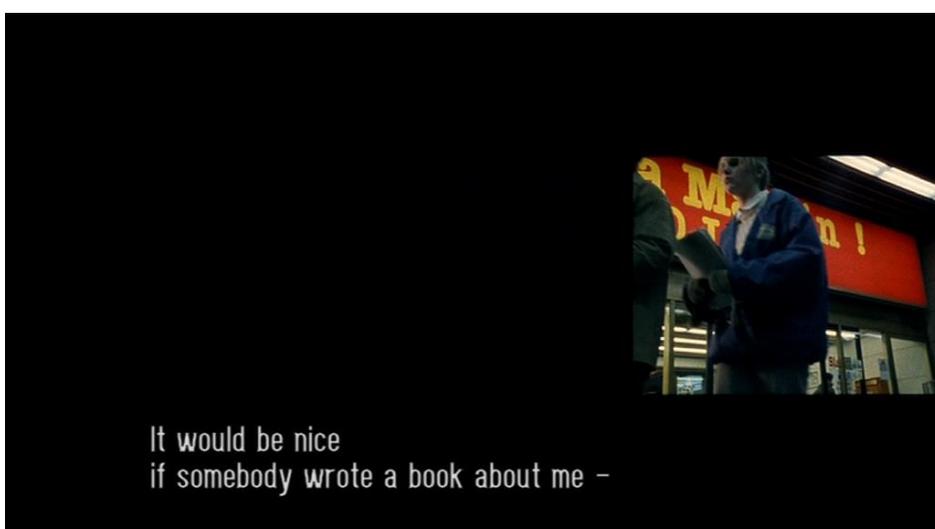


Figure 36 - *If 6 Was 9* (1995) Eija-Liisa Ahtila

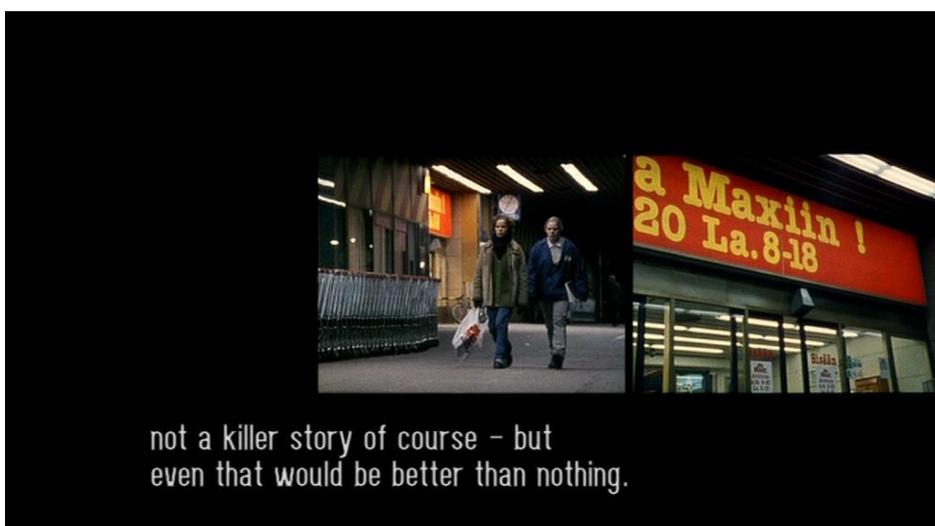


Figure 37 - *If 6 Was 9* (1995) Eija-Liisa Ahtila

The pair walk away together from the supermarket doors, leaving the frame and appearing, following their exit from the left side of the right screen, in the middle screen. Positioned from a different angle than before, the girls walk towards the camera at a quick pace. So far, screens match the action to express the continuous movement of Satu and Päivi. In the next series of edits, however, the disjuncture of space, opened by figures crossing screens while disappearing and reappearing, leads to a moment where the logic of continuity disrupts itself altogether.

As the girls exit the frame on the right, the middle screen cuts from black to a wide shot of the pair walking towards the camera. The next shot on the left screen is a close-up of Satu walking in the same space alone. Although cut very quickly together, Päivi, who was next to Satu in the earlier shot, is missing from the frame. This is the disruption, quick and small almost as if were nothing at all but also a huge breach in continuity. If this were to follow the conventions of single-screen continuity editing, we would expect to see her appear alongside Satu on the same screen. She has disappeared between the edits, but also between the screens, into the space-off multiplied by the triple screen format. All screens go to black. The girl's disappearance is only brief, but a spatial-temporal breach has occurred, and the construction has been revealed.



Figure 38 - *If 6 Was 9* (1995) Eija-Liisa Ahtila



Figure 39 - *If 6 Was 9* (1995) Eija-Liisa Ahtila

In *If 6 Was 9*, shots that would normally be cut together on a single screen edit are, instead, drawn next to each other, coexisting in a form of spatialisation. This recalls the concept of ‘spatial montage’ developed by media theorist Lev Manovich. In *The Language of New Media* published in 2001, Manovich foregrounds the concept of ‘spatial montage’, in distinction to ‘temporal montage’, in order to analyse how new technologies and practices in film and video produce and privilege co-existing images.⁸⁹ Spatial narrative techniques such as those we find in Renaissance painting, Manovich argues, were suppressed by the same logic as Fordist modes of production.

Spatial montage represents an alternative to traditional cinematic temporal montage, replacing its traditional sequential mode with a spatial one. Ford’s assembly line relied on the separation of the production process into sets of simple, repetitive, and sequential activities. The same principle made computer programming possible: A computer breaks a task into a series of elemental operations to be executed one at a time. Cinema followed this logic of industrial production as well. It replaced all other modes of narration with a sequential narrative, an assembly line of shots that appear on the screen one at a time. This type of narrative turns out to be particularly incompatible with the spatial narrative that has played a prominent role in European visual culture for centuries.⁹⁰

⁸⁹ Lev Manovich, *The Language of New Media*, (Cambridge, MA and London: The MIT Press, 2002)

⁹⁰ Manovich, p. 325.

Manovich's main point is that sequential logic that demands one image be supplanted by another, thus depending on the loss of one image in order to progress, is not the only way to produce narrative. Yet cinema, he suggests, has been suppressed so that sequential logic is all that is produced.

The sequential form of montage, however, mirrors the fundamental materiality of film comprised of twenty-four frames a second, which is itself upset by new technologies of digital and video. Manovich argues that this disruption at the level of technology opens durational aesthetic practices to a different relation between space, time and montage at the level of materiality and form.

The logic of replacement, characteristic of cinema, gives way to the logic of addition and coexistence. Time becomes spatialized, distributed over the surface of the screen. In spatial montage, nothing need be forgotten, nothing is erased.⁹¹

The spatialisation of montage entirely refigures the time and space of the moving image because, once we can add another image alongside the present image, the obligation to overwrite and overcome what has already been is erased. Addition, rather than replacement, becomes the method, meaning what has been (as a past image) is still *existing* in the present. In fact, there is no past image only the present. The screen becomes the spatialised interplay of the present persisting through spatial montage's expansive operation. Time is overcome by space.

Continuity editing, while constructed from discontinuous shots and sequences, is produced to give the impression of continuous action and story. Ahtila's episodes are tightly formulated narratives in which the edits are a crucial part of producing the narrative across three screens. Manovich's concept of spatial montage a useful aid for our description of the interaction of three screens, such as when a match on action between shots happens across two projections, a girl moves out of one frame and into another. For Alison Butler, however, *If*

⁹¹ Manovich, p. 325.

6 Was 9 is more ambiguous in its use of spatial montage than Manovich's spatial framework allows. She critiques his schema for proposing a form of montage that seeks visual mastery—to see all at once—thus reinscribing, although in a different manner, the desire of classical *misé-en-scène* to perpetuate a sense of unity and to fend off the fear of fragmentation. *If 6 Was 9* refuses this reinscription by using elements of spatial montage alongside temporal montage to subvert the desire to see all at once. Although the work has a strong narrative tendency, the work insists on a profound ambiguity embedded in its articulation of space and time, even from a basic level, where location shots are tripled, and our sense of time is disrupted by the three screens that show three moments at once. This ambiguity that is carried into the experience of watching in the installation. In the fast sequences of slow motion shots and landscapes after Elsa's episode, the speed of the edits is such that the viewer cannot take in all the images, nor their spatial or temporal connections, at once. The frontality of the three screens that are impossible to see in one gaze embodies the ambiguity of the work. Butler says:

Ahtila deliberately subverts what Manovich proposes as the defining properties of spatial montage: spectatorial mastery of space, and freedom from the vagaries of time and memory. Instead she unsettles the spectator by deploying “any-space-what-ers,” a term Deleuze uses to describe both the disconnected spaces that typify urban modernity and the disjointed visual field created by discontinuity editing. The insistent patterning of black screens into the montage deepens the installation's spatial aporia by invoking something—or somewhere, or some time—outside the images.⁹²

Butler calls the style of editing ‘discontinuity editing’, which names the disconnected space of the visual field. It is also conceptualised by her invocation of the Deleuzian ‘any-space-what-ers’.⁹³ Deleuze is another who, like Burch's taxonomy of off-screen space, attempts to

⁹² Butler, ‘Feminist Film in the Gallery’, p. 12.

⁹³ Butler, ‘Feminist Film in the Gallery’, p. 12.

describe the mysterious field around the frame.⁹⁴ The space-off becomes an ambiguous borderline on which the Girl involved in a spatial-temporal dance. If we recall Burch's description of off-screen space divided into six segments, what we have in *If 6 Was 9* is different. In *If 6 Was 9* the off-screen space is multiplied by three, there are eighteen possible spatial segments. This means the opportunity to express what is not expressible in frame is amplified, creating an expanded field for the feminist work of the space-off.

Ahtila takes advantage of this using the figure of the Girl to disrupt spatial-temporal conventions, to disappear and reappear again and again. De Lauretis' subject of feminism, a subject in process, becomes intimately connected to the Girl in Ahtila's film through the multiplied space-off and the Girl in movement in-between. In the episode at the supermarket the space-off has a particularly strong figuration. Päivi's initial movement out of frame and out of immediate view—moving literally into the space-off—lays the ground for further disjunctive articulations of space made possible by the three-screen arrangement. The space-off and the Girl, become conceptual elements working together.

Continuity and the concept of the Girl might be connected to another term, 'continuity girl' a term, now out of use, that refers to the member of the film crew who was responsible for recording details of a take in order to avoid discrepancies between shots in the edit.⁹⁵ The continuity girl, as the nomenclature suggests, was a role predominantly done by women, and whose job was to produce a kind of external memory for the director, taking detailed photographs and notes during each take to ensure editing would run smoothly. The word continuity means following one after another, coming from the Latin *continere* meaning

⁹⁴ In *Cinema 1: The Movement Image* Deleuze writes: 'Any-space-whatever is not an abstract universal, in all times, in all places. It is a perfectly singular space, which has merely lost its homogeneity, that is, the principle of its metric relations or the connection of its own parts, so that the linkages can be made in an infinite number of ways. It is a space of virtual conjunction, grasped as pure locus of the possible.' Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 1: The Movement Image*, trans. by Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997) p. 109.

⁹⁵ Now this role is generally called the onset script supervisor.

to literally hang together but also to restrain, control or enclose. To hang together is the mode in which both continuity editing, and the continuity girl work toward, namely, a logical coherence enclosed in a narrative structure. It is ironic, perhaps, that the task continuity girls were given to ensure that minute details maintain coherence across scenes to aid narrative closure, are those that de Lauretis and her subject of feminism seek to expose and deconstruct. The continuity girls kept the frame together, while de Lauretis points us to the conceptual possibilities of the movement past the frame. The continuity girls' task, however, also involved memory. They were a kind of external memory for the film, and thus are also a way of extending the film past the boundaries of what is in 'the frame', while keeping the film 'together'.

If 6 Was 9 develops a fundamentally different relationship to narrative coherence that does not depend on continuity but does enable a story to be told. It preserves and remakes a form of narrative for three screen projections and the Girl. In particular, I am proposing that Päivi and Satu have figured a new kind of continuity girl, internal to the artwork and embedded as structure rather than content. The girls that appear become the Girl in *If 6 Was 9* who holds together and fragment sequences. They are bound, not to the enclosure of narrative coherence, but to inaugurate a different formation of movement and images.⁹⁶ Discontinuous time and diegetic space, reformulated by the new forms of the moving image in the gallery space, are held in place and drawn apart by the movement of the Girls in and out of frame. This is almost a literal figuration of de Lauretis's theorisation of the feminist work of the space-off approached by the Girl as image. More than a metaphor for the identity of girls, the form and technology are structurally necessary for understanding the form of *If 6 Was 9* and part of the work 'thinking' the Girl.

⁹⁶ Continuity is thus understood via the etymological meaning of to hang alongside, rather than restraint.

Conclusion

How can we understand a durational artwork projected onto three screens in which the only characters that appear are girls that talk explicitly about sex drawn from experience stemming from older women? I have explored how Ahtila's approach is invested in examining *how* images and narratives are constructed through their multi-screen formats and how this relates to the work of 'thinking' the Girl. By theorising the Girl in terms of Bergsonian duration, I have attempted to elaborate how *If 6 Was 9* makes the Girl appear through its particular moving image form and through the temporal differentiation of past experiences revoiced by girls in the present. In the entanglement of time and duration, the Girl is an important dimension of moving image that frames the terms in which we define futurity. I then extended this to think about the form of the moving image installation in its connection to the figuration of the Girl. Through an analysis of editing and the function the space-off I aimed to show how the Girl as a concept and problem informs not only the characterisation and content of the narrative but also the form of the installation. More than a metaphor for the Girl, the three screens and the unique style of editing use gaps, cuts and disappearing girls to allude to what the visual field cannot contain, using this as a critical tool upon itself.

Conclusion

Feminine Becomings: Theories of the Girl and the Moving Image sets in motion ‘the Girl’ in dynamic relation and difference from ‘the girl’. My analyses perform the Girl as moving image through selected artworks by Chantal Akerman and Eija-Liisa Ahtila in dialogue with *The Second Sex* by Simone de Beauvoir.¹

This conclusion presents insights from the thesis and suggests where they point next. First, however, I want to draw into focus the question with which we began: in what ways do film and moving image artworks explore dimensions, or inscribe modalities, of *feminine subjectivity*? In this context, the Girl has been understood as a dimension of feminine subjectivity that amplifies but also challenges specific forms of feminist thought and aesthetic practice. The three chapters addressed text, film and artworks that were read as operating on both axes—as amplification of questions of sexual difference and the feminine through a particular dimension of subjectivity, and a challenge to feminist theories and inscriptions of this moment. While addressing the Girl as a question framed in relation to moving image artworks, I also examined the form and process of these artworks as a site intimately connected to forms of becomingness—as situation, as cinematic position, as image—that have been the means of thinking the Girl. Formulated in this manner, the Girl is connected to what is materially conceived in moving image works so that the moving image is understood in an expanded sense. The moving image might also then depart from these limits through its intimate performance of the Girl.

The focus of this thesis, namely, how film and moving image artworks explore, or inscribe, dimensions of feminine subjectivity has been positioned as an aesthetic and

¹ Thanks to Carol Mavor for helping develop this formulation.

philosophical study addressed to texts, films and artworks. The method of close reading has allowed me to develop concepts for the analysis of different forms of the Girl, bringing together a number of theoretical approaches and critical concerns that have urgency in current debates in feminist theory, film studies and visual culture. I have not, however, examined mainstream Hollywood cinema or ‘teen movies’ aimed at and featuring girl-characters in relation to the set of questions raised in this study. Girls have not been the producers of the texts under discussion. Nor have I explicitly addressed the full range of theoretical and philosophical writings on the Girl. My focus has been on texts, films and artworks that are themselves philosophical and aesthetic inscriptions of the questioning of the feminine. I have argued that these three instances narrate the shifts, complexity and far reaching significance of the Girl in relation to the girl put to the question of feminine subjectivity and contemporary feminist moving image art practices. While these examples are uncommon, I do not wish to limit the Girl to this archive. There have been and surely will be other instantiations and inscriptions which will continue to push us to think about the Girl as a dimension of subjectivity and a problem for feminist theory.

Having completed this research, it is clear that the Girl prompts further questions which leads me to suggest future directions. I propose to build on this research by developing further case studies that explore the Girl as moving image and the Girl/girl dynamic as it has been presented here. Since first paying serious attention to the Girl during this research, an array of films which centre girl characters and narratives have been released.² One approach to this growing body of G/girl-films would be to see how they might elaborate the relation and

² See for example, *Girl* (dir. Lukas Dhont, 2018); *Skate Kitchen* (dir. Crystal Moselle, 2018); *The Miseducation of Cameron Post* (dir. Desiree Akhavan, 2018); *I Am Not A Witch* (dir. Rungano Nyoni, 2017); *The Florida Project* (dir. Sean Baker, 2017); *Ladybird* (dir. Greta Gewig, 2017); *Thelma* (dir. Joachim Trier, 2017); *Raw* (dir. Julia Ducournau, 2016); *Mustang* (dir. Deniz Gamze Erguven, 2015); *Diary of a Teenage Girl* (dir. Marianne Heller, 2015); *The Fits* (dir. Anna Rose Holmer, 2015); *Bande de filles* (dir. Céline Sciamma, 2014).

difference of the Girl that this thesis inscribes. The tragicomic surrealist tale of a young girl from Zambia cast out from her village in *I Am Not A Witch* (2017) directed by Rungano Nyoni, brings into focus the Girl as myth as it intersects with other historical, ideological and supernatural forces. Strands of the Girl as mythic figure also manifest, albeit differently, in *Thelma* (2017) directed by Joachim Trier and *Raw* (2016) directed by Julia Ducournau. *Raw* draws on the haptic potential of film in woozy, single-takes and visceral close-ups of bodies that stage an eerie encounter with the metamorphosing and hungry body of the main character Justine. Artists like Rachel Maclean and Marianna Simmett have recently presented a body of moving image artworks that connect to my questioning of the form of the moving image and the Girl. Maclean's striking aesthetic presents an excessive 'girliness' as a form of parody verging on fairy-tale horror. Simmett's visceral film/performance also foreground the Girl as the narrator of strange bodily tales.

I have sought to draw out the aspects of the moving image which are important for the concept of the Girl, a result of which has been extending the concept moving image, in its tangled relation to the Girl, beyond traditional forms. In other words, does the Girl as moving image persist as a useful concept when the movement of becoming is presented otherwise—such as in a novel, or photograph? I am, therefore, interested in exploring the connection of different artforms to the movement of the Girl, cinematic or otherwise. In response to the work presented here, a line might be traced from *Mädchen in Uniform* (1931), through de Beauvoir's reading in *Le Deuxième Sexe* (1949) of the film and the chapter on the Girl, to a novel *Olivia* (1949) by Dorothy Strachey, inspired by the film by Leontine Sagan, itself becoming a film *Olivia* (1951, its English title being *The Pit of Loneliness*) directed by Jacqueline Audry, forming a lesbian genealogy and triangulated web of the Girl in English, German and French.

The discussion of Akerman's cinema and the Girl has constituted an important part of this study, but it is clear that more work remains to be done to take into account her other

films and also her move into gallery installations. Putting my concept of the *cinéfilie* in dialogue with a more extended body of work may offer further insights into her cinema. The recent development of the Fondation Chantal Akerman in May 2018 has also released an archive of materials that may be significant for expanding the scope of the project.

Ahtila's recent work continues to provoke us to think about the boundaries of memory and the moving image, her newest moving image/sculpture, entitled, *Potentiality for Love* (2018), consists of three parts one of which is a large LED video sculpture called *Memory of Mother*. The work examines the relation between memory, love and empathy connected to questions of how we define ourselves through others, imagined in the work through the figure of a mother and a chimpanzee. Bergsonian duration seems also to resonate with the questions this work poses to the viewer albeit through the maternal and post-human.

Having proposed that the Girl is a problem for feminist theory—and feminist theorists—this research has circled around an issue present in the field of Girls' Studies, namely, that the Girl is a problem, in part at least, because girls do not write feminist philosophies and, in general, do not make the films of which they are the subject. This issue has led me to a new project in 2017 named *Art School for Rebel Girls* that was produced in association with arts organisation Pavilion. Inspired by Pavilion's feminist beginnings as the UK's first women's photography centre founded in 1983 by graduates from the Department of Fine Art and the University of Leeds, which taught young women in its immediate community to make photographs at a time when the means of production was otherwise unavailable to them, *Art School for Rebel Girls* draws on feminist pedagogical practices for creative workshops for thirteen to fifteen-year-old girls at two schools in Leeds. Having discovered 'the Girl' as the problem to be addressed in my research, this project has tested the limits of the Girl in a different context, while also opening up a relationship between girls and artistic practices from a different angle.

While *Art School for Rebel Girls* does not close the gap between girls and those who write philosophies of the Girl, it has created an opportunity for these boundaries to soften by creating the space for an inter-generational working group of artists to reflect on experiences of being ‘a girl’ and also develop creative responses to ‘the Girl’. This is a different project from the one I present here, but *Art School for Rebel Girls* would not have taken this form without my immersion in these questions at its inception. *Feminine Becomings: Theories of the Girl and the Moving Image* led me to the project that has become *Art School for Rebel Girls*, as an opportunity to address one of the issues that *Feminine Becomings* could not: what would a film look like that is not *about*—or *of*—but *by* a girl?

Selected Filmography

Chantal Akerman

Films

Saute ma ville, 1968, 13m, black and white, 35 mm

Cinematographer: René Fruchter

Editor: Geneviève Luciani

Je tu il elle, 1974, 90m, black and white, 16 mm

Production company: Paradise Films

Cinematographer: Bénédicte Delsalle, Charlotte Slovak, Renelde Dupont

Editor: Luc Freché

Jeanne Dielman, 23 quai du Commerce, 1080 Bruxelles, 1975, 200m, colour, 16 mm

Producer: Evelyne Paul, Corinne Jenart

Production company: Paradise Films/ Unité Trois

Cinematography: Babette Mangolte, Bénédicte Delsalle

Editor: Patricia Canino

News from Home, 1976, 85m, colour, 16 mm

Producer: Alain Dahan

Production company: Hélène films/ Unité Trois/ Paradise Films/ ZDF

Cinematographer: Jean Penzer

Editor: Francine Sandberg

J'ai faim, j'ai froid, 1984, 12m, black and white, 35 mm

Segment for *Paris vu par, 20 ans après*

Executive producer: Marc Labrousse, Jean Santamaria

Production company: JM Production/ Films A2

Cinematographer: Luc Benhamou

Editor: Francine Sandberg

D'Est, 1993, 107m, colour, 35 mm

Executive producer: Marilyn Watelet

Producer: François Le Bayon

Production Company: Paradise Films/ Lieurac Productions

Cinematographer: Raymond Fromont, Bernard Delville

Editor: Claire Atherton

Portrait d'une jeune fille de la fin des années 60 à Bruxelles, 1993, 60m, colour, 35 mm

Production company: IMA Productions

Cinematographer: Raymond Fromont

Editor: Martine Lebon

Chantal Akerman Par Chantal Akerman, 1997, 63m, colour
Producer: Xavier Carnioux
Cinematographer: Raymond Fromont
Editor: Claire Atherton

Demain on déménage, 2004, 110m, colour
Producer: Paulo Branco
Production company: Gemini Films, Paradise Films, Arte France Cinéma
Cinematographer: Sabine Lancelin
Editor: Claire Atherton

La folie Almayer, 2011, 127m, colour
Executive producer: Serge Zeitoun
Producer: Patrick Quinet, Marianne Lambert
Cinematographer: Raymond Fromont
Editor: Claire Atherton

No Home Movie, 2015, 115m, colour
Producer: Patrick Quinet, Serge Zeitoun
Cinematographer: Chantal Akerman
Editor: Claire Atherton

Artworks

Marcher à côté de mes lacets dans une frigidaire vide, 2004, black and white
video projection with scrim, moving projection of image and notebook.

Eija-Liisa Ahtila

ME/WE, OKAY, GRAY, 1993, 3 x 90s, black and white
35 mm film and 3-channel monitor installation with sound

If 6 Was 9, 1995, 10m, colour
35 mm film and DVD installation for 3 projections with sound

Today, 1996-7, 10m, colour
35 mm film and DVD installation for 3 projections with sound

The Present, 2001, 5 x 1 min 12 sec to 2 min, colour
5-channel monitor installation with sound

Love is a Treasure, 2002, 55m, colour
35 mm film

The Wind, 2002, 14 m, colour
3-channel projected installation with sound

Elspeth Mitchell

The Hour of Prayer, 2005, 14m 12s, colour
4-channel projected installation / 3-image split screen film

Where is Where, 53 m 43s, colour
6-channel projected installation, 8 channel sound / 4-image split screen film

The Annunciation, 2010, 28m 25 s, colour
3-channel projected installation / 1 image film HD/DCP

Potentiality for Love, 2018, colour
Moving image with 3 silent parts

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Appendix