

NEGATIVE OEDIPUS: Carol as Lesbian Romance and Maternal Melodrama
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PREFACE

In her contribution to *SEQUENCE*'s ongoing discussion of the maternal melodrama, Pam Cook considers Todd Haynes' miniseries *Mildred Pierce* (HBO, 2011). Noting the genre's characteristic 'textual fluidity' (Cook 2015: 2), she cites the director's linking of Michael Curtiz's 1945 film of *Mildred Pierce* with Max Ophuls' *The Reckless Moment* (1949) as crossovers 'between crime and melodrama'.^[1] Haynes' attention to this hybridity prompts Cook to review the incoherence of mother-love movies; employing Gérard Genette's term 'paratextual', she charts the influence of references outside the film text to this layering of significance.

The feminist scholarship on *Mildred Pierce* has undoubtedly influenced how subsequent spectators (including Haynes himself) have viewed the 1945 film. Cook's 1978 study employs the myth of Demeter and Persephone to elaborate its theme of maternal disempowerment. In the incestuous Greek pantheon, Persephone's mother Demeter, father Zeus and rapacious uncle Hades are siblings whose quarrel over the powers of fertility divide the seasons into the warmth in which Persephone dwells on earth with her mother and the cold that accompanies her annual departure to her uncle in the underworld. Returning to Cain's novel, Haynes queers these incestuous relations by bringing out a theme suppressed in the film – Mildred's erotic obsession with her daughter Veda. In Curtiz's adaptation this homosexual implication is displaced onto Mildred's friendship with Ida. Conversely, Haynes brings mother and daughter together in a kiss. Cook's interest in this scene lead her to refilm it in sequential video essays, one in which she overlays passages from Cain's novel onto Haynes' images, and another in which she slows the kiss

and substitutes a different version of the 'Casta Diva' aria played on the soundtrack. In both cases the invocation of these paratexts elicits additional meanings of love and loss in the story's mother-daughter relationship.

In the spirit of this 'textual interaction and revision', the essay that follows examines another adaptation of a novel filmed by Haynes, Patricia Highsmith's *Carol*. It too involves a mother threatened with the loss of her daughter as well as a lesbian relationship with incestuous overtones. And it too, I argue, is a generic hybrid, of the maternal melodrama and the romance. In considering Haynes' 2015 film together with Highsmith's 1952 novel and the author's biography, as well as psychoanalytic and feminist theorizations of the maternal homoerotic, I employ a range of paratexts to illuminate the incoherences of *Carol*.

This essay examines the characterization of the young lesbian in *Carol* (Todd Haynes, 2015) as what one critic (Bradshaw 2015) terms the 'quasi-daughter' of her lover. Such observations raise the issue of the 'negative' Oedipus complex, Freud's designation of the child's desire for the parent of the same sex. A reading of the film's source novel together with author Patricia Highsmith's journals suggests that its transgressive romance is explicitly Oedipal, uniting the lesbian couple at the 'price' of the mother-daughter relation it supplants. The protagonist of the 1952 novel is a nineteen-year-old woman abandoned by her own mother, whose lover will also leave her daughter. From the perspective of the film's 2015 release that price need not be paid, and its narrative is therefore altered. Where the novel is structured around the point of view of the younger woman, the film adds that of the older one, who seeks to escape the dilemma of relinquishing either her lover or her child. Generically the lesbian romance is combined with the maternal melodrama, a narrative tradition that can exert its own lesbian appeal. Classical melodramas like *Now, Voyager* (Irving Rapper, 1942) have been said to enact a maternal homoerotic fantasy without an explicit lesbian union by offering the female spectator and her diegetic delegate the figure of the surrogate mother as desirable woman. In portraying the desirable woman as a lesbian mother, the film of *Carol* offers the maternal fantasy *and* the explicit union, but not without its own measure of ambivalence.

There are two imaginaries at work in this film, one of the forbidden lesbianism of the early

1950s, the other of the – comparatively – legitimated relation in the era of equal marriage, the first seen through the lens of the second. This optic is signalled by the film’s importation of photography into its narrative and its citation of photographic images (still and moving) from the period. The younger Therese (Rooney Mara) is an aspiring photographer to whom the older Carol (Cate Blanchett) gives a professional camera. In several scenes photographs are taken, displayed or discussed. Replacing Therese’s training as a theatrical designer in the novel, the medium offers a more direct reference to the process of film making, constructing her point of view as the film’s dominant (but not sole) perspective. But in its marked subjectivity, Therese’s vision is obscured – blocked by obstacles, clouded by tears, at times deliberately eluded by Carol herself. In this regard, it has been compared to the obstructed street scenes of the mid-century Manhattan photographer Saul Leiter, whose work was consulted by Haynes and cinematographer Ed Lachman. And there is another relevant reference, to the ‘negative’ Oedipus complex that Kaja Silverman has read in both psychoanalytic and photographic terms in her account of the mother-daughter relation.

1. A Christmas Carol

The Christian icon of the mother and child is everywhere in Highsmith’s novel, originally titled *The Price of Salt* in a possible allusion to Gide[2] and a more obvious avoidance of Dickens. Left by her mother in the care of nuns, Therese Belivet has arrived in New York to train as a theatrical designer. Her proudest possession is a wooden Madonna purchased in her first month in the city, and one of her sketches resembles a rather eerie doll’s house. With an apprenticeship not yet in sight, she supports herself as a temporary clerk in the toy department of a large store during the holiday rush. There, surrounded by infant effigies that drink and weep, she is befriended by an older saleswoman, like her own mother an immigrant from eastern Europe. In a macabre interlude, Mrs. Robichek takes Therese back to her apartment and insists that she try on a velvet dress that she wants to give her, ‘of a red deeper than blood’. Fascinated at first by her apparition in the mirror, the young woman suddenly undresses in a panic. Her benefactor tucks a blanket around her shivering body and calls her ‘you baby’ (Highsmith 1991: 13-15). When Mrs. Robichek falls asleep, Therese escapes the maternal captivation she has warily observed in the miniature railway at the

store, its circling caboose forever clinging 'to the fleeing train like a child to its mother's skirts' (8).

'Terry' has an art student boyfriend with whom she does not enjoy sex. His immigrant mother is sewing another unwanted dress, in ominous wedding white. Throughout the novel this spurned motherliness is strongly associated with eastern Europe rather than with the WASP society that has bred the store's 'most arrogant' customers, women in 'mink and sable' (9) like Carol Aird, who offers a more elusive and erotic connection with the maternal figure. To invoke Julia Kristeva's distinctions in *Powers of Horror*, Mrs. Aird is not abject, nor subject (a position allocated to Therese via the novel's adoption of her point of view) but object. When Therese first beholds the tall customer in the loose fur coat she cannot look away. After this customer makes her purchases and departs, Therese buys a Christmas card and sends it to her address, signing the store's name and her employee number rather than 'what she might have written - "You are magnificent"' (32). The next time they meet, she declares this outright to the amused Carol. Yet when questioned about herself, the young woman replies with a fictional biography, claiming that her mother is dead. Her six-sentence family romance moves Carol to describe her as 'a strange girl ... flung out of space' but the extra-terrestrial Therese is elated, feeling 'no need of parents and background' (39-40).

Therese has no need of parents because Carol will become her surrogate mother. On her first visit to her suburban home, she is asked her age and told that she's a child. Offered a drink, she obligingly requests hot milk. To Carol's disgust she swallows the scalded liquid with its scum. It tastes 'of bone and blood, of warm flesh or hair, saltless as chalk yet alive as a growing embryo' (54). The nauseating brew and its association with embryonic life call up one of the most vivid definitions of disgust in psychoanalytic literature, from *Powers of Horror*. By avocation a crime writer, Kristeva has saluted Highsmith as one of literature's 'passionate pilgrims to the high places of carnage' (2012, 118) and quoted her *Plotting and Writing Suspense Fiction* in an epigraph to the fourth chapter of her own novel *Murder in Byzantium*: 'Perhaps I have a strong criminal tendency buried deep within me, otherwise I wouldn't be so interested in criminals and I wouldn't write so often about them' (2006, 89). Although *The Price of Salt* (retitled as *Carol*) was not published in Highsmith's name until a decade after the French publication of *Powers of Horror*, her authorship was the subject of

speculation for many years. Might Kristeva have read the pseudonymous edition prior to writing the following observation?

Food loathing is perhaps the most elementary and most archaic form of abjection. When the eyes see or the lips touch that skin on the surface of milk – harmless, thin as a sheet of cigarette paper, pitiful as a nail paring – I experience a gagging sensation, and still farther down, spasms in the stomach (1982: 2-3).

This horror is powerful, Kristeva maintains, because it incites the infant's separation from the mother, enabling it to give birth to itself. Without the intervention of the principle of 'identity, system, order', a principle that Kristeva identifies with the father, the child will stifle within the maternal bond and become a pervert. So deadly is the consequence of this engulfment that it calls to her mind the heap of children's shoes in the museum at Auschwitz and something glimpsed under a Christmas tree, 'dolls, I believe' (1982: 4).

Instead of the milk, Therese vomits up her mother, tearfully confessing to Carol that she is not dead but has abandoned her for a new marriage and family, with a two-hundred-dollar parting gift that she is determined to return. To this her hostess replies 'When you forget about paying her back, then you'll be an adult', a remark that suggests that vengeance might be an ingredient in this gothic concoction. With 'the shriek of a hysterical woman' (Highsmith 1991:55-56) the telephone's ring interrupts their conversation. It is Carol's estranged husband Harge, announcing his arrival to fetch some presents for their young daughter, whom he has claimed for the holiday. The Oedipal father will separate first the daughter and then the 'quasi-daughter' from the lesbian mother, despite the two women's drive away from him across the country.

2. Negative Oedipus

Julia Kristeva may have found her ideal pervert in Patricia Highsmith, a lesbian who was acutely aware of her own incestuous attachment to her mother and its consequences for her sexual orientation. Her fiction and journals reveal that she was both appalled and enthralled

by their claustal connection. 'We are in a vicious circle, of which each of us forms one half', she announced to her diary at the age of 19.[3] An unwanted child left with her Texan grandmother from age 3 to 6, when her mother moved to New York to work as a graphic artist with her new husband, and again for a year at age 12, Highsmith spent much of her life in paroxysms of Oedipal love and resentment, lamenting her mother's absences[4] yet quarrelling with her violently and breaking off all contact during her final years. Her consciousness of this homosexual incest as a double transgression may have driven her defiant interest in perversion as a moral principle, a wilful turning away from good, as well as a sexual pathology.[5] An early reader, Highsmith encountered at age 9 the writings of the Freud populariser Karl Menninger, from whom she would later borrow case histories for her novels. Her favourite, his 1930 bestseller *The Human Mind*, includes this discussion of the Oedipus complex:

Some children are unable to detach sufficient of their family love bonds ever to love anyone else. They are, as we say, *fixated* always on the mother or father, or it may be a brother or sister; or it may be someone who too closely resembles one of these pillars. This is the persistence of an infantile relationship, which in the unconscious workings of the mind becomes a romantic triangle (300).

And in his entry on 'the antisocial type', Menninger claims that "'Perverse" describes these folk better than any other word'.

They play at the game, but break all the rules. They are sometimes possessed of good bodies, good looks, good manners; they lack neither intelligence nor perceptual powers. Their defectiveness is in their emotional and volitional functioning. They cannot keep out of trouble (137).

'Perversion interests me most and is my guiding darkness',[6] Highsmith declared in a diary entry of 1942, the year she graduated from college.

Like many lesbians of her generation, Highsmith consulted a psychoanalyst herself. By late 1948, when her own encounter with a glamorous customer during holiday work at

Bloomingdale's prompted the outline of her second novel, she was undertaking treatment for her sexual aversion to her then fiancé, the writer Marc Brandel. So closely associated is this novel's narrative with the themes of her analysis that it might be characterized as an attempt at working them through. In a lightning transference to her female analyst, the writer recorded their 'mother-child' relationship after their second appointment and subsequent feelings of love and hate. Before she broke off treatment a few months later, Highsmith was told by Dr. Ella Klein[7] that her sexual desire was 'completely connected with attack'. For her part the aggressive analysand considered seducing the homosexual wives in her therapy group — 'better latent than never' — and dismissed her doctor as a 'cut & dried Freudian', an arresting accusation given the pervasive talk of castration anxiety in their sessions (Schenkar 2009: 262-266).

Freud's own theory of the erotic bonds between children and their parents was never that fixed. Although he formulated the Oedipus complex in his self-analysis of the 1890s, his first use of the term did not occur until 1910 and then in regard to a child's love for a parent of the opposite sex (Freud 1910: 171). Only later did he acknowledge its gender ambivalence. In *The Ego and the Id* he proposed that children could develop not only a 'simple' or 'positive' attachment to the parent of the opposite sex but an 'inverted' or 'negative' variant, in which they desire the same-sex parent while identifying with the other (Freud 1923: 33). Further investigation of psychical development quashed the symmetry of this second account, and in his essays on sexuality in the 1920s and early 30s Freud concluded that the mother is the founding love-object of both sexes, who attribute the phallus not only to her but to themselves, with the clitoris functioning for the girl as the penis for the boy. In boys, the task of maturation is to transfer this love to another woman or suffer the penalty of castration; for girls, it demands a double renunciation, of their clitoral sensitivity and their passionate female attachment. In the final revision, the girl's Oedipus complex awaits transference to the father. Its negative variant is replaced by a pre-Oedipal stage of development (Freud 1931: 230), an often-lengthy mother love which if not dissolved by the realization of female castration can linger in residual bisexuality.

The influence of mother love on female sexuality became a major debate within second wave feminism from the 1970s. Its most provocative expression, one that its author Adrienne Rich

later regretted publishing,[8] was 'Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence', a polemic memorably said to have divided its feminist readers between a 'storm of criticism' and a 'furor of consensus' (De Lauretis 1994: 190). Rich's psychoanalytic authority is her contemporary Nancy Chodorow,[9] but her question about female development could equally be addressed to Freud. Why, 'if women are the earliest sources of emotional caring and physical nurture for both female and male children' would women 'ever redirect that search'? In reply Rich eschews the explanation of the missing phallus for a range of social forces 'that wrench women's emotional and erotic energies away from themselves and other women', from endemic heterosexism to physical violence and enslavement. Among these she names a pivotal concern of *Carol*, the 'seizure of children from lesbian mothers by the courts' (Rich 1983: 217-219). But Rich also perceives an erotic bond opposing this compulsion, one that connects lesbianism as a sexual practice to a continuum of 'women-identified' love and care – effectively uniting desire and identification between them. Female maturation is said to link the pleasure of 'the infant sucking her mother's breast, to the grown woman experiencing orgasmic sensations while suckling her own child, perhaps recalling her mother's milk-smell in her own' (229).

Within feminist cinema, the maternal relation also emerged as a topic at this time,[10] notably in Laura Mulvey and Peter Wollen's 1977 experimental film *Riddles of the Sphinx*. Despite its differences from the film under consideration, it not only evidences the salience of *Carol*'s theme forty years earlier, but also anticipates key motifs and devices – particularly the foregrounding of the female photographer. Moreover, it has provoked a series of commentaries on the psychodynamics of the mother-child bond and its import for feminism, one to which this contribution to SEQUENCE is heir. Made to investigate the place of the mother in a patriarchal discourse that consigns her to 'a voice apart, a voice off', unconscious and indecipherable, the film opens with Mulvey's account of the mythological identification of the female parent with the devouring sphinx that besieges Thebes, 'the cannibalistic mother, part bestial, part angelic'. [11] At its centre is a fictional mother, Louise (Dinah Stabb), announced in an intertitle as 'perhaps ... too close to her child'. After her birth she withdraws from her husband and the wider world to care exclusively for her daughter. In a video within the film the real-life artist Mary Kelly characterizes this relation in psychoanalytic terms as 'the inter-subjectivity of the pre-

Oedipal instance'. Kelly's Lacanian account of her own child's infancy assigns this primal connection to the imaginary, the pre-linguistic realm of fusion with the mother.

Kaja Silverman's reading of *Riddles of the Sphinx* begins with an attempt to rehabilitate Kristeva's account of the mother-daughter relation, claiming that it articulates an erotic desire 'which functions in some very profound way as the libidinal basis of feminism' (Silverman 1988: 101-102). But if, in the Freudian-Kristevan schema, the fusion of infant and mother must be ruptured to enable the entry of the paternal symbolic, what is the status of this libidinal connection? Following Freud's description of negation as instinctually destructive (1925: 239), Kristeva posits the same-sex Oedipus as 'negatory of the social, symbolic bond' (Kristeva 1988: 239). She warns of the psychotic regression that looms with the suckling so tenderly evoked by Rich, when a new mother may rediscover a homoerotic connection with her own. In reply Silverman cites the claim of Freud's pupil Jeanne Lampl-de Groot that the girl's love for the mother is not an expression of their primal union but an assertion of desire acquired *after* their separation (1966: 40-41). This fully Oedipal love is argued to foster her anti-patriarchal bond with the mother, and through her, with her own sex. When Louise parts with her husband her daughter becomes her primary focus and her own mother her mainstay. These intimate connections both enforce and enable what the voice off describes as a 'gathering of strength', one that propels Louise into the sociality of work, politics and a new relationship with a woman.

Silverman's especial interest is the film's twelfth shot, in which a centred camera pans around a mirrored room while Louise reads an account of a dream written by the woman she has moved in with, a nursery worker called Maxine (Merdelle Jordine). As Louise recites passages in the transcript, its author listens while applying makeup at a mirror. Their discussion of the dream amidst all these reflections in a red-draped room evokes a dyadic regression deep into the imaginary (Silverman 1988: 135). (The attempts at interpretation and the quilt covered bed also suggest an analytic session.) When Louise reads Maxine's echoing phrase I 'looked at myself in the looking glass', the two women, both wearing dressing gowns, are framed together (see Figure 1, below). The recollected dream features a threatening array of male figures – Maxine's imperious father, soldiers with plumed helmets and an interrogating priest — who are all repelled: 'I had a feeling of jubilation and

in a very loud voice I ordered that all my father's property should be sold by auction.' But in the final seconds of the shot a third term confronts the couple, the cinematographer reflected in one of the mirrors (see Figure 2, below). The imaginary gives way to the symbolic, but a symbolic represented by a camerawoman.



Figure 1 – Riddles of the Sphinx: Louise and Maxine reflected in the mirror



Figure 2 – Riddles of the Sphinx: A mirror in Maxine's room discloses the camerawoman

The toddler Anna is not present in this scene, but in Shot 13 she is seen with her mother in the Egyptian Room of the British Museum. Circling past a series of ancient sarcophagi the camera intermittently discloses the upper body of Louise, viewed through the glass-enclosed exhibits while the voice off recounts a half-forgotten description of another box, containing a figure of the sphinx. Speaking from an apparent time in the future, the female voice digresses to several childhood memories- her mother carrying her on her hip, her elation at her father's leaving, then 'finding her mother's friend sleeping next to her mother' and feeling 'a surge of panic, as if she'd been left behind and lost':

She thought her mother would be angry, but she smiled, and, when she got out of bed, she noticed the shapes of the arch of her foot and her heel and the back of the calf.

As this sentence is heard Louise and Anna are revealed together, walking hand in hand and then bending forward to ponder the enigmatic hieroglyphs inscribed on the cases of these

‘mummies’.

Silverman reads these memories as a recollection of loss followed by desire: Maxine’s arrival severs the mother-child dyad, instigating the negative Oedipus. Moreover, this black woman’s visual contrast with the white Louise calls up a photographic negative: ‘Maxine ... introduces otherness into what would otherwise escape difference and desire. She is the third term that separates Anna from Louise, thereby making it possible for the former to invest erotically in the latter. Maxine is also, at least within the terms of this reading, the trace of Louise’s negative Oedipus complex, in much the same way that a photographic negative might be said to be the trace of its positive – she is both a black figure in the otherwise white tableau, and the object of Louise’s desire’ (132).

Here the use of ‘negative’, while as problematic in regard to race as it is to sexuality, acknowledges the reflected camera as well as the negative’s primacy in the process of photographic printing – a possible parallel to this early stage in Freud’s scheme of psychic ‘development’. More obvious is its allusion to the chiaroscuro configurations of the cinema’s lesbian couples: sometimes racially distinguished, as in this film and *She Must Be Seeing Things* (Sheila MacLoughlin, 1987), often in hair colour, and frequently coded butch and femme in oppositions of light and dark. *Desert Hearts* (Donna Deitch, 1985), in which a blonde divorcee falls for a darker lesbian, stands as a popular example of these conventions, while Leontine Sagan’s 1931 *Maedchen in Uniform* (in which the fair-haired teenager Manuela declares her love for her brunette teacher while cross dressed for the school play) is their prototype. And then there’s *The Killing of Sister George* (Robert Aldrich, 1968) whose eponymous butch has brown hair and a fair girlfriend called Childie. (The correlation of these differences in colouring with those of gender identification might allude to the aspect of the negative Oedipus which both *Riddles of the Sphinx* and Silverman avoid, identification with the parent of the opposite sex.) Highsmith’s novel, however, makes both lovers blonde in what can be read as a predetermined – almost ancestral – attraction, signalled by the gothic revelation of Carol’s resemblance to an old portrait hung in Therese’s school. Conversely, its film adaptation casts the dark-haired Mara against the perfectly named Blanchett.

What all these films must negotiate is the relation of similarity and difference, so often equated with an assumed antithesis of identification and desire, in love between women. In its emphasis on its characters' consciousness-raising discoveries of shared experience (of motherhood, childcare, workplace organisation, etc.) *Riddles of the Sphinx* emphatically privileges love as a form of politically enabling identification. The combination suggests to Silverman those object choices that Freud (1914: 90) deems narcissistic — desire for what one is; what one was; what one would like to be; someone who was once part of oneself — the conjugation of the film's three female generations. Her account of the film concludes with its description as an affirmation of 'a female collectivity capable of transcending class, ethnic, cultural, geographical, and historical boundaries' based on 'a primary and passionate desire for the mother' (139).

Teresa de Lauretis's reply to Silverman, Rich and other exponents of the maternal homoerotic acknowledges its contribution to feminist solidarity while disputing its primacy in lesbian relations, a distinction between the ethical and the sexual that will offer an important perspective on the dual point of view structure adopted for the film of *Carol*. *The Practice of Love*, her ambitious reconsideration of the psychodynamics of lesbian sexuality, argues strongly that its 'fantasmatic object is not the mother, but the denied and wished for female body' (288). The 'castration' that initiates this object choice is a primary narcissistic loss of body image, a psychic wound that seeks its healing in the sign of the lesbian lover's desire. As sign or object, it functions as a fetish, a highly valued token not of the phallus (maternal or paternal) but of 'the female body itself' (262). Rather than *identifying* with her lover's desire, the lesbian *desires* it, and its validation of her own female body-image. De Lauretis is categorical in her dismissal of the 'popular feminist fantasy which projects onto female sexuality certain features of an idealised feminist sociality' (185), not least the mother-daughter relation. Yet her own account of the lesbian's primal failure to receive the narcissistic validation of her body-image ironically rediscovers the figure of the mother. Where Rich's lesbian continuum and Mulvey's mirrored couple are sustained by an extrapolated mother-love, de Lauretis's lesbianism is constituted by its absence.

This is all too easy to perceive in the anguish of Stephen Gordon, the wounded butch in Radcliffe Hall's novel *The Well of Loneliness* whose mother finds her infant appearance

repulsive. Her femme counterpart describes her own bodily restitution in a dialogue between Amber Hollibaugh and Cherrie Moraga: 'Part of the reason I love to be with butches is because I feel I repair that damage ... I feel that as a femme I get back my femaleness and give a different definition of femaleness to a butch' (410). More problematic for de Lauretis is a heroine whose physical narcissism has been so injured by her tyrannical mother that she becomes a recluse, Charlotte Vale (Bette Davis) in *Now Voyager* (Irving Rapper, 1942). This prototypical makeover film traces Charlotte's transformation into a chic philanthropist who, after a brief romance with the unhappily married Jerry (Paul Henreid) and the demise of her wealthy mother, presides over her Boston circle without 'a man of [her] own'. Instead of resuming her affair with Jerry, Charlotte becomes the spinster guardian of his 12-year old daughter Tina (Janis Wilson), herself traumatised to the point of breakdown by a rejecting mother. To take up this role Charlotte must relinquish her still-married lover, at the insistence of the psychiatrist who has treated both her and Tina. Her willingness to do this has prompted readings of 'a homosexual desire played across the film' including Stanley Cavell's guess that Charlotte may be 'contemplating' such a possibility, as suggested by the film's titular citation of the homosexual poet Walt Whitman and the camp performance of its leading actress (279). But de Lauretis is not persuaded, arguing that despite these allusions to ('male') homosexual culture, the film offers no "'possibility" of female homosexuality as such, or of actual "homosexual desire"' (138).

Nevertheless, female homosexuality has persisted in readings of *Now, Voyager*, most notably in one by de Lauretis's former doctoral student, Patricia White. Their differing interpretations (and indeed our own) may reflect differing personal investments in the subject, de Lauretis pointing out that she arrived at her lesbianism after heterosexual involvements, and White maintaining that *Now, Voyager* addresses 'the untold want' of 'spectators like me' (White 1999: 96). And what those spectators are said to want is Bette Davis as Charlotte Vale, who makes herself available for lesbian fantasy by taking Tina on a camping trip reminiscent of a night she once shared with Jerry, and cradling his sleeping daughter in her arms. But this is not Oedipal, argues White, because Charlotte is a *surrogate* 'mother' (italics and quotation marks her own), a governess figure who can thus become the 'object of desire for the spectator who takes up the girl's position' (White 1999: 129). White (2015: 14) has subsequently argued that this 'girl's position' is also made

available to the spectators of *Carol*, to which I now turn.

3. Mommy's Baby, Carol's Maybe

The first encounter of Therese and Carol in the film also takes place in the toy department of Frankenberg's department store, walled by cabinets of dolls and advertisements for the likes of 'Bella Baby'. The glass eyed infants, those patent signifiers of the uncanny, provoke a certain horror but the gothic overtones of the novel are downplayed, notably by Therese's donning of the comic Santa cap mandated for the Christmas sales staff. Enhanced by her schoolgirl dress and diminutive features, her elfin appearance is contrasted with that of the much taller customer examining an electric train across the floor. As she makes her way to Therese, a sign proclaiming 'Mommy's Baby \$8.00' is repeatedly visible behind her counter (see Figure 3, below). Carol's initial request, for a doll identified as one that 'cries and wets herself', is out of stock, prompting a question that underlines the generational difference between the two women. What was Therese's favourite doll at age four? Her reply - that she preferred trains - propels the scene forward from the 1950s into a politically correct present, as does her insistence that smoking is not permitted. The flustered customer returns her lighter to her purse and pulls out the first photograph of the film, of a little girl whose dark hair is cut in a short bob. 'She looks like you - around the eyes', lies the saleswoman who herself resembles the pictured child. Their photographic similarity will be restated subsequently, when Carol notices a portrait of Therese at a similar age in her apartment.



Figure 3 – 'Mommy's Baby': Therese in the toy department

The next scene obliquely establishes another aspect of this intergenerational relation, that of the older woman as the powerful purveyor of sartorial style to her younger lover. Therese and her boyfriend Richard crouch in a cinema projection booth, watching the scene in *Sunset Boulevard* (Billy Wilder, 1951) in which the aging actress Norma Desmond (Gloria Swanson) dresses her screenwriter toy boy (William Holden) in white tie and tails, telling him 'You look absolutely divine.'^[12] This brief allusion is one of several to the films of the period, but it functions as more than a cinephile reference, quickly yielding to Carol at home brushing her daughter Rindy's hair (See Figure 4, below), a gesture of tenderness and tutelage that will be repeated with Rindy and then with Therese. At the film's conclusion Carol will behold the latter – now dressed in smart office clothes – and tell her 'You look really fine.'



Figure 4 – Rindy’s face is obscured as Carol brushes her hair

This styling gathers impetus as the two women drive into the Midwest, with Carol flirtatiously applying cosmetics and perfume to Therese in their motel room. It is interspersed with a repeated composition that also suggests both erotic intimacy and maternal solicitude, in which Carol stands above the sitting Therese and lightly touches her shoulder. This touch frames the flashback from their interrupted conversation at the film’s opening to its repetition near the end, and only once is it reversed – when Therese attempts to comfort Carol after the older woman’s discovery of the younger’s girlhood photograph provokes tears about her enforced separation from Rindy. The motifs coalesce on New Year’s Eve, when – like Louise and Maxine — they are mirrored together wearing dressing gowns, Carol standing above the sitting Therese and stroking her hair as the two confide to each other their previous loneliness (see Figure 5, below). In this redoubled figure identification and erotic longing are conjoined, to be then disavowed when Carol regards Therese’s naked body and says ‘I never looked like that.’



Figure 5 – Therese and Carol reflected in the mirror

Unlike Tina in *Now, Voyager*, Mara's Therese is no ugly duckling, although her costumes seem to be modelled on Audrey Hepburn's pre-makeover pinafore in *Sabrina*, another Wilder film from 1954. Despite her technological inclinations, any association with more than mild tomboyishness is still ruled out by what de Lauretis laments (two decades before *Carol*) as the 'conventional casting and characterization' (114) of the mainstream lesbian romance, indicting *Personal Best* (Robert Towne, 1982), *Desert Hearts* (Donna Deitch, 1985) and *Black Widow* (Bob Rafelson, 1987). Therese's cosmetics lesson is an excuse for physical contact, not the body-image therapy performed by Charlotte Vale. But Therese is, as Carol's former lover Abby (Sarah Paulson) declares emphatically, *young*, an immaturity emphasized by brightly lit close-ups of her wide-eyed expressions and a marked deficit of dialogue – particularly in comparison with Carol's flirtatious badinage from the moment they meet.[13] Observing this blankness White applies her analysis of Tina's role in *Now, Voyager* to the similar part played by Therese – as a position available for the spectator's appropriation.

This comparison is made even more apt by Blanchett's recent claim, after playing another surrogate mother in the live-action *Cinderella* (Kenneth Branagh, 2015), that she increasingly models her performances on those of the stars of high melodrama, Bette Davis as well as Barbara Stanwyck and Joan Crawford.[14] The parallel with Davis is particularly well supported by the two stars' reflexive performance styles, stage backgrounds and repeat portrayals of the virgin Queen Elizabeth I, the spinster guardian of an entire nation.[15] But instead of *Now, Voyager's* subtle invitation to lesbian fantasy, *Carol's* lesbian fantasy is opened out to the general spectator. 'Therese,' White maintains, 'becomes the single subjectivity from which all the characters, emotions and events emanate, a position akin to the spectator's' (White, 2015, 12). Yet the single point of view of the novel, and the film's gesture to it in its use of the flashback, do not comprise the entirety of this adaptation. There is a second subjectivity and a second genre at work in *Carol*. And these additions are crucial to the film's negation of its perverse origins.

4. A Family Romance

Highsmith's narrative is an account of what Therese knows, sees, overhears, is told and imagines, a narrative of a young person's fascination with a glamorous older one. After a private detective sends recordings of their lovemaking to Carol's husband and she leaves Therese to negotiate access to her daughter, the older woman's ensuing experience is conveyed in letters and later summarized in a conversation. The novel's unitary point of view is essential to a romance whose enigma is a highly alluring but potentially treacherous figure. Its generic apparatus includes a portrait whose sinister import Therese suddenly recognises when she encounters a copy of it after Carol breaks off their relationship:

She knew the picture was exactly the same, only much larger, and she had seen it many times in the hall that led to the music room ... It was Carol. Now in the long moment while she could not look away from it, the mouth smiled and the eyes regarded her with nothing but mockery, the last veil lifted and revealing nothing but mockery and gloating, the splendid satisfaction of the betrayal accomplished. (232)

As David Bordwell has pointed out, Haynes' adaptation adds Carol's point of view to its narrative, creating what he terms a 'dual protagonist film'. This alteration is claimed to show that the 'two women share the same goal, romantic union ... By being transported to Manhattan and seeing what Carol is struggling against, we can appreciate Carol's profound sacrifice for Therese.' An 'if-only-they-both-realised' wish is elicited, with the audience knowing 'Carol to be more courageous than Therese does, which makes the young woman's decision not to reignite their affair more regrettable' (Bordwell, 2016).

Although Bordwell acknowledges the influence this doubling of protagonists has on the film's narrative structure, he does not discuss its doubling of genres, the addition of the maternal melodrama to the lesbian romance. This is also important, and not just because of our ironic realization of their reciprocal affection. Indeed, the maternal melodrama threatens to undermine the mutuality of the romance plot. The novel's heroine wants Carol. But what does Carol want? Ultimately she tells Therese that she 'refused to live by a list of silly promises they'd made up like a list of misdemeanours - even if it did mean they'd lock Rindy away from me as if I were an ogre. And it did mean that' (248). The young woman can imagine all too well the antagonism that this limited access will create between Carol and her daughter, because she too was a child whose mother rarely visited. In the back story that the film omits the widowed Mrs. Belivet is a touring musician who later marries and starts a new family, offering ample motives for Oedipal resentment and sibling rivalry. Despite this realization Therese is immensely relieved to discover that 'Carol had not betrayed her. Carol loved her more than she loved her child' (250). Had this competitive attitude been retained, the film adaptation might have joined Haynes' *Poison* (1990) in the transgressive annals of Queer Cinema, with its characteristic resistance to 'positive' images. Instead the passage of time, the aspiration for a more general audience and the need to create a lead role for Blanchett demand a second subjectivity, one whose normativity contradicts the possessive desire of Highsmith's Therese.

At the advent of the couple's first lovemaking, the film's point of view switches and Therese becomes the object of the erotic look, with her naked body displayed while Carol retains her robe. The latter's appropriation of the gaze is signalled by her exclamation 'I never looked like that', a looking which can be understood as both appearing and seeing. But the film's

shift to Carol's perspective opens it to the dilemma of the maternal melodrama, whose heroines are typically torn between romantic and parental love. The ethical supremacy of the latter requires some form of sacrifice and, almost inevitably, the romance is abandoned. To invoke Blanchett's models, Bette Davis relinquishes Jerry in *Now Voyager*; Barbara Stanwyck sacrifices her entire social existence for her daughter in *Stella Dallas* (King Vidor, 1937); and Joan Crawford loses two husbands in her devotion to the ungrateful child she toils for throughout *Mildred Pierce* (Michael Curtiz, 1945). These precedents suggest that Carol will have to give up Therese to retain Rindy (a role split between identical twins, KK and Sadie Hein), and her additional scenes are filled with her unhappy contemplation of this fate. In a nod to Highsmith's analysis, they include an agonizing conversation with her in-laws about the psychotherapy she is undertaking to qualify for unsupervised access to her child. In Therese's absence, we see the sanctioned dominance of Harge (Kyle Chandler), Carol's increasing desperation and her reliance on the support of Abby, but very little of Rindy. As Carol descends into depression the *maquillage* she has taught to Therese wears away, even as the younger woman acquires more poise and style.

Carol's near-suicidal feelings will provide an avenue of escape, albeit a very contemporary one in another of the film's lurches into the present day. When she asks what use she is to Rindy 'looking into my own grave', an ethical solution to her dilemma appears. Where the novel's Carol proudly refuses the constraints that Harge and his family want to impose on *her*, deciding never to demand access again, the film's protagonist delivers an impassioned speech about the welfare of the child, described as 'the most breathtaking, the most generous of gifts' a couple can give each other. Refusing to gainsay her feelings for Therese, she nevertheless warns her husband and his lawyers about 'the mess we are about to make of a child's life' if she is denied regular visits and forced to go to court. In the name of the child, Carol appeals for the legal right to lesbian motherhood that will have been won by the time of the film's debut, the future perfect in both senses. The combination of tenses with which the period piece superimposes the present of its making onto the past of its story allows it to assert the couple's innocence while defying the residual gravity of previous prohibition. As one critic argues, 'Therese and Carol's forbidden love must be kept secret in ways that would be unnecessary now, at least for American women of their class, race and region; one can imagine a contemporary judge awarding Rindy to the two loving moms

rather than the bullying, homophobic Harge' (Prose, 2015). The lesbian romance and the maternal melodrama, the erotic and the ethical, are united with the two protagonists. In a mid-century Sirk film the improbability of their happiness would be a reminder of the injustice that prevents it. Today that remembered jeopardy brings to mind de Lauretis's complaint about Rich's lesbian continuum, that its linking of female affections both transgressive and normative makes the latter 'more radical, thrilling but safe' (192).

5. Camerawork

Although the young Highsmith was befriended in the 1940s by distinguished photographers including Berenice Abbott, Ruth Bernhard and Rolf Tietgens, her novel's pictorial references are largely to Therese's theatrical sketches and the painting that her boyfriend Richard is studying. The sole photographic image is a snapshot of Rindy boating with her father.[16] Yet when recalling her real-life customer in the toy department Highsmith invoked the medium in menacing terms. A year and half after their encounter, she celebrated the completion of the novel's first draft with a pilgrimage to her suburban avenue. Although she glimpsed a woman with blonde hair driving past, she couldn't identify her. On the following day she wrote in her notebook that she had 'felt quite close to murder, as I went to see the house of the woman who almost made me love her when I saw her for a moment in December, 1948':

Murder is a kind of making love, a kind of possessing. (Is it not attention, for a moment, from the object of one's affections?) To arrest her suddenly, my hands upon her throat (which I should really like to kiss) as if I took a photograph, to make her in an instant cool and rigid as a statue.[17]

In Highsmith's novel Carol is compared to a statue of Venus and a painting of a 'smiling woman in the ornate dress of some court, the hand poised just below the throat, the arrogant head half turned, as if the painter had somehow caught her in motion' (232). When she abandons Therese, the younger woman's belated realization of Carol's resemblance to this mocking figure is described as a birth: 'her stifled cry was like the first yell of an infant,

being dragged into the world against its will' (247). To elaborate the notebook's photographic metaphor, this fixing of the image, stabilising the threatening woman as a 'cool and rigid' object of representation, enables Therese's emergence from maternal engulfment.

The imagined treachery of this maternal figure returns me to Freud, and the paranoia which he ascribes to the conflicted 'mother-complex' (Freud 1915: 267) of a female patient in a 1915 case study. As in Highsmith's novel, the case involves surveillance, but this time of the daughter: the woman believes that her clandestine meetings with a male colleague are being photographed at his behest and their details disclosed to an elderly superior with white hair like her mother's. Her evidence for this surveillance is a clicking sound coming from behind the curtain in the lover's room and the small box carried by two men she sees whispering together on the stairs. Despite her lover's denials, she concludes that he is not only having her photographed but also betraying her with the older woman. The similarity between this rival and her own mother, a widow on whom she is said to have a homosexual dependence, leads Freud to attribute her suspicions to a primal fantasy in which the imagined couple play the role of her parents. Its acoustic character suggests the overhearing of 'the sounds which betray parental intercourse or those by which the listening child fears to betray itself' (269). The daughter is argued to identify with the older woman, and the click interpreted as the spasm of her own genital pleasure.

The projected primal scene, in which the protagonist moves from childish auditor to adult participant, also features in Highsmith's novel and its film adaptation. In both versions Therese overhears Carol quarrelling with Harge on her first visit to their home. Later in the novel Carol tells Therese that Harge's detective recorded their first lovemaking via 'a spike that picks up sound like a dictaphone' (249) driven through the wall of their room. The detective's taping of the couple's intimacy is also a central incident in the film, but it follows and is paralleled with Therese's visual surveillance of Carol through the viewfinder of her camera. Both the aural and the visual perception of the attentive child are signalled in the audible clicking of Therese's camera as she presses the shutter.

In assigning photography to Therese, the film awards her the ostensible point of view and —

acknowledging the female authors Highsmith and screenwriter Phyllis Nagy — artistic enunciation. Not only does Therese's flashback frame its narrative but her own visible camerawork follows the conspicuous opening crane shot that pursues the young man who interrupts her reunion with Carol. The film's attention to its cinematic origins is also apparent in its allusions to mid-century movies — the previously mentioned Wilder films and David Lean's 1945 *Brief Encounter* (the couple's interrupted parting, the flashback framing of its ensuing narrative, Therese's reflection in a train window and the romantic piano chords that theme composer Carter Burwell lays over a more contemporary string ostinato reminiscent of Philip Glass). The scene in which Therese photographs Carol buying a Christmas tree at a snowy roadside lot (see Figures 6 and 7, below) is reminiscent of a similar incident in *All That Heaven Allows* (1955), although Haynes' long-time cinematographer Ed Lachman has stressed their rejection of Douglas Sirk's stylized primaries for the more subdued tones of mid-century photographers like Abbott and Vivian Maier as well as Saul Leiter, their visual reference for the 2011 *Mildred Pierce* (Stasukevich, 2015: 1).



Figure 6 – Therese photographs Carol at the Christmas tree lot



Figure 7 – Carol photographed by Therese at the Christmas tree lot

In Leiter's blurred street scenes, rain streaks, reflections, cars and umbrellas obscure passers-by. The haze of reminiscence is intensified in the film's rendition of the period in the photochemical grain of Super 16, conveying (with repeated shots of Therese asleep and a remarkable amount of drinking) what White calls a 'swoony' and Bradford a 'woozy' eroticism. Often viewed through the windows of taxis and trains, the mise en scene attempts not a depiction of '50s Manhattan, but of a memory of the city refracted through photographs of the period. Blocked, framed off or seen from behind, its human figures are faceless, a strategy which Haynes also adopts in filming Carol's young daughter. A brief scene of Therese leafing through her own prints – actually taken in the 1960s by photographer Brian Blausen – reveals a similar style. But in a change underlined by some pointed dialogue, falling in love encourages a move to portraiture, including a close-up of the sleeping Carol (See Figure 8, below). Pulled from the developing fluid by a rueful Therese after the two have parted, her image – hair tousled, eyes closed – is a melancholy souvenir of a dead love affair, if not the dead lover of Highsmith's notebook.



Figure 8 – Carol's portrait in the developing fluid

Both the photograph and the fetish, Christian Metz has argued, signify loss and protection against it. Often the last object seen before the terrifying registration of maternal castration, the fetishized 'piece of clothing or underclothing' is argued to stop the look like the photographic 'take'. Both function like death in their 'abduction of the object out of the world into another world, another kind of time', with Metz observing how the act of taking pictures has so often been 'compared with shooting, and the camera with a gun' (Metz 1985, 84). But if a photograph can figure death in its silence and its stillness, it can also suppress such loss by its equivocal registration of a past presence, the combination of disavowal and acknowledgement by which the fetishist is said to fend off the unbearable realization of the missing penis. Here Metz pauses to wonder how this fear of castration might apply to 'children whose body is similar to the mother's' (89), acknowledging the genital resemblance that complicates the application of this theory to female homosexuality. Without ascribing a clinical fetishism to the latter (a question that De Lauretis deals with at some length), Therese's experience of love, loss, disillusion and a compensatory 'fixing' of the beloved's image through the medium of photography can be said to summon up this

syndrome. But to follow Metz, any such 'fetish' will itself be swept away by the anti-fetishistic momentum of the cinema, 'a stream of temporality where nothing can be kept, nothing stopped' (83). Even a short film is too mobile, too long and too large to function as a fetish: 'Things are too unstable and there are too many of them on the screen.' (88) Within this formulation, the image of the lost lover will be overwhelmed by the motion picture of which it is a fragment. The photograph may say death but the film, and Therese, move on before we fully register that statement.

The differences in scale between Therese's photographs and the film in which they appear confirm her apprentice status in the work of image making, an abiding youthfulness. In this she remains a 'quasi-daughter' and a potential rival to Rindy. Already parted from her mother for the Christmas holidays, Rindy is not present in any scene of the novel. But while her 'eviction' (White 2015: 14) from the narrative enables the couple to embark on their travels and consummate their romance, the maternal melodrama demands her inclusion to demonstrate Carol's conflicted feelings. The film's solution is the creation of brief scenes between mother and daughter before and after that journey, but scenes that distance the child enough to maintain our sympathy with Therese and obviate any impression of a rivalry.

Here Leiter's compositions are also employed, not to represent the anonymity of urban life but to efface Rindy, often filmed at a distance, her features obscured by a hat or turned away from the camera. Indicatively, when the mother brushes her daughter's hair or hugs her after their separation, it is Carol who is more visible. This tactic, so different from the fuller characterizations of beloved daughters in classical melodrama, emphasizes the mother's distress, frees her for our erotic contemplation and prevents any untoward engagement with the plight of the little girl. The efforts to obscure the images of Carol's daughter suggest that the film's blurred style is not simply elegiac reminiscence, or the superimposition of past and present, but an equivocal negation, repelling a distressing perception while somehow acknowledging it. The opposed interests of Therese and Rindy create a necessary irresolution, a form of visual censorship which in an inspired malapropism a student of mine once described as the 'haze code'. [18]

The difficulty of getting the erotic and the ethical into focus is the issue of the maternal

melodrama, and arguably of psychoanalysis itself, but neither the film's resort to this genre nor its source's supreme indifference to its sentimentality offer an answer. Those who would imagine a happy ending in which the Oedipal daughter becomes a lesbian co-mother should bear in mind Highsmith's own warning that

One situation - maybe one alone - could drive me to murder: family life, togetherness.[19]

If the era of equal marriage made *Carol* filmable, its perverse romance was written to trouble that ethos. Far from 'blurring'[20] the maternal homoerotic with an idealised sociality, Highsmith's novel depicts the triumph of lesbian desire over family ties, to the immense pleasure of readers in the 1950s and since. The 'primary and passionate love for the mother' (Silverman: 139) results in the daughter's displacement by the lover, the formation of the female couple rather than a lesbian family. The film's answer to this ethical quandary is to disavow it, counterposing the likely loss of the daughter at mid-century with the consolation of contemporary custody. The prospect of the mother's sacrifice is postponed beyond the conclusion, to the more liberal present of its spectatorship. The plot of the melodrama is enacted — but without the price.

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NOTES

[1] Cinematographer Ed Lachman also observed this crossover in *Carol*. See Iain Stasukevich, 'Carol', *American Cinematographer*, December 2015, p. 1.

[2] Joan Schenkar, *The Talented Miss Highsmith: The Secret Life and Serious Art of Patricia Highsmith*, New York: St. Martin's Press, 2009, p. 272, claims that the title may allude to a Gospel passage in a favourite book of Highsmith's, Andre Gide's 1925 novel about adolescent sexuality, *The Counterfeiters* (New York: Vintage Books 1973) p. 123: "'If the salt have lost its flavour wherewith shall it be salted?'"

[3] In Diary 1, December 1941, p. 112, Highsmith asks 'Could I possibly be in love with my own mother? Perhaps in some incredible way I am.' Quoted in Schenkar, *The Talented Miss Highsmith*, p.20.

[4] At 17 she wrote in her notebook (Cahier 9, February 4, 1938) , 'M[other] will never leave S[tanley, her second husband] and never know real happiness. I know we could be happy us two.' Quoted in Schenkar, *The Talented Miss Highsmith*, p. 110.

[5] 'There is nothing I would not do, murder, destruction, vile sexual practices. I would also, however, read my Bible,' Highsmith observed (Cahier 16, September 4, 1947) in a fit of jealousy at the infidelity of her lover Virginia Catherwood, a wealthy woman on whose own child custody suit *Carol* is partly based. – See Schenkar, *The Talented Miss Highsmith*, p. 284.

[6] Diary 3, September 17, 1942, quoted in Schenkar, *The Talented Miss Highsmith*, p. xviii.

[7] Readers familiar with Melanie Klein's theories of the infant's aggressive attitude to the mother will note this analyst's similarity to her namesake. In 'Early Stages of the Oedipus Complex' (1928) Klein claims that the one-year-old child 'desires to destroy the libidinal object by biting, devouring and cutting it, which leads to anxiety, since awakening of the

Oedipus tendencies is followed by introjections of the object, which then becomes one from which punishment is to be expected.’ – in Juliet Mitchell (ed.), *The Selected Melanie Klein*, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1986, p. 71.

[8] ‘When I began to hear that it was being claimed by some separatist lesbians as an argument against heterosexual intercourse altogether, I began to feel acutely and disturbingly the distance between speculative intellectual searching and the need for absolutes in the politics of lesbian feminism.’ – Adrienne Rich, ‘Reflections on “Compulsory Heterosexuality”’, *Journal of Women’s History* 16.1 (2004), 9.

[9] Nancy Chodorow, *The Reproduction of Mothering*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978, p. 200, briefly observes that lesbian ‘relationships do tend to re-create mother/daughter emotions and connections, but most women are heterosexual’ due to prevailing taboos.

[10] See also *Mirror Phase* (Carola Klein, UK 1978) and *Daughter Rite* (Michelle Citron, US 1979).

[11] This and all subsequent quotations from the dialogue may be found in Laura Mulvey and Peter Wollen, ‘*Riddles of the Sphinx: Script*’, *Screen* 18:2, Summer 1977, pp. 61-77.

[12] This may also be an allusion to Highsmith’s colourful biography, since the lover on whom she partially based the character of Carol, Virginia Kent Catherwood, was later accused of alienating the affections of the real life silent star on whom *Sunset Boulevard* is said to be based, Mae Murray. See Schenkar, *The Talented Miss Highsmith*, p. 285.

[13] Here script writer Phyllis Nagy’s claim to Patricia White that the novel’s heroine is, as Highsmith’s stand-in, ‘virtually character-free’ seems mistaken. Because Therese does represent Highsmith she is endowed with many of her interests and attributes. Her stage models reflect the author’s penchant for woodworking, she has read Gertrude Stein in her school library, and when Carol first asks about her background she suavely replies ‘What could be duller than past history!’ See Patricia White, ‘Sketchy Lesbians’, *Film Quarterly*

69:2, Winter 2015, p. 8.

[14] 'I think it's the deliciousness, the relish that they had, the wonderful attack they had on the characters they play on screen.' Quoted in James Mottram, 'Cate Blanchett on Getting Spite Just Right in Cinderella', March 11, 2015, www.thenational.ae/arts-lifestyle/film/cate-blanchett-on-getting-it-right-in-cinderella. Accessed 09.02.16. This echoes the observation of Stanley Cavell cited by de Lauretis (p. 133) in regard to *Now, Voyager*, the 'theatricalization of desire' in Bette Davis's performances, particularly her 'hysterical energy'. See Cavell, 'Ugly Duckling, Funny Butterfly', p. 227. See also Jennifer O'Meara, 'Cate Blanchett's Deconstruction of Performance through Performance', *The Cine-Files*, <http://www.thecine-files.com/cate-blanchetts-deconstruction-of-performance-through-performance/>. Accessed 2/0/2016.

[15] See Elisabeth Bronfen and Barbara Straumann, 'Elizabeth I: The Cinematic Afterlife of an Early Modern Political Diva', in Mandy Merck (ed.), *The British Monarchy on Screen*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2016.

[16] I can find only one reference to the cinema in Highsmith's novel, when Therese looks around the hotel room in which she has made love with Carol for the first time and thinks that 'She would remember every detail of this room forever' (168). From Highsmith, a devoted Garbo fan who insisted that the star resembled her mother, the citation of *Queen Christina* (Rouben Mamoulian, 1933) is clear.

[17] Cahier 19, July 1, 1950, quoted in Schenkar, *The Talented Miss Highsmith*, p. 282.

[18] Named after Will H. Hays, President of the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America, the Motion Picture Production Code was the Hollywood studios' ruling code of self-censorship between 1930 and 1968.

[19] Cahier 31, August 15, 1972, quoted in Schenkar, *The Talented Miss Highsmith*, p. 2.

[20] De Lauretis indicatively uses this term when challenging, for example, the use of Rich's



'lesbian continuum' argument 'to blur ... the distinction between feminism and lesbianism',
p. 192.