COLOUR AND GENDER IN AUSTRALIAN FILM

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Certificate of Authorship and Originality of Thesis (Declaration)

The research and discussion presented in this thesis are the original work of the author and has not been submitted in any tertiary institute or University for any other award. Any material which has been presented by any person or institute has been duly referenced, and a complete list of all references is presented in the bibliography.

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List of Publications

2005 *Colour Healing in the New Age: Gender, Power and Subjectivity*, Honours Thesis, Rockhampton: CQUniversity.

2006 'Blue in the New Age: New Spirituality or Old Hegemony?', Perth: University of Western Australia - Murdoch University: *TASA Conference Proceedings*, December 4-7.

2007 'Colour, Gender and *Gone With the Wind'*, Auckland: University of Auckland: *TASA-SAANZ Conference Proceedings*, December 4-7.

2008 '*Sin City:* an object lesson in colour', Melbourne: University of Melbourne: *TASA Conference Proceedings*, December 2-5.

2009 '"Her husband barely in the grave…and *that dress*!": Colour, Gender and Lady Sarah Ashley', Canberra: Australian National University, *TASA Conference Proceedings,* December 1-4.

Chapter 1 Introduction to the Thesis

Introduction

This thesis is of necessity experimental both in design and content. Sociological literature on the study of colour is limited to concerns of race and class, so that colour has become a euphemism for these concepts. This is not the intention of this study – I am examining colour as the hues we perceive in everyday activities and their social significations when used deliberately in representation. I have long held interest in how colour terms are used in language to indicate psycho-emotional states, but have questioned why, when we live in a world where colour concepts can even differentiate gender attributes – the Western pink-for-girls, blue-for-boys phenomenon for example – there has been very little investigation of colours as a social markers, apart from the aforementioned use to indicate race. My investigations have led me into psychological, anthropological, philosophical and cultural realms to uncover colour 'knowledge' and from there to semiology, representation and feminism in search of the tools with which to expose colour to a sociological analysis.

What follows in this thesis is that journey, colour use examined in respect of its marking of gender attributes in a major social reproducer of these concepts, popular narrative film. The study had to be approached from both a macro and micro perspective, and because of the sheer volume of information available in each film, only that colour information pertinent to gender displays of the primary characters in the study films is presented here. Nonetheless, even this restriction has provided more data than can be adequately addressed in this thesis. As a novel approach to the investigation of colour, this study lacks the theoretical underpinnings available to traditional scientific studies, so has drawn from a wide range of literature in search of cornerstones upon which to build the research. Before a case could be made regarding colour's use in representing gender, it was necessary to establish the structure of the films, and so I elicited from various academic modalities those aspects that seemed most fruitful for my purpose. Drawing from quite disparate disciplines has necessitated the inclusion in this document of two literature reviews – one to locate the theoretical background relating to colour and the other to address the methodology adopted for the analysis.

Introduction to the Thesis

In this chapter I will address the background to the study and present an overview of the thesis chapters. My intention is to open up a space for a new way of approaching gender studies – to examine how the presentation of selves in a symbolic way links to psycho-emotional states exhibited in colour uses. Completion of this ambitious project is beyond the scope of this study, but what follows is an introduction to the issues involved in the representation of gender attributes through the medium of colour films. This thesis then sits at the nexus of film studies, gender studies and semiotics, with links to the newly emerging sociology of emotion.

1.1 Situating the Study

Film studies has declared the search for a 'film language' dead (see section 2.1), yet structural analysis of narrative film shows that certain conventions are adhered to by film-makers in the West. These conventions are the genre attributes (see section 3.2) which, despite post-modern approaches of bricolage and self-referentiality, continue to be relied upon by readers of film in order to make sense of the movie on the screen. Film studies has been particularly entranced by the way in which gender is constructed, both as the representation of the characters on-screen and through the ways that members of the audience are addressed (see section 2.2). Psychoanalytic analyses and semiotics have been the primary loci of critique, both producing ample literature on the various techniques used by film authors to create the requisite visual and narrative congruence, with some also addressing particular features of these productions, including colour.

Gender studies has been a major contributor in bringing together representation, reproduction and rebellion as features of gendered displays in films. But gender studies also moves beyond representational media to investigate the everyday experience of gendering within social life. Butler's (1990) concept of performativity tackles these issues as a process of everyday life, ensuring that men and women learn and practice 'being' their gender. Relating this concept to film uncovers the potentials within the characters' performances that contribute to their gendered representation on the screen. This produces a reading of films that focuses on the markers of these performativity potentials, a project that has previously investigated films from textual perspectives – narrative, sub-text, referentiality and so forth. In this present study, the markers have been identified as

colours worn on the bodies of the characters, but the colours of the ambiences of these films also contribute to the gendering process.

Colour studies have not penetrated sociology sufficiently to provide background theory or practical applications for its investigation. Indeed, colour's very existence is claimed to be an artefact of human visual propensities and emotional states rather than any 'real' object for study (Massumi 2000). Issues of nomenclature, focal colour spaces and cultural significations all contribute to a colour's social 'meaning' in a given context, thereby providing an endlessly-changing variety of readings available to the viewer. Nevertheless, colour's use in films produces a specific cultural reading related to the social background of both production teams and audiences. It is here that this study seeks to understand what is being presented onscreen in relation to the gendered performances being portrayed.

The nexus of film, gender and colour is approached as a problem of film semiotics, but one in which the symbolisms are non-discursive (Langer 1979), that is, they relate directly to the emotional spaces and reactions of the audience rather than provide a linear exposition of the narrative. Colour suits this purpose because its appearance onscreen can be received passively and uncritically in films which present verisimilitude as a feature of its 'everyday' temporal and spatial locations. Ambient colours locate the films' actions within contemporary social spaces that are easily recognisable and readily promote identification with the portrayal of emotional responses by the characters. Colours on film bodies enhance this by providing clues to the 'types' of characters being portrayed.

Colours promote emotional responses from people, permitting insight into the activities of those being observed, and serve as points of reference for the responses made by the observer. Thus a blue-clad person can indicate authority (police) discipline (armed services) and hard work (trades and service personnel), and viewers of such people will align their responses towards them accordingly. Other colours provide commensurate 'readings' but not all colours are perceived to carry the same meaning-potential, and indeed some colours can be read from apparently contradictory perspectives. Red for example, has strong links to the representation of gender, and so reads differently when worn by a male as opposed to a female body. This is exaggerated in films because of the limited scope for representation of a character as a 'real' person. Colour here becomes a

short-hand sign of underlying motivations and perspectives. It is this aspect of the formation of character types that forms the data examined in this thesis.

1.2 History of the Project

I have long held an interest in colours as a marker of difference in everyday social life, particularly in terms of cultural sensibilities. A career in psychiatric nursing showed me links between mental states and colour use in people with varying levels of reality orientation and wellness. My interest led to the discovery of colours' attributed 'meanings' drawn from New Age philosophies and practices, and this formed the basis of my Honours thesis on the value attributed to blue as the colour of spirituality. Yet whilst some colour concepts were agreed by the authors of New Age books on the topic, others were quite disparate, particularly for less easily defined 'colours' such as magenta, lime and gold, for example.

The most-cited authors of colour research were Berlin and Kay (1969) who uncovered a lexicon of basic colour terms that exists in all languages, but the universalising claims of these authors remain highly contestable. Seeking further afield, it became apparent that there was ample literature on the psychological links to colour presentation, but a paucity in the literature in relation to social understandings. The most common use of colour concepts in sociology related to racial differences and demonstrated the fluctuating nature of these classifications. In terms of colours as hues, sociological investigation provided nothing.

Examination of social structure brought forward the works of Bourdieu (1979) and Levi-Strauss (1970), both of whom investigated the cultural meanings of social practices. Whilst Levi-Strauss provided some cultural explanation of colour uses, Bourdieu's work presented colour only as a semantic potential for descriptive purposes within the text. This descriptive function of colour terms persists throughout literature from all sources, containing the assumption that colour terms carry meanings that are understood by the members of society to relate to emotional-mood states. Yet there has been no attempt to address this phenomenon as a social practice.

Introduction to the Thesis

Films were chosen from the inception of this research as the source for data because they are easily accessible and few Australians would not have experienced the suspension of belief necessary to make a film appear to reflect a 'reality'. Colour films are a relatively recent addition to the long history of colour use in art, and now provide the most common format in which narratives are presented on screen. Whilst colour use in art is the source of much discussion amongst critics, this practice has not extended to colour use in films apart from a few isolated contributions (see section 2.3). There was no common theoretical basis for colour's investigation in these studies, the colours discussed had not been defined and methods used in the prevailing research were not enunciated.

Production of data for this thesis continues the tradition of using basic colour terms to represent a range of chromatic potentials varying by brightness and saturation levels. Hues in films change according to lighting conditions both in the production of the films, but also in their viewing. The films of this study are designed for viewing on a cinema screen, so their translation to the small screen (television, computer screen) alters some of the intensity of the colours, and frequently obscures colours that are visible in the cinema due to the truncation of the images in their preparation for small-screen viewing. Nevertheless, there is sufficient information available to produce an analysis of the uses of colours to enhance a performance and promote narrative cohesion. It is this data that is examined in this thesis.

1.3 Overview of the Thesis

Much of the literature on colour is philosophical, challenging colour's reality. It is the personalised experience of colour that makes it meaningful for the individual, but colour's evocative potential has also been harnessed throughout history to concepts such as liberty, equality or brotherhood, and designed to produce cohesive human action. Colour concepts differentiate religious beliefs, political ideologies and increasingly, economic discourses, but again there is little in the literature to investigate further than these phenomena. Nonetheless discourses using colour concepts denoting human attributes persist, and these extend to visual interpretation on the cinema screen. The literature that underpins this thesis is therefore three-pronged; Chapter 2 presents ideas from film studies, gender studies and colour studies. At the intersection of these three areas is a space that I will use to demonstrate the links between colour, representation and gender

performance. Chapter 2 sets the scene for my claim that colour use in film costumes is a social signal indicating what form of gender performance is available to the character. These are *performativity potentials* – the differing ways in which a gendered body can produce a gendered response to an external dilemma.

Lacking tools for the study of the colour-gender-film nexus, an exploration of methodologies was necessitated. This has produced a second literature review in Chapter 3 dedicated to the unfolding of the methodological theory that informs this dissertation's practices. Chapter 3 seeks to find a space at the intersection of three disciplines (semiotics, genre studies and post-structuralism) and sets the ground for the methods adopted. Colour is a human perceptual ability that carries meaning in the same manner as linguistic signs; hence a foray into semiology is necessitated. Colour is moreover, a *non-discursive symbol*, and so produces meaning for people at an unconscious level, so produces meaning in terms of emotional responses rather than linguistic concepts. The arbitrary nature of signs moreover does not provide sufficient explanation of the ways in which colour concepts impinge on meaning in film usage, so the choice for an analytic approach examines Levi-Straussian structuralism as a potential basis for examination of colour use. Genre studies have contributed to this by proposing a pre-existing structure that identifies the type of film being viewed. Additionally, post-structuralist critiques identify issues of relativity in the creation of meaning, so the special relation of gender and representation in terms of colour uses highlights these differences.

Chapter 4 provides the methods involved in this study. Film studies neglects to advise the reader of any methodological practices upon which authors have based their research and there appears an underlying assumption that film analysis occurs through watching the film in its narrative sequence, segment-by-segment or for its discursive practices. Attempts at these methodologies have led to development of an alternative approach. This methodology draws from a number of sources, adapted to allow examination of colours in films and relying heavily on contemporary technologies. Technological manipulation of the films produced an 'invented' way of examining the films – a macro view that highlights the flow of colour information throughout the film, and a micro view that focuses on individual character proclivities and their associated colours. Decisions about choices of films and colours for investigation required a rationale that is presented in this chapter together with an introduction to the binarist positionings of colour presentation. A corollary to this

binarist logic of colour use led also to a binarist nomenclature for the film cohorts under investigation. The films are classified according to gender-interest and marketing strategies, and so adoption of the term 'chickflick' for female-interest films (Garrett 2007) has invited adoption of a commensurate term for the male-interest films – 'dickflick', a justification for which is also provided in Chapter 4.

The first of three substantive data chapters, Chapter 5 applies the only existing structural analysis of a genre (Wright 1975) to the dickflicks. Here the similarities between Wright's 'hero-functions' and the progression of the hero through the action-adventure films are drawn out and their differences highlighted. Examination of the resultant binary propositions links them to the use of colours in these films, uncovering a basic palette of colours that crosses all the narratives to designate types of masculinity. Basic binary distinctions in the narratives of these films are easily linked with the presentation of specific colours, showing that despite the appearance of colour in anomalous ways, the films retain an internal logic that makes the colour presentations meaningful. Evidence of differential use of colours for male and female characters is also presented.

Chapter 6 applies the structural analysis used in Chapter 5 to the female-interest films. This analysis of the chickflicks produces a narrative progression that traces nine basic 'functions' for the romantic comedy. These romance hero and heroine (rom-hero/ine) functions form a morality play that leads the protagonists from single status to co-joined in a highly gendered, heterosexual progression. Male characters and female characters transition through all these functional sites, but do so in ways that are stereotypical of prevailing beliefs about how men and women interact with one another. The romances produce a reassuring sub-text that encourages viewers to read male and female performances as gender congruent regardless of the issues facing the individual characters or their responses to these.

In Chapter 7 the rom-hero/ine functions are examined for their binary distinctions, relating these to the presentation of colours on the bodies of the characters. Two primary binaries – male-female and inside-outside – permeate the narratives, with a number of lesser binaries associating with specific aspects of the narrative trajectories. In this chapter, the uses of colour to differentiate different kinds of men and women are explored, concentrating on the primary characters of the chickflicks. Here the colours can be seen to

promote recognition of the characters' psychic states and so enhance the narrative through use of non-discursive symbolism.

Chapter 8 continues from Chapter 7, and provides an in-depth evaluation of the primary characters in *Muriel's Wedding* (1996), a film that has two female leads instead of the usual male-female combination. In this chapter I explore the ways in which colours help set up the gender dichotomy and how they aid in the interplay of gender performances that lead Muriel and Rhonda through the romance narrative as pseudo-lovers. This film's analysis offers scope for extrapolation of the film colours as indicating performativity potentials which, when enacted, demonstrate that gender remains a fluid process despite the romance narrative's thrust towards heterosexual orthodoxy.

Finally, in Chapter 9 I review the thesis chapters, situating the research in its sociological context. As an experimental sociological investigation, this thesis confronts questions about representation of the colour-gender links in films. The implications of this study for sociology are also identified and avenues for future research are proposed.

Conclusion

Films are a good archival source for the examination of the intersection of gender and colour because they are liberally available artefacts of the post-modern era, one of the most popular pastimes of 21st Century humans. Films register the passions and anxieties of the culture from which they arise, and they reflect, reproduce and disseminate social norms. Colour use is one of these norms – both as use in costumes, and as use in interpretation of the portrayed characters. The appearance of colour onscreen precedes the unfolding of the narrative so stands as a human decision made to carry the concepts evoked by the narrative. Such a choice is not random, but based on prevailing concepts associated with colours. These colour concepts are the product of social learning, and so are meaningful in particular ways in particular environments and at particular times, changing as societies change.

The social use of colour therefore invites speculation on colour's general significatory function in social reproduction. Gender in particular continues to be demarked by colour usage in everyday clothing – males are offered a basic 'trinity' of colours, blue, brown and

achroma (the white-grey-black continuum), whilst female clothing colour extends over the entire spectrum. This demarcation is even more rigid in films than in everyday life, so that colours of the characters' costumes helps situate them as *types of people*, with a gender demarcation most readily seen in films' use of red costumes. Analyses of colour use in film has academic consensus about its contribution to representation largely limited to the black-white dichotomy of race issues and there are studies which investigate meanings attributed to coloured items within a film. But colour's use outside these representations has not eventuated despite more than 60 years of colour film production. This thesis sets out to bridge these gaps, bringing together an everyday 'reality' of colour with everyday social practices. Colour binaries abound in film representations, and are frequently interrelated, so a structuralist account of colour's presence in film is indeed a challenging exercise.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

Gender critiques and film studies have together created a trend in cultural studies that focuses on the representation of the sexes on film. Film, it has been argued, advocates a rendition of masculinity and femininity that serves the cinema-going masses as a salve to their alienation within postmodern relationships and experiences. Thus popular films become a beacon for 'the aspirations, obsessions and frustrations' of those who spend time and money making or viewing them' (Andrew 2000:179; De Heer 2005). Yet films have also promoted the replay, in various guises, of moral panics about their widespread undesirable influence, particularly on the young women of the 1930s, and resulting in the development of discourses examining ideological promotion and management of 'mass' society (Miller 1939; Tudor 2000:188). Issues arising from these discourses continue to haunt the products of Hollywood and have also found their way into the formulae of most English-language films (O'Regan 1996). Of necessity, in order to be competitive, recent popular Australian films have largely followed the generic formulations of Hollywood and this has undoubtedly assisted their fiscal successes.

Academic interest in films and their effects has bifurcated along aesthetic or ideological avenues of inquiry, the former primarily involving film journalism, and the latter concerned with 'film's position as symptom or influence in social processes' (Dyer 2000:2). Film as a 'social fascination' and the continuing popularity of 'the movies' have been vital components underpinning these critiques (Turner 2000:196-7). Attention to *film* has incorporated production concepts such as auteurism, editing techniques and mise-en-scene as well as examination of genre and narrational styles. Spectatorship in these debates hinges on issues of film's illusory capacity and increasing referentialism. Acculturated spectators are thereby able to respond to the film as a coherent whole with a purposeful story presented as an unfolding presence instead of the purposive anastomoses of many disparate elements that constructs each film. The *movie* experience originally spawned aesthetic debate and moral panics before assuming a semiological approach that mostly examined individual films or the collected works of individual directors. More

recently, issues of spectatorship have overtaken both film and movie critiques, leading to renewed emphasis on the important place that film holds within the social consciousness.

Gender studies have arrived late in film studies, having first uncovered gender discriminations in the social body generally, and only later addressing these to representational styles and the concomitant objectification of women. At this stage, feminists turned their attention to the growing evidence of female representations that served to underpin patriarchal assumptions about 'correct' femininity and its location in society. Various responses to these feminist viewpoints have uncovered and explored further representations such as homosexuality, race, class, age and function, and have led to a call for a feminist cinema – incorporating feminine ways of thinking/doing in feminist narrative or descriptive structures that offer a 'counter-cinema' to the usual Hollywood offerings. This call for a counter-cinema that would reveal all the underlying sexist discourses in film was not brought to fruition however, because 'the actual moments of rupture were insufficient to provide women with any sizeable degree of satisfaction' (Erens 1990:xix). Films needed to be popular in order to promote any meaningful discussion that could offer extrapolations of film and movie reactions to social conditions and activities.

Whilst neither gender studies nor film studies have a common origin, by the 1970s they were firmly wedded in exploration of identity and experience. Gender representations in film have been examined from many different perspectives and similarly, the film-viewing experience and its influence upon its audiences have undergone multi-faceted critiques. Some of these critiques will be addressed in this chapter, but it must be noted that very limited attention has been paid to the examination of the subject of this thesis – colour – and its position within the processes of gender representation that establishes different 'kinds' of people within the minds of the viewing masses. For this reason, it is necessary to move from the known, that is, extant film and gender explications to the relatively unknown – the use of colour to support certain elements of representation and thus to shape audience responses to the characters so marked. I therefore have separated film from gender at first in order to bring them together in an evaluation of colour's contribution.

Literature Review

2.1 Film Studies

Paradigms governing the examination of films have altered over time. From their inception as a variety of arguments about a new technology, film studies have spawned increasing numbers of academic critiques of contemporary western culture. Films provide a rich source of cultural information (Neale 1980) as they reflect and reinforce social mores (Barthes 1973) that prevailed during their time of production. The films I am presenting here erupted on the Australian public as blockbusters but their academic critique is largely lacking. It is thus important to situate the academic output of this era in order to understand current thinking in the discipline. For this purpose I will now address part of the historical development of film studies, constructing leads to a potential methodology for examination and critique of the films of this, my study.

2.1.1 Historical Development of Film Studies

Perkins' (1972) history of film studies traces their development from early optical illusions to the 'blockbuster' Hollywood production that had become a major capitalist influence in the western world. Perkins (1972:17) differentiated his critiques between the *film* – the physical object moving through the projector – and the *movie* – the finished product that is viewed on the screen by the audience. This is a useful distinction in a postmodern critique, and I shall continue to use it, despite the conflation of the two terms in much academic writing and in common Australian usage.

In his *Introduction to film studies*, Richard Dyer (2000:1) declaims three innovations that have been decisive in the history of film – its very invention, the introduction of sound, and the introduction of colour. Each of these innovations led to changes to the representation of 'reality' and assisted in the production of meanings which ensure that film *matters* to its spectators. Early writers such as Bazin and Arnheim (1957, see also Perkins 1972, Easthope 2000) regarded the cinema experience as somehow re-producing reality. Arnheim (1957:7) resorted to historical underpinnings for what he called 'film art' – an artistic convention of creating a meaningful organised image available to all art forms. For Krakauer (1965:ix), film was essentially an extension of photography in that it shares an affinity for the visible world, and so makes available to its viewers a version of reality. But

such arguments posed aesthetic questions about the validity of claims to the realism of film in the face of the movies' capacity for producing the illusion of reality.

As early as the 1890s, powerful political and philanthropic attention had been attracted by the intensity of responses to and popularity of, films (Gripsrud 2000:200-1). Working class people were flocking to 'the movies' and the films they were watching were increasingly critically evaluated as inciting behaviour that did not align with current social order. The ensuing moral panic involved issues of susceptible women and children, who, incapable of self-control, needed rescue from the 'self-indulgence and weakness that film-viewing was believed to engender' (Gripsrud 2000:202). Part of this moral panic was based on the fear of film's potential as an ideological tool because of film's propensity for creating an illusory but nevertheless powerful 'reality' (Balazs 1953:201). The purpose of film is to anastomose viewers to the narrative flow, guiding their emotional responses and creating 'out of the viewer's own imagination' a pleasurable experience (Kolker 2000:18). This ensures that the spectator will return for a similar experience, but it also places the spectator out of the control of society into a world of fantasy that is only partially controlled by the film-maker (Stacey 1994). Early spectators of Hollywood films tended to over-value the fantasies that film provided, fetishising stars alongside their lifestyles because Hollywood 'glamorized everything' (Ray 2000:68).

Concerns about film ideologies and the effectiveness of their links to consumer beliefs and actions fuelled opposition to the new, Hollywood-inspired aesthetic and cultural concepts (Dyer 2000:7). Kleinhans (2000:104) attributes these responses to the highly politicised discourses of capitalist practices found in subsequent and contemporary film theory. Inquiry into the ideological facets of film hinged on its presentation of signs motivated according to the traditions of cinematic discourse (Dyer 2000:3). Marxist critique sought to utilise films as examples either analogous to the experience of fragmentation of the modern citizen, or to a cultural attempt to create continuity and stability from the fragmentary experiences involved in the everyday postmodern life. Great attention was given to the search for deconstructions of the way in which visual and auditory 'rhetoric' construct perceptions of social realities (Morowski 1973). Attempts at controlling film content then became a struggle igniting political debate about the purposes for which film could be manipulated. Feminist critique, to be examined in greater detail later, drew attention to the imagery, the film's content, bifurcating into psychoanalytical or semiotic

critiques of the representation of women in the movies. Much of this critique has hinged on the identification of sexist narrative components and stereotypicalities in character presentation (Dyer 2000:6).

Early attention to film as a reflection of reality also invited critique of its aesthetic appeal and its capacity for chemically converting reality to film stock (Nicoll 1936). Both Benjamin (1936) and Dyer (2000:5) identified the mechanical production of the camera as constituting an anomalous relation between reality and image. Unlike theatre, where characters must reveal themselves through their 'speech acts', in film, images can stand in place of words since images provide a 'realistic' truth that is based on a feeling of reality (Mitry 2000:161-162). Thus images produce an instantaneous access to explanations of reactions by characters on the screen, and opportunities for enhancement of the 'reality' therein enacted. Such theorizing led to a diversification of approaches – studies of film-the-product, in which auteurist, editing, montage and genre discourses dominated, and movie-the-experience, involving a multiplicity of exploratory territories. Perhaps most importantly, it was Hollywood's discovery that films needed to enchant in order to be fiscally productive (Ray 2000:66) that led the way to the movie's acceptance as a legitimate object of scientific curiosity.

2.1.2 Film as Production

Bazin (1958 cited in Perkins 1972:9) believed that film is essentially the 'art of reality', but his conceptions saw film as a continuous unfolding of reality, and he did not approve of editing techniques which disrupted the flow of that reality. Such practice, he claimed, created arbitrary relationships between shots which disallow the 'real', instead, the filmed reality should afford the same view in the same time-frame as reality that is experienced. Clarity is an important component of this visibility - the more clearly the filmed object is seen, the more likely it is that its 'reality' will be accepted as such. Perkins (1972:62) posits credibility in the movies as the human privileging of visual data over other forms, so that we believe that when several images coalesce into an apparent movement, life is connoted. The influence of imagination and suspension of belief, all part of the 'reality' of the movie experience remains throughout unless, as Perkins noted 'the *reality of the objects and events*' on the screen become questionable (1972:62 italics in original). Issues of clarity and credibility thus developed as the primary criteria in the production of films.

Literature Review

Film, and especially colour film, is an emitter of patterns of light that offers the illusion of a continuous view of reality (Perkins 1972:42), so is particularly apt for the production of such 'realities'.

Tudor (2000:192) presents *film* (an amalgam of what I call film *and* movie) as the tri-partite construction of the efforts of film-makers, film spectators and film texts, derived from 'negotiation and interaction involving active social beings and institutionalised social practices'. Such an approach has taken time to dominate film theory. Metz (1982: 5-9) had conceptualised *film* as an institution involving production, distribution, exhibition and viewing practices, although in contemporary theoretical approaches, each of these is addressed as a separate issue. And within production, issues of auteurism, montage and editing vie with cost, narrative and character for critical attention.

As productive totalities, films are composed of shots (photographic records of events) and cuts (interruptions to the shots) to which may be added recurring elements or themes, creating a montage whose role is to contain special meaning (Kolker 2000:13). The '*primary responsibility* of montage is to ensure the film's narrative flow' says Mitry (2000:112, italics in original), concurring with Perkins (1972:79-84) who says that such work requires organization of whatever is within the frame into a significant form. Here the director has control over the 'cinematic eye', controlling the perception and partial view of whatever the spectator will see in the movie. Meaning arises from the placement of shots in a narrative sequence, with close-ups emphasising specific potential meanings. By emphasising the director's vision, by allowing only what is *within* the image, the movie exploits its potential for engaging an audience and heightening audience responses.

Films are made to be seen and so must have some form of coherence and decipherability that the audience understands (Mitry 2000:16). For Balazs (1953:211-212) such understanding arose from the relationship between the audience and the represented world, which could most readily be ascertained in the 'reading' of the close-up shot. Here, the object of interest becomes enlarged many times its 'natural' size, and overtakes the focus of the camera and spectator. Perkins (1972:50) considered the close-up necessary in order that details could be presented clearly in their setting, and the audience made aware of their symbolic value. The epitome of close-up shots would coalesce into an editing form known as 'shot-reverse shot' (Silverman 1983), most effectively using the human face as its

focus. Here, the 'stars' could 'emote' using the barest of human facial expressions or the most bizarre, depending on the narrative requirements (Dyer 1979). Balazs (1953) believed that framing played a large part in the effectiveness of the close-up, carefully inscribing its characteristics into the literature. Bazin (1967) countered this, claiming it was the *mise-en-scene*, the complexity of the entirety of what is contained in the frame (lighting, objects, movement), that allowing the audience to perceive the proffered reading. Nonetheless, such editing techniques became identified with a 'filmic language', more commonly called 'cinema language' (Perkins1972:21) and will be considered in section 2.1.3 'Film as Language'.

Auteurism, the absolute directorial control over a film's production, was the first film-making methodology to invite critique (Wollen 1972). Eisenstein, a director and critic within the Russian formalist movement identified and practiced auterism, proposing a 'montage of attractions' as the basis of film (Tyler 1944:78). Compiled by a single authority, and indicative of the differing approaches of individual directors, auteurism was seen to house 'a loose frame of common attitudes' (Wollen 1972:77) that coalesced into two main critiques. Firstly, critics sought to reveal a core of meaning in the films they studied, to reveal thematic motifs that were representative of the auteur's skill. This led to the retrospective application of auteur typology to directors whose work had not previously been so examined, but whose body of work exhibited this level of control in a film. When Hollywood studios rose to power, English-language films become subject to Fordist practices (Bordwell, Staiger & Thompson 1985). Uppermost also in the minds of film producers was the constraining or unleashing effects of money and resources on the type of film that could be produced (Clair 1953; Kael 1956).

Technical inventions such as film sound and colour preceded and encouraged artistic enterprise (Panofsky 1934) but also split academic interest between mechanical production issues such as lighting (Bellman 1974; Pilbrow 1979; Ford 1994; Lacey 2005) and camerawork (Tyler 1944) and aesthetic properties such as *style* (Panofsky 1934) and characterisation (Kennedy 1942). The traditional view stressed style and *mise en scene* as the most important elements for the creation of meaning within film, attributing these to individual auteurial skill. Mise-en-scene elements combined in this way by the director are reminiscent of 'bricolage', Levi-Strauss' (1966) concept of the transposition of different meaning elements from one context to another for the purpose of creating new meanings.

Such manipulation of image structures however did and does not account for the ready readability of some films over others, and so emphasis shifted to other film characteristics as purveyors of meaning.

For Pudovkin (1954) and Lindgren (1963:79) meaning in film resulted from editing as the foundational activity of film art, and this attitude continues (Anonymous 2009). Editing involves the placement of shots in sequences to create new meanings through their association. This meaning is absent from each separate shot, but once established, imposes a rhythm on the movie that aids in its interpretation, guiding the viewer to various separate elements of significance (Pudovkin 1954:191). Such an approach took the film out of the hands of the individual director and offered it for reassembly in the production studio (Mitry 2000). For Bazin (1967) these film-making techniques are manipulatory and dishonest, denying the viewer the chance to perceive the entirety of the filmed image. Editing, as a bearer of significance, depends on its ability to convey meaning even (and particularly) when it is not obvious to the spectator (Perkins 1972:102). In this view, the primary directorial responsibility is concealment of the editing process to reinforce a sense of reality in the film's viewing, since the image's derivation is never as important for the viewer as how well it reveals the movie's world. Nonetheless several authors (Kennedy 1942; Mitry 2000; Bordwell & Thompson 2005) maintained that any distinctive, recognisable style remains attributable to the director, offering limited support to auteurist claims.

Storytelling or narrative functions and characterisations were not considered in these critiques. Nonetheless auteurism continued as the major focus of interest into the 1960s before it was displaced by study of films as textual systems (Turner 2000:194). Film production, it was now surmised, particularly from the large studios, aimed at appealing to the largest possible audience through standard, generic narrative forms developed in 'a structure of educated guesswork and creative repetition' (Kolker 2000:12). Perkins (1972:127) viewed this phenomenon to have arisen because viewers are 'interested observers' whose satisfaction from stories is linked to how closely the movies resemble issues for personal concern. The ability to experience movies directly as an autonomous reality and to understand their structural propositions is learned (Hecht 1954; Perkins 1972; Metz 1982; Mitry 2000). The increasing awareness of cinematic devices and structures led to an increasing endorsement of 'art' films (primarily European) and

depreciation of 'Hollywood' (that is, *genre*) films as truly representative of cinematic values. Issues related to genre became important sites for analysis, leading to a shift of interest away from individual producers to 'types' of films (Neale 1980).

2.1.3 Film as Language

Image and sound were accepted early on as separate and complete structural forms (Balazs 1953:210; Arnheim 1957:170) and this had considerable influence on the direction of subsequent analysis. Whilst considerable work had been done on the structure of language (see de Saussure 1916; Barthes 1964; Hawkes 1977) and myth (Ogden & Richards 1966; Barthes 1973; Wright 1975; Levi-Strauss 1963, 1979), this approach had not been liberally applied to film studies. The nature of language had long been a source of philosophical debate, but it was only with the discovery that it is the combination of sounds, not the sounds themselves, that provide for a meaningful coherence (Levi-Strauss 1963:108), that linguisitics came into its own. Beginning with de Saussure's (1916:16-18) investigation of the linguistic sign, that is, between the concept (the signified) and the 'sound-image' that designates the signified (the signifier), language could be studied as a system of signs used to express ideas. Each sign is denoted (given a word), thus associating a particular signified with its signifier, and connoted (emotive and cognitive associations are attached to it), thereby creating a second-order signification (Wollen, 1972; Hawkes 1977; Lacey 1998) which is symbolic.

Linguistic signs are arbitrary, and it is this very arbitrariness that protects them from change (Hawkes 1977:25). Language consists of contrasts between signs which are positioned within a spectrum of meaning, each specific and unique in comparison to other signs within that spectrum. Most important in this process is the ability of the speaker and listener to distinguish between the sign and what it is *not* – setting in place a binarist logic that each child learns as s/he becomes acculturated to the underlying structure of their language (Hawkes 1977:24-28). Barthes (1964) too, discussed oppositional elements of common social experiences, while Eco (1979) expanded on this to claim that texts have a formula and underlying codes that are available to competent readers. The arbitrariness of these signifying structures ensures that no two languages can ever be said to represent the same social reality (Sapir 1921 cited in Hawkes 1977), leading to the view that the entire social field could be considered a language.

Cinema language seemed to reproduce the characteristics of novels and theatre, supporting the linguistic parables that had entered the literature, but not without debate. An early critic, Bazin (1967) admitted that film was a language, but refused to accept that the image may be reduced to a linguistic sign. An early Metz publication (n.d. cited in McCormick 1975:24) had proposed that verbal language, pre-existing the subject and always available for use in spontaneous, arbitrary ways, and cinema language are vastly different because cinema language must always be motivated in some respect and requires a *reader* to decipher its codes. These codes, he maintained, could be found within a film's *text*, but views on what constituted a text varied. Ideas as disparate as Dyer 's (1979:ii) suggestion that star images represented a form of text within cinema language, and Lowe's (1974:4) explication of landscape as an 'essential ingredient', capable of taking the form of characters explored distinctly different aspects of cinema language.

As semioticians began to deconstruct film texts to uncover their 'hidden' meanings, it became obvious that these existed at many levels, that is, films were polysemic (Wollen 1972). Gradually the conviction arose that *any* analytic approach to the text in which the combination of signs could be demonstrated to produce a point of view became justifiable, even if it was against the text's preferred reading (Hartley 2005; Dancyger 2009). Nonetheless, as Mitry (2000:186) declared, '… an image seems to possess an inherent quality as a symbol', and because of its 'decoded, directed reality' (2000: 189), the audience attaches meaning to the sequence in which the image appears, most often a meaning that arises from the way in which elements (through mise-en-scene and editing) are portrayed. The process begins as visual perception, and the sight engages emotions which require language in order to be expressed (Mitry 2000:166). The *fade-to-black* and *lap dissolve* phenomena used in film are, in Mitry's view, analogous to the punctuation marks of language and contribute to the narrative rules under which the film is imagined. Such visual prompts help produce an internal language through which the film is 'read'. Countering Bazin's (1967) claim that the audience is free to create whatever meaning it chooses from any particular movie, Mitry (2000:125) instead posits that whilst the spectator indeed creates a meaning from the movie, s/he can only do so from whatever images are offered for processing. Attributed meaning arises from recognition of signs within the movies that help to construct the film as a linguistic formality replete with

symbolisms reminiscent of language. But human language and 'film language' are vastly different entities.

In its presentation of a narrative, the film image approximates a 'spatial image' reminiscent of the real space in front of the viewer (Mitry 2000:49). A series of frames constitutes each shot, and numerous shots constitute a scene – and in its sequential presentation, the image 'moves' within the spatial confines of the movie's screen. However, the resulting cinema language depends for its coherence on its development by human agents rather than as an *a priori* grammar with set rules of engagement as in spoken language (Mitry 2000:25-26). Metz (1982) had previously argued that the movie is not a system of signs - there is no association between films and verbal codes, and whilst the shot is a signifying unit, it cannot be a unit of signification (as is the word) because images are complex signifiers. Mitry (2000:135) agreed, highlighting the role of the film's construction as producing 'a *language without signs* [with] *no grammatical rules … only rules of rhetoric'* (italics in original). Cinema language thus became a contentious concept in film studies because of its inherent inability to maintain coherence in the familiar pattern of languages. The issue of what constitutes a 'sign' in film became a problematic issue that Pearson (1992) addressed in her investigation of *codes* – conventionalised deployment of sets of signs that produce familiar sets of meanings. Christie (2000: 58) translates these as 'filmic utterances' that maintain illusory and convincing continuity supplied by the internal speech of the spectator during the viewing process. Films as cultural artefacts are grounded in the time and place of their origin, rendering specific representations that can be understood by those of similar cultural background (Lacey 1998). The purpose of semiological analyses was to uncover the 'reading' each film presented, through structured genre codes, to its audience. These patterns of meaning were believed to help constitute the social world (Tudor 1974:213 citing Galli & Rositi).

Attention to the rules of film rhetoric became the province of genre studies (Bordwell 1989; Stam 2000), beginning with Neale's (1980) seminal work. Genre, he identified, is constituted by 'systems of orientations, expectations and conventions that circulate between industry, text and subject' (1980:19). Working from a generalised social awareness of 'types' of films, Neale identified *genre* as issuing from studio production as well as being applied retrospectively to films with similar narrative characteristics. Genre links to narrative in the Hollywood drive to present a 'clear and coherent fictional world'

that fixates audience attention (Eitzen 1999:394). The concept of verisimilitude – plausibility, motivation, justification and belief systems – gained importance alongside genre as narrative constructions of expectation and anticipation (Neale 2000:157-158). The attribution of a genre tag to a film does not, however, confine the narrative to a limited sphere of production. There are definitional problems as to what constitutes 'genre', such as cultural specificity (differentiating critical/interpretive ideas from descriptive practices) and generic conventionality (intertextual referencing), so that elucidating key qualities and genre limits becomes a priority in its understanding (Berry 1999:26-27). Moreover, genre's explication as myth can only be applied retrospectively. As Stam (2000:150-152) concludes, genre is problematic as an object of film-criticism because, despite its exposition of narrative, character, representation and rhetoric (amongst others), genre remains a fluid concept that crosses boundaries, intermingles with other genres and yet remains to some extent contextually and temporally bound. Altman (2000:182) further observes, 'genres are simply the generalised, identifiable structures through which Hollywood's rhetoric flows'. And for the viewer, genres relate to an accurate 'reading' of the film because they thrive on addressing persistent social problems through innovative narrative twists (Williams 2000:219). Some of these issues, particularly in relation to gender will be revisited in Chapter 3.

Perkins (1972:127) wrote 'we anticipate important information from the screen' and so help construct meaning through our active intervention in the mental processing of the images. He called this the '*fascination of seeing*' (Perkins 1972:129, italics in original), a conscious state of relaxed attentiveness Mitry (2000:127) equates with being drugged. Others have used the analogy of hypnotic trance to describe the phenomenon (Bergstrom 1979). Metz (1982) argued a similar case in that images signify absences rather than presences, and so the movie experience hinges upon imaginary significations – what they mean for individuals – rather than fixed 'realities'. *Reality* hinges on the human ability to attend to fragments of phenomena which in turn become 'real' for each observer. Because of a combination of the cinema setting, spectator expectations and the film's projection of an illusion, the viewers' emotions are engaged *as if* their perceptions were of a 'real' experience. Bennett and Woolacott (1987:64) referred to such a phenomenon as 'an always-already culturally activated object [co-produced with]… the always-already culturally activated subject' as a single unity of experience and interpretation. And in order to prevent awareness of the illusion from disrupting the movie 'reality', films strive to fuse

narrative, concept and emotion in a way that engages and absorbs the viewers' consciousness (Perkins 1972, Metz 1982). For Andrew (1984:14) the problem of balancing tradition and 'the encounter of the new' limited the potential for any film to separate itself from the system that conferred intelligibility on it. The film must be able to be read as a text.

The form and function of film texts thereafter became the site for critical antagonisms. Some writers denied differences between the interpretation and use of a text, leading others to postulate a hotly contested 'intention of the text' (Eco 1985a; Rorty 1992 cited in King 2000:211) which Bordwell (1989:32) pejoratively calls 'interpretability'. Interpretability arises through the interaction between viewing of a film through dominant frameworks of meaning and the hidden levels of meaning to which they direct the spectator's attention through the spectator's foreknowledge of how it is to be interpreted (Bordwell 1989:2-3). Hybrid semiological-psychoanalytical dissertations such as Morley's (1980) argued that audience agency in reading and misreading all or part of any film text according to peculiarities in the spectator's contextual situation was the primary driver of meaning in film texts. Metz's (1982) view understood texts as having the power to position the spectator to read each text in keeping with dominant ideologies. Both emphasise the position of the spectator as determiner of specific meanings. As Mitry (2000:127) points out, 'there is no such thing as an *empty* sign' in the presentation of cinema language (italics in original). Film studies remained nevertheless 'firmly committed to the interpretation of individual texts' (Turner 2000:193). As such, and because some of these concepts inform my own methods, I will expand these more fully in Chapter 3.

More recently, some academic interest has moved to the interplay of text and self-referential systems within postmodern media discourses, called 'intertextuality' (Stam 2000). Metz' (1982) concept of a film's textual system as a coherent network of meaning, based on the assumptions implicit within the film as well as the film-viewer, meant that films unfolded before their viewers in a continual reworking of socially available discourses. Moreover, intertextuality allows examination of the cross-relation between a specific text and other texts, thereby breaking with the amorphous 'context' that had created such a stumbling block to coherent analysis. The critic's role now was to move away from narrative elements and characterisations, issues of genre (Neale 1980) and stardom (Dyer 1979, 1993) respectively, towards more formal elements of the film. The resultant analyses

required 'a kind of Brechtian distanciation' that operated as an objective examination of a film rather than an emotional engagement (Stam 2000:147). These micro-analyses of films were attacked firstly by postmodernist disbelief that such approaches could capture a film's meaning and their authors were labelled pejoratively as 'film interpreters' whose production merely applied theory to subject matter rather than allowing it to emerge from the data (Bordwell 1989:109). Currie (1999:51) remained unconvinced of the importance of film conventions for analysis, yet as Stam (2000:148) points out, film analysis is a methodology open to many and diverse influences, and so continues to maintain a place in textual discourse.

2.2 Gender Studies

Foremost in the 1970s' examination of cinematic signs were feminist critiques. These tended to coalesce around three broad themes – representation, reproduction and rebellion – and used two main discourses – semiology and psychoanalysis. Representation invited examination of the ways in which women were marginalised and devalued in specific representational 'types'. This approach later extended to inform critiques from non-white and non-heterosexual spectators (Gaines 1986), areas that have branched into distinct critical discourses. Reproduction examined the ways in which ideological issues underpinned film narratives and assumptions. This was and remains a fertile ground for psychoanalytic discourses whose examination of the Oedipus trajectory (following Lacan's prolific work) has provided numerous insights in terms of spectatorship. Rebellion occurred through more practical means, with theoretical 'women's films' taking centre-stage in both critique and as production. This spawned a variety of 'feminist' films and 'female' viewpoints, which did little to enhance feminism's aims since such experimental films rarely captured popular attention (Michel 1981:238) and can be utterly rejected by the mainstream as a worthy political effort (Jacobwitz & Spring 1985). Critique turned instead to an emphasis on counter-reading of the filmic text, referred to as 'reading against the grain' (Erens 1990; Smelick 2000), as well as an investigation of gender anomalous representations. Each of these produced important theory.

2.2.1 Gender Representation and Films

Stratagems of sexism were the first sites for feminist assault of the patriarchal order of Western societies. Questions about women's desire, their interests and possibilities for production as film narratives were uppermost in the minds of 1970s critics. An early work was Haskell's (1973) history of female representation in film, which exposed changes in the filmic treatment of the female image. Dualities in film representation of women such as 'Madonna-Whore' and 'Bride-Mother' produced images of a restricted femininity that had moved from the early days of film and an idealised vision of female loveliness to a then-contemporary disparagement of femininity. Haskell claimed that such representations were symptomatic of social conditions and that women had gained little, and perhaps even been forced to retreat from some of the more contentious gender models towards an increasing dichotomy of passivity-is-good and activity-is-bad model of conduct. The implications of these positioning practices could also be understood as ways in which women are represented as signs, performing precise iconographic and ideological functions (Johnston 1973).

The representation of gender in Hollywood narrative movies consistently portrays various highly stereotyped versions of characters, with the clear result of a naturalisation of gender inequality (Dyer 1993, 1997; Smelik 1998). These cinematic images arise from and generate powerful appeals to common social experiences and individual fears and fancies, thereby making them immensely popular (Wright 1975). In particular, representations of women have provided social cues to action, since it is to women that Hollywood interests have most addressed their image-making (Coward 1984). Rich's (1980) exploration of the Hollywood representation of mothers, for example, uncovered patriarchal representations of either idealised saintliness and self-abnegation or disparaged grotesqueness and sadism, but none of the mother as person, as woman, with needs and aspirations of her own. Kaplan's (1983:128) examination provides four such representational types: the good mother, the bad mother (the witch), the heroic mother, and the inept mother (silly, weak, vain). She also pointed to an emerging trend of splitting film women into 'old-style Mothers and new-style efficient career women' whose roles are guided by nurturing *Fathers* (Kaplan 1983:134), a sentiment also addressed in Wood (1986:340). Of certainty, such representations have continued to expound patriarchal myths about woman's inability to combine what Williams (1984:151) identifies as 'womanly desire with motherly

duty'. This concept can be laid at the door of patriarchy's fear of strong women, a phenomenon noted by Fischer (1989) and examined in detail in relation to representations of ageing women by Banner (1992).

The aesthetic and production discourses had also begun to spill into these debates. Artel and Wengraf (1978) critiqued such 'image studies' approaches, arguing that emphasis should be laid on positive images of women in film to create appropriate role models and undermine existing stereotypes. Writing at the same time, Waldman (1978) countered that there is no guarantee that 'good' images were truthful, nor indeed do they necessarily confront sexism. Instead, she advocated a closer scrutiny of the interaction between reader/viewer and text/film for a better understanding of the 'image' issues. Johnston (1973) had earlier helped disrupt the search for a 'realistic' filmic image of women by pointing to the artificial, mechanistic and contrived nature of all filmic output. She positioned the medium of the discourses (films) within its cultural context, claiming such an approach to be best practice for further research into film. She famously noted that 'within a sexist ideology and a male-dominated cinema, woman is presented as what she represents for man' (1973:25). This did not stop others, like Gledhill (1978) calling for a reinscription of realism as a force within cultural production of films in order to embrace its radical as well as hegemonic aspirations, to which Kuhn (1982:250) responded 'realism [in film] perpetuates illusionism' and works ideologically to give the impression that what appears on the screen is an 'uncoded reflection of the 'real world''. Further, Wood (1986:340) insisted that 'the alibi of realism masks ideology' so that through film's illusions a patriarchal, bourgeois hegemonic society is constructed and maintained.

By 1987, Gaines would declaim,

> [t]hose of us who eat, sleep, breathe political theories of representation, who have made the politics of meaning our life's work, are not always aware of the ways our own consciousness is shaped by words, images, or other signifying material (p. 82).

She reinscribed the spectator into textual analysis, echoing Haskell's (1973) lament that the ideas and opinions of the women who were so represented, that is, the women in the audience, had been completely overlooked. Arbuthnot and Seneca (1982) had already identified one persistent problem in these representational debates – feminism continues to use male thought and experience as the source for argument and 'competence in

feminist thought is not a sufficient academic credential' for gaining legitimacy from academic colleagues (p. 124) - a cry echoed in the writings of numerous feminists of the 1980s (see Rich 1980; Kuhn 1982; Kaplan 1983; Williams 1984; Jacobowitz & Spring 1985; Gaines 1986; de Lauretis 1987). Fiction film is replete with differing versions of *Woman* (de Lauretis 1987:297) but does not account for the different social contexts in which *women* obtain or lose visibility. With or without visibility, Woman continues a sign that classical Hollywood films represent in positive terms only when she is docile and suffering (Silverman 1984:322). These ideas have relevance to interpretation of the ways in which colours are used on these female bodies, the topic of investigation in Chapters 7 and 8.

2.2.2 Gender Reproduction and Films

Sociological analysis has traditionally examined film as a 'mirror to society' through which tabulation of stereotypicalities can articulate the faces of movie characters, producers and audiences alike (Andrew 2000:180). However, the cultural norms and practices depicted in films are transformations of histories as well as their transmission, and are intended primarily *to entertain* a mass audience. The popularity of films has thus been a vital component underpinning the critiques offered by film studies (Turner 2000:196-7).

As previously noted, early spectators of Hollywood films tended to over-value the fantasies that film provided, fetishising stars alongside their lifestyles because Hollywood 'glamorized everything' (Ray 2000:68). This promoted the development of psychoanalytical investigation in terms of the unconscious, narcissism, castration, hysteria and repressed desire, amongst others. These influences are referred to as a film's 'subtext' (Creed 2000:76) and attach particularly well to narrative cinema. The 1970s saw a redirection of Freudian theoretical applications to film that incorporated Lacan's (1985) differentiation of the 'Imaginary' and the 'Symbolic'. One of the first attempts to apply a mixture of Lacanian psychoanalysis and semiotics to film critique decried the sociological attempt to compare screen with 'real' women, and argued that film is a construction of various codes which need decoding in order to understand their often contradictory interplay (Cook & Johnston 1974). Their arguments moved feminist film criticism away from simplistic notions of positive and negative imagery.

Baudry (1886, cited in Creed 2000) and Metz (1982) both regarded the film experience as effected from the intertwined imperatives of industrial and psychic-mental 'machineries'. Baudry's thesis hinges on the spectator's ability to identify with the camera, being created as a viewing subject in the process – 'the active centre and origin of meaning' (1986:290, cited in Creed 2000:77). As such, the subject approximates the experience of the Lacanian Imaginary, the period when a child first experiences itself as a unified, albeit false, Self. This occurs in the 'mirror phase' of child development and splits the Self into experienced (Real) and idealised (Symbolic) parts. The experience of film viewing, for Baudry, not only allows such double-identity, it actively encourages it. Metz (1982) partially supports this view, but argues that the Symbolic also needs analysis in terms of the voyeuristic opportunities of the movie experience. Metz (1982) examined the aftermath of the hero-succeeds-in-quest phase of a film, and points out that the hero must have successfully subdued, contained, controlled, demystified or become unified with the female character as well as to have identified with the 'law of the father' – the Symbolic. Such 'apparatus-theory' uncovers the imaginary unity that film viewing offers to permit the viewer to return to the Imaginary, as a unitary, whole Self. Further, by insisting that the film shows what is no longer there, Metz argued that the double-identity permitted an intimacy between viewer and viewed that absolved the viewer of any guilt about his viewing. But such theory completely ignores gender insofar as the subjective viewer was assumed to be male.

The first feminist response to Metz and similar theorists was Mulvey (1975), who theorised the film spectator as male, engaged in 'looking' relations with a signified Woman – an image for the pleasure of the 'male gaze'. Male characters, she argued, always enacted their desire whilst female characters were the objects both available for voyeuristic appraisal as well as hero-reward. According to Mulvey (1975), woman represents man's 'Other' in patriarchal culture, and so is a symbol for male fantasies and obsessions rather than being accorded identity in her own right. Her image thus becomes a source for male pleasure whilst women can only adopt the male gaze or accept the devalued position of identification with the image in the film. Scopophilia (the pleasure in looking) and fetishism (the overvaluation of parts of a female object-body) both retain this diversification of masculine dominance and feminine acquiescence.

The arguments Mulvey presented were compelling indeed, but did not include a space for female spectatorship and female pleasure in the cinematic experience. In this view, the

active female spectator engaged in looking relations did not exist. She enunciated a profoundly passive image of the female viewer which provoked an immediate outcry from feminists and sparked a flurry of reviews. Mulvey (1981) subsequently examined the ideological functions of the gaze through an imbalance of power that posits the female spectator as either masochistic - in her identification with the objectified female on the screen - or sadistic-voyeuristic - if she adopts the masculine viewing position. She argued that the male spectator has an uncritical identification with the hero, receiving the passive woman vicariously, whilst the female spectator must adopt either a narcissistic or sadistic relation to the image of femininity on the screen. Narcissism, she claimed, arises in the female spectator's identification with the (passive) heroine whilst sadism involves her identification with the controlling male gaze, and so with the male viewing position.

Criticisms of Mulvey's view were fourfold, mostly objecting to her pessimistic conclusions that Hollywood had nothing to offer women apart from their objectification as images. Firstly, feminists like Modleski (1982) argued for the existence of a female Oedipal trajectory along which the female spectator could switch between the masculine and feminine positions – a bisexual response. This concept of fluidity of movement between two identificatory positions was extended by de Lauretis (1984) to include the idea of gender as a process, constantly evolving and constantly being revised. However, as has been noted by diverse critics, the socio-historical location of women and men in audiences does not necessarily match their description within such textual analysis. Doane's (1987) treatise on desire exposed the positioning that female spectatorship could adopt as multiple and contradictory, a point that Kuhn (1985) examined in her work on filmic cross-dressing and its relation to the psychic gender flux of the spectating woman.

A second approach examined film in what has been called 'fantasy theory' (Creed 2000:82) and attempted to position gender as a fluid response to Freud's 'primal scene' and subsequent/consequent castration and seduction fantasies. What emerged for spectators was a concept more adaptable than the bisexual gaze – it could encompass identifications across gender, time and space (Cowie 1984). Arbuthnot and Seneca (1982) had argued that the film offered pleasure for women quite apart from those appropriated by the (male) gaze. The stars could resist objectification through refusal to avert their eyes from the male gaze, active looking at men, encroachment into male space, assertive body posture and protection of their space. The friendship apparent between the two stars/characters

facilitates the female viewer's connection and identification rather than the voyeuristic or avaristic gazes of psychoanalysis and Marxism respectively.

Doane (1982) proposed the concept of 'masquerade' as both a constraining and an innovative force available to women to flaunt their Freudian 'lack'. The lack is expressed when a woman brings to and takes from the film-viewing position identifications with those aspects of film most likely to hook her affectively, a potential Williams (1984:154) calls women's 'multiple identificatory power' due to the variable migrations of emotional patterns across the viewing experience. Doane (1982) supported the idea of the feminine masquerade as a resource for women to flaunt their femininity and thereby subvert patriarchal precepts. For Doane, filmic masquerade is to be read as an 'excess of femininity' that can be critiqued for its social constructedness, yet it also provides warning of the punishments inherent in female usurpation of male privilege. Nevertheless, she regards the masquerade as a productive force which offers women a readable image that can be used to argue for change. Further, Doane described a homosexual desire in the relations between women in the audience and those portrayed on the screen, a point Gordon (1984) explicated as part of the fantasy life and pleasure felt by women in voyeuristic activities. Gordon's primary point was that women needed to recognise the constraints imposed by all representations of women in the socio-political structures of their daily lives. In reviewing Hitchcock's apparent misogyny, Modleski (1988) traces the interdependence of masculine and feminine identities, the former predicated on the alien-ness of the latter. Female viewers' reactions of anger were at odds with the Mulveyan concepts of feminine responses of passivity and subjection. In positing a trajectory through bisexuality, Modleski identifies a possible explanation for women's multiplicity of viewpoints, including contradictory ones. Stacey (1987:370) later claimed these views were contaminated by an ideology of masculinised female homoeroticism.

The third critique of Mulvey's ideas challenged film's representations of masculinity and their relation to masochistic tendencies in both male and female viewers. Dyer (1982) wrote of the voyeuristic appeal of the male body and how it is displayed for consumption whilst Neale (1983) concluded that the eroticisation of the male body remained firmly within the acceptable spectacle of action – male spectators are not encouraged to desire male bodies as they are encouraged to desire female bodies. Narrative films in particular play on 'voyeuristic fantasy' (Gordon 1984:418) insofar as the movie experience provides a

comfortable environment in which the spectator can enact a singular engagement with the magic unfolding upon the screen – a window into an alternate world with a privileged view. Culturally competent audiences expect to understand the encoded meanings of the star bodies they encounter on the screen, drawing these into the narrative presentation and thereby verifying the link between text and context (Dyer 1982). Such condensation of much of the action/adventure/detective/spy/western/science fiction/etc genres also makes it clear that there is no place for a feminine Oedipal path in this discourse. Ellsworth (1982) argued for the importance of an historical perspective as a facet of interpretation. Her paper explored the possibilities of collective and political readings available to oppositional readers. De Lauretis (1984) concurred, arguing for a wider focus on feminist representations, pointing particularly to the need to bridge the contradictions between woman-as-object and woman-as-historically-situated.

De Lauretis (1984) discussed experience as an ongoing construction of a subjectivity that is always both a point of arrival and point of departure for personal interactions with the world through various practices, discourses and institutions. Patriarchy's solidity in social relations works through discursive and representational structures in a continuous engagement by a self or subject with social reality (de Lauretis 1984:182). Pointing out that the '*individual's habit as a semiotic production is both the result and the condition of the social production of meaning'* (de Lauretis 1984:179, italics in original), she concluded that a distanciation between the philosophically-ethically constructed *woman* and the living, breathing *women* in a film's audience was imperative.

Gaines (1987) was critical of the psychoanalytic view because of its universalism and thus inattention to issues such as gender, class relations and history. Gaines (1986) had challenged psychoanalytic insistence on sexual difference as the defining oppressive tendency in the lives of women. Non-white women, she charged, experience discrimination first by virtue of their colour, and only secondly as women. Moreover, she found that black men in film are not permitted the same latitude of looking as white men. This had profound implications for the viewing positions of non-white audiences of predominantly white films. From her Marxist perspective, Gaines argued that the psychoanalytic 'sexed identity' offers only support for the sense of the futility of political change experienced by many women. To this end, Gaines (1987) redirected focus to the spectatorship and pleasure in film-viewing practices of women. Lesbians, she points out,

assign greater credence to the viewer, whose gaze appropriates the image, than to the male point of view theorised by psychoanalysis. Through such a gaze, an oppositional form of pleasure can ensue, quite apart from the fetishist and identificatory practices that had dominated the literature. Her plea for a re-evaluation of the pleasures of 'feminine' genres such as romance and melodrama elicited considerable response. Her critique of film theory's focus on psychoanalytic studies – in which women's silence, absence and repression from subjectivity can endlessly be explored – gradually uncovered a different, subjectivity-seeking femininity. In her turn, Ellsworth (1990) argued for a lesbian appropriation of masculine/heterosexist desires for their own uses, echoing Cowie's (1984) claim of spectatorial mobility in identification practices. Additionally, the case was made for the oppositional readings inherent in the social positioning of black audiences of Hollywood's white heterosexist films (hooks 1992).

The fourth approach was dissection of films using Kristeva's (1986) 'abject maternal' image – the castrating, dangerous females of the drama, science fiction and horror genres. Here, Kristeva argues that women can be represented as monstrous - the punitive and brutal female archetype who can both give life and take it away. Bad mothering creates a spectacle, whilst good mothering sidelines the mother as a passive spectator of the life of her child. Hollywood's dismissal of mothers as either self-abnegating or selfish and cruel uncovers patriarchy's warning to women who transgress its expectations of mothers, particularly with regards to the mother-daughter bond because within it, men are excluded (Kaplan 1983). Williams (1984) investigated how women take on maternity and its obligations – a reading position not hitherto theorised but analogous to the experience of mother-daughter bonding as a positive model of relationship. This reading position defies the psychoanalytic weakness or deviation from the male norm with which such bonding had previously been addressed. Like Modleski before her, Williams concluded that women's tendency to identify with multiple viewpoints positions the maternal melodrama as a focus for reflection upon very real issues and problems within their lives.

Modleski (1988) had examined the utopian pretensions of films that offer women fantasy resolutions to real problems or outlets for their rage and desire. She postulated a female Oedipal drama to counter the traditional Freudian Oedipal trajectory of '… the (male) hero confronted with a crisis in which he had to assert himself over another man (often a father figure) in order to achieve social recognition and win the woman' (cited in Creed 2000:77).

Yet some feminist voices argued against the totalitarian and universalist principles inherent in psychoanalysis. Mayne (1993) had argued that psychoanalytic viewers were 'ideal types' and that there is an alternate view of the 'real viewer' available for examination by cognitivist methodologies. Carol (in Bordwell and Carol 1996) supported this by pointing to the learning and memory that spectators bring to the viewing experience, a history that informs their reading of the filmic product as well as their relation to it. This created a space for a female subjectivity quite apart from that previously hypothesised, a subjectivity that had been recognised in star bodies (Dyer 1979; Turim 1979) but not examined in terms of female spectatorship. In examining potentially oppositional types of female stars, Dyer (1979) concluded that these embodied an individuality that was unique *because it was female*. As such, they usurped the masculine position in the flaunting of their particular and peculiar femininities. Allen (1990) and Gaines and Herzog (1990) attributed much of the feminine individualism of female stars to their costuming and public appearances. The star achieves 'a look' that identifies her uniqueness and so symbolises a form of fantasy achievement unavailable to most of her audience. The issues pertaining to 'the look' and its relation to colour will re-emerge later in this thesis.

Revising the history of feminist film critique, White (2000) traces feminism from its early focus on the female-as-image through an uncovering of the contributions of women to the film industry, to the broader issues of representation of race, class and sexuality that inform contemporary film production. Many of these ideas predicated a direct link between filmic representations, spectator beliefs and spectator actions. Stacey (1987:369-370) argues that psychoanalytic accounts of spectatorship, hinging on concepts of identification and object choice, present their case in binary mode – masculine/feminine, active/passive, strong/weak – thereby automatically masculinizing the discourse. This affects non-heterosexuality as an explicable phenomenon, denying the place of the woman who gazes at another with (not necessarily homosexual) desire. Psychoanalysis has nothing to offer such female spectatorship. Pribram (1999:146) asserts that the spectator is inseparable from the 'subject', being constituted as psychoanalytic, discursive and social and so is available for critique, thereby opening a space for female spectatorship. White (2000) criticises psychoanalytic approaches to film for their absence of attention to the relation between the female spectator and the stars she anticipates in the films she watches – particularly female stars who represent powerful, independent role models. Kipnis (2000:152) charges that feminist theorists have frequently conflated the 'male gaze'

with Foucault's 'panopticon', in an all-powerful controlling and viewing male subject, and so give little thought to the resistive potential of feminine viewing practices. A change in direction has taken place in which film studies, once concerned with auteurist output, genres and individual 'art' films, is now open to examination of popular filmic output and of the audiences who consume them (Turner 2000:197).

Benjamin's (1936) concern with the loss of artistic 'aura' in filmic representations has not damaged their relevance or influence in culture at the reproductive level. Gordon (1984:421) had described four ways of 'looking' in movies. Most noticed by the audience is the interchange of looks between the characters on the screen. Secondly, the spectator's viewing of the screen image is moderated by the look of the camera which precedes the film's construction. This third look is a composite of camera-work and editing, and achieves the illusion of a privileged look (the spectator's view) at the world unfolding onscreen. The fourth look is one Gordon constructs as a critical feminine look – the look that catches the looker in the act of looking. This look is the one most mollified in the darkness of the theatre, yet carries the greatest social approbation and so is potentially the greatest reinforcer of prevailing social norms. If the looker knows not who is looking at him/her, and the dark cinema hides that observer, then behaviour will be modified accordingly (Perkins 1972). And what can be made visible through film has extended from the public realities of everyday life to worlds of 'imagined communities' which are themselves a rich source of investigation of social and cultural situations (Anderson 1983, cited in Chow 2000:171). Chow (2000:169) described these processes of identification through 'relations of visuality' as 'suturing' – the growth of a special relation between seeing and knowing that hitherto had been restricted by culture and education, but now engaged audiences regardless of their 'linguistic and cultural specificities' (Chow 2000:172). Whilst it can be charged that immediate comprehension of a film can imply assent, through the accompanying passivity of looking, to the racialised and gendered representations that appear (Kolker 2000:19-20), Wiegman (2000:159) reiterates that film stereotypes remain important for differentiation of symbolic characters who embody complex cultural codes, and so ensure fluency of film interpretation by disparate and undifferentiated audience-readers.

2.2.3 Gender Rebellion and Films

Gender rebellion through film occurred concurrently at the levels of production and theory, with one informing the other and vice versa. Films that attracted a female audience had early been disparaged as 'weepies' (Williams 2000) or trivialised ('costume' dramas and musicals) (Geraghty 2000; Hollows, Hutchings & Jancovich 2000) but they had also fostered a consumerist ethic, so much female production was put to service in creating extravaganzas that displayed women *for* women (Eckert 1978; Gaines 1990; Herzog 1990; Bruzzi 1997; Church-Gibson 2000). Examination of the 'woman's film' uncovered a preponderance of melodrama involving romance, domesticity and motherhood, and so linked sociological foci on 'depictions of women' with feminism's 'figure of Woman' (White 2000:119-20). In popular film narratives, typical restoration of the female to the social order occurs through forgiveness-and-marriage or restitution-through-death (Wood 1986), indicating a social need for the classical Hollywood ending which restores the patriarchal order, and mollifies the (male) spectator (Lapsley & Westlake 1992). Genre development in this way had rendered a multiplicity of variations on a limited number of themes, and it was to these narratives that a feminist counter cinema was envisioned (Tudor 1974). From such theory, feminists began to explore a counter-production, to envisage other ways of making and presenting women's filmed stories.

The disparagement of women's domestic labour that spills over onto other women's enterprises (Lesage 1978:231) created an ethos of unacknowledged productivity within hegemonic male culture. Women's bodies and productivity were routinely appropriated, and social life conducted under institutionalised discourses that established the (male) rules (White 2000). Talented and pivotal Hollywood women, apart from stars, were therefore unearthed and credit claimed for their contributions to the industry, but as Wood (1986:342) warned, male aversion to women's power is made manifest most clearly when 'women's power [is] made visible and concrete'. Thus it is that women continue to play less powerful roles as producers, directors, actors and members of the film crew, regardless of their skills or productive history and capacity. Nevertheless, some film-makers, notably women, have incorporated feminist theory into their practice, melding creativity with women's issues (Erens 1990:330).

Documentaries formed a large part of the feminist film-maker's first responses to the lure of films for women in the 1970s, concerned with the issues faced by women regarding family, work, violence and economic conditions, and their success encouraged the filmic narrativisation of the lives of important women throughout history (Erens 1990:216). Lesage (1978) traced the development of such non-fiction 'realist' films as a politicised critique of patriarchy. To accomplish a successful 'women's identity', she concluded, women needed to have a politicised conversation about the lives of women becoming available to women. To this, Michel (1981) responded by addressing the difficulties in filming history since it can only present a limited viewpoint, with its concomitant fragmentary and often misleading or misguided, idiosyncrasies. Representativeness in the choice of documentary subjects was also cited as an issue. Kuhn (1982) examined documentaries that had reframed familiar narratives to expose previously hidden forms of women's oppression, and identified the practice of the interspersion of fictionalised elements which interrupt and are interrupted by the 'talking heads' of the realist elements as preventing fantasy identifications from overtaking the political implications of the subject matter. This enforced a critical approach which was demanding upon the spectator and did not engage emotions in the same way as fictional narrative. Nonetheless, Gentile (1985) noted that feminist film-makers introduced ideological aspects into their films despite claiming that meaning erupts from the film's reading. Feminist films are particularly effective at eliciting multiple viewer responses about the same film and within the same viewer which may or may not develop in tandem with the director's intentions. This positions women viewers of such films as having a 'critical subjectivity' balanced between involvement and identificatory practices on the one hand, and individualist readings on the other (Gentile 1985:403-4). For Lesage (1978) 'realist documentary' had presented as a potential source of subversive feminist voices, but these have failed to capture the mass interest as did narrative films, often because of their highly personalised themes and the aforementioned frequently maximal requisite effort in their reading.

Rich (1980) similarly examined women's counter-cinema and its academic spawn, uncovering critiques which ignored important facets of feminist sensibilities and women's experiences. In comparing British with North American commentary, Rich determined that the former limited the role of women viewers in the formation of understandings of the texts they view, due to a perceived passivity against which the text's 'message' needed academic interpretation. Rich (1980) argued for a broadening of feminist text and the

development of a variety of approaches, and these proliferated within the next decade to produce a loose consensus that the most potent of forces impinging upon meaning in films is the spectator. One of the earliest, De Lauretis' (1987) examination of European women's films provocatively posited a female spectator, one who is addressed separately by these films and whose reading of them is therefore also from a female perspective, albeit one that originates in differing sexual, racial, economic and cultural experiences. This person, she concludes, should be the spectator addressed by feminist film-makers.

Other issues came to the fore. Mayne (1981:381) sought the female voice in film, claiming for it a 'strategic importance' in the struggle to change the dominant paradigms and assumptions presented in narrative cinema. Silverman's (1984) concern with the lack of female vocal authority in mainstream films led her to identify several methods of using the female voice in feminist film-making, and when Jacobowitz and Spring (1985) examined the extent to which socio-political change may be invoked by feminist films, they found several elements which had potential for affecting viewers' consciousness and their subsequent actions. High among these was the practice of 'exposing images, voices and narratives long suppressed' (1985:364). Rich's (1983) study of pornography, a filmic modality that both marginalises women as images and alienates them as spectators, certainly had this in mind. She concluded that feminists urgently needed to create alternate sexual discourses with which to broach pornography's hold on the image of woman. Focusing on the psychological dimensions of the romance narrative, Fischer (1989) examined the common characteristics of the 'in-love' condition in film – efforts to create a satisfactory self-image for an idealised lover, self-sacrifice, profound sexual passion, long periods of waiting and a tendency towards self-delusion and fantasy – which support the traditional view of love as a negation of the feminine as a separate existence. Grodal (2004) compared these latter two types of films, concluding that pornography resonated to anonymous desire whilst romance focuses on heterosexual relations-bonding. These ideas will be revisited in Chapter 7. In other studies (Hills 1999; MacRory 1999), mainstream alternatives to the figure of Woman, such as action heroines, which may initially have presented as transgressive, were shown to bear the marks of masculinity that never sit comfortably with the female body, and so fail to provide a satisfactory feminine position within films.

Wood (1986) had claimed that feminism needed to suppress its political stance in order to accommodate Hollywood's demands if feminist films were to become commonplace. His

structural analysis of two feminist films of the 1970s detailed the 'huge communal sigh of relief' (Wood 1986:339) offered by Hollywood to its viewers at the eventual surrender of the 'hostile' feminist to the protective arms of a strong male partner. Extrapolating this to 1980s commercial films, he found that feminist discourses had infiltrated the narrative, although they did not readily or successfully challenge male assumptions, noting 'the precariousness of what was achieved in the 70s can be gauged from the ease with which it has been overthrown in the 80s' (1986:339). Stacey (1987) also attacked feminist film critiques as hinging on assumptions of feminine viewer positioning as *masculine* (see Mulvey 1975, i.e. lacking a male erotic object and a female spectator), *masochistic* (see Bellour 1977 and Bergstrom 1979, i.e. no room for a subjectivity) or *marginal* (see Doane 1982, i.e. does not account for diversity in female spectatorship). She concluded that a more complex model which differentiated between gender identification and sexuality was needed.

Much academic effort also went into counter-readings of filmic discourses and previously-reviewed films were resurrected and re-examined in terms of character 'types'. Stereotyping, Smelick (2000:134) charged, is not restricted to the vision of Woman, the primary theme in psychoanalytic discourse. *Gay* (that is, effeminate man) and *butch* (that is, mannish woman) stereotypes, she pointed out, are used as sources of comedy and violence respectively in most mass entertainment (see also Doane 1982; Kuhn 1985, and Tasker 1998 for an examination of a related issue – cross-dressing). Both stereotypes signify a failure to incorporate heterosexual norms, and as such strengthen the stereotype of white heterosexuality as the ultimately desirable condition. Yet, as Doty (2000:149) pointed out, bisexuality, trans-sexuality and androgyny in film narratives are predicated on being 'between' or 'outside' gender binaries and as such, cannot be subsumed in one 'politics of queerness'. It had already been established that the homosexual pleasures offered to the spectator are not limited to heterosexual normativity – transgressive spectatorship has its own pleasures (Stacey 1994). Just as the psychoanalytic bifurcation of desire and identification had been unable to address the multiplicity of desires evident in women's film-attending practices, Stacey (1994) argued that transgressive spectatorship needed to be separated from modernity's conflation of gender identification and sexuality.

Additionally, the case was made for the oppositional readings inherent in the social positioning of black audiences of white heterosexist films (Erens 1990; hooks 1992; Evans

2002), and discourses (Curthoys 1992; Ferrier 1992; Wiegman 2000; Bronski 2008). The black-white colour-term dyad is used here in the format most commonly associated with academic discourse, that of race. Knowledge of the inaccuracy and distortions of stereotypy does not, however, alter the political positioning of individuals so designated, nor do spectators respond to stereotypes in a simple unilateral manner (Bhaba 1983). Wiegman (2000) points out that race and ethnicity are often conflated or subsumed beneath each other's discursive power, and that in North American film criticism it is primarily the model of race=black and ethnicity=Jewish that informs readership. Moreover, there is a tendency to conflate Asianness with physical difference rather than either race or ethnicity, whereas European heritage produces discourses solely in ethnic terms. Similar studies have not been made on Australian audiences, and indeed they would be rapidly outdated as Australianness daily extends to incorporate new multiplicities of race, ethnicity and religion into its cultural mix. In this way, Mulvey's (1981) revision - displacing the notion of a fixed spectatorial position - encouraged focus instead on the gaps and contradictions that permit resistance and diversity to question patriarchal significations and representations.

For those investigating audience reception – Benjamin (1936/69), Krakauer (1965) and Stacey (1987) for example – all have reached the same overall conclusion that visual literacy has superseded the written literacy of modernity, with resultant increase in alienation and/or isolation. Technologies of entertainment have created an apparent docile viewing population for whom films have an especial meaning outside any narrative curiosity or star-driven fervour. Women continue to flock to narrative films, the same kind of narrative films that Perkins (1972) had identified as requiring concessions to patriarchal discourses in order to be readily accessible to the reader. Such discourses are familiar and produce an escapist fantasy that is highly appealing to women (Studlar 1990; Garrett 2007). Moreover, because feminist films have failed to excite and attract women in the same numbers as mainstream Hollywood films, sexist discourses remain the dominant form of gender representation (Erens 1990). Nonetheless, Garrett (2007:4) is more hopeful, distinguishing 'the new woman's film' from previous female-oriented forms and attributing to it feminine concerns with aesthetics, structures and themes that offer satisfaction to women. I will revisit these themes in Chapter 8.

Hill (2000:97) had uncovered an increasing pattern of individual films being critiqued using postmodern concepts, features of which are 'eclecticism, an erosion of aesthetic boundaries, and a declining emphasis upon originality'. Contemporary pop music mixes with costume drama, feminist performances and ideation, and narrative elements invade comedy – all manner of genre crossings become available. Other writers refer to postmodernism in films as an amalgam of modern technologies and other, non-modern stylistic options – Wollen's (1981:168) 'appropriation', Hassan's (1986:505) 'hybridization', Featherstone's (1988:203) 'stylistic promiscuity' and Hebdige's (1988:191) 'rework[ing] the antecedent' all share this basic view. For Jameson (1984:58) this trend has resulted in a 'culture of the … simulacrum' offering only emptiness, depthlessness and conservatism in postmodern film product. Kolker (1988:x-xi) links postmodernism with a reactionary anti-modernism that returns film conventions to classicism and its accompanying hegemonic traditions despite the mixing of genre specificities or 'pastiche' requirement identified in Jameson's (1984:64-5) critique, an idea to be reframed in Chapter 9. This pastiche extended increasingly in the 1970s to include film studies that similarly borrowed from multiple critical epistemologies for their coherence, so that Marxism, structuralism, linguistics, psychoanalysis and semiotics intermingled with postmodernist ideas to provide a wide variety of reading positions (Kleinhans 2000:108). As semioticians and feminists had already concluded, the most interesting emergent site of study for film was the spectator, and how spectating can and does contribute to social reproduction (Kuhn 2009).

2.3 Colour Studies

Colour has often been devalued as the feminine part of painting, taking second place to 'masculine' drawing (Gage 1993: 174). Colour is pervasive (the '*initial* sign of "objects" and "events"' – Ogden & Richards 1972:83) yet also functionally 'invisible' (Dyer 1997:46) unless particularly highlighted through contrast or motion (Johnson 1966:7-13). It is both a hue and vehicle for symbolic connotations (Street 2009:191). Psychological investigations point to the intense visual and emotional effects of colour on humans (Birren 1978; Yau 1994), yet as Costall (2002: 74) puts it, 'colour ... is an abstraction ... ecologically... meaningless'. Gellatly too (2002: 83-85) finds exception with Bornstein's claim that 'to see colour is to categorise the spectrum into hues' because the absence of colour terms in many languages suggests that colour is not a major focus of attention for all people. Lyons (1995: 198-217) had presented a similar argument. Nevertheless, as Davies and Corbett

(1997) have pointed out, all people share all the available colour space within their inventory of colour terms. Modernism has examined colour's excitation of visual apparatus (Clark 1998; Block 2003), its physical properties (Rainwater 1971; Varley 1991) and its sign-value (Osgood et al 1975; Kress & van Leeuwen 2002), but postmodern approaches have pointed out the context-dependency of the colour phenomenon (see Lamb & Bourriau 1995 and in particular Massumi 2000). Combined with the discovery that few Western people can differentiate brightness from saturation (Van Brakel 2002), these critiques suggest that colour is a cultural environmental artefact (Eco 1985b).

It has been claimed that people are affected by colour emotionally (Birren 1950, 1978), because colour makes things appear 'warm or cold', 'provocative or sympathetic', 'exciting or tranquil' (Varley 1991: 10, 50). Colour as symbol has long been used as a powerful cultural perceptual language. In Australia, for example, Aborigines, like similar 'stone-age' cultures, have also imposed cultural relevance on each item of their limited colour palette (Finlay 2002: 32-66). Further, the symbolism of colour in Western thought has been subjected to the 'Rule of Opposition', which denotes not only the ambivalence of colour symbols, but also the polarity of those symbols (Gage 1993: 90). In addition, the search for colours, especially 'new' colours, has occupied artists and commercial interests alike, to the extent that the 'ownership' of certain colours has now also become the subject of some dispute (Lawson 1999; Walker 2005).

In film studies, feminism has forged a sizeable research archive, and whilst colour theories abound in respect to colour's intersection with film production, colour's links to gender have been largely ignored, this despite colour - and particularly bright colour - being associated with the feminine in social symbolism (Arnheim 1957; Coates 2008). Indeed, very few researchers have investigated colour's use *as* colour in film[1]. This is the primary objective of this thesis, but firstly, I would like to draw attention to the colour studies that have dominated academic discourse generally.

2.3.1 History, Anthropology, Sociology and Colour

Aristotle first described colour perception as a human potentiality waiting to be changed by the properties of coloured objects (Johansen 2002: 171). Bacon's description of rainbow colours in terms of 'species propagation' (Kraml 2002: 205; Wachelder 2002: 220),

Newton's exposition of 'differential refrangibility' of spectral fringes (Steinle 2002: 234-237), Goethe's work with complementary spectra (Steinle 2002: 237-242; Derksen 2002: 256-257) and Geiger's cross-cultural evolutionary theory of colour nomenclature (Saunders 2000) have all contributed to the intellectual investigation of the physical phenomena of colour.

Anthropological studies have shown that colour features as an important element of ritual (see for example Turner 1967; Levi-Strauss 1970 ; Strathern & Strathern 1971 (discussed in Ball & Smith 1992); Paul 1982; Herdt 1984; Yau 1994; Stobart & Howard 2002; Hovers et al 2003; Hutchings 2004), language (Berlin & Kay 1969; Lyons 1995; Davidoff et al 1999; Moore et al 2000), commerce (Bottomley & Doyle 2006) and social discrimination, for which race issues are the most prominent (see for example Dyer 1997; Jackson & Rasenberger 1988; Jowett 1992; Schulman 1992; Guerrero 1993; Imre 1999; Thornley 2001; Brasell 2002; Evans 2002; and Leyda 2002 for examples of film studies and colour terms). Class issues (such as Lindsay 1996; Hoberman 1997) associate colour with symbolic social conditions, and whilst ethnographic analyses accumulate, the consensus of most psycho-social critiques is that colour is both a *social* as well as an individual experience. This social aspect is one that philosophers such as Goethe (as cited in Sepper 1988; Derksen 2002; Steinle 2002) and Wittgenstein (1978), and critics such as Massumi (2000) have grappled with in their investigation of 'phenomenal' colour spaces. Phenomenol spaces bring colour's very existence into question, with the debates showing an expanding diversity of subversive and reconstructive knowledge-claims (Gerritsen 1975; Decock 2002). Whilst these issues have only indirect bearing on this thesis, they are nonetheless important in terms of postmodern and post-structuralist debates that also inform my ideas.

Investigation of colour terminology by Berlin and Kay (1969) challenged Sapir and Whorf's linguistic relativity thesis (see Simpson 1991; Davies, Sowden et al 1998) and the resultant division between universalist and relativist discourse trajectories produced vociferous debate. Berlin and Kay (1969) proposed a limit of eleven basic colour terms (BCTs) for all languages that is acquired along evolutionary lines according to the society's technological sophistication. All languages, they determined, had words for black and white, but if a hue term was added, it was always red. Following this, the appearance of the other eight BCTs (blue, green, yellow, brown, pink, purple, grey and orange) completed the colour lexicon, and permitted all other colours to be described. Berlin and Kay (1969: 14) determined that

the foci of the Munsell colour spaces named by BCTs were remarkably similar across the 98 languages they surveyed and followed a highly constrained nature.

Most criticism of the Berlin-Kay thesis expounded methodological issues (Ratner 1989; Dedrick 1998; Saunders 2000; Saunders & van Brakel 2002), in response to which Kay and Regier (2003: 9085) acknowledged 'the most damaging evidence against the universality hypothesis is that there are languages that appear not to fit the proposed universal pattern'. Philosophically, too, problems occur in colour knowledge-claims. Delgado (2004:81), citing the "epigenetic rules" of the human mind, stressed that the disposition of individuals to partition basic colours from each other facilitated both sensory processing (coding) and cognitive manipulation (representation). Mausfield (2002: 141) found that colour representations are 'biologically important' and vital for trade objects, with BCTs mirroring the degree of linguistic abstraction achieved within a society. For Kraml (2002) this justified a claim that colour is a mere registration device for environmental hazards and objects, which Whittle (2002) extrapolates: colour corresponds to structures in the world, extended over space and time, that organise the visual field into boundaries. A 'personal prototype' for the structural cognition of colour has been hypothesised (Moore, Romney & Hsia 2000), a point also made by De Weert (2002: 338) who notes that colour does not change perceptually as illumination changes, calling this 'colour constancy', 'the most central process in colour vision'. Colour constancy would then contribute to foci and boundaries of specific colour categories in a language (Davies & Sowden *et al* 1998).

The development in primates of trichromatic vision (Sacks 1996) where perception of colour begins with activation of the hue-coded cells of the retina, tends to suggest a universality of at least some aspects of colour perception (Gellatly 2002; Seppalainen 2002). Colour categories, it is suggested however, are formed from boundary demarcations found within language (Dedrick 1998; Roberson, Davies & Davidoff 2002), and so colour can 'mean' whatever each social group wishes it to mean (Eco 1985b). Colour is turned into representational knowledge, used in everyday situations to produce the appearance of a certain kind of person, and flourishes as an unconscious symbolic signalling system of greater social truths (Eco 1985b). 'In real life, one generally sees the colours one expects to see', Johnston (1966:7) claimed. Nevertheless, colour 'clarifies the doubtful form of things', ensuring that, along with shape and texture, objects are easily discriminated (Gage 1993: 7-11). Massumi's (2000) critique of the production of colour-

knowledge creates no problems for the interpretation of colour signals in everyday life or in the cinema. The notion of 'basic colour terms' permits an analysis that avoids the problems associated with colour cataloguing in films identified by Higgins (2007), and for this reason has relevance to this thesis.

2.3.2 Colour and Films

Dyer (2000:1) has declaimed three innovations as decisive in the history of film – its very invention, the introduction of sound, and the introduction of colour. In its links to film production, colour is cited by many feminist and film writers as an important element in the aesthetic (see Arnheim 1957; Bellman 1974; Andrew 1984; Ford 1994; Munnoch 1994; Edgerton 2000; Dick 2002; Bordwell & Thompson 2004; Telotte 2004; Neale 2008), narrative (examples are Ames 1992; Hogue 1994; Dyson 1995) and symbolic (such as Dyer 1997; Backstein 1994; Conrad 1994; Kehr 1994; Hoberman 1997; Insdorf 1997; Jackson 2000) facets of a film. Johnson wrote in 1966, '[t]oday's film-makers and viewers, nurtured on indifferent colour films and those which use colour only piecemeal, are not yet at ease with the concerted use of colour to shape the film as a whole' (p. 22). Perkins (1972:54-56) discussed the availability of black and white film as a resource for use in colour films and vice versa, pointing to the greater emphasis on detail in the former to produce audience responses, compared to the instantaneous emotional reaction available to the colour stimulus. 'The spectator does not have to *translate* the use of colour ... in order to be affected by it' (Perkins 1972:56). Giannetti (1996:22) agrees, stating that colour is 'strongly emotional in its appeal, expressive and atmospheric rather than conspicuous or intellectual', able to work its magic because people accept it passively. In 2010 colour is so common in films that it is the black-and-white film that stands out as an object of curiosity. But this has not translated into a study of what Johnson (1966:3) called 'this sheer elusiveness of screen colour'.

Studies in colour have permeated many differing research agendas, yet detailed analysis of the use of colour as a signifying or meaning-producing phenomenon in film is rare. Indeed, even when a colour term is used in a film's title, the meaning attached to this is overlooked in the search for other meanings (see for example Backstein 1994; Layton 1994; Mangravite 1994; Smith 1999; Williams 2001a; De Bona 2003; Taubin 2006) and yet other writers use colour terms to designate an idea without exploring the colour links (Conrad 1994,

Sweeney 2001, Kendrick 2006, Chien 2007) – and Hogue (1994) does both. Moreover, little has been produced at the intersection of colour and gender and film studies despite the contemporary prevalence of colour films. Nonetheless, there are a few outstanding contributions to this difficult research area.

In 1966, Sharits presented a singular in-depth analysis of the colours used by Godard (one of the directors along with Hitchcock, Eisenstein, Hawkes and Ford, for example, to have attracted auterist critiques). Twenty-one years later Deutelbaum's (1987:17) analysis of a film's colour use in costuming emerged. Deutelbaum noted consistent colour binaries that segmented the narrative for narrative functions, so that unlike the usual view of colour as a symbolic enterprise derived from the 'language' of painting (Church Gibson 2000:36), his approach linked the ambivalences of the characters to their actions and the colours that appeared both in their environments and on their bodies. A further nine years and Rohrer-Paige (1996) linked colour to gender, postulating a narrative symbolism for Dorothy's ruby slippers in *The Wizard of Oz*. Both these writers had examined the role of colour as an important carrier of meaning within the films they critiqued, and when Kieslowski's trilogy *Three Colours* was released, others have begun to report their ideas about colour in film (see Kehr 1994; Insdorf 1997; Wilson 1998; Moore 2002; Coates 2002 & 2008). For the purposes of this thesis, the relevant studies have been grouped under three headings: ambience, skin and costume/artefact.

2.3.2.1 Colour and Ambience

From its inception, colour was an important aspect of the ambience of films (Johnson 1966; Pilbrow 1979; Kindem 1987). Taking its early cues from stage lighting (Bellman 1974; Andrew 1984), films were projected through coloured filters to enhance the 'mood' of black-and-white (henceforth called 'monochromatic') films (Johnson 1966; Perkins 1972; Munnoch 1994; Higgins 2007). At first the addition of colour to films was seen as an assault on realism (Solomon 1972; Neale 1985) but once well-established, some monochromatic films were 'colorized' to enhance their appeal to post-WWII audiences (Edgerton 2000; Bordwell & Thompson 2004). As part of its introduction, the Technicolor company adopted a discourse about 'natural' colour (Perkins 1972; Telotte 2004) which fed into the existing aesthetic issues of verisimilitude as a marker of 'good' films. But as Tellotte (2004) remarked, colour does not have to be 'natural' in order for it to be effective in films.

Perkins (1972:122) had already drawn attention to the characteristic of quite severe changes of colour on screen being accepted as 'natural' provided it was directly motivated by the actions of the characters.

Ball and Smith (1992:58) had noted the importance of colour as an essential feature of the seen world through which 'objects are experienced, classified and described using their colour as a significant identificatory principle'. In film, the use of colour extends further, allowing a wide range of effects within the film's mise-en-scene. Whilst attention is often directed at film costume, Sharits (1966) asserted that environmental colours were equally important, a point that Johnson (1966:6-7) had made earlier, drawing attention to the variety of colour options available to a film's director. Tudor (1974), Giannetti (1996), Smelik (1998) and Thornley (2000) further identified decolouration of a film to be associated with sombre narratives, whilst bright and multi-hued ambiences were more likely to appear in comedy, fantasy and musical films (Neale 1980; Andrew 1984). Three studies by Adams, Dorai and Venkatesh (2002), Rasheed, Sheikh and Shah (2003) and Wei, Dimitrova & Chang (2004:833) confirmed this through computable colour cues which demonstrated a high consistency between colour use and genre aspects of films. In particular, the latter study found that 'the transitions of colours between shots … may lead to mood dynamics' of about 80% accuracy of association.

Referring specifically to landscape colours, Ford (1994) demonstrated how a cityscape could be made to adopt a filmic 'persona', whilst Zonn and Aitken (1994) examined the Australian landscape as an important marker of masculinity within the Australian film. Both examined scape and its colours as associate characters in their respective films, an issue also visited in Farquhar (1992). Others link ambience colours with narrative aspects such as class, where saturated multi-colour is a marker of dirt and associated with lower socio-economic class when compared with the upper-class - 'light colours and plain walls [which] tend to demonstrate constantly how clean these walls are' (Coward 1984:69). Dyer too (1993:129) discusses gradual changes of ambience colours through a film as the circumstances of the narrative unfold, and signalling the hero's changes, a transformation Johnson (1966:17) had called 'organised realism' and Stam (2000:152), 'cinematic colour codes'. Here the colouring of each scene appears natural, but the sequences are organised to form a dramatic and contrasting progression. When Coates (2008) examined the symbolism and uses of red in four films, he noted that by realist conventions, red is the

most viscerally 'real' of colours, a point that Perkins (1972:85) had made earlier, adding that 'because we are not given reason to question the credibility of the colour … we can give the full emotional response that the arrangement of colour requires'. Colour as ambience has considerable import to the production and reception of films and is an issue to be revisited in Chapter 4.

2.3.2.2 Colour and Skin

Of all topics, colour as euphemism for race is most prominent in contemporary Western literature. North American social commentary in particular establishes that *colour* equates to *race*, and although this is not the specific version of 'colour' that I examine in this thesis, it is nevertheless important to the production of some of the films in this dissertation. With respect to representation in film criticism, it is Dyer's (1997) work, *White*, that is most illuminating. Dyer divides whiteness into *hue*, *skin* and *symbolic* components (p. 45), tracing how seemingly universal concepts of whiteness as archetypally opposite to blackness have shaped human awareness and prejudices in favour of whiteness and against all that is non-white, that is, what is considered black (p. 48). Hue, informed by symbolism, is applied to skin, which reinforces symbolism (Gergen 1967:397), so that even 'to be darker, though racially white, is to be inferior' (Dyer 1997:57). Williams (2001:14) examined blackness in terms of 'pro-Tom sympathy vs anti-Tom antipathy' and warned that the white-black lesson for black skin is 'that white love, no less than white hate, is lethal' (p. 19). Evans (2002) took this further, examining mainstream film representations of inter-racial families and the miscegenation taboo, and established that 'not having a family – or having the wrong kind' (p. 274) became cause for dehumanisation.

Other writers on film have pointed to the all-pervasiveness of whiteness as socially dominant. Thornley's (2000) discussion of the presence-in-absence of whiteness, and Brasell's (2002) work on cross-racial relations are particularly apt here. Thornley talks of the power of the rarely-onscreen white man in relation to that of the white-man-gone-native, and how the triangle formed by the addition of a white woman informed race relations. Brasell's work also investigates triangles, this time the interactions between white, black and Asian Americans, concluding that racial difference remains locked into the dichotomy of white-black relations at multiple social levels. Dyer's (1997:44) plea that it 'would probably be a better world if we didn't use colour terms at all to designate groups

of people' is echoed in Dalmage's (2000) suggestion that the 'colour-line' in the United States is becoming blurred, causing rupture in social and power relationships. America's election of a 'black' President in 2008 seems to confirm this, as does the increasingly sympathetic view of black skin in 21st century film representations.

2.3.2.3 Colour and Costume-artefacts

Butler's reminder (1990:92) that the 'body gains meaning within discourse only in the context of power relations' permits a focus on the markers of such meaning. Traditionally, it has been the role of costume and objects to enhance the appearance of power (Tudor 1974; Wilson 1985) and as Goffman (1976:22) pointed out, such artefacts are culturally conventional expressions of subjectivity that are 'available to us *at a glance*'. Colour is frequently employed for just this purpose, in everyday life as in film. Nonetheless, the role of costume in film has been variously subordinated to body language as an index of power (Arbuthnot & Seneca 1990:118), made capable of 'repositioning destabilizing gender performances' (MacRory 1999:53), and attributed the potential 'to disguise, to alter, even to reconstruct, the wearer's self' (Kuhn 1985:53). Moreover, Western understanding of costume as frivolous (Steele 1997:1), sexualised (Bruzzi 1997) and bourgeois (English 2007) has emerged from its relation to consumer culture (Eckert 1978), creating images which coalesce in the display of gender (Goffman 1976; Williamson 1978, 86). Church Gibson (2000:34) claims that costume is nonetheless 'undeniably an important site of filmic pleasure' and so despite its 'preoccupation with feminine fripperies' (Garrett 2007:189), costumes may be considered as indices of varying 'types' of power available to the wearer (Harper 1994; Cook 1996; Bruzzi 1997).

Gaines (1990a:1) points to the success of films in establishing themselves as '*the same as* the reality to which [they] refer' (italics in original) via the naturalisation of costume *as* clothing despite the lack of correlation with what real women wear. Costume is the indicator *par excellence* of gender in narrative film, much of which occurs through style and colour. Style enhances or disguises physical attributes/defects, and so is a major indicator of the wearer's gender, but however the costume has been created, colour is the most significant element (Paine 1988:42). It is at the junction of style and colour that gendered power is symbolised, and so colour can be regarded as a metalinguistic signal that is added to the narrative in much the same way as has been identified for films' music scores

(Garrett 2007:66). Salih and Butler (2004:23) described gender as the 'corporeal locus of cultural meanings' where choice is restricted to 'a network of deeply entrenched cultural norms', and I am suggesting that these norms impose a colour symbolism that extends to the costumes of characters.

An important aspect of this colour use is the identification of characters at critical narrative moments (Sharits 1966; Gaines 1990b; Neale 2008) because 'when collections of signs are close together… colour coding is frequently employed' (Ball & Smith 1992: 63) for differentiating aspects of a visual field. Perhaps more importantly, the suspense which holds the film audience enthralled 'requires the banishment of style [and] the presence of some other strong costuming statement that would reiterate the intensity of the passion and echo the fear' (Gaines 1990b:206). Colour has been shown to be 'replete with symbolic significance' (Ball & Smith 1992:36), making self-decoration a 'visual medium for communicating symbolic information' (p. 39), for which colour is paragon. Yet as Williamson (1978:24) warned, the 'use of colour is not significant in itself, it is the significance of the correlation it makes'.

2.4 Colour as Symbol and the Postmodern Subject

Van Gogh's assertion (cited in Ogden & Richards 1972:183) that '[c]olour as colour … MEANS something - this should not be ignored, but rather turned to account' (emphasis in original) sits uncomfortably with Street's (2009:209) postmodern conclusion that 'films demonstrate colour's inherent instability of affect and meaning'. Street (2009:195) calls colour 'a complex register' that potentiates meanings related to narrative norms and cultural context. Simmel (1921, cited in Ball & Smith 1992) claimed that of all human senses, '[t]he eye has a uniquely sociological function'. It is thus a short jump to the potential sociological implications of film-viewing. Johnson (1966:10) pointed to the brightness and isolation of the screen image as the primary attractant that enables colours to act as 'a kind of servo-mechanism, amplifying a mood that would still exist without color', enabling the viewer to respond more keenly than to a similar context in everyday reality.

What is notable about colour symbolism is its remarkable cross-cultural and cross-temporal similarity for three specific colours – white, black and red. White and black are usually

discussed together, brought together as a dualism by early Christian teachings (Dyer 1997:67), with white given primarily positive connotations and black negative ones (Tudor 2000; Pastoureau 2008). White has been variously attributed as 'the synthesis of all colours' (Evarts 1919:131 cited in Dyer 1997); neutrality and innocence (Sharits 1966); 'triumph, light, innocence, joy, divine power, purity, regeneration, happiness, gaiety, peace, chastity, truth, modesty, femininity and delicacy' (Gergen 1967); light and safety (Dyer 1993); purity, spirituality, transcendence, cleanliness, virtue, simplicity, chastity and virtue (Dyer 1997; Pastoureau 2008); innocence and the ability to 'dampen' other colours (Coates 2008); and indicating youth, gaiety and informality (Street 2009). Black's symbolic connotations include a concealing, unknown, and unseen absence (Neale 1980:43); darkness and danger (Dyer 1993:31); badness (Currie 1999:51); depression and 'deathly corruption' (Coates 2008); and strength and baseness (Street 2009). To these Pastoureau (2008) adds elegance and sophistication as well as power and demonic influences. On a wider scale, some authors prefer to divide the concepts of darkness and lightness into 'warm' and 'cool' colours (Giannetti 1996:22; Street 2009) which advance or recede in an image respectively.

Considered to be mid-way between black and white, arising out of 'meaningless' grey (Osgood, May & Miron 1975), is red. Coates (2008) describes red as the most powerful of hues, able to be contained only by white and black – both of which have an even more fundamental symbolic status. Sharits (1966) regarded red as warm and attractive. Jones (1979) saw red as signifying sexuality, change and activity, concepts echoed by Erens (1990) who added danger as a signifying concept. Rohrer-Paige (1996:147) described red as hinting of rebellion, passion and spilled blood; Giannetti (1996) associates it with aggressiveness, violence and stimulation; and Coates (2002) sees it as offering warmth and relationship, the primary signifier of intensified emotion and resistance, whilst in 2008 he regarded red as promising passion, seduction, drama, danger and romance. Street (2009) lists excitement, activity and heat among red's 'meanings'. All these authors regarded red as a hidden principle of power – associated literally and metaphorically with blood and life. Kendrick (2006) linked red with masculine violence, particularly when linked with black, a combination which has further connotations of money and lucrative but ignominious success (Coates 2008). In nature, black and red signal poisonous plants and venomous insects (Varley, 1991). Moreover, the colours black, white and red have special symbolic associations within traditional linguistic communities (Theroux 1994:58-59) and offer 'primary' symbolism (Eisenstein cited in Coates 2008).

Linking these colours to gender display, Coates (2008) points out that the classical film representation of the woman in red is linked to life and passion, while a black-dressed one represents death and decay, and the woman in white, innocence. Femininity is further subsumed by the symbolism of pink, which has the effect of de-masculinising (un-manning) the masculine in films (Coates 2008). Dyer (1993) linked pastel colours to femininity and primary colours to masculinity, whilst Coates (2008) links grey, brown or black with the masculine. Grey for Kalmus (cited in Street 2009) denoted subtlety, refinement and charm. Sharits (1966) also mentions three other colours – blue, green and yellow - but their links to specific symbolism is less clear. Blue, he says, is the color of villains, green indicates hatred and yellow the regaining of feeling and new beginnings. Sharits further proposed that a film's equal distribution of complementary colours would indicate that the action could be directed either way with equal probability. Johnson (1966) cites blue as the colour most liked and yellow the least liked colour by adults, adding that the human emotional responses to colour depend on associations, which may differ between individuals as well as between contexts. Green, he claims, is restful only as long as it is not associated with decomposition. And more recently, pink has become associated with homosexuality (McCafferty & Hammond 2003; Koller 2008), reduced aggression (Caudill 1981:34) and the 'feminine' (Hurlbert, Luing & Sweeting 2003).

Johnson (1966:5) says that colours interact to enhance or diminish one another's effectiveness, to which Ogden and Richards (1972:237) add that the emotional effects linked to colours are learned through experience as well as through linguistic association. Both Varley (1991:58) and Finlay (2002:324) concede that ambiguity in colour symbolism is inherent in its experience. Screen colours differ from reality, and enforce an over-valuation because of their contrast with the darkened theatre (Johnson 1966:7), a point also discussed by Mitry (2000) and echoed in Massumi's (2000:180) argument that 'colour has *struck*'. In its ability to refocus attention, colour 'shatters' the unity of the image (Kristeva 1980:221), thereby implying that colour perception precedes the identification of objects (Wilson1998:349). Certainly, there is evidence to suggest that very young infants respond to colours (Birren 1978; Adams, Courage & Mercer 1994; Franklin & Davies 2004), but this does not equate to the partitioning of the spectrum into universal colour spaces. Higgins (2007) points to the multiplicity of hues that are perceptible to humans, but complicates any colour analysis by drifting from BCTs to 'vehicles of chroma', the scientific

quantification of spectral assemblages into definable 'colours'. Such an endeavour produces an enormous catalogue of colour presentation and directs attention away from the experiential meanings attached to colours (Lamb & Bourriau 1995:197-198), especially on the screen (Jameson 1990:220; Perkins 1972:140). As Street (2009:209) rightly points out, many films demonstrate 'colour's inherent instability of affect and meaning'.

Massumi (2000:181) talks of the colour experience becoming personalised as perception, a relational context. The seen world – 'visual facts' (Ball & Smith 1992:17), the 'non-illusory apparent' (Currie 1997) - is attached to a variety of beliefs and expectations about the nature and functioning of everyday life, and this includes the development of 'colour constancy' in which the 'brain adjusts for and discounts differences' (Lamb & Bourriau 1995:199). Division of the spectrum occurs through binarist distinction (Osgood, May & Miron 1975) but although we have linguistic terms for these divisions, 'we do not know what chromatic effects these words refer to' (Eco 1985a:158). Instead, Eco (1985a:160-164) claims, although colours are correlated with a cultural concept, there is no universal method of demarking different colours. For Currie (1997: 47) this positions colour as a type of response to a visual stimulus – '[r]oughly, for things to be red they merely have to look red to us in normal conditions'. With such potential definitional difficulties, the colours discussed in this dissertation will use BCTs, although it is accepted that each BCT encompasses overlapping as well as focal spectral territory.

Conclusion

This literature review has shown the extensive volume of work that informs my thesis. Drawing from three distinctly separate disciplines of inquiry, I have attempted to uncover the links that, when joined together, offer a cohesive understanding of colour's importance as a signifier of *something* in film. Film studies have promoted the idea of film as an enterprise, each product adding to the store of similar products and promoting the same symbolisms. That colour is an exceptionally potent symbol has been commented upon by only a few authors, and so opens a space for my investigation of colour's use as a filmic symbol.

Feminist discourses have grappled with the problem of gender representation and reproduction for a long time, with film a prime target for their illustrations and objects of

study. These commentaries have however been mostly organised around the narrative construction of films and the role of the spectator in the construction of meaning. The discourses offer insights into the various ways in which women continue to struggle with the limitations of hegemonic society to present a feminist perspective of their experiences. Gender performativity, it seems, stretches to how individuals think as well as to how they act (Butler 1990). A major contributor to the construction of gender is the use of colour in films, yet this has received scant attention and so serendipitously offers me another niche for this thesis.

Issues emerging from the study of colour are complex and replete with fine distinctions. Arguments about the nature of colour outweigh interest in its signifying value in the physical sciences, whereas the social sciences avoid examination of the hues by focusing on the euphemistic attribution of 'colour' to concepts of race and class. Whilst acknowledgement of colour's ephemeral links with symbolism occurs rarely, the use of BCTs in the literature is common. This use of BCTs carries with it assumptions about 'commonsense' meanings attributable to the colour terms, yet these also have not been challenged or investigated. Examination of the meaning that colour terms provide for the postmodern 'reader' is similarly neglected. Filmic 'terms' are the components of the scenes, to which colour is a potent addition.

Drawing these three areas – film, gender and colour studies – into focus, this thesis will address the gaps, highlighting the ways in which colour use in Australian films helps construct gender performances and suffuses them with meaning. An even more notable gap within the literature, and related to the lack of interest in the study of colour, is the provision of a methodology with which to attempt this project. This has necessitated a second literature search, to which I now turn.

Notes:

1 There are some tantalizing glimpses of the power of colour in gender displays to be found Bellantoni's 2005 book, *If it's purple, someone's gonna die: the power of color in visual storytelling*, Boston: Elselvier, brought to my attention since the submission of this thesis for examination. Unfortunately, her brief overview of 100 films in 50,000 words provides little analysis or data useful for my purposes, and so, whilst an important contribution to the growing awareness of film colour as a data set for further analysis, adds nothing to nor refutes my arguments.

Chapter 3 In Search of Methodology

Introduction

Analysing visual data brings with it a multitude of contingencies that will influence the outcome, not the least of which is the point of view brought to the research by its author (Stake 1995:45). This thesis explores the linkages between colour and gender, using films – that is, artefacts – as data, and, as a thesis entering largely unexplored territory, issues in both the selection of data and methods used for analysis arise. My interest in colour is longstanding, but my approach to explore this phenomenon in films has been born of the data set as much as by the application of theory or the processing of the data. Beginning with the idea of experimental science, both data and method needed to be approached via a triangulation paradigm (Denzin 1970: 300-301) so that a suitable rationale could develop for explanation of the project's results. In this way, the data (colour) is examined through extant knowledge of two other conceptual fields (film and gender) whose intersections are already well-theorised, and therefore have considerable academic rigour.

Film studies have developed several methods to investigate visual phenomena, most significantly psychoanalytic, genre and semantic approaches amongst qualitative researchers, with some important contributions from quantitative approaches. These and varied other influences have helped guide my approach. As a result, it is necessary to examine some of these briefly in order to offer a rationale for my adoption of the sociological tools utilised. This chapter outlines these arguments and processes, replicating the development of my post-structuralist feminist approach. Existing methods are examined in terms of colour (touching on Berlin & Kay's 1969 BCTs – to be examined at length in Chapter 4), structure (semiotics and binaries), and culture (non-discursive symbolism and gender). In the process, the analytical tools for examination of the colour content of films are ascertained.

3.1 Structuralism and the Gender/Film/Colour Nexus

Blockbuster films are structured to appeal to multiple cultural interests, and much academic interest has been allotted to the question of how various social issues are

represented therein. Gender is one important facet of this representational system, and is linked to the individual viewer's relation to the images on the screen. More generally, gender is a foundational aspect of all social arrangements, producing conventions that influence human behaviour in various ways. These conventions result in arrangements which govern interactions between people and so are important in determining the ways that any particular social group operates. An interplay of conformity, resistance and improvisation exists as practical knowledge in the minds of individuals, creating constraining and innovative responses to everyday situations (Giddens 2003:25-28). Knowledge about and manipulation of a society's rules and resources relies upon the belief in reason as a social force that enables people to become reflexive agents, continually adjusting their conduct. Social interaction is regarded as comprising socially-defined parameters to which individuals become adjusted as they absorb these norms into personal repertoires of action. The primary form indicating adjustment is language.

Structuralism is a term which is used in many different ways. In this thesis, it is used primarily in the sense prevalent in film studies, which derives from the work of de Saussure and related theorists. Unlike the structuralism of Anglo-Saxon sociology (as represented by structural-functionalism) with its focus on social institutions such as the family, work and education, this kind of structuralism arose through the analysis of language, the social use of words as representational systems. Language became, in structuralist paradigms, an aggregate of meaningful words existing within a historical (diachronic) dimension, but remaining fluid so that change can be recorded and measured (Hawkes 1977:19). In this section, de Saussure's (1916) seminal work in linguistics will be explored first to determine how the study of language produced a new way of examining texts. For film studies, this was provided by the concept of genre, the Hollywood staples that had captured and enthralled the cinema audience since film's inception. Genre aligns with Levi-Strauss' (1963) ideas on myth and offers understanding of the same-yet-different aspect of films that had attracted critical attention. Notwithstanding the elegance of this schema, challenges to the simple relation between the sign's signifier and signified erupted through post-structuralist concepts of reflexivity and agency. These introduced the important element of the reader into textual analysis. Far from expression of simple communication - sending an unadulterated message from (active) author to (passive) reader - films highlighted the problem of the viewer, the person addressed by the film. This issue will be outlined next as it caused a shift in film studies from psychoanalytic searches for meaning

within archetypal psychological structures employed in film texts, to consideration of the interaction between viewer and viewed. The cinematic experience then, is a unique process of engagement that produces both temporal distortion and psychological identification within experiences that simultaneously protect the viewer from risks other than being caught in the act of viewing. It is an isolated and isolating activity (or inactivity, if we consider the restriction to a chair in darkness in front of a screen as non-active or passive conduct) enacted in the company of numerous strangers – an experience that is definitive of 20th-century Western cultural life.

Post-structuralist ideas have also highlighted the contextual nature of all interactions, so that the meaning of any action/word/thought must align with the prevailing conditions. Film studies have grappled with this most assiduously in the deconstruction of gender, but a sizeable commentary is also available on the political economy of film and in reading films 'against the grain'. Much of this corpus has already been addressed in Chapter 2, but the semiotic approach to films will be examined in greater detail as it pertains directly to my *modus operandi*. As Goffman (1976) and Williamson (1978) so aptly pointed out, it is the linking of symbols within a totality that constructs meaning – and post-structuralist thought has added the thinker into this equation. Colour, as has been ascertained in Chapter 2, is 'in the eye' of the viewer. But what is seen is linked to what is socially seeable – colour is no different in this respect. And if what is seeable is socially constructed, then it follows a structuralist path that differentiates it from what is not-seeable. Not all societies 'see' colour in the same hue-saturation-lightness triad adopted by Europeans, and not all individuals 'see' colour in the same colour spaces, whilst yet others 'see' colour where none objectively exists (synaesthesia). All of these groups do, however, establish their colour-criteria on the basis of binaries. Structuralism therefore remains a powerful tool for the study of colour as a social phenomenon and it is these 'colour binaries' that will be sought in the films under review in this study. Some such differences have already been identified by other researchers, so the final part of this chapter will introduce these emerging trends and their implications for this thesis.

3.1.1 Structuralism and semiotics

Structuralism's roots arose through awareness of the processes that govern all social action. Once in place, these structures become potent forces for continued structuring, so

that people cease to be aware of their creative culpability and instead come to regard these structures as natural and authentic ways that the world should be (Hawkes 1977:14). De Saussure (1916: 113-114) presented language as the interaction of 'interdependent terms' proposed as a system where each term gains its meaning solely from the presence or absence of other terms. Words, the carriers of meaning, are arbitrary sounds that, once differentiated from other sounds, allow meaning to be exchanged. De Saussure examined the role of language systems, emphasising the overall context in which the shared system of signs used in everyday speech is rendered intelligible. He described language as 'a system of signs expressing ideas', or *langue*, and separated this from individual speech acts, which he called *parole* (de Saussure 1916:15). De Saussure indicated the necessity for speakers to share an underlying system of *langue* in order for individual 'speech events' to be meaningful to their audiences (de Saussure 1916:13-15). Thus, being able to discern the difference between specific sounds, called *phonemes*, enables language to be shared in a meaningful manner (Hawkes 1977:22).

The basic elements of speech events are *signs* - linguistic structures which link a sound-image (signifier) with an object or concept (signified). De Saussure determined that meaning and signification occur entirely within language systems, and pre-exist the objects which then rely upon language for their meaning (Culler 1976:23; Howarth 2000:19). This is described by de Saussure (1916:68) as the 'arbitrary nature of the sign', a key principle that articulates the lack of natural relationship between objects and the words used to describe them, that is, between the signifier and the signified. Moreover, de Saussure (1916:120) argues that the ideas behind signs have less importance than the presence of the other surrounding signs, positing the identity of any sign as the product of the differences within linguistic elements of a system. In this way, a sign/word/sound becomes meaningful only in relation to the system of which it is a part. Thus, de Saussure posited, words have *linguistic value*. Linguistic value has two parameters: firstly, words represent ideas and secondly, words must be contrasted against other, opposing words, so that the linguistic value of any word is determined by both the idea that it represents, and by the contrasts in its constitutive *langue*. Thus words have meaning as *words* but also as *not-other-words* in a system of semantic oppositions placed within a syntactic sequence. The oppositional relation of phonemes not only distinguishes signs from one another, but also constitutes them.

Signs combine to form phrases and sentences, and meaning occurs through a cultural sensitisation to meaningful sounds. The langue of which words form a part is not randomly compiled, but delivered in specific sequences which themselves contribute to the meaning of each phonemic utterance (Hawkes 1977:25-26). Similarly, the absence of words/phrases from a sequence assists in the production of meaning. The cultural setting of a language is also important, as it sensitises actors to the meaningful sounds and desensitises them to those which are not meaningful, allowing those which do not conform to the required phonemic pattern to be dismissed as 'other' (Hawkes 1977:30-31). In order that such a complex system of representation is comprehensible, the social agents using this system must share common understandings. And because both words and phrases may be used in innovative ways, language maintains a fluidity that echoes the flux of meaning attributed to individual signs.

Signs carry meaning in three different ways – they can be iconic (they represent the object that they 'mean' in a realistic way), indexical (they represent 'meaning' through a scale of differences), or symbolic (their meaning derives from an imagined connection with the signified). Such conceptualisations give the sign equivalence with the basic units of myths, Levi-Strauss' (1963) 'mythemes'. To understand myths, Levi-Strauss (1968:211) examined them at the sentence level, uncovering relations that covered all potential permutations between bundles of connected mythic elements, his 'mythemes'. Mythemes produce archetypes and archetypical experiences organised into oppositions that resonate at a societal level – good-bad, strong-weak, supernatural-human, male-female, amongst others. In this way, mythemes have the same 'what-is' represented by 'what-it-is-not' pattern as linguistic signs. In representing supposedly independent linguistic entities as relations in a system of elements, Levi-Strauss claimed that everything in human experience could be approached as 'matter for' communication codes, intense with signification and intent on establishing social meaning through what is conventionally named 'culture' (Boon 2000:169). Further, Levi-Strauss postulated a common underlying structure of mythemic relationships within all societies (Levi-Strauss 1963:87; Hawkes 1977:39) and later (Levi-Strauss 1970) explicated myth as the outward presentation of universalised human fears and taboos. Such universal social issues continue to influence and haunt 21st Century Australians, and their symbolically presented solutions permeate cultural signifiers from clothing to entertainments, just as they have throughout history. Levi-Strauss (1968:87) pointed to the idea that all people classify and organise their worlds in meaningful ways,

linking different systems of symbolic relations, with alternative practices made possible by differing signs and codes. This brought him to the conclusion that society itself can be regarded as a symbolic system, shifting sociological attention away from the study of conscious linguistic phenomena to their underlying unconscious structure (Howarth 2000:23).

3.1.2 Post-Structuralism, semiotics and gender

Myths permeate contemporary Western social life through institutions of gender, race and class, amongst others, and are reinforced through their re-presentation to audiences in highly symbolic ways. For the 21st Century Westerner, myths both demonstrate the all-pervasive force of institutions and are a target for an increasing critique of their all-pervasiveness amongst an increasingly aware and sensitised postmodern population. The institutions which have dominated social life for centuries are increasingly under threat from communication methods that encourage 'life' within a virtual world (Baudrillard 1990:92). Structuralist investigation sought the uniform linguistic patterns that give coherence and meaning to social life, but post-structuralist thought regards language as a system of meaning derived from relations of difference and contrast. In this light, stability of meaning becomes evidence of an act of power, in which one social group imposes its version upon others, with resistance by those acted-upon maintaining a social tension that is simultaneously productive and repressive (Foucault 1979, 1988). Signs in this light become sites of potential contestation and continual re-creation by aware and knowledgeable actors in a never-ending flux (this issue has been adopted in gender studies, to be extrapolated in section 3.2).

Ideas of reproduction and repression of social skills are found in Bourdieu's (1979) notion of the 'habitus' – a method for perpetuating signs to create distinctions between various groups of people within a society. Bourdieu examined the stigmata of elitism and its concomitant cultural externalities as evidenced by social practices – 'established patterns of power and privilege' (Wacquant 1998:217) - having postulated that the individual's thirst for dignity is the ultimate motivation promoting social interaction. Bourdieu described individual action as intuitive, strategising and innovative, involving three aspects of social action: the habitus, capital and field (Bourdieu 1979:23,56,110). Habitus refers to largely unconscious interpretive schemas that provide guidelines of action which have been

structured by an individual's conditions of socialisation. Simultaneously, individuals reproduce those conditions through their practices. The habitus operates in relation to the amount of cultural *capital* (educative experiences and familiarity with bourgeois culture) and material capital possessed by an individual, within a *field* (structural forces of existence) (Bourdieu 1979:113).

The habitus is both structuring and structured. The system of acquiring dispositions is dependent upon the level of endowment of capital an individual achieves and the ability to mobilise this as power within a given social arena (Wacquant 1998:216-221). The two most valued forms of social capital Bourdieu identified are education and social origin, both of which contribute to hegemonic conditions through a scholastic measurement system that tends to reinforce and affirm the social status or class to which a person is relegated (Bourdieu 1979:13-18). The determination of life chances resides under the cloak of talent and meritocracy but conserves an unequal distribution of power, and hence increases social inequality. Bourdieu calls these variables of social capital *commonsense notions*, and notes that the experiential expertise acquired outside the authorised educative system is valorised only for its technical expertise, and becomes sanctionable when it challenges authorised competencies (Bourdieu 1979:25). This ensures that the acquisition of cultural competence involves both the disposition 'inherited' from ancestors, involving a 'sense' of culture, and that of educative practices, the two being inseparable. Paradoxically, the cultural legitimacy of any practice cannot be distinguished on its own merit from the preferences of those in positions of dominance who choose the particular cultural practice and are entitled thereby to nominate and define that practice as culturally superior to others (Bourdieu 1979:92). Each social arena thus becomes a field containing ongoing clashes between hegemonic interests and those of 'outsiders' seeking to introduce different standards and mores. These clashes are referred to by Bourdieu as 'symbolic violence' (Wacquant 1998:217). Symbolic violence is the imposition of legitimising and solidifying structures of inequality upon social agents through systems of meaning which are shared in common languages and conduct (Bourdieu 1979:471).

Explication of any social interaction involves dissection of the social constitution (habitus) of the agents, their capital and the particular field in which they encounter each other. As the social order becomes inscribed in human minds, it takes on characteristics of objective limits, turning these into a 'sense of limits' through which individuals will exclude

themselves from the social goods and experiences from which the objective limits have already excluded them (Bourdieu 1979:471). Bourdieu identified two invisible relational patterns that impose themselves upon agents in such social contexts - reproduction and transformation. Reproduction results from mutually reinforcing social and mental structures, whilst transformation arises from discordances between habitus and field and leads to innovation and structural change (Wacquant 1998:223). Hegemonic interests primarily support reproductive strategies, whilst transformative strategies are used by those seeking to transmute or exchange one type of capital for another. The primary aesthetic senses exhibited by different social groups are thus defined in opposition to each other as issues of *taste*, eloquently defined by Bourdieu (1979:56) as 'first and foremost the *distaste* of the tastes of others' (italics added).

Social tastes and distastes have an in-built value system that was identified by Derrida as denoting a superior and an inferior concept, in which the superior sign is given positive connotation and the inferior sign a negative one. Derrida (1976:313-316) argued that oppositional features of signs do not threaten or undermine each other, but are as necessary in the construction of the oppositions as they are for their own construction. Agreeing that signs obtain meaning from relationships with other signs, he highlighted the conditional aspect of such meaning, noting that signs can also break from any given context and recombine with other signifiers and contexts to create new meanings. Signs in this respect have a 'minimal remainder' of meaning that enables their recognition in new and different contexts (Howarth 2000:37). This is a reflexive process that requires a deconstructive analytical approach.

Derrida's (1976) deconstructive approach argued that meaning arises from the structure of language rather than the psychological intentions of speakers, and this extrapolates to the idea that humans think only in signs. If a text refers to anything, it refers only to other texts, thereby creating an expandable and intersecting web Derrida termed *intertexuality* (Hoy 2000:52). His critical reading of texts asserts there is no neutral or objective position in critique, as all judgements rely on and mask underlying complex political and economic ideologies (Hawkes 1977:154). Derrida's philosophical stance undermined structuralist attempts to develop a 'science of man', because he challenged the very conception of 'man' (Hawkes 1977:145-146), and his deconstructive approach revealed the way in which texts work both to create meaning, and to operate against themselves (Hoy 2000:44).

These ideas have had considerable influence on the semiology of film, and will be examined further in Section 3.2.1.

3.1.2.1 Post-structuralism and Semiotics

Whilst people are actively engaged in the invention and production of words, they are also engaged in the production of their social reality, a reality which changes as the words used to describe it change. Such cyclic activity is enhanced by use of an amalgam of gesture, stance, tone, accent and social context which can create a communication which is at cross-purposes with the actual signs to which the words refer. This positions signs as creating meaning through context rather than as mere signifiers of some objective reality – all communication is therefore interpretative (Hawkes 1977:126-127). Denotation (the literal meaning of language events) and connotation (the allegorical meaning of language events) are vital to the interpretation of speech acts, but do not govern the specificity of meaning. Connotation involves the transformation of an established sign into a signifier of some other signifier-signified combination, allowing the medium to affect the message. Such intertextuality allows language to transform and change as new signs are added and established signs are superseded or used to refer to different objects or concepts. Derrida (1967:313-316) proposed that the meaning of any sign is always unstable, multivocal and changeable. Words act as signs to direct attention, and must do so in particular ways in order to produce meaning. Post-structuralism dictates that words do not locate some external reality, but rather, merely point to other words used in the construction of reality. Language thus retains fluidity.

Langer (1979:27) argues that meaning derives from thinking and the essential act of thinking '*is* symbolization'. Words, she claims (1979:31) 'are used to talk *about* things … they are reminders', and as such are symbols. For Langer (1979:41-42) symbolisation is a mental process of translating experiences from what enters the mind into thought. This is an ongoing process of meaning-making that produces 'a veritable fountain of more or less spontaneous ideas' (Langer 1979:43) of which speech is the outer-directed terminus. This makes symbolisation both an end product and an instrument of its production. As an end product, the symbol is imbued with referential power, deriving its meaning from the meaning it has *for* someone. As an instrument of symbol production, symbolisation links experience with thought, and so creates meaning at in inner level that may be far removed

from the intent of a symbol as product. In this view De Saussure's indexical and iconic signs are symbols indicating differing types of reading rather than discrete semantic units, their meaning deriving from contextual relations. Langer claims (1979:55) that meaning is 'a *function* of a term' – meaning rests on its privileged placement in a pattern of environmental experiences and internal thought processes. This makes symbols '*vehicles for the conception of objects*', and the difference between signs and symbols is consigned to the use to which the subject puts them – signs require action, symbols require thought (Langer 1979:61, italics in original).

Langer (1979) further differentiates between *discursiveness* and *non-discursiveness* in symbolism. Discursiveness belongs to the world of words, spoken and written, and functions through the placement of words in strings of 'vocables' – meaningful sound sequences. Langer (1979:81) says that such structures limit thinking because 'only thoughts which can be arranged in this peculiar order can be spoken at all', and it is the role of a maturing human to learn to use this structure in communication with others. But thinking is not all about the process of producing vocables.

Langer (1979) explored the production of symbols by humans questing to understand non-vocalisable experiences, more commonly known as *feelings*. The assumption that vocables and feelings are separate entities in communication, or are produced by separate processes, is for Langer a fallacious issue, although it has been an unspoken article of faith amongst many semiologists. All meaning, she says, arises from the interaction of experience and the attempts to articulate those experiences using whatever symbols are available. The maturing human learns to associate vocables with *things* through a process of abstracting specific details out of the accumulated sense-data of an experience and then extrapolating that experience as, or projecting that experience onto, the 'thing' (word, image) that subsequently represents it. But the remaining experience, the 'stuff' left over after the abstraction of a vocable is not meaningless, for it has contributed to its meaning-production. The left over 'stuff' – the visual, auditory and kinaesthetic components of the context – articulates in complex ways with language, and is termed by Langer (1979:93) as 'non-discursive' symbolism.

Non-discursive symbols arise from a sensory appreciation of experience that cannot be represented as, or defies ascription to, words. Non-discursiveness encompasses a global or

holistic impression of sense-data which, although not represented directly, impinges upon the meaning of any experience. Non-discursive sense-data is a potential within an experience which can either become focal - and thereby produce a linguistic sign - or remain in the background, affecting the experience but not taking on especial significance within it. Langer (1979:97) calls this potential the 'presentational symbolism' of an experience, and claims its symbolic mediation is logical, just as discourse has logic. The experience of presentational symbolism is an instantaneous process of promotion of a disposition or an attitude of 'nameless, emotional stuff' (Langer 1979:100-101) which echoes the habitus described by Bourdieu (1979) as a means of establishing a certain subjectivity. The process is reflexive in that it emerges from the psyche unbidden, but also reflexive in terms of a conscious reflection on and adjustment of the resulting action. For Langer, this symbol-making tendency emerges from a sense of significance attaching to an object or experience. Language may impose limits on multiple discursive significances, but there are no such limits to non-discursive symbols. Colour is a principal example of non-discursive symbolism used in film and will be discussed in section 3.3 below.

3.1.2.2 Post-structuralism and Gender

Second-wave feminism erupted in a vast array of literature on the links between social institutions and gender, all pointing to mechanisms whereby women were constituted under patriarchal 'relations of ruling' (Smith 1987: 3). Institutions, established through use of power differentials, have, over time, positioned men and women so that it is discourse which prevents easy access to alternative forms of gendering, resulting in unequal representation particularly in the public sphere (see Yeatman 1994 and Lister 2003 for issues connecting the public to the private and vice versa). Questions regarding who speaks for whom and under what conditions became important as race, culture and sexuality all impinged upon the debates. Many of these issues were explored in film studies (see section 2.1) and alternate views of the development of femininity (de Lauretis 1984 or Delamont 2004 for example) and masculinity (e.g. Connell 1987, 2000) were championed. It was the French structuralists and post-structuralists, however, who advanced the ideas that led to these postmodern revisionings of gender construction.

Foucault's (1977) explication of biopower, a method for training of body parts to function according to a pre-designated formula, is one such concept. Implicated in the production

of a particular/pre-ordained way of doing an activity most efficiently (biopower) is another of Foucault's (1988) concepts, the technologies of the self. Here the individual not only accedes to the external pressures of biopower to *adapt* to the needs of his/her society, but s/he uses biopower to advance some personal desire – to *adopt* the process in order to overcome a perceived deficit. In the Western world, Rose (1989) established that this amounts to a work on the 'soul', becoming a never-ending search for self-improvement towards some social ideal. The project of self-transformation uses ways of examining, reflecting upon and transforming the self, and are associated with a form of power which Foucault (1979) calls governmentality. This is an indirect, mediated form of power which operates through the 'free' choices of individuals. These ideas influenced many feminists, and although Foucault did not produce an exhaustive archaeology of gender, there is ample inducement in these ideas for further theory.

One such is Butler's (1990) proposal of *performativity* as the mechanism for the creation of gender. Butler argues that the production of a 'sexuality' is a mandatory aspect of personhood in Western society. Sexuality is, moreover, limited to a choice within a normative heterosexist matrix, based on recognition of an infant as either-or and then established through repeated performance of specific bio-political actions. The power relations that govern gender enter discourse as a naturalised element of social life that bifurcates humans along a 'heterosexual matrix' (Butler 1990:111) that defies radical critique. The evidence of male or female sexed bodies is sufficient to initiate gender prescription and proscription. Gender prescriptions are then 'inscribed' (Foucault 1978) onto the body in a never-ending effort to unmake what-is (the 'natural body') and create in its place what-should-be (the civilized, fully gendered body). Gender thus becomes an educative process that trains both the body (as per Foucault's 'biopower') and the psyche (as per Bourdieu's 'habitus') to create one of two kinds of people – either male or female – in a cyclic process of self-transformation. Continual repetition and re-experiencing of the practices reinforces their meanings, imprinting this upon the psyche through both mundane and ritualised actions (Butler 1990:140). Gender is therefore never completely attained or perfected.

Humans can also never be 'without … gender' – that is, outside of or lacking in gender markers (Salih & Butler 2004:21). Whilst postmodern relations of power may frame gender as a choice between variables, the choices are in fact limited to 'the parameters of

culturally available terms which always pre-exist the subject' (Salih & Bulter 2004:22). Actions suitable to gender performances are appropriated by individuals under the watchful eye of a society with deeply entrenched cultural norms that require repetition as a normalising set of practices – a daily re-inscription of gender stigmata. The body is thus experienced as always 'becoming' its gender (de Beauvoir, cited in Salih & Butler 1990:23), often through covert and arduous appropriation of skills pertaining to cultural ideals of masculinity or femininity. This discursive distinction between 'masculine' and 'feminine' promotes the bifurcation of gender potentials and in a patriarchal society masculinism, the 'political expression of specifically male gender interests and practices' (Stokes 1997:65), constructs 'unmasculine' characteristics as 'feminine', and as a pejorative 'other' (Hopkins 1998:180, Thornton 1995:12). Both Thornton (1995) and Stokes (1997) noted that this discursive relation serves a significant ideological purpose in seeking to ensure tractability in women.

The biopower to which female infants are subject differs to that experienced by male infants, and the practice that each sex undergoes endeavours to ensure that only one of the two acceptable forms of gender is reproduced. The performativity supported by repetition and practice of gender ideals is a compulsory aspect of socialisation – to have failed to correctly acquire the assigned gender is, moreover, subject to sanction (Salih & Butler 2004:130). Overt prohibition via discourse then becomes a site for conflict, with 'failed' gender construction targeted for ostracism, punishment or violence, but it is also a starting point for opposition and resistance (Foucault 1978). Such arduous training would suggest that there is considerable potential within the performances and performativities of individuals. It is thus *performativity potential* that will be examined in this thesis – the gender choices that are available to individuals and how these relate to the gender performances that are elicited from them. For this we need to examine the intersection between gender construction and its representation in films.

3.2 Structure and Film Theory

Post-theory suggests that everything in social experience is contextual. Nevertheless social order is maintainable through the common assumptions and beliefs held by a society's participants. Consensus in film theory has been that the directorial input to a film presents a view of a world that must, in order to be understood by and appeal to its audience,

reflect such beliefs and assumptions (see section 2.1). Appeal to common problems and interests helps films to retain audiences, and profitability hinges on popularity, so the mainstream film industries rarely stray far from accepted formulae even with new or emergent social trends. Films are dated by these mores, yet their underlying social institutions continue discursive dominance in Australia. Today, some traditional mores are preserved (race and gender), whilst others are undergoing modification (age, ethnicity and class) and new social mores have emerged (multiculturalism, environmentalism). Critiques of films have examined these various social issues through psychoanalytic and Marxist discourses, and feminism has contributed a considerable critique of representational practices (see section 2.2).

There remains, in the most fiscally successful film product, the obligatory satisfactory resolution – the promise of more adventure following the successful completion of a masculine quest, or the successful union of the male and female principal characters in romantic love. The people represented in these stories have not changed to any great extent – men are proven strong, and women beautiful, and on these binarist attributes hinges the fantasy that films encourage. Further, the near-religious fervour that can be generated in a franchise film audience not only supports genre-related production – termed by Altman (1984:9-10) the 'ritual' or 'semantic' approach due to its search for the building blocks of film language – but also exploits audience interest by guiding and moulding experiences – Altman's (1984) 'ideological' or 'syntactic' approach, concerned with the structures created by the semantic elements.

Semiotics, having uncovered the rules of spoken and written grammars, turned its attention to semiotic analysis of other human enterprises (Langer 1979:67). The search for a cinematic language, a 'body of rules' whereby the film's purpose may be achieved became a compelling issue, but although it is now acknowledged to have greater descriptive than prescriptive potential, the idea of a language of film remains. Film-makers ignore such tenets at the peril of their film's failure (Adams, Dorai & Venkatesh 2002:473). This brings the arguments full circle, but useful ideas within this body of work have bearing on my thesis. Mitry (2000) for example, argued that film has characteristics that simulate language, but that this language is in no way comparable to the language of words. His examination of the image as a 'coherent entity' (Mitry 2000:41) uncovers the workings of symbolism mooted by Goffman (1976) in his explication of the visual as perception-at-a-

glance, and identified by Langer (1979) as 'non-discursive' symbols. In order to understand the presentational symbolism of non-discursive symbols however, it is necessary to understand how discursive symbols are presented in film. This will be addressed in the first part of this section.

Discourses of the ritual approach followed Levi-Strauss in examining narrative systems and searching for mythical structures within the narrative (Altman 1984:8-9). This led to interest in genre, and like Wright's (1975) treatise, a search for the structural units of a narrative 'type'. Wright defined the binary oppositions operating within the 'Western' narrative and then identified how they presented like mythemes – 'functions' in his terms. Neale's (1980) study of genre distinctions led to the idea that genres have greater fluidity than previously credited, yet as an everyday concept, genre retains its usefulness. It is on a broad basis of genre – films appealing to men versus films appealing to women – that this thesis seeks to identify colour symbolisms, and related genre issues will assist this process. Wright's approach will be modified in my own methodology, and so will be explored in more detail along with an interrogation of Garrett's (2007) work on the oft-disparaged 'chickflick'.

3.2. 1 Film Semiotics

Language is the medium by which the visual is mediated and communicated, so any study of the visual must, of necessity, be translated into the spoken language (Ball & Smith 1992:6). Language permits influences to flow between producers and readers of visual signs, with common and familiar meanings sought and found. Films can be regarded as texts whose everyday 'reading' and academic 'deconstruction' elicit meanings, often vastly different from one another. Early textual research relied on content analysis, searching for a *film grammar* – the rules and conventions employed by film-makers (Arijon 1976:2). Film offered especially tantalising fodder for structural analysis due to its use of language, its perceived 'reality' and the constructed nature of its production. The film narrative became the first focus of such structural analysis, with film narrative examined as if it were another example of a text (Barthes 1957, 1964). This produced considerable data, but did not capture film's structure sufficiently well to become definitive. In contrast, Mitry (2000) argued that unlike the spoken or written word's fixed meaning in context, the filmic 'word' does not exist, its closest counterpoint, the shot, consisting of numerous elements that

together create meaning (Mitry 2000:36). Shots sometimes act like a word, particularly as a close-up shot of an object, but even this could never be condensed to a single descriptive word. To describe a shot, Mitry (2000:132) claims it is necessary to use several phrases, thus turning a single instantaneous visual perception into a series of explanatory idioms which nonetheless fail to capture the entire essence of the shot. This does not mean, however, that visual imagery is meaningless. On the contrary, film images have a powerful and meaningful effect on their viewers, although this effect may vary between viewers.

Mitry (2000:41) argued that images are perceived creating 'tighter and tighter links between [visual] elements' which consciousness reorganises into a 'coherent entity'. Langer (1979:93) referred to these coherences as 'presentational symbols', features of which will be extracted from the simultaneous experience of an 'object'. The extracted portion of any experience has both discursive and non-discursive aspects, and it is the interplay of these that give individual meaning to that experience. This individual meaning is symbolic. Langer (1979:126-141) noted that symbolism is the heuristic result of language's structuring of observations and their interpretation, and that the use of metaphor is evidence of the use of presentational symbols. Yet some experiences produce symbols which language cannot reveal, and it is their non-discursive, emotional component that haunts long after the experience has passed. In this view, films are an improvement on everyday experience and fantasy alike, offering, as they do, a coherent narrative structure that is missing in many human experiences. The purpose of fiction, Langer (1979:175) says, is to gratify wishes, to offer a satisfactory solution to problems, albeit artificially-induced ones. I will come back to this issue of presentational symbols in section 3.3, but firstly will turn to the structure of the moving narrative image as it is contemporarily presented.

Things signify in film because of the way they are recorded, says Mitry (2000:35), not due to any inherent significance. Films are composed of sequences of *scenes* – sub-phrases of the film promoting one aspect of the narrative - which are further composed of *shots* – individual frames in a scene which must carry all the meaningful elements of the scene to be taken in 'at-a-glance'. But in order to be meaningful at all, the constituent phrases of a film's descriptive power must obey certain rules. The 'reality' presented by the film image is truncated, specifically chosen, focalised and edited to achieve a metaphoric relationship with the other elements of film, with the basic 'rules' a narrative film follows involving

logic, *verisimilitude* and *ideology*. Logic is determined by the type of narrative to be presented, verisimilitude demands that the narration obeys certain presentational rules, and ideology ensures that the narrative is presented from a particular perspective.

A film's readability is the result of the editing process whereby the audience learns to understand the syntax of a genre along with the semantic elements of the film's visual presentation (Altman 1984). This leads naturally to the need for logic in the assembly of the images. The logic of a film and its ready readability depend on numerous factors, not least the imagination of the producer and director, the expertise of the camera and sound technicians and the editor, as well as the prior experience of the viewer. A film's logic can be restricted or expanded depending upon the subject matter and manner of presentation. Logic in film is especially important in the editing process, where the linkages between unrelated objects and actions have to be set up in sequences that allow for easy reading by the audience. Logic follows narrative structure, and it is the flow of the story which accentuates or diminishes the potential signification of any one isolated element on any one of a film's shots. The elements of editing logic that Mitry (2000:217) isolates are *pace*, *rhythm* and *focus,* all of which are interrelated in their production and effects. Pace, rhythm and focus can all be produced through the placement of several shots in close proximity to each other. Pace involves the movement of action through time, rhythm sets up expectations through close relations between shots, and focus isolates elements that might otherwise escape unnoticed, but are vital to the narrative flow. Pace and focus work to create a tension in the narrative presentation that produces the film's rhythm.

Motion has an important part to play in the human visual experience, since movement of any kind attracts attention (Mitry 2000:47). Movement links to the viewers' emotional experiences, and it is the apparent movement of the image in film that makes film so seductive in its ability to maintain human interest, so drawing the viewer into the narrative. Pace is a major feature of action scenes, whereby fast movement by the actors is matched with rapid movement between different framing angles and between close-ups and distant views of the action. Rhythm, which Mitry (2000:217) defines as the 'arrangement and alternation of movement' arises from the sensation of motion. Rhythm emerges from a juxtaposition of differently-paced scenes helping to build suspense whilst simultaneously establishing the meaninglessness of time due to time's artificial suspension or elongation

by the number of shots used. Rhythm can be regarded as linear – it moves in the direction of the narrative, engaging the viewers' emotions and eliciting a sense of expectancy.

Notwithstanding the roles of movement and rhythm as signifiers in film, the presentation of cinematic 'objects' must also follow some form of sequential relation in order to confer meaning upon any one object (Mitry 2000:112,123). Mitry (2000:198,246) further claims that incidental objects remain essentially meaningless in the background of the image unless singled out for close-up or becoming part of the action through interaction with the shot's focal point. For this reason, objects to be imbued with meaning are presented in close focus only when they serve to move the narrative along. The singling out of an object by close-up and interaction with the human image promotes its becoming meaningful because it is now *different* from the non-isolated mise-en-scene elements. Often, the object in close-up has a metaphorical relation to the narrative, but there must be, Mitry (2000:199) claims, an 'objective basis' to metaphorical expression – '… even in the most far-fetched 'fantasy' film, the cinema exploits concrete reality and the logic appropriate to the chosen style'. The 'objective basis' is verisimilitude – and verisimilitude aids in the *passive* transfer of ideology (Langer 1979).

Hollywood was early seen to take advantage of spectators' energy and psychic investment in a film to lure the audience into its preferred Ideological positions (Altman 1984:9). This altered the focus of critique to encompass questions of representation and identification. Identification issues became the province of psychoanalysis, and representational issues from the 'silver screen' the focus of a broad range of gender and production theories. Representationalists agree that film images are ideologically grounded in and have commitment to numerous structures within the social life of their viewers. Many feminists (see section 2.2) have demonstrated that a gender bias exists in the construction of male and female characters, and others (Craik 1994, Cook 1996, Bruzzi 1997) have highlighted the gendered nature of film production. Images repeatedly present a narrative reality that advances from beginning to end with a purpose (Mitry 2000:105), and that purpose supports existing social institutions. Adjunct to this fantasy world is the movie theatre, where, by virtue of its womb-like intimacy, the visual narrative can temporarily suspend time and dislocate space, transporting the viewer to an ideal world where heroes are strong and always-triumphant, and heroines are always beautiful. Eco (1979) and Metz (1982) seized upon the nature of the film-going experience, concluding that signification

depended upon the viewer as much as the experience and the film-makers' input. The spatialisation of the image during its projection makes film appear 'real' to the senses, and so is able to engage viewers' emotions. Being projected larger-than-life in a darkened theatre adds to the focalisation of viewers' attention, allowing perception to be limited by what is presented on the screen, and thereby aiding the transmission of significations, but these must all follow a logic that involves the viewer as well as the film-maker, and this logic is based on the verisimilitude of the imaged world's genre orientation. This is a learned process. Metz (1982) contrasted the 'native' reactions of competent film-attending actors in relation to crossings between genres and other anomalies of cinematic experience, with those of cinematic ingénues. Failure to create sufficient reality-illusion would most likely reduce a film's potential for success at the box-office, but the expedient of commercial success exacts the price of sameness from film products – commercially successful films rarely stray from the dominant social themes in their era of production (Wollen 1972).

3.2.2 Genre

The tendency of film-makers to adhere to dominant ideological themes gave rise to the 'genre' approach to film study (Neale 1980). Ideas about what constituted a genre abounded and continue to cause dispute today. Miller (1984:36, cited in Freedman & Medway 1994) had argued that the number of genres reflects the complexity of their emitting society, whereas Bordwell (1989:147) claimed that genre boundaries were too vague to be acceptable as discursive limits. Knight's (1994) assertion that genres were a necessary concept that helped effect meaning from film consumption echoed Corner's (1991) belief in genre as an organising factor for directing consumer choice and expectation. Chandler (1997:2-5) identified three structuring methods for establishing genre - 'definitional' (having specific defining semantic elements or syntactic construction), 'family resemblances' (having similar semantic and syntactic assemblages) and 'prototypicality' (the 'ideal type' of a genre category) – and concluded their prime purpose is to provide a framework for the production and interpretation of texts.

Nonetheless, Stam (2000:128-129) cited four problems with the allocation of genre labels to films - their adequacy in capturing the film's ethos ('extension'), their tendency to produce branding of films ('normativism'), their interpretation as exclusive boundaries

('monolithic definitions'), and their 'biologism', their assumed progression along an evolutionary life-cycle (see, for example, Tudor 1974:180). This reduced genre labels to an indefinable everyday convenient shorthand to describe a film. Andersen (2007:219) however argues that genres are 'self-organising processes among texts, readers and writers' and that this gives them validity as signs, useful to both producers and consumers. Narrative genres move through time, maintaining, in established theatrical convention, a three-act sequence of problem-reaction-resolution. These syntactic structures are assembled from a wide variety of contexts, problems, actions, failures and solutions - the semantic elements of a genre – and are recognised as the conventions of genres. They each contribute to a genre's content, form and purpose (Kwasnik & Crowston 2004:3).

Narrative conventions limit what can be accepted into a film category, so only objects that offer an authentic image to the film's themes are acceptable. The more 'realistic' the film is intended to be, as biography or history for example, the fewer opportunities there are for anomalous material to appear, whereas fantasies, science-fiction and comedies have wider latitude. As Mitry (2000:5) observes, 'film places the audience *among* the characters of the drama *within* the space of the drama' (italics in original), and it is this positioning of the audience that demands what verisimilitude is necessary in any one film. To include an anomalous object or experience is common practice, but requires incursion into differing generic formats, and so most films are classified as amalgams of two or more genres. Genres are useful indicators of a film's potential market appeal, and it is no surprise that major blockbuster films should encompass numerous generic codes in order to appeal to the widest possible audience (Andersen 2007:215). Nonetheless it is possible to divide genre-driven themes into male and female interests, an issue to be addressed further in Chapter 4.

Wright's (1975) structural analysis of the Western genre unpacked the elements to be found in this male-interest genre, locating four binary oppositions and sixteen functional variables that encapsulated the workings of these binaries. What Wright also captured, in a less obvious way, was the general structural layout of *all* successful masculine interest genres presented in the narrative style. Wright's first binary (good-bad) stands in all men's interest films for the rival interests between the hero and his competitors; the strong-weak binary is demonstrated by the hero's capitulation to his 'fate'; the inside-outside society binary is reflected in the relations between the hero and the societies of his origin and

adoption; and finally, the civilization-wilderness binary (Wright's 'least important' binary) is the trajectory of disorder-order that is an overarching theme of men's interest films. This similarity between various masculine interest films in respect of these variables will be further discussed in Chapter 5.

Women's narrative films, on the other hand, have not been analysed in the same way, so this will be addressed in Chapter 6. Women's interest films are primarily of two types: the romance, and the melodrama, both disparaged by Haskell (1973:154) as conducive to 'wet wasted afternoons'. These genres serve to tell women a moral tale which usually results in the female characters' salvation (through marriage), redemption (through self-sacrifice) or punishment (Garrett 2007). The 'salvation' narrative is found primarily in the romance genre, and is the focus of the second half of this thesis. In romances, the struggle against inevitable domesticity or headlong flight thereinto equally result in a satisfactory heterosexual conclusion to the story. The 'redemption' narrative presents 'anti-woman', whose progress through the narrative is curtailed by a change of heart and results in salvation-by-marriage in the romance or in punishment-by-martyrdom in the melodrama. Additionally, the unrepentant anti-woman's narrative culminates in her 'just' punishment for her sins, but not before any and all of her positive 'female' traits are shown to be flawed or corrupt. I will examine this process in Chapter 8. Melodramas, so preoccupied with 'death, persecution and prostitution' (Garrett 2007:12), also offer the three above-listed narrative trajectories for women, particularly in their relation to the valorised feminine heroism and self-sacrifice so often featured.

3.2.3 Postmodern 'Chickflicks'

Women's films have reflected social issues, from post-WWII's realignment of women to the domestic sphere, through issues of female friendship and family relationships in the late 20th Century, and on to the thematically postmodern concerns of the 21st Century (Garrett 2007: 2-4). But postmodernism has also been embraced by mainstream Hollywood in a celebration of its own excesses. Garrett identifies these themes as including (but not restricted to) irony, genre blending and self-conscious references. These, she remarks (Garrett 2007:5,12) have often been addressed in film critiques as hinging on excessive violence, brutality, misogyny and male criminal subculture, all issues of male-interest. But she also notes (Garrett 2007:7-13) that these issues are also filtering into female-interest

films. Moreover, whilst the entry of brutality and gallows humour in women's films is challenging and ameliorating the traditional image of the impressionable, naïve or unintelligent female viewer, unfortunately these additions are also manipulated by production 'values' to pit female characters against each other in the manner of male rivalry. Women are now depicted as free to assault, cheat and abuse with abandon only to be reinscribed by patriarchal romantic and family ideals in contemporary socio-cultural contexts by film's end.

Prior codes, conventions and cycles of filmic output are continually reworked with new, updated contemporary critical viewpoints and values and a typically postmodern knowingness that reflects contemporary women's disenchantment with the domesticity imbued therein (Garrett 2007:28). Alongside this, the increasing power of entertainment and leisure industries ensures that cultural production and consumption are now inextricably intertwined and no longer the province of different social classes or ethnicities (Jameson 1984:64-66). Thus the 'high-concept blockbuster' (with 'something for everyone') remains the dominant form of Hollywood's successful films (Cook 1996) despite Hollywood's primary market remaining adolescent males (Garrett 2007:18, 28). Women's films have not, moreover, succeeded in lifting their critical value. Instead, there has been a reversion to sexism disguised under a rubric of 'raunch culture' and 'bad-boy attitudes', and a failure to propose an 'alternative female essence' (Garrett 2007:35, 37). Indeed, the woman's film is balanced between nostalgia for traditional virtues and contemporary values of independence, aspiration and achievement (Garrett 2007:53).

Women's psychological pain and trauma continues to fascinate women viewers (Doane 1987, Altman 1998) but the postmodern woman's film has less investment in these aspects of women's lives than during the monochrome film era (Garrett 2007:67). Instead, forays into adventure and action genres have excited critiques about 'authentic' and 'inauthentic' femininities (Garrett 2007:59). What this work has cast into doubt is the veracity of the psychoanalytic feminine 'viewing position', particularly in the light of arguments from queer theory (Smelik 1998). Industry interests however, continue to market their films on the presumption of a gendered appeal, with action-adventures of the male-interest kind catering to the traditional female-as-prize representation of women, and films of romance and melodrama pejoratively dismissed as 'chickflicks'. Cheaper to produce and less exciting than action-adventures, chickflicks nonetheless have a large slice of the movie-watching pie

because women will generally take their partner to the film (ensuring two ticket sales) and women are a large proportion of the movie-going public to begin with (Garrett 2007:61-64). Attaching the woman's adventure to a strong appealing and sympathetic male virtually guarantees a large film audience, but themes of the female-as-social-saviour and female-villainy remain staples. Domesticity, far from being portrayed as the desired result of female adolescent dreams, has now shifted to a promise of liberation from career pressures and lonely spinsterhood for the '30-something' woman (Garrett 2007: 201-205).

Langer (1979:173-177) regards all storytelling as providing the same device – stories offer coherence to the internal presentational symbols that are the stuff of dreams, by 'account[ing] for' characters and actions that dreams fail to subdue. Myth and fairy-tale however are not the same, despite their similarities in character-types and activities. 'The difference is in the two respective *uses* of that material: the one [fairy-tale], primarily for vicarious experience, the other [myth] essentially for understanding actual experience' (Langer 1979:177). It is both the mythic and the fairy-tale elements that draw viewers back to films, because they offer realistic significance to the stories they present by the manner in which they are presented. The mythic element of contemporary Australian women's everyday experience remains the struggle towards a gender-neutral equality, whilst the fairy-tale is the happiness and contentment promised by assumption of the highly gendered and subordinate domestic role. These are powerful issues for women's psychic and emotional investment.

3.3 Colour and Gender and Film

Colour is an important element in the production of filmic representations, with commentary regarding aesthetic, racial and symbolic uses presented in section 2.3. Anthropologists such as Turner (1967) and Levi-Strauss (1970) have provided examples of the uses to which colour is put in rituals. According to Langer (1979:146), ritual emerges from the recurrence of familiar events, for which only 'certain *general features*' are necessary as prods to conscious response. Rituals become a praxis of metaphor wherein gesture and context form meanings different to their meanings in everyday experience. These arrangements involve colour - an environmental cue to a meaning about something for someone in a specific context. Beliefs are carried into everyday praxis through the use of metaphor or myth, and colour terms are often the verbal signs of character-typology.

Structuring of beliefs and ritual as well as everyday praxis involves such potent forces for continued structuring that people cease to be aware of the structures they have created, instead regarding these as natural and authentic ways that the world should be (Hawkes 1977:14). Colour's philosophical position as a socialised perceptual taxonomy is just such an element of everyday life. Colours are not discrete entities like words, but provide a range of frequencies that have ascriptive limits in physics but overlap each other in social life. Nonetheless, colours are demonstrable as signs – iconic (see for example the representation of blondness in Dyer 1979), indexical (both Dyer's [1997] *White* and Pastoureau's *Black* [2008] and *Blue* [2001] offer good examples of the indexical nature of colour signs), and symbolic (played out as religious, political, commercial, ethnic and gender differences). It is these symbolic uses that this thesis examines.

Mitry (2000:187) claims that '[t]he symbolism of objects may be used without necessarily isolating them…', and I believe this applies to aspects of objects as well. A major part of verisimilitude in narrative films is colour, and if the colours used do not comply with pre-existing ideas of what colours are permissible or should appear, then the viewer rejects the image as false. The colours of sunset and sunrise for example, can be isolated into shots separating different 'days' of film time as well as transporting the viewer to exotic climes. Colour knowledge allows the viewer to recognise the planet, time of day, season and species with which the narrative is formed. To the viewer, colour acts as a subliminal modifier of perception, assisting, like music, to build emotional responses commensurate with the narrative intent. Social expectations assist in the choice of colours in a film, and these are tied to genre distinctions and must offer verisimilitude in order to be effective in creating the emotional variations desired by both creator and consumer of the film. The difference in colour presentation between dramas and comedies is often quite marked, and so helps to create meaning beyond the confines of the presented narrative (Adams, Dorai & Venkatesh 2002).

What a colour 'means' is elusive, since social contexts provide some meaning, but this meaning cannot be universalised. The colour significations in film engender emotional responses that filter perception and accompany the reading to create an experience for the viewer within genre-mediated parameters. This is a mental exercise, producing an internal language composed of visual, auditory, kinaesthetic, cognitive and emotional

responses to the experience (Mitry 2000:154). Performance is a major part of the film's attraction, representing, resisting or/and reinforcing social practices. Colour is part of such praxis, identifying individuals as carrying racial, ethnic and gender characteristics, particularly through the use of costumes. As presentational symbols, the colours of costumes should, logically, inspire emotional responses that are consistent with the concepts accorded those colours in the society from which they emerged. Thus a bright colour highlighted in a dark scene (or indeed in the darkened theatre or any other site of limited perception) not only presents itself as important, but does so by virtue of the restricted view through which such ancillary elements become meaningful (usually the close-up). This is even more so when these 'ancillary elements' - the actors' coloured costumes - present a symbolism that exceeds the narrative role of the character, and enhances the character's performance. Verisimilitude in film thus takes in not only the parameters of logic in narrative and narrative structure, but also involves the presentational logic of the film's appearance .

Presentational symbolism allows many concepts to be telescoped into one total expression, and colours offer such opportunities (Langer 1979:191). Like film generally, presentational symbols can be considered to have achieved their objective when they confirm pre-existing values, but like all arbitrary signs, they must also enter into a continuous cycle of re-confirmation in order to retain their 'meaning'. The constituent parts of presentational symbols can be separated and investigated as distinct phenomena, provided that it is remembered that their meaning relates to the whole of the experience, and not only to the symbolic component. Colour became an early defining aspect of genre, a non-discursive symbolism that restricted the use of multi-chroma to 'light' films – comedy, history, romance and musical – whilst monochrome maintained the 'reality' of 'serious' films – drama, thriller, mystery, war, crime, western – long into the era of colour films (Bordwell, Staiger & Thompson 1985). This issue is important to this thesis, because it demarcates 'light' – frivolous, non-serious, *feminine* – interests from 'serious' – heavy, important, *masculine* – interests, not the least through their use of colour.

It is the peculiar ability of presentational symbols to 'articulate forms which language cannot set forth' (Langer 1979:233). In other words, people produce feelings in response to engagement with presentational symbols, and these feelings are meaningful and so are projected back onto the stimulus. Yet this emotive response is largely untranslatable,

having properties that have no equivalence in words, whilst revealing a nature that extends beyond verbal description. Like music, colour consists of many separable items (the individual 'colours'), which permeate the environment and so are easily recognised, and they easily modify each other's character in combination, thereby creating a context in which they present themselves. This makes colour essentially symbolic, but not in the sense of linguistic signs.

All cultures have a limited number of basic words to denote colours, some having a longer linguistic history than others (Berlin & Kay 1965). This has practical relevance for my research (to be addressed in Chapter 4) because it raises some questions about colour's use in films: has a limited basic colour vocabulary similarly limited the number of symbolic uses to which colour can adhere? Alternatively, has the symbolism of colour extended beyond the confines of specific uses and produced an internal dichotomy that mimics a binary relation? Or is the symbolism adhering to colour so diffuse it spreads well outside the parameters suggested by its spectral limits? There is certainly evidence to support all three hypotheses, but their investigation in film demands attachment to a known binary, to determine if and how colour helps to create meaning. The essential binary to be utilized in this thesis is gender, to expose the gendered distribution of colour use in film and the way that colour influences the reading of the main characters' performances.

Conclusion

Structuralism's focus on binarist relations and film studies' pursuit of a film language have provided the analytical tools with which this present research is conducted. Colour is a major aspect of the way in which things are made to signify in film, adding to the readability of the finished product. Readability in turn allows recognition by audiences of the type of film to be presented, as well as the matching of internal narrative expectations with the narrative elements unfolding on the screen. Neale's (1980) analysis of what constitutes genre provides a conundrum – genres are not rigid demarcations of narrative 'types', but exist within a fluid milieu that crosses from one narrative style to another in an ever-energetic search for novel ways of presenting their stories. Genre studies have pointed to the individualities of films within the constraints of verisimilitude, extending to differentiation of masculine-interest films from those marketed to other groups – women and children. Wright's (1975) investigation of the Western genre provides a framework for

the understanding of certain male-centric films, and will therefore be highlighted in Chapter 5. Garrett's (2007) analysis of chickflicks will support the extrapolation of Wright's work onto female-centric films, the basis of Chapter 6.

Underlying both approaches are the ideas of Langer (1979) and Butler (1990). Langer's exposition of non-discursive symbolism and presentational styles allows identification of colour as a symbolic 'non-discourse' that nevertheless lends itself to the readability of the discursive aspects of a film. Colour identifies characters and situations and stimulates emotional responses, and so is a powerful aspect of the continuing fascination of Australians for film-going. Within the movie experience, gender norms are continually reinforced. Butler's (1990) rendition of performativity as the process whereby gender is implanted upon the human psyche as it activates the human body, is an important element in the narratives that form popular films. Many writers have unpacked these gender norms, but my research uncovers the non-discursive practices of colour use that aid in their dissemination. The philosophical aspects of semiotics and feminism that have been presented in this chapter are thus vital to an understanding of colour-as-symbol in Australian films, and to their analysis. What follows in Chapter 4 are the methodological parameters under which the data set was collected and appraised.

Chapter 4 Inventing a Method

Introduction

The controversial 'colouration' of monochromatic films (Leibowitz 1991:363), either as added appeal at their initial release (Munnoch 1994) or to increase their re-run appeal (Edgerton 2000), demonstrated the distinction between colour use as transformation of monochromatic film and colour use in colour films. The conscious interpellation of colours over a previously monochromatic film placed them in a similar position to works such as Kieslowski's (see Kehr 1994; Insdorf 1997; Moore 2002; Coates 2002, 2008 for discussions of this auteur's colour representations) – that is, colour becomes a conscious ideological tool, and carries with it the associated symbolisms in its creator's mind which, as Coates (2008) demonstrated, is more rigidly context-dependent than in films where colour is less firmly controlled. Such stylistic approaches are readily recognised by audiences as contrived, but if they are genre-congruent, are also accepted uncritically.

In the context of this dissertation, two intersecting areas of post-structuralist research - semiology and sexuality - are especially inter-twined. Semiology has traditionally examined the construction of meaning through discursive practices, and this has greatly influenced gender studies through the disinterment and investigation of signs vital to the construction of gender identities (see section 3.1). This resulted in cessation of the search for a 'film language' and a refocusing onto the representations of gender that inform contemporary gender practices. Gender deconstruction of films has become an important aspect of postmodern film critique, both from a psychoanalytic perspective and in terms of inter-referentiality, where gender constructions are now regarded as context-dependent and fluid rather than the fixed entities assumed in psychoanalytic discourse (see section 2.2).

The reticulation of post-structuralist critique and gender theory demonstrates a myriad of potential sources of subjectivity-formation, particularly in relation to colour 'meanings', but is light on the practicalities of how the data is managed. Research involving micro-analyses of colour-and-film (see for example, Adams, Dorai & Venkatesh 2002; Wei, Dimitrova & Chang 2004) provide such a vast collection of colour information that it would be unmanageable for this present research. Similarly, the literature on interpretive colour-

and-film research is restricted to individual films or auteurist uses (see section 2.3) and generally focuses on one or two prominent presentational colours within these films. Reticulation of colour information across differing films and differing production values requires a different approach.

Triangulation strategies encourage multiple intersections of processes, so a number of alternative methods were applied in pilot projects, studying films within-genre and across-genre, as well as using micro and macro analyses. The eventual procedures and their rationale for this study are set out below. Although presented as a linear narrative, the discovery of the most effective methods for handling data for my purposes was and remains an unfolding experiment. Home computing and its ancillary ease for manipulation of electronic data aided this research immeasurably, and highlights the wealth of information that can be acquired through this technology. Other issues to be resolved included choice of data sets (films and colours) and a rationale for these. This will be addressed shortly, but first let me turn to a resume of the project.

4.1 The Progression of the Study

An over-riding concern in this study was to minimise the financial costs – venturing onto experimental territory, I intended to tread carefully, adopting an approach 'as-if' I were an everyday consumer in Australia. I therefore intended to use only those resources already available to the wider community and at limited expenditure. The choice of films as data formed the foundation of the study from its inception, as these are readily available and so allow replicability of this project. Films also invite a relaxation of the body and a suspension of belief in their consumption (Metz 1982), and so offer presentational symbols such as colour directly to the human psyche, eliciting in turn a variety of emotional responses (Langer 1979). I wanted to uncover the way that gender is presented in conjunction with colour use to create gendered colour symbolisms. My original goal was therefore to examine as many films as possible for their colour content, allowing the emerging data to point to an analytical framework, as in a grounded theory approach, and so to create the links necessary to uncover cinema's colour 'language'. Film semiotics has however stalled on the vexed issue of how meaning is constructed through the reading of the film by an audience (See Chapter 2), so the search for coherence in a film colour-language seemed similarly fated.

The rise of the Hollywood film industry now sees hundreds of films released to Australian cinemas each year, and even more numerous films become available on DVD for home consumption. Having originally chosen randomly from amongst the myriad of offerings at the DVD rental establishments, it soon became apparent that there was a vast imbalance between the numbers of women's-interest and men's-interest films. This drew me to investigate the popularity of these films in Australia (discussed in section 4.2) and narrow down the focus of my attention. Immediately problems arose in access to the data. Archival information on films is plentiful, but the further back in time, the less accurate and less available is any information on releases in Australia (communications with mpdaa.org). The intention, to investigate the top-20 films in Australia each year since colour film's inception thus hit a major barrier. Additionally, most of the films released in the early years of colour film were monochromatic and many of those listed prior to the 1960s were never released for the home-use market, and are still not available (mpdaa.org; imdb.com).

Traditional methods of popular film viewing require a focus on narrative flow in order for the films to become readable (Morley 1980), but this is also a focus on the film's discourses. Colour is non-discursive in its symbolic value, and so should provide an emotional reading that is commensurate with its various sequential hue appearances. Viewing the films in the traditional way deflected attention from the films' colour content onto the 'action' on the screen. The solution to this problem serendipitously appeared during the transfers of analogue data to digital format, a necessity due to deterioration of many of the older videos, acquired in lieu of the unavailable DVDs (see section 4.3 below). The physical method that grew out of this destroys the flow of the narrative structure and subverts subjective engagement with the film experience, enabling the 'colour story' to be revealed. This alternate form of 'reading' films de-emphasises plot, and brings to the fore the colour appearances[2], revealing the consistent appearance of colours *prior to* the culmination of the scene's 'action'. This finding adds weight to Langer's (1979) argument that colour's non-discursivity sets the scene for an emotional response.

Over time and many films, certain colour trends began to emerge (discussed in Chapters 5 and 7), allowing differentiation along colour-content lines. Most films sat midway, alternating between high and low colour content, confirming the observations of Adams, Dorai and Venkatesh (2002) and Wei, Dimitrova and Chang (2004) that colours add to film

ambiences and denote tempo. But some films stood out in terms of colour content - that is, they demonstrated consistent high colour or low colour in terms of brightness, hue number and screen time. What these findings offered for a gender perspective was the dichotomy 'high colour = women + children' and 'low colour = men', both within the films and in terms of the overall look of the films. It became apparent that the least colourful films were those directed most clearly at male viewers and the most colourful films those directed at female viewers. The most intimate use of colour in films is moreover, on the bodies of the main characters, and it was to this that viewing for colour content eventually turned.

Having selected the case study films, definitional issues for colours were addressed. The experience of colour is entirely an imagined response to a socially-conditioned environmental trigger (Massumi 2000), and so 'colours' must have their spectral ranges delimited for readability. This mandated a reliance on a store of basic colour terms (BCTs) to define and describe the colours on show (see Section 4.2.2). BCTs simplify classification of colours across films and film qualities. The BCTs identified by Berlin and Kay (1969) appeared most useful for this purpose, and identified another potential hypothesis – if colour words appear in a language over time, then the symbolism associated with the 'older' BCTs should also be more stable in its scope than those attached to 'new' BCTs. This reasoning assumes that BCTs are directly responsive to social attention to a phenomenon – black and white, the oldest of the BCTs, should therefore have a very stable set of symbolic meanings compared with all other BCTs, and the symbolism of red should be more stable than that of blue, green or yellow. This intriguing hypothesis uncovered some supporting evidence (Saunders 2000: 81; Gellatly 2002: 86), but ultimately had to be abandoned due to the lack of fit between colour binaries as determined in art and the presentation of colours on the silver screen. Instead, BCTs were used to develop data categories, opening up this research to potential challenge. As Massumi (2000) emphasised, colour values change according to the psychic state of the viewer as much as by any manipulation of chroma, brightness or saturation.

Processing of the data applied a structuralist perspective, using Wright's (1975) template and defining differences in the presentation of action-adventure narratives (the male-interest and low-colour films) compared with romantic-comedy narratives (female-interest high-colour films). Establishment of binary relations within the films could then be

compared with the colour content of their presentation (see Chapters 5 and 7). Differentiation of male from female characters and their performativities were then analysed in the light of their presentation as *types* of heroes and heroines. Examination of colour use related to these performances led to the conclusion that colours link to particular types of characters in a manner coherent with the narrative potential (see Chapter 8).

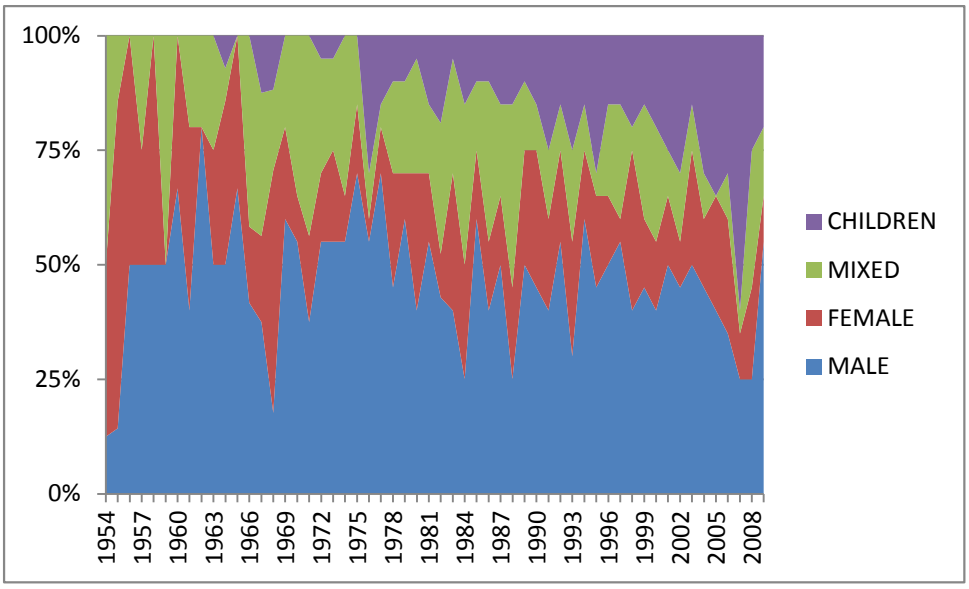
4.2 Issues in Data Selection

As a thesis based on artefacts, this work adopts a simple strategy for film data choice – popularity. This choice was made for a number of reasons. Firstly, the only detailed structuralist review of a gendered film genre - the male-centric Western (Wright 1975) – used this criterion and also facilitated the analysis of the films I was studying. Following Wright's lead, the choice of box-office success seemed an appropriate link to the reach of each of the films. Popularity in 21st Century Australia does not rely entirely on the box-office however, with sales of home versions rivalling box-office takings for the ultra-successful 'blockbuster' films. Box-office success however *does* link to the social mores of the time, and so contributes to the reading of these films, and permits observation of temporal trends in colour uses. This should also facilitate extrapolation of colour information as a changing symbolic value over time. Additionally, popular films have a greater penetration of the Australian social body than any representative medium excepting television, and so reinforce social norms by offending the least number of potential viewers. Audience attraction is an important indicator of the potential influence of any given film (Shipley & Cavender 2001), and conversely, also an indicator of the extent to which the audience identifies with a film's represented material – in other words, how well the film reflects the society and its interests (Lowe 1974, Stacey 1994, Gripsrud 2000). Film offers vicarious experience and some genres are more successful at drawing interested viewers, but an easy demarcation of genre types is foiled by the tendency of all contemporary blockbuster films to incorporate several genre elements within each corpus (Rasheed, Sheikh & Shah 2003, Higgins 2008) in what Shipley and Cavender (2001:10) refer to as 'hyphenates'.

A division of films using genre categories (from imdb.com) produced long lists of genre tags for most of the films. Authenticity of a genre hinges upon the expectations of its audience,

and these expectations are strongly divided along gender interest lines (Garrett 2007:2). Perusal of the twenty most successful films in Australia each year between 1954 and 2009 (total of 941 colour films found) demonstrates a strong male-female interest divide in genre classification. The films fitted four primary categories: genres which appealed to (mostly) men; genres which appealed to (mostly) women; genres which were marketed at a specialty audience, and had significance for or were directed towards both male and female viewers (comedies, biographies, documentaries); and finally, those genres which were labelled 'animated' or 'family' (see Figure 4.1 demonstrating the distribution of these four categories across the cohort of films within the 'top-20' data set).

Figure 4.1: Percentages of four genre-marketing divisions of the top-20 box-office films in Australia 1954-2009 (by year of release).
Data Source: imdb.com (for generic classifications), mpdaa.com (for box-office data 1954-1991) and boxofficemojo.com (for box-office data 1992-2009).



On average, just under half of the top-20 films released in Australia each year are classified as male-interest films. Women's interest films average 15% of the total, with general interest and children's films making up the remainder. Over time, the number of top-20 male-interest films has decreased in favour of films marketed for children. This phenomenon reflects market concerns with profits, but also demonstrates that the popularity of female-interest films has not changed despite social changes in Australia that have legislated equal (gender) opportunity in many spheres of public enterprise (O'Regan 1996). The popularity test is also skewed due to the tendency for children attending cinemas to be accompanied by adults, so the viewing public of these films is a wider demographic than the marketing emphasis would suggest.

As fiscal successes, male-interest films vastly outnumber female-interest films and are also more likely to attain higher ratings than female-interest films (position 1-2 versus position 4-5 respectively), indicating a potential difference in emphasis on both production and consumption patterns. Choices from amongst these films thus hinged on the development of strategies to balance male and female interests (see section 4.2.1 below). Masculine interest films all feature a man as the heroic guardian of 'good', pitted against diverse adversaries or circumstances. These genres include 'action', 'adventure', 'thriller', 'western', 'crime', 'war' and 'sport' (Cucco 2009). Masculine-interest films have features that involve overt depictions of violence (Kollin 2001, Shipley & Cavender 2001) whereas the violence within female-interest films is more covert (Smelik 1998). The heroes of men's interest films are also more physical in their presence and have greater active capacity than most romantic heroes (rom-heroes). Female-interest genres are primarily 'romance' and 'melodrama' (see section 2.4) in which females are more likely to take the primary role, although male romantic leads are also common. Here it is the development of a satisfactory heterosexual coupling by film's end that drives the narrative, regardless of the demonstrated individual skills (or lack thereof) of the principals.

Attracting huge audiences, Hollywood films have dominated Australian cinematic releases for decades, whilst British films absorb a large percentage of the non-Hollywood product sold to Australian audiences (O'Regan 1996). Nonetheless Australian films have claimed a niche position (Lowe 1974) and occasionally an Australian film will acquire blockbuster status in Australia, attracting audiences to rival their major Anglophone competitors. Classification as an 'Australian' film is however problematic as there are no set criteria for ascertaining a film's country of origin and, increasingly, films involve a collaborative effort between different nationalities in terms of financing, production and actor combinations (O'Regan 1996). Further, the influence of the Hollywood industry has resulted in a homogenisation of narratives and processes (Higgins 2008). The Australian films that achieve great success adhere in large part to the narrative precepts pioneered by Hollywood genre films (Walsh 2000).

Australia is a small producer of popular feature films in comparison with the output of Hollywood for example, and rarely basks in the level of monetary allowance accorded a Hollywood film. Nonetheless, their popularity in the Australian cinema demonstrates that

the 'home-grown' product also has an allure for Australian audiences that belies its limited commercial backing. There is a quirkiness associated with fiscally successful Australian films – Australian films are difficult to classify because they must have an irreverent approach to institutions in order to appeal to an audience already feasting on the spectacular from Hollywood and Britain (O'Regan 1996). Multiculturalism has not significantly penetrated the film-going Australian body in the 56 years covered by this study, as other ethnicities are well-represented in film releases but a non-English language Australian film has yet to burst into the top-100 category (imdb.com; boxofficemojo.com).

Australia's political will also plays a part, with an increase in successful Australian film product coinciding with an increase in available Government and industry funding and sponsorship. Affirmative action legislation in Australia led early to a comparatively large number of women becoming involved in direction, camera and production work (O'Regan 1996), all domains traditionally assigned to men in Hollywood and Britain (Herzog 1990, Neilsen 1990, Turim 1990). The potential for a link between gender and colour use in film by male and female directors is limited because firstly, only twelve percent of Australian films reviewed have been directed by women, and only three of these have achieved top-20 status for their release year; and secondly, the subject matters and treatments by Australian female film directors have frequently subverted and challenged genre confines. The 'level-playing-field' for film choices had to reflect the tastes of the majority of the Australian population, and be suited to my argument that film colour use reflects and encourages identification with certain types of gender performance – and this is best seen in the blockbuster film.

Blockbuster status relates to the gross box-office takings of a film in its cinematic release. Box-office success consists partly of successful marketing, but also of the interest and popularity of a particular film in the offerings from several studios in any given 'season'. The search for suitable Australian films brought to light fifty-one that had achieved a place in the twenty top-grossing films during their release year between 1954 and 2009 inclusive (see Appendix A for this list). The films were categorised according to the genre labels attributed to them by the users of imdb.com, to increase the likelihood that genre categorisation accords with the views of the audience as well as reflects the intentions of the production source. The Australian films demonstrated a preponderance of 'male-

interest' films and these generally attracted a higher audience number than 'female-interest' films, rated by fiscal success.

4.2.1 Strategies for Film Choices

Of the forty-eight Australian films identified in the top-20 releases for their year, 20 were male-interest films, 10 were women's interest films, 14 were gender-neutral and 4 were marketed for children. Among the female-interest films, melodramas (6) out-numbered romantic comedies (4), but as melodramas had similar colour restraints to action-adventures, they were eliminated from the pool of potential films for this research examination. Additionally, since animated (Telotte 2004), musical (Herzog 1990), science fiction (Tasker 1998), historical (Harper 1994) and documentary (Lesage 1978; Doherty 2003) films all carry specialised genre-congruent colour schemes, the data base for this current research has deliberately excluded such films, focusing instead on films with a strong gender bias in their narratives and genres. The remaining cohort provided five male-centric action –adventure films. In order to equalise the number of films for review, the final choice thus includes a romantic comedy (*The Man Who Sued God* 2001) which only achieved position 26 – the next closest rating to a top-20 position – during its release season.

The final list of films for this study remains contentious, as country-of-origin criteria range from an all-Australian crew, setting and money (*Stone* 1974, *Mad Max* 1979 and *Muriel's Wedding* 1994, for example) to films with non-Australian stars and setting, but with Australian finance and direction (as for *Green Card* 1991) or mixed efforts (such as *Age of Consent 1969* and *Crocodile Dundee II* 1988). Eventually, the five top-grossing Australian action-adventures and five top-grossing romantic comedies were chosen. These ten films of the present study's cohort also range across various genre categories, but all five masculine-interest films are action-adventures (*Stone* 1974, *Mad Max* 1979, *Mad Max II: the Road Warrior* 1981, *Mad Max – Beyond Thunderdome* 1985 and *Crocodile Dundee II* 1988), whilst all five female-interest films are classed as romantic comedies (*Age of Consent* 1969, *Green Card* 1991, *Strictly Ballroom* 1992, *Muriel's Wedding* 1994 and *The Man Who Sued God* 2001).

4.2.2 Strategies for Colour Coding

Goffman's (1976) *Gender Advertisements* and Williamson's (1978) *Decoding Advertisements* have demonstrated how advertising displays affirm basic social arrangements through the linking of concepts with visual prompts. Studies like those by Gorn, Chattopadhyay, Yi and Dahl (1997), Lohse and Rosen (2001), Moore, Stammerjohan and Coulter (2005) and Zviran, Te'eni and Gross (2006) went further, ascertaining that 'high value' colours in advertising invoke a positive reception in its audience, and thereby promoting the idea of colour as an independent variable. The reception accorded visual data is, however, socially conditioned. Colour attains 'high value' according to social mores, reinforcing a ready-made bias whereby individual viewers approach the viewed. Ball & Smith (1992:1) note that because the social world is a seen world, the beliefs and expectations of its participants influence what is seen as effectively as what is seeable influences beliefs and expectations. Class and gender are precisely the kinds of markers that can often be established through use of colour. They are also prime reinforcers of certain kinds of viewing practices and understandings, helping to produce a 'habitus' (Bourdieu 1979) referred to by various authors on film as a conditioned and educated ability to 'read' the text (Mitry 2000).

Goffman (1976) sums up the potency of such images as emanating from the human ability to take in the visual 'at a glance' and thereby assess instantaneously a wide variety of social signs that expose vital information about a context. As Massumi (2000) pointed out, colour is very much in the eye of the beholder, and leaves an impression that is modulated through the perceiver's memory and emotional state. Films deliberately set out to influence emotion, so it is not unexpected to find that colours tend to be used in the same way in some films. Moreover, as Fewkes (2008) asserts, nothing in film is the colour of the original object, and this leads to what Ruby (1975:110) termed the production of a specific 'ethnographic aesthetic ' – for my purposes, a genred sensibility and usage of colour in films. Researchers have identified differences in colour usage for neo-noir (Bruzzi 1997; Curnutte 2005), horror (Ford 1994; Heffernan 2002), comedy (Rasheed, Sheikh & Shah 2003, who were also able to identify action, drama and horror colour histogram patterns), musical (Church-Gibson 2000), melodrama (Deutelbaum 1987; Adah 2001) and feminist noir (Modleski 1988; Mizejewski 2005) genres, and differences in gender interest in various genres (Cook 1996).

Defining colours has been shown to provide 'millions' of separate hues to which the contemporary Westerner has been acclimatised (de Weert 2002; Gellatly 2002; Higgins 2007). Identification of a particular colour becomes problematic when the lighting values in the film change, and a white garment, for example, becomes coloured through the use of filters (Johnston 1966:3) or computer-generated interventions (Telotte 2004). Colours interact to distract attention and to confuse, and to permit tracking (Varley 1991; Gage 1993; Finlay 2002). This occurs through the formation of contrasts, harmonies and clashes (Johnson 1966:5), and aids in the production of verisimilitude. The long-standing traditions of the theatre for colour signals of mood/scene changes through lighting continues in modern films, although the slippages between differing mood-scene elements are usually less intrusive than those seen in the theatre. Film colours are created from projected light, and so have an ethereal aspect to their presentation that is not present in everyday life (Perkins 1972; Bordwell & Thompson 2004). Film colour is 'larger' than life, and so can be expected to have a greater impact than everyday environmental colours. Specific coloured lighting enhances particular scenes in some films, and enhances the mood of those scenes, encouraging viewers to experience these changes vicariously.

None of the literature on colour coding in films provides accurate descriptions of the colours investigated, and indeed this would be a problem as film colours vary according to the available light, and so may change markedly in the course of a scene as well through the ambience of a film's viewing (Collard 1991). There is no consensus regarding just how white is 'white' or what type of red is classed as 'red'. To define colours, it was therefore necessary to turn to the most basic taxonomy of colours in the Anglophone world - the eleven BCTs (Berlin & Kay 1969), encompassing red, orange, yellow, green, blue, purple, pink, brown and the monochromatic range (white-grey-black) which I call 'achroma'. For ease of reference, and accepting that each colour exists in a 'space' whose margins intersect and overlap with those of other colours (Dedrick 1998), the colours discussed in this dissertation will be located within the word-symbol's designated colour space as it appears to the average Australian eye.

4.3 Issues in Data Collection

Electronic examination opens the way for many methodologies. Rasheed, Sheik and Shah (2003), for example, explored semantic interpretative potentials in films using computable visual cues such as shot length, shot motion content, lighting and colour variations to establish their data parameters. They asserted that the film colour histograms they trialled have reliability and relate well to generic presentations of the filmed narratives (2003: 4). Wei, Dimitrova and Chang (2004:832) provided a study of 'movie palettes', linking colours with particular mood states, and establishing that genre films bear identifiable 'movie palette histograms'. Both of these approaches used a form of computer analysis that drew inferences from the colour content of films and sought to define the grammatical structures associated with specific types of films. Wei *et al*'s study, achieved an 80% accuracy of colour-mood-genre linkage in their study of fifteen feature films, an accuracy only imagined by Zettl (1990) who researched colour for its exploitation as a mood enhancer in film viewing without such electronic services. All three studies approached their subject through a search for universalising 'physical' structures signalled by colour use. Their results demonstrate that such structure remains a productive avenue for further exploration, and may indeed uncover links between colour use and gender.

Contemporary technology allows different viewing practices than those traditionally associated with the cinema experience – slow-motion, freeze and fast-forward for example - and these have been employed extensively in the procurement of data for this thesis. Owczarski (2007) and Fewkes (2008) have both indicated the importance of technology choice to the production and outcome of research into visual art as well as to the producers of visual product. For the current research the technology involved access to computers, a DVD player, a video player and the software that would allow variable access to and dissection of the films. Use of these data-manipulation technologies brings with it issues of copyright infringement. *Age of Consent* (1969) has not yet been exploited through remastering and re-releasing in DVD format, and its video-tape release has faded colours due to age and tape-wear, and so lacks the lustre and brilliance of the feature film. It had to be converted to DVD to prevent further deterioration and because video cannot be manipulated as easily as digital media.

An extensive search for copyright holders of the ten films of this study proved unsatisfactory. Some could not be traced whilst others were unable/unwilling to provide the permissions needed for inclusion of still images within this thesis. When copyright holders were available, they also wanted to restrict stills to those available within their archives, none of which were suitable to the specific intent of colour examination for this research. Archival stills generally focus on the stars, not on their costumes or the surrounding ambiences. For this reason, no pictures are included in this thesis although they were used liberally for reference during data analysis.

Films are cut differently for television use than for the cinema, and this affects their colour presentation (Collard 1991, Poetsch 1991). The size, clarity and settings of the small screen (either television or computer monitor) will also change the tone, chroma and luminescence of any film colour. Editing for the small screen can remove much of the impact of the original film through manipulation of the focal points of the images (e.g. a close-up instead of a mid-length shot) or truncation of the screen size (resulting in the peripheral sections of the cinematic image being dissected). Without the original films in a quasi-original cinematic setting for comparison, it is impossible to tell which aspects of the films have been altered to suit the needs of the DVD and video releases. Certainly the restructuring of the DVD version would impinge upon the intensity of the colour experience and also the emotional impact of the movie.

4.3.1 Viewing the Film for Colour Content

Colours are difficult to track during regular screenings of films because attention is too easily diverted to onscreen dialogue or activity, or by the ambient music/sounds attached to the film. Turning sound off increases attention to colour content, but is tedious and fails to hold viewer attention. In contrast, the serendipitous discovery of the value of fast-forward options in watching a film for colour content has promoted attention to colours otherwise not consciously registering when the films are viewed in their entirety. Fast forward options (to between 3 and 5 times normal speed) remove distracting sounds and uninteresting (in colour values) close-ups, so colours that appear onscreen become the new focus of attention. This is very useful in determining the number of times a colour appears, the length of time it is present on the screen and to which uses a colour is put.

Costumes, artefacts and ambience all provoke recognition of mood states in the characters, and their colours guide the viewer to share the films' emotional content through the construction of links. Temporal changes in the narrative can be signalled by rapid consecutive changes in costumes (see section 7.2) or by the presentation of landscape elements such as sunrise and sunset (see section 5.4; Chapter 8). The colours used in these scenes emphasise the temporal shifts as they appear in contrast to the colours of the preceding scenes. This helps change the mood of the cinematic experience and prepares the viewer for what follows. But this use of colour as signifier of meaning is too restrictive and has little bearing on the narrative process.

Narrative colour content requires closer attention to the occurrence of colours on bodies, as bodies are the foci of the films' vicarious pleasures (Mulvey 1975). The fast forward option is not effective for this purpose, because although it reduces the researcher-time for attending to colour, it fails to give an accurate description of the colour content of costumes which, seen larger-than-life in the cinema, promote a greater psychic response from the viewer than apparent to the computer-aided researcher. For this, frame-by-frame stepping and extraction of images became the method of choice through which colours of costumes could be tracked.

These two processes, fast-forward viewing for continuity and slow-stop progress for fine detail, produced the data set taken from the DVD versions of the original films. Each of these data bits was then subjected to colour coding, utilising strategies outlined in section 4.2 and paying particular attention to colours that are inserted with deliberate directorial intent. These will be addressed next.

4.3.2 Selecting Colours to Investigate

Colours are used in films to promote verisimilitude and to encourage links between what is available on screen and what is experienced as reality. Having eliminated all the films in which colour use is constrained by virtue of genre distinctions, the colours for potential investigation now needed to be categorised. BCTs (Berlin & Kay 1969) reduce the need for differentiation between brightness and saturation levels of colours, and instead relay the focus entirely on hue as the marker of colour. This led to the identification of the three areas of colour use – as ambience, as skin and as artefact (see section 2.3.2). Ambience

and artefact uses proved the most effective for data collection as none of the films provided examples of colour-as-skin, a not-unexpected finding as Aboriginality has little penetration of popular Australian films generally (O'Regan 1996).

Not all ambience colours were examined however, as they had little relevance to the situating of the lead characters in gender presentations. Landscapes and similar vistas are certainly symbolically linked to male characters and home with female characters (Wright 1975) in all the study films, but as the primary aim of these ambiences is verisimilitude, their colours do not directly relate to the positioning of a character as masculine or feminine. In contrast, ambiences of artificial lighting, set up deliberately to create a mood are integral to the narrative (Bellman 1974) and so offer scope for exploration of their colour links to gender displays (see section 7.2).

Artefacts handled by the film characters bring objects into close-up for the purpose of making them meaningful (Arnheim 1957) so those which are also brightly coloured can serve to connect symbols. Whilst these may offer useful insights into the film's sub-text, it is the artefacts (costumes) worn on the bodies of the characters which indicate character mood and point to plot elements (Deutelbaum 1987). Characterisation ensures that only those artefacts worn or handled by the principals carry valid meaning for narrative progress, and the colours used convey these meanings throughout the films, transferring them from artefact to artefact. Emphasis in gender displays links directly to the costumes/artefacts associated with the visual presentation of a gendered body (Butler 1990), and their colours associate with the themes of the narratives. Star costuming thus became the primary data set examined for colour content, and ambience colours were included only when specifically tied to gender representation within a film.

4.4 Issues in Data Analysis

A structuralist approach to uncovering of basic themes within the films was also linked to gender representation. Wright's (1975) analysis was examined for its relation to the action-adventure films and provided similar conceptual groupings (see Chapter 5). The fit with romantic comedies was however poor, necessitating the instigation of a structural analysis of the romantic comedy narrative (see Chapters 6 and section 7.1). Only after

binary distinctions could be established for the romantic comedies could the relation between gender and colour be identified.

Apart from the black-white dichotomy, colours in films do not appear to follow strict binarist distinctions, with the art links of complementary colours only superficially related to the colour uses and symbolism. Red, for example, is green's complement in art (Birren 1978; Bottomley 2006) but can be juxtaposed against black/white (Davidoff & Roberson 1999, Hovers et al 2003), blue (Chien 2007) or pink (Kendrick 2006; Koller 2008). Each of these sets up a binary relation, some also linking to gender presentation. Some colour symbols relate to special social occasions such as weddings, where the colours presented on the screen bodies follow protocols found within everyday life. These are not specific to a gender analysis (although, as in the case of weddings, brides wear white whilst grooms wear black and white or grey), so these colour signals are not considered particularly symbolic of gender, the focus instead being on the costume type. There is a similar relation between colour and uniforms. Preliminary findings indicated a link between the colours of characters' 'everyday' costumes and gender. These were subsequently investigated in relation to the structure of the film narratives and colour binaries examined.

4.5 A Note on the Dickflick

Feminists have exposed language as a masculinist endeavour – words and concepts only arise from accepted masculine 'logic' and rationality (Butler 1990; Yeatman 1994). Emotionally-charged concepts have limited linguistic extrapolation and are encapsulated under a limited number of 'basic' emotions (Plutchik 1980, 2002). The work by linguists and their feminist critics has also uncovered the underlying values that permeate all discourse – this has led, in film studies to the emergence of the 'chickflick' as a term to describe films which are created to appeal to a predominantly female audience (Garrett 2007). The chickflick is pejoratively connected to irrationality, emotionality and a certain lack of importance in the everyday interests of hegemonic Australians. Feminists have decried the inherent negative connotations adhering to language that describes both women and emotions, linking the two as an almost-exclusive duo that threatens to undermine rationality. There is limited possibility within such a linguistic privilege for language to entertain purely female perspectives.

Inventing a Method

Treated as a frivolous indulgence, chickflicks fail to achieve the fiscal heights of the action-adventure films (and increasingly, animated films for children), and this reinforces ideas relegating limited value to their production. CGI (computer-generated imagery) for example, has yet to penetrate the production of a chickflick in the manner in which it has invaded the contemporary action-adventure. Action-adventure films have a similar banality to the chickflick – a feature that has been addressed by feminist film critics – but everyday discourse does not allow attribution of a pejorative to these blood-and-guts offerings. It appears that masculinist discourse permits pejoratives against women but not by women against men (Garrett 2007). Garrett (2007) has responded by embracing the chickflick, playing with its meanings and providing a humorous response to a negative connotation. Are men capable of such reflective practice?

'Action-adventure' as a term connotes positive human activities, ones which promise a triumphant ending to any number of environmental and human challenges (Neale 2000). The expectation engendered by these innocuous words also underscores a gravity and sobriety that reinforces masculine privilege – the films largely show men undertaking struggles against other men and overcoming man-made problems. The problems are always worthy adversaries and the heroes are generally 'ordinary' men whose special talents emerge in response to extraordinary situations in which they achieve maximum potency. Women in these films are given as rewards for successful males, having little narrative value apart from their appeal to the male gaze (Mulvey 1975). Feminist psychoanalytic critics may well link such films to the tumescence of a phallus, as they generally provide thrills that offer their male viewers such vicarious pleasures. What is often overlooked is that the minimalist narrative exploration of characters and the maximisation of violence appeals more to young men than the mature adult, and so is a transitory interest for most of the youthful audience. Are such films then worthy of the gravitas of 'seriousness' that attaches to male-oriented entertainments in the public imagination or is there some other way to describe these films?

My attempt to create alternative terms to 'action-adventure' has met with differing responses, usually depending on the gender of the recipients. A search for an alternative term to describe the action-adventure film, and capable of complementing the tone of *chickflick*, resulted in two main contenders – the 'prickflick' and the 'dickflick'. In Australian understandings, neither of these terms received favourable responses by the men to whom

they were introduced, yet women overwhelmingly found humour in their enunciation (most preferring 'prickflick'). Nonetheless neither term is unproblematic. 'Prick' in Australian slang has the dual meaning of phallus and aggression. 'Dick' in Australian slang connotes the phallus and stupidity. 'Prickflick' fails to capture the essence of the action-adventure films examined here because there is little of the underlying nastiness the term evokes. 'Dickflick' captures the inanity of these films but is somewhat risqué as it tends to offend the sensibilities of the people who avidly consume these films.

To use neither term requires, in the interests of fairness, that *chickflick* be similarly discarded, but I am loath to do so as I, like Garrett wish to challenge patriarchy's right to determine its meaning. Alternative terms such as 'boy-film' and 'girl-film' are also unsatisfactory as these terms suggest extreme youth as a feature of their audiences, when it is the teenager and young adult who most avidly enjoy the action-adventure film and do not seek boyish pleasures. Moreover, chickflicks appeal to women of all ages. Garrett's embrace of *chickflick* as a serious academic category has emboldened me to apply the label *dickflick* to the action-adventure films presented in this thesis. I do this in part to emphasise that these films are not to be taken seriously – they are, after all, entertainments that have little relation to everyday realities of interactions between males - and to remove my analysis from the impression that such entertainments have higher social standing than the chickflicks. I apologise for any offence this may provoke in my readers – colour too is regarded as 'frivolous' by many men, so I am in part attempting to address and overcome both sets of prejudices.

Conclusion

Contemporary Australians are highly visual and our films offer primarily the kinds of visual experiences that challenge convention and so they rarely attain the popularity of the Hollywood or British product. Those rare films which have the requisite audience appeal are then the films which will have the greatest potential influence on their audiences. The ten films chosen for this study all have this quality – few baby boomer Australians would fail to recognise the titles or remember the basic plot-lines. The rationale for the chosen film lies in this popularity.

Inventing a Method

Colour films offer visual feasts, so limits for colour analysis involving measures in coding and object choice are necessary. The definitional constraint on colour nomenclature (BCTs) permits latitude of colour naming, allowing inter-film as well as intra-film comparisons. BCTs allow for variants of brightness and saturation, and being hue-dependent divide colour space into functional units. Black, white and grey in this paradigm are 'colours'. Choices about which colours to investigate hinge on their presentational symbolism – lead characters' costumes are designated as the most potent of these. Development of physical models for examining the films for colour content required attention to praxis, and could not be accomplished using traditional viewer practices. Viewing films for colour content disarticulates colours from the narrative, allowing their symbolic value to be elicited. The methodology described in this chapter is therefore replicable only with the requisite technology.

Trends emerging from my pilot studies suggest that colours are used in films as signals for character states. But they are also linked to gender in terms of gender interest (chickflick versus dickflick) and within the films to denote gender differences. This nexus has never been addressed in academia, and so this present research adds to the growing body of literature on colour in film by examining colour use as a marker of gender performance.

Notes:

2 I have, since submission of this thesis for examination, discovered that Belantoni (2005:xxix) also approached this issue, advising that her students "run [the film] on fast forward and look for how ... colors propel the story or modify the characters". This hint would have saved me considerable angst and struggle to find an appropriate data manipulation methodology.

Chapter 5 – Structure and Colour in the Dickflicks

Introduction

The construction of characters in film narratives accords with the binaries that the producing society uses to represent ongoing themes and issues. These constructions play off one another in a dance of dualities that are represented most dichotomously in entertainments and rituals (Levi-Strauss 1979). Heroes and villains become identifiable in action as well as in other aspects of their representation - heroes and heroines (hero/ines) must always end up doing good, regardless of their initial presentation, and the villains must be punished for their transgressions (Bordwell, Staiger & Thompson 1985). Wright's (1975) classic study of the 'typical' structure of the western genre of films demonstrated four such binaries articulating around the consistent aspects of the interrelation between the hero, the villain and the society through which they both circulate. Wright's binaries of the 'western hero' have a wider relevance in film narratives as they can be demonstrated in the narratives of each of the action-adventure films of this study.

In this chapter I examine the five 'male-interest' films – *Stone* (1974), *Mad Max* (1971), *Mad Max II: The Road Warrior* (1981 – referred to hereafter as *Road Warrior*), *Mad Max: Beyond Thunderdome* (1985 – referred to hereafter as *Beyond Thunderdome*) and *Crocodile Dundee II* (1988) – in terms of the binaries set out by Wright for his study. Narrative analysis shows that *Road Warrior* and *Crocodile Dundee II* bear closest resemblance to Wright's classic western plot whereas *Mad Max* and *Beyond Thunderdome* most closely resemble amalgams of his professional/vengeance variants. The differing binary emphases give these action-adventure films a greater apparent variety than the possibilities identified by Wright (1975). These alternative narratives link to sub-genres under which the films are classified - drama-crime-mystery (*Stone*), science-fiction (sci-fi)-thriller (*Mad Max* franchise) and comedy (*Crocodile Dundee II*) (imdb.com), and so the treatment of the action varies considerably also.

There are similarities between the structure of the dickflick and the structure of the western that suggest that there is a common sequence in all male-interest narrative films, and this indeed appeared to be the case in the pilot studies preceding this research, but

there are also differences. The scope of these action/adventure narratives consequently required modification of Wright's hero 'functions' in order to apply to the most common denominators. The binaries he uncovered nonetheless remain vital to the structure of each of the films in the dickflicks cohort. In this chapter I intend to follow Wright's example by applying a set of functions to establish the ground for examination of the binary oppositions through which the films are structured. Further, I explore these binaries in relation to the non-discursive presentational symbolism of colour and how this helps construct the binarist readings. Finally, I examine the roles of female characters in the dickflicks, linking their activities to the colours worn. Firstly, it is necessary to introduce the films and their narrative outlines (a plot outline for each study film is available in Appendix B).

5.1 The Dickflicks – an overview

Each of the films in this cohort attained high popularity in its release year, with *Stone* the only dickflick that did not form part of a franchise. Film franchises aid in the uptake of a film by an audience due to known factors governing characterisation, plot and of course, star power (Dyer 1979; Cucco 2009). As Australian films, they all exhibit a quirkiness that differentiates each from the Hollywood product of its day (O'Regan 1996), and so have been used as exemplars of dickflick violence that has fed back into Hollywood's postmodern self-referential output, the topic of the 2008 documentary *Not Quite Hollywood: the Wild, Untold Story of Ozploitation*. Their continuing popularity suggests a need for such films in the formation of the male psyche, and the ongoing influence of their imagery in the popular films of contemporary Western culture (Quentin Tarantino in *Not Quite Hollywood*). What follows is a short overview of each of these films, taken from information available on imdb.com.

***Stone* (1974) –** Position 19

Stone is a young policeman whose mission, to uncover the murderer of numerous Gravedigger biker club members sees him join their club. His actions forge a mutual respect with the bikers but his full membership also carries obligations which will change his life. Hailed as an 'authentic' view of such biker communities, this film portrays violence in a not-unsympathetic manner.

***Mad Max* (1979) –** Position 4

Max Rockatansky is a policeman whose stress-leave/holiday is cut short by the vengeful actions of a biker group. Max battles alone against their pervasive evil, and embarks upon a vendetta when his family is killed by the bikers. Set in a near future of social unrest and resource scarcity (especially of fuel), the dystopian worldview of all the *Mad Max* films is played out as western-style narratives.

***Road Warrior* (1981) –** Position 3

Set a few years further into the future, Max is now a loner in a desolate post-apocalyptic world, where he becomes embroiled in the fight between a fuel-rich survivor group (led by Pappagallo) and a number of brigands who wish to steal their fuel hoard. Using his skills to outwit and defeat Lord Humungous and his barbarians, Max earns the gratitude of the survivors but declines to join them.

***Beyond Thunderdome* (1985) –** Position 8

Robbed of all his possessions, Max stumbles upon Bartertown, and offers his services in a political coup led by Aunty Entity. Having defeated Master-Blaster, Max refuses to kill his opponent and so is punished by release into the desert where he is found by a band of children living in a hidden oasis. The children mistake him as their Saviour, and expect him to lead them back to prosperity in a new world. Drawn into their mission, he defeats Aunty and so initiates another legend for the survivors.

***Crocodile Dundee II* (1988) –** Position 1

In the second film of this franchise, Mick Dundee has settled with Sue in the United States but they become the target of Rico's drug cartel plot when Sue's ex-husband sends her photographic evidence of murder. Alarmed at the failure of police protection, Mick relocates Sue to the Australian outback where he succeeds in destroying the villains.

The similarity in the presentation of the heroes in these films is their construction as loner-heroes. Stone and Mick Dundee are the least isolated, but they retain the fearlessness of the typical hero whose special skills (bike riding for Stone and bush-lore for Mick) are nonetheless developed in isolation from society. Max's special skill is the handling of vehicles at high speed. Stone and Max are rejected by or reject the social groups they aid, whereas Mick's reassertion of his relationship with Sue is an alternative ending expected of

the comedy sub-genre of this film. A review of Wright's (1975) hero-functions and their accompanying binaries is set out below.

5.2 Wright's Classic Western Structure and the Structure of Dickflicks

Four fundamental oppositions – the inside-outside society, good-bad, strong-weak and wilderness-civilization oppositions – indicated the basic elements of the western genre to Wright (1975). These oppositions are interrelated, with the status of any character in terms of these four binaries qualifying the narrative's genre construction. For Wright's study this produced three variations in addition to the classic western theme – the vengeance, transition and professional narratives – which present the binaries with differing emphases. These four binaries are enacted through a series of narrative forms that differentiate the variations from each other. Wright (1975: 33) termed these narrative forms 'functions'. He uncovered sixteen such functions in the classic and transition western narratives, thirteen in the vengeance variant, and twelve in the professional variant (1975: 48, 69 & 113). There are marked similarities between these variants, and this led to application of Wright's analysis to the present film cohort.

The action-adventure is a broader genre category that incorporates many other genres. Westerns are action –adventures situated in a mythical North American past that have gun battles and horses and a strong emphasis on the wilderness-civilization divide as their defining motifs. Australian cinema has produced similar films (Limbrick 2007), situated in mythical Australian landscapes and offering gun-battles, although horses are optional (replaced by cars in Australia – Simpson 2006). Each of the dickflick heroes and villains in the study cohort uses a gun as a sign of power, but only the villains use them indiscriminately. Each hero has his 'horse' (Stone's bike, Max's car and Mick's use of the landscape elements) to carry him from engagement to engagement with the enemy. Their generic specificities are nevertheless quite different: *Stone* was contemporary to its 1970s making, dealing with contemporary issues of political assassination; the *Mad Max* franchise is set in a post-apocalyptic not-too-distant future; and *Crocodile Dundee II*, whilst contemporary to its origin and social issues (the illegal drug trade), is set in North America as well as in Australia.

Insertion of comedic, sci-fi and mystery themes into genre films permits a wide variety of narrative propositions. These permutations demonstrate the difficulty in defining what constitutes a genre category, a point made by numerous writers on genre (see section 3.2). Under such constraints, I would like to propose a modified set of functions for the films under review. The dickflick hero-functions bear relation to Wright's hero-functions, summarized in Table 5.1, but not all of these apply in the same way. Moreover, Wright's functions demonstrate a linearity to the western narrative that is not as clear in the dickflick, whose narratives include frequent twists and turns that make the hero's trajectory a series of repeated setbacks to be overcome. Further, whilst the western hero finishes his quest in glory, the dickflick hero is more likely to be left somewhat jaded or disillusioned despite his success. There is a loss of some kind for the hero at the end of each film, even if, as in *Crocodile Dundee II*, it pertains only to a loss of innocence. Some of the dickflick hero-functions run parallel to the western hero functions, but because of the circularity of the action-adventure narrative (see Appendix C for patterns), the appearance and sequence of its hero-functions also differs from Wright's formulation.

Table 5.1: Relation of Dickflick Hero-Functions to Wright's (1975) Western Hero-Functions

Wright's (1975) Classic Hero Functions	Dickflick Hero Functions
1 the hero enters the social group	1 the hero desires to obtain a goal
2 the hero is unknown to society	
3 the hero has exceptional ability	2 the hero chooses how to use his skills
4 the hero is given special status	3 the hero obtains co-operation from others
5 the society doesn't completely accept the hero	4 the hero is confronted by an obstacle to his success
6 there is a conflict between villains and society	
7 the villains are strong, society is weak	5 the hero is opposed by an equal foe
8 there is strong friendship/respect between hero & villain	6 the hero succeeds in attaining the goal
9 the villain threatens society	7 the villain retaliates against the hero
10 the hero avoids involvement in the fight	8 the hero avoids/escapes danger
11 the villains endanger a friend of the hero	
12 the hero fights the villains	9 the hero repeats the struggle with the villain
13 the hero defeats the villains	
14 the society is safe	
15 the society accepts the hero	
16 the hero loses/surrenders his special status	10 the hero remains aloof from his success

Similar to Wright's first function (1975: 41), the dickflick hero attempts to obtain his goals by contact with a social group. But he does not remain unknown to the society, because he ensures that his place within the society is quickly established. The dickflick hero also exists outside of the society even whilst living within it. Mick Dundee, for example, fishes with dynamite in New York harbour, Stone refuses to partake of drugs with the Gravediggers, and Max's rejection of the social rituals or activities of the various societies

he encounters all differentiate these heroes from those societies. In this respect, the first dickflick hero-function conflates the society's needs with the hero's desires. The Gravediggers' need for safety converges with Stone's desire to solve the murder mystery; Max's desire to continue his solitary life links to the society's need to found a new homeland in *Road Warrior* and *Beyond Thunderdome*, whereas his desire for a safe lifestyle engages with the society's need to rid itself of the undesirable element situated as Toecutter's band in *Mad Max*; and finally, the society's need to render the drug trade a blow meets with Mick's desire to ensure Sue safety.

Like the western hero, the dickflick hero has special abilities (Wright's function 3 ,1975: 42) which are necessary for him to attain his goal. In this second dickflick hero-function the hero must determine how to utilise his special skills to greatest advantage. In each case the hero's exceptional abilities are well-known by the society rather than uncovered serendipitously. Stone demonstrates his skills repeatedly in order to present his qualifications for membership with the Gravediggers – he fights, saves one of their lives and almost wins a bike race against the best of their number. Max's exceptional driving skills result in the society presenting him with a very fast vehicle as inducement to continue to use his skills on their behalf (*Mad Max*); his bravery and persistence prove important for the escape plans of the society (*Road Warrior*); and his exceptional fighting ability enables Aunty to gain control of Bartertown (*Beyond Thunderdome*) and for the children's group to escape with Master. Mick Dundee's native cunning and bushcraft provide for an alternative method of keeping a witness-to-crime safe, and thereby absolving the society of the need to constrain Rico and Miguel. This function differs from Wright's function 3 in that the dickflick hero's special abilities are made known before they are put to use, and the hero has an active choice to make about the way in which his skills will be applied.

Special status conferred on the western hero is Wright's function 4 (1975: 43), playing itself out as the advancement of the hero's progress through the interaction between the hero and society. In the dickflick, this special status attracts the assistance of others in the hero's quest. This special status does not render the hero as separate from the society (an aspect of Wright's function 5, 1975: 44) so much as aid in his incorporation within it. The hero's status permits his transposition into the society, and a place is made for him therein. Stone's entrée into the Gravedigger band is facilitated by his prowess as a fighter and rider, declaring him as having legitimacy as a biker. Max's exceptional driving permits Fifi (his

boss) to grant him liberties in the methods he chooses to take in combating the villains (*Mad Max*), whilst in *Road Warrior* his ends are abetted by the Gyro-Captain and in *Beyond Thunderdome* by Pig-Killer. Mick (*Crocodile Dundee II*) makes most use of members of social groups in his adventure – Rat's street gang and Australian Aboriginals alike do his bidding. In all cases the hero is accepted as one of the social group whose assistance helps the hero's quest.

Wright's societies were reluctant to accept the hero completely (function 5, 1975: 44) but the dickflick societies are more likely to be accommodating to the hero; therefore conflict arises from some external source (external to the society and to the hero). Whilst there is also an inter-societal conflict of interests between society and the villain (Wright's function 6, 1975: 45), this is not the reason for the dickflick hero's quest. In each film the hero has a personal need to satisfy and this is what drives him to undertake the adventure. The dickflick hero is not concerned with the need to be completely accepted by any society, but *is* concerned to be permitted freedom of action. When this freedom is curtailed, he is forced to act. This also absolves him of the moral implications of the actions he performs to regain his autonomy. The obstacle to freedom is important as a motivating factor, often presenting as a person of importance in the hero's life – Jessie and Sprog for Max (*Mad Max*), Sue and Walter for Mick (*Crocodile Dundee II*) – or the direct cause of the hero's inability to proceed freely – Humungous' marauders (*Road Warrior*) or Jedediah (and Jedediah Jnr) and Aunty (*Beyond Thunderdome*) for Max. A similar role for *Stone*'s Amanda is tokenistic – the life she has with Stone barely registers on screen and his adventure touches her most potently during the final scenes of carnage, where her constraining action is to attempt to call for help, something he prevents.

The larger society in each of these films is largely irrelevant to the dickflick plot, the films instead making use of minority groups or individuals to represent a society. It is the interaction between hero and these micro-societies that pertains to the narrative, and whilst the opponent/villain is always strong, each micro-society's problems are also obstacles to the hero. Unlike Wright's western societies (function 7, 1975: 45), the dickflick 'societies' have considerable resources and strengths with which to combat the villains. The dickflick narrative requires the hero's transformative touch in order to render the society free of the villains' influence. But the most important aspect of the strong-weak contrast is that the villains' strengths are equal to the heroes' strengths, an important

feature of the western (Wright 1975: 45). Both villains and heroes have special skills that they put to the service of their own ambitions. A contrast with society's strengths is therefore unnecessary as the society's part is largely limited to support for the hero.

For Wright (1975: 45), the hero and villain have a mutuality of respect that underpins their view of each other's skills. Such a response also occurs within the dickflick, but as the villains and heroes tend not to have much personal contact, this mutual respect comes only after the villain is made aware of the hero's presence and awesome skills. This is accomplished when the hero attains some goal that brings his exploits to the attention of the villain. The ensuing respect is therefore for the skills and ingenuity rather than for the person. Humungous respects Max (*Road Warrior*) only after he has succeeded in bringing the truck into the survivor compound, whereas Max is already alerted to Humungous' social value when he spies Wez reporting to his superior. Rico learns to respect Mick (*Crocodile Dundee II*) once they have relocated to Australia, and he finds that Mick is no easy target. Nightrider's response to Max (*Mad Max*) indicated that Max's reputation was one to be feared, and Aunty's "Ain't we a pair" (*Beyond Thunderdome*) sums up the validation by the powerful for others of their ilk. Only the assassin and Stone do not observe this practice of mutuality, as theirs is not a struggle against each other, the assassin remaining unaware of Stone's status until Stone rescues him from the Gravediggers.

Having been alerted to the hero's involvement through his success, the dickflick villain retaliates. Wright's villains threaten society and a friend of the hero (functions 9 & 11, 1975: 46), but the dickflick conflates societies and hero-friends. The villain's threat is also more personal, aiming directly at the hero. When Toecutter destroys Max's friend Goose, and then Jessie and Sprog (*Mad Max*), the 'madness' in Max is unleashed, but in the subsequent films it is Max who is corporally subjected to the villains' retaliation. Rico's threat against Sue mobilizes Mick in New York and his threat against Walter accomplishes the same end in Australia. But there is no doubt as to whom the villain's threat is directed, as both men are aware of the need to out-manoeuvre and incapacitate the other. Whilst shown to be a danger to the larger society (and some of the micro-societies), the damage to the societies is not what motivates the hero – instead, it is when the fight becomes personal that the hero commits to the struggle. However in *Stone*, where the hero and villain remain anonymous to each other until the end of the film, the villain's actions are

not directed at Stone *per se*. Instead it is only when the Gravediggers reassert their reputation as society's villains and subject Stone to an exit beating that the usual villain's retaliation is delivered, *de facto*.

Wright's function 10 (1975: 46), in which the hero avoids involvement in the fight, is never an option for the dickflick hero. Their refusals are tokenistic because the struggle in each of the dickflicks is a personal one from its inception – the villain stands in the way of the hero's goal attainment. Rather than avoid engagement, the dickflick hero is able to escape danger through the application of his skills and some serendipitous opportunity. At this point in the narrative, the action virtually ceases as the hero recuperates or relaxes and enjoys the respite afforded by his successful avoidance of/escape from the villain's retribution. This tempo change accompanies indications of time passing (see section 2.1). Stone's sojourn in the Gravediggers' stronghold as their stories unfold and the naked morning swim thereafter bear testament to the symbolism of this time-space in *Stone*. Similarly, Mick and Sue enjoy a billabong-side interlude before once again facing Rico (*Crocodile Dundee II*), and Jessie relaxes at the lakeside while Max 'plays' with his car's engine (*Mad Max*). The respites from danger for Max continue as recuperative phases in both *Road Warrior* and *Beyond Thunderdome*. These are positive experiences for the dickflick heroes.

Forced by the situation to return to the engagement with the villains, the Western hero fights and defeats the villains (functions 12 & 13), permitting the society to return to safety (function 14) and accept the hero (function 15) (Wright 1975: 46-47). The dickflick hero however undergoes a series of trials and confrontations with the villains. The success that eventuates results from repeated efforts to overcome his opponent's activities. This is more akin to a chess match than the direct gunfight of the Western, although gunfights do ensue in all the study films. And it is not the hero's bullet that brings the villain down, it is the combined efforts of the community with which the hero is associated. The Gravediggers (*Stone*) are more than a match for the assassin, capturing him after an additional loss of two of their number, and so it is left to Stone to dislodge him from his predicament and place him in another, less dangerous situation. Max's revenge against Toecutter and Johnny-the-boy bring them to their deaths by impersonal means (*Mad Max*) and although he shoots Bubba, it is only after Bubba attempts to kill him first. These impersonal means to end the fight are also evident in the subsequent films and involve an

object in motion – trucks and cars in *Road Warrior* and trains, planes and automobiles in *Beyond Thunderdome.* The disposal of Rico and Miguel (*Crocodile Dundee II*) is facilitated through the actions of Sue and Walter, despite Mick's plans to capture both villains alive.

Having completed his task and being subsumed into the society, the western hero loses his special status, taking on the new role of citizen (Wright 1975: 48). Such happy endings are not guaranteed for the dickflick hero. Having been accepted by the societies readily enough very early in each film, the dickflick heroes have maintained a separateness that retains their 'special' status. Thus it is that these heroes do not find the fulfilment that emerges from successful integration into society. In each case, there is a lingering look into the future – a stare into the unknown, nostalgia for the struggle and the challenge of the adventure, and an apparent amnesia for the brutality and pain of the action in the final scenes. This is most potent in the endings of all three *Mad Max* films, where Max's expression informs the viewer that this is not the end – there are more adventures to come and more action to be experienced. A similar ending for *Crocodile Dundee II* has Mick and Sue embrace, but their focus is not on each other, rather, it is on the next adventure. Sue's matched gaze into eternity echoes her earlier complaint that Mick regards the struggle as a game rather than the life-threatening situation that she perceives. Stone's nostalgic reminiscence about his time with the Gravediggers is cut short by their visit and brutal biker farewell. Stone's refusal to instigate remedial efforts indicates that he, too, expects further engagement, if not with the same biker community.

The dickflick hero-functions that have been outlined above have one further capacity – they also describe, but in different and sometimes opposite ways, the trajectory of the villains. Villain trajectories, unlike hero trajectories, are linear, taking their cue in order from 1 to 10 with little deviation. Each villain has a strong goal, primarily to continue to go about their business regardless of its social value (function 1) and each chooses to use their special skills to gain advantage within larger society (function 2), although this may be accomplished through the efforts of others. The assassin chooses the art gallery balcony from which to exercise his profession (*Stone*); Toecutter directs his followers to perform any number of atrocities, joining in as necessary (*Mad Max*); Humungous leads the assault on the survivor compound (*Road Warrior*); Aunty steers Bartertown to some semblance of community despite interference from Master-Blaster (*Beyond Thunderdome*); and Rico directs the activities of his drug trade accomplices in general and brother Miguel in

particular (*Crocodile Dundee II*). Like the heroes, the villains are also able to gain co-operation from others, including members of the greater society (function 3) - although this is accomplished by coercion more often than as voluntary acquiescence to their requests. *Stone*'s assassin recruits henchmen, but does most of the work himself, unlike Toecutter, Humungous or Rico whose dealings with ordinary people consistently involves intimidation and/or assault by their followers on their behalf and at their behest. Aunty also gives instructions to her followers, but is also the most benign of all the villains, using coercion by legitimate means – *The Law*. Such interactive effort assists the villain's goal-attainments rather than producing obstacles to be overcome as function 4 does to the hero. Recognition of the hero as a match for the villain occurs at function 5, and this begins the personalisation of the struggle for which the villain has the first advantage (function 6). Retaliation against the hero by the villain (function 7) transmutes into a period of respite for the hero, but also for the villain who, although not needing to recuperate, continues his business (function 8). Re-engagement with the hero (function 9) precipitates a series of ups and downs culminating in the villain's defeat (function 10). There are elements of depersonalisation with this final defeat – villains are destroyed in *Mad Max*, *Road Warrior* and *Crocodile Dundee II*, but they share the hero's experience of denouement in *Stone* and *Beyond Thunderdome.* Thus the assassin and Aunty retain their lives and so have a future with new and as-yet unknown problems to be overcome.

5.3 The Binaries in the Dickflicks

Although Wright's western hero-functions cannot be comprehensively established in the dickflicks, each of these involves the use of the same binary distinctions that Wright identified (1975: 50-59). Wright extrapolated four sets of binaries around which the narrative of any western film revolved – the inside-outside society, good-bad, strong-weak and civilization-wilderness binaries. The classic western has a lone male hero whose challenge is brought about by the imperilling of a society through the actions of villainous others. The hero contrasts with society and with the villains on each of these dichotomous propositions, and the villains similarly contrast with society and the hero using the same binaries, regardless of the individual narrative type (classic, transition, vengeance and professional variants). The position of each hero, villain and social group on these binarist contingencies determines the type of western film unfolding. Dickflicks have similar

variations (see table 5.2), employing Wright's binaries with high, low or moderate levels of emphasis depending on the individual plot variant.

High contrast in the binary positioning of the dickflick heroes and villains highlights the moral differences between the protagonists. Where the binaries have moderate contrast there is a lesser differentiation of society, villain and hero on the binary scales. The hero may perform deeds as despicable as his foe, or the society may have its own strengths to combat the problems it faces, or the villain may be the leader of the society. Low contrast in binary relations only occurs in the strong-weak positioning of hero, society and villain, indicating that the issues confronting them are based on relative deployment of strengths and responses to others' strengths.

Table 5.2: Emphasis of Hero-Villain-Society Binary Difference in the Dickflicks

FILM	Inside/Outside	Good/Bad	Strong/Weak	Wilderness/ Civilization
Stone	HIGH	MODERATE	LOW	SEPARATION
Mad Max	MODERATE	MODERATE	HIGH	SEPARATION
Mad Max: Road Warrior	HIGH	HIGH	HIGH	SEPARATION
Mad Max: Beyond Thunderdome	HIGH	MODERATE	LOW	SEPARATION
Crocodile Dundee II	HIGH	HIGH	HIGH	INTEGRATION

Of the five films, *Crocodile Dundee* and *Road Warrior* are the closest in presentation to Wright's (1975) Western themes. Both have high emphasis on the differentiation between society and the prime adversaries, good and bad are easily identified and absolute, and the strong-weak continuum is much in evidence in their narratives. The result of the wilderness-civilization struggle however differs for these two films – Max (*Road Warrior*) maintains his links with the wilderness by spurning the society, whereas Mick (*Crocodile Dundee II*) retains his privileged position of outsider inhabiting an insider space within civilization. Mick returns to being integrated into society whilst Max remains forever outside society. Separation from society and retention of the wilderness is most common in these dickflicks, but it is of two kinds – all the hero's exploits in the *Mad Max* trilogy lead Max to the separation-through-isolation from society that typifies the western hero. In contrast, Mick and Stone become inside-outsiders, able to move easily between the worlds of civilization and wilderness because they retain the wilderness characteristics within themselves – part of the character remains wild.

For *Mad Max* there is only a moderate contrast on the inside/outside and good/bad binaries, but the strong/weak binary demonstrates high contrast. The society represented by the townspeople strongly contrasts with the villains but does not impinge on Max's activities - Jessie and Sprog stand in for such a society, and their weakness (in being killed) strongly contrasts with the strength displayed by Toecutter's gang, despite Jessie's spirited response to Toecutter's attentions. The moderate contrast of the inside-outside society binary occurs through the multiple representations of micro-societies – the Hall of Justice police, the biker gang, the townspeople (where the police are entirely invisible), Jessie and Sprog – each a separate part of the greater society and each remaining largely unknown to the others. Goodness and badness similarly demonstrate only a moderate contrast, because whilst there is undoubtedly evil in Toecutter and goodness in Jessie, each has a touch of the other as well – Jessie is very capable of defending herself from Toecutter (although she cannot save Sprog, dying in the attempt), and Toecutter holds Johnny-the-boy tenderly as he admonishes him for his behaviour (albeit with a loaded rifle in Johnny's mouth). But Max's actions when contrasted with the villains present him as a conflicted hero, using the same strategies as his opponents to inflict maximum damage with, particularly towards the end of the film, a minimum of emotional engagement or sympathy for his victims.

A similar moderation of the good/bad binary occurs in *Stone* and *Beyond Thunderdome*. The action-adventure does not clearly mandate villainy as in the western tradition; instead, there are opponents who occasionally do villainous things. Both the hero and villain are on a quest – they are both interested in the same subjects/objects and their means of acquiring their goals are roughly equal if not similar. Both Stone and the assassin are professionals whose goals, although opposed, involve the Gravedigger club which has its own motivation and methods for routing opposition. Competition in this film is a three-way struggle with each opponent demonstrating a capacity for violence in identical ways – through the use of guns. *Beyond Thunderdome* demonstrates this binary distinction in a different way – Aunty is the leader of the Bartertown society but her actions are for the benefit of the society and her dispute is with Master-Blaster, not initially with Max. Aunty's eventual quarrel with Max results in her turning away from her defeated opponent rather than destroying him – the action of a 'good' leader rather than a despotic 'bad' one.

The relative strengths and weaknesses of various factions within *Stone* and *Beyond Thunderdome* demonstrate a low contrast because it is the hero's personal quest that is the over-riding theme of the films, and the societies and villains are more evenly matched for skills and resources than in the western (refer to Wright 1975). *Stone*'s biker society is robustly confident in its ability to overcome the villain, and although their prize is taken from them by Stone, they enact their revenge as villains in their own right. It is Stone's response to this attack that reframes their actions as justified. *Beyond Thunderdome* presents two such strong societies – in Aunty's Bartertown and at the children's oasis. By film's end, there is the emergence of a third social group – the resettled city dwellers - and each of these has skills and resources sufficient to overcome their immediate problems. The children's oasis society may be innocent but it is strong in its own right, and it is Max who presents as an evil influence in their community when he 'takes over', threatening and assaulting Savannah. The binaries of the dickflick are therefore intertwined in ways both similar to and different from Wright's original conceptions. Nonetheless they are vital to the construction of the narratives.

5.4 The Dickflick Binaries and Colour

The most remarkable feature of the dickflicks is their similarity in colour composition despite their wide variety of scenarios and narratives. Colours are not necessarily arbitrarily assigned to their placement in the films (see section 2.3). Some colours, those of natural objects and environments for example, are located in a reality outside that of the film and departure therefrom produces effects not associated with 'realistic' narratives (Metz 1974). Outdoor locations have colour limitations determined by the natural environment, whereas indoor locations have a greater variety of colours associated with furnishings, although the lighting is often less intense than that used for outdoor settings. Themes emerge from these ambient colours and binary distinctions are invoked in their use. The alignment of yellow flowers with death in *Stone* is an example of the use of colour to signify an aspect of the narrative. In *Mad Max*, yellow cars are a warning to miscreants, but it is black that aligns with death and red with destruction. Most consistently, the dickflicks rely on the use of darkness to obscure the action, so that even when well-lit, hazy browns, blues, and the black-grey-white (*achroma*) colours feature to the exclusion of almost any other colour. The 'darker' the narrative, the more dark and dingy these colours appear, and the more 'serious' the fight that ensues. 'Unnatural' ambience colours are

also important because coloured lighting helps project more sinister or exciting meanings than otherwise available (Arnheim 1957), but these are rare. The red haze over what remained of a desertified Sydney city at the end of *Beyond Thunderdome* ensures that not only is it recognised *as* Sydney by its audience (ruined Harbour Bridge and Opera House are prominent) but also that the audience recognises *this* Sydney as post-apocalyptic.

Additional generic tags can link to the uses of colour – comedy (*Crocodile Dundee II* for example) presents its colours more brightly (Wollen 1972; Street 2009) than the dystopic *Road Warrior* or *Beyond Thunderdome*. The daylight settings of *Crocodile Dundee II* are evocative of lazy Australian summer days, whereas those of the *Mad Max* franchise are of indeterminate season, with the landscape and dark interiors indicating desolation where seasonal changes are meaningless. Thus the ambience hues in *Crocodile Dundee II* are conducive to lightening the tone of a film in which people are killed, and contribute to the authenticity of the comedic elements of the film. Similarly, settings which involve contemporary or near-contemporary styles (*Stone*, *Crocodile Dundee II* and *Mad Max*) offer a greater scope of hues than *Road Warrior* or *Beyond Thunderdome* which are set in a bleak future, so the overall ambience of these latter films is darker and more chromatically restricted to emphasise the devastation that is inferred but never seen.

Also notable in colour use is the frequent framing of the hero against a sunrise/sunset to establish his connection with the world at large and with his legendary goodness in particular (Wright 1975: 58-59). The transposition of landscape against close-up shots of the hero attaches some of the grandiosity of the landscape, forming a bond that assists in the presentation of the narrative and justification of the hero's activities (Pudovkin 1954). Similarly, the artifice of framing the lead characters against a blue sky whenever there is decision-making or important verbal interaction helps naturalise the close-up as an important carrier of non-verbal information (Arijon 1976). Villains are sometimes given this same framing, but more often, as in *Mad Max II* and *Crocodile Dundee II*, are usually positioned against a background reminiscent of an artistic depiction of a hellish or dark environment, and so the negative values of such places are transposed onto the character. *Stone* is the only film that does not use these devices, partly because most of the action is filmed from slightly above whereas the hero-against-the-sky is generally filmed from below. Such filming practices alter the involvement of the audience with what is shown on-screen (Bordwell 1989). Although largely located within a physical space that positions each

audience member looking upwards (the position of a child learning something important from his/her elders), the view-from-above repositions the audience as the observer from a distant safe vantage. This superior position also favours a wider and more inclusive view of the action than available through either horizontal or from-below shots (Clair 1953; Dancyger 2009). Views-from-above also capture more reflected light and colour, giving more detail and permitting greater tracking of movement and action (Gage 1993; Finlay 2002).

Of greater relevance in establishing colour's role in binary positioning of character type is its use in costumes and relevant artefacts (Gaines 1990b; Paige 1996). Not all the binaries are depicted this way in each film, but the use of light and shadow and other visual features of the costumes help to make these distinctions. As with the ambience colours though, brown, blue and achroma predominate, particularly for the male characters, whereas the other colours are more frequently found on the bodies of female characters. This gender distinction is one binary that Wright did not address, but is vital to the understanding of colour's place as a 'presentational symbol' (Langer 1979) in films. Colour forms a major feature of the characters' costumes, changing according to the situations and reactions portrayed by the characters. It is also an important indicator of a film's temporal position in human affairs – for example, *Stone* (1974) and *Mad Max* (1979) can be dated by the colours of the costumes and artefacts used by ordinary members of the portrayed societies.

Costume changes for the main dickflick characters that demonstrated a maximum binarist contrast often derived from little more than the removal or addition of an article of clothing for a short period. This is demonstrated in *Road Warrior*, where the costume worn by the hero remains constant for most of the film, with two scenes – Max showing a bare torso, and the replacement of a red ribbon for a white bandage - completing the costume changes. Yet each bears its significance. The red ribbon links Max to his only 'friend', the dog who wears a red scarf in lieu of a collar. The killing of this friend precipitates Max's desire for revenge on Humungous. Its replacement by the white bandage simply determines that he has now, despite his social phobia, linked his fortunes with those of the 'good' society by adopting its primary colour. His black uniform, however, retains his special status as an outsider who remains different. His brief semi-nude appearance denotes vulnerability, appearing as he recovers from the car crash, and is shrouded in semi-

darkness. The Feral Kid provides his clothing and Max is ready again for action, damage (black eye and white bandage) notwithstanding.

Not all of the dickflick binaries can be demonstrated in colour contrasts because the 'darker' the narrative, the less the expression of colour (Maland 2002; Arthur 2003). Three colours predominate in these films – a *trinity* consisting of blue, brown and the black-grey-white continuum, *achroma*. By limiting the 'look' of the film to maximum exposure of the masculine trinity colours, the films rely on subtle differences in presentation of heroes and villains and general members of society, indicating also a two-dimensionality of characterisation generally (the prime example here is *Beyond Thunderdome*). Conversely, the more colour used in the film, the greater the differentiation of characters along the binary divides and the greater the complexity of their presentation. This is particularly true of the female characters, who generally bear the burden of colour in these films. In order to understand the role played by colour's presentational symbolism I wish to explore Wright's (1975) binaries in relation to the dickflick hero-functions and the colours in which they appear.

5.4.1 The Inside-Outside Society Binary and Colour

Using the minimalist masculine trinity palette, it is possible to differentiate an individual's location within and without the various societies depicted in the films. *Stone* offers three such societies – the world of Amanda, the world of the Gravediggers and Blackhawks, and the world of the assassin. Amanda's world is pristine, white and well-ordered, the biker groups wear their 'colours' of primarily blue denim to signify their associations, and the assassin's world is one of clandestine meetings in dark offices and cars, just as his activities are primarily enacted in darkness. Stone initially belongs to Amanda's world but is seduced by the bikers' world, signifying this by his adoption of their blue uniform, but more importantly, by replacement of his white biker helmet for a black one. Male Gravediggers wear black helmets, females yellow or orange ones, while only two of the Blackhawks wore helmets. Black and blue (the colours of bruises) designate the societies that live by fighting. When Stone leaves the Gravedigger world, he resumes the colours of his previous life – and becomes a vulnerable outsider who feels the wrath of the society he has wronged.

Mad Max also produces three societies – the police, the bikers and the general public. The police world is dark, crumbling around them as their buildings and cars disintegrate. The yellow-red-black police vehicles are the brightest objects in the film, and each is marked for destruction. The biker world is associated with the outdoors – wide open spaces whose subdued greens and yellows and browns hide these black-clad outlaws from their prey. The world of ordinary people is much more colourful – the townspeople harassed by Toecutter's gang have a preponderance of reds and greys and whites, whilst Jessie and May wear an assortment of colours. Max's duty time associates with his black uniform whilst his off-duty time sees him in pale blues and whites, signifying his change of status from worker to leisure-seeker. After Jessie's murder Max is shown to purposefully resume his uniform before enacting his vendetta against Toecutter and Johnny-the-boy.

There are only two societies in *Road Warrior* - the survivors in the compound and Humungous' marauders outside it. These two groups are marked as quite polar in their costume colours – the survivors are primarily in greyed whites and pale tints whereas the marauders are in black and where colour exists it is well-saturated and vibrant. Max belongs to neither society, and he does not join either although he sides with one against the other, consummating the link by changing red for white on his arm. The almost-white and black dichotomy of colour in this film's societies provides a strong link between the inside-outside society and the good-bad binaries.

Beyond Thunderdome also presents two societies - Aunty's Bartertown and the children's oasis – differentiating them by colour. The children are primarily in brown, whereas Bartertown residents wear greyed browns, off-whites and blacks, with the guards in all-black. Only Aunty, as Bartertown's leader, is distinctly different in her colour – she wears light grey, and, along with the general cleanliness of her environment, is accorded high status within this bleak world. The two societies do not meet, nor is there a direct conflict between them, so it is only Max's association with each group that facilitates the links. Neither society is especially good or bad – each has its rules and culture, and each is thriving under harsh environmental constraints. In effect, this film offers two micro-narratives, with black-clad Max remaining separate from both social groups whilst engaging with each in turn. As in its precursor, *Road Warrior*, Max is seen semi-nude, and again this is at a time of vulnerability during recuperation from an ordeal. There is never any intention by the Bartertown society or Max to engage further than their mutual contract,

so inside-outside society is not an important part of this half of the film, but at the children's oasis, Max specifically refuses the sign of his acceptance into their society – the blue captain's hat. His rejection of this emblem signals his rejection of that society, and so he remains firmly positioned outside it.

Crocodile Dundee II displays a number of social groups – the general North American society as well as an underground street gang, and in Australia, the worlds of the tourist town and the Aborigines. Mick is an outsider in all of these societies, although he is accorded special status within each group and is able to move with ease between them. Mick mostly wears a characteristic brown 'western' style costume that is at odds with the more elegant colours of the general North American public and also contrasts with the black of Rat's street gang. In Australia his costume fits with the town where Walter resides and runs his tourist operation, but again, Mick is an outsider with special status that enables his odd behaviours to be indulged. Purporting to have Aboriginal kinship privileges, Mick nevertheless does not adopt their costumes and his direction of their activities suggests a relationship that again indulges a favoured outsider. Each society maintains a congruence of colour in their costumes that reflects Mick's difference – and this difference links the inside-outside society binary with the wilderness-civilization binary. The social group represented by Rico, the villain, is in black and white, although his brother Miguel wears a purple shirt in North America, and Rico sports red after Sue's abduction.

5.4.2 The Good-Bad Binary and Colour

Of Wright's (1975) four binaries, good-evil seems the easiest to present in terms of colour use, because of its traditional links in the Anglo-Christian imagination to the colours black and white (Gage 1993; Pastoreau 2008). In the era of monochrome westerns, hero and villain were allocated white and black hats respectively, so that the film-goer could easily track the characters throughout the action sequences (Kress & Leeuwen 2002). But although black and white continue to be used in this way in colour films, these colours are not always used to denote exclusively either good or bad. Often, these colours are used anomalously or in tandem, but there is a consistency between the dickflick hero's use of black and white that differs from the consistency of the principal villain's use of these colours.

Stone's villain is introduced in a dingy white coverall garment that allows him to blend into the building walls for his assassination assignment. Stone's gleaming white riding suit and helmet help him stand out, beacon-like, against the night through which he rides to the Gravediggers' hotel. Here the use of the same colour to denote both good and bad are not seen as ambiguous because one white is dull, the other vibrant, so the demarcation between hero and villain is emphasised. Further, Stone's home environment registers as a 'natural' light-filled environment, whilst the villain is seen in the shadowy underworld of dimly and artificially-lit clandestine meetings or as a body part moving surreptitiously amongst machines at night to disable them. The rival biker groups are not accentuated in this way – theirs is a common blue theme and although they may differ and enjoy their battles, neither group registers as necessarily good or bad.

In *Mad Max*, the villainy of the law officers, Max included, is visually equated with Toecutter's gang, although the camera focus on Max ensures that the audience is aware of his innate goodness. Black denotes badness, and in Max's case, he can remove it or put it on as an act of will – he is not constrained by his habits to be bad as is the case with Toecutter. When Max removes his black uniform he does not change in terms of the good-bad binary, remaining the hero throughout regardless of his actions. Max does, however, suffer a loss of power when he dons white instead of black, linking the black-white dichotomy to the strong-weak binary. As a hero, Max must be good, so any bad action must also be justified – and black permits this justification because it also denotes a restriction to duty attended by an enhanced power to accomplish his task. Duty as part of the good-bad colour presentation of white also appears for Bubba who reluctantly returns for Johnny-the-boy at Toecutter's behest. Bubba's helmet is a light silver colour (very close to white) and his accompanying enaction of obedience to Toecutter illustrates that his badness is not omnidirectional.

Road Warrior dichotomises the presentation of good and evil most extremely, but uses the traditional black and white in an anomalous as well as a traditional manner. The use of white and black as signifiers of differing societies also allocates each society a representation of goodness and badness, with goodness apportioned the 'white' society and badness the black-clad hordes. Although Pappagallo, the survivor leader, goads Max into a fight, his concerns for his society's welfare positions him as a 'good' leader, whereas Humungous' concern for his minions, especially Wez, is presented as another opportunity

for violence. The survivor society also has many more female members than the barbarian society, and this further links the survivors to goodness through the traditional 'civilizing' influence of the feminine (Levi-Strauss 1970). For the hero and villain the use of black and white inverts the good-bad binary. Max is in black throughout the film whilst Humungous wears a greyish-white face helmet as his signifying costume article. At its most effective, this mask glows throughout the night during which Humungous harangues the survivor society in a hellishly-lit environment. Max, for his part, is able to disappear into the night surrounding the marauders' encampment because his black costume does not reflect light. Badness is thus linked to the bizarre spectre of glowing white at night and goodness with the concealing safety of black on black.

Beyond Thunderdome is the darkest of the dickflicks, both in terms of it themes and its use of colour. Most of the action occurs within dimly-lit environments or against monochromatic empty spaces, creating an aura of seriousness and overwhelming badness. The clothing on Bartertown's residents is filthy, they and their environment dusty, and the reception for Max hostile. Entertainment consists of single combat to the death. The oasis children, in contrast wear brown, are generally clean and entertain themselves with stories to keep their heritage alive, despite the isolation of their dim refuge. In differentiating brown cleanliness and achroma dirtiness, the societies are represented as good and bad respectively, and so the entry of a black-clad Max to either society denotes something of interest will follow in their interactions. Within Bartertown, Max does good, relieving Aunty of her homage to Master, and also in his refusal to kill Blaster, whereas in the oasis, Max refuses to assist the children's proposed escape and assaults Savannah when she insists on leaving without him. Aunty the 'villain', in contrast, wears a clean silvery-grey garment and lives in an aerial 'palace', removed from the grime of her townspeople, and administering to them 'The Law'. As the legitimate leader, she also collects no dust in her wild chase after Max and the stolen Master, and in leaving Max in the desert, does good – he is given another chance at survival.

Black and white feature prominently on the bodies of *Crocodile Dundee II*'s villains and 'good-guys', again, both in traditional and in anomalous ways. Both Leroy Brown and Rat's pack wear grey and black as their primary colours respectively, and both use this colour to denote 'badness' as a means of promoting fear and uncertainty in outsiders. Sue appears first in a white bed and nightgown, and later in a white shirt - the innocent and good victim

of the evil of others. These are both traditional uses of black and white, but when worn by the villains, these colours read differently. Rico's first action is shooting a subdued victim at point-blank range, and this he does in white. Rico is unaware that he is being photographed as he murders, so his white links to a potential claim to innocence. But when he entertains a kidnapped Sue, he has replaced his white jacket with red, indicating a barely-contained sense of his superiority. In Australia, all that remains of his white is a hat, the remainder of his costume is black, indicating that he is now actively engaged in badness – going so far as to set a bushfire. His final act is to unwittingly offer himself as a target for Miguel's rifle, for which he wears brown. Mick in contrast retains his browns from his previous exploits (in *Crocodile Dundee* 1986) and, for the first few scenes of the film, blue. Mick's role adds humour and lateral thinking to the problems he encounters, and so his colours are designed to allow these qualities to show through – he is good (as heroes must be) but also quirky in his choice of tactics. When his plans are unmade by Walter's shot, Mick is wearing Rico's colour – black – and so is read by Walter as being bad. This misperception costs Rico and Miguel their lives.

5.4.3 The Strong-Weak Binary and Colour

Strength and weakness are part of the adventure narrative insofar as they permit the hero to struggle to attain his goals, but more graphically, each of the heroes has his strength tested by the villains in a fight during which the hero receives the worst of it. The darker the story, the more pronounced this aspect of the binary relations. Whilst black and white indicate goodness and badness, it is often the removal of these costumes (or part thereof) or the addition of some hue that signals a change from strength to weakness.

The strong-weak binary has very low contrast in *Stone*, yet it still demonstrates colour differentials. The Gravediggers may be targets for the assassin, but they are by no means unable to protect themselves. The villain is a skilled worker, and is bested only by superior numbers in the final challenge. Each representation therefore allows for both strength and weakness to co-exist. The colour blue brings them together in the graveyard – different shades for different qualities. The dark blue coveralls worn by the villain at his defeat re-introduces his theme of assassin-as-tradesman, but this time he is made captive and subject to retribution – ergo, he has attained weakness. Stone's blues here locate him visually between the villain and Undertaker (in pale blues) and so he stands the middle

ground between strong and weak, protecting one from the other. But red also indicates this binary in a less obvious manner - Undertaker and Stone are uneasy allies, competing with each other for supremacy. Their red bikes are engaged as symbols of their rivalry and equality of strength. At their final meeting, when Stone wears white, it is Stone's red blood that signals the end of their co-operative relationship through his descent into weakness. This same white was his signature colour at the beginning of the film, along with unsaturated blue, and together they linked to Stone's role as a supplicant (wishing to ride with the Gravediggers) and his weakness (assault victim).

Weakness is also associated with pale blue in *Mad Max*. As part of his uniform, blue links Mac to his fellow officers, none of whom are able to escape Toecutter's minions and their antisocial activities. Toecutter's troop wears primarily brown and black, and their strength against townspeople and police alike is profound. The only other characters to wear this combination are the politician who is annoyed at the expense of Max's new car, and Johnny-the-boy's solicitor. Both these characters represent the strength of the larger community, so in both cases, brown and black link to power. Blue, in contrast, links to weakness in a number of ways – not the least as the light which shines in the burns unit where Max views Goose's incinerated body. Here Max's shock temporarily incapacitates him, and the blue and white theme of this scene links later to Max's ignorance of Jessie's problems with Toecutter. By not being aware of the problem he is positioned as a follower (obeying Jessie's instructions) rather than as proactive policeman. At his weakest however, Max is in white – when he agrees to Jessie's demand that he leave his job, and later, when he arrives too late to save her from Toecutter's wrath.

Red also links to the strong-weak binary in its association with danger and destruction in *Mad Max*. As part of the police car insignia, red attests to the lethal capacity of the drivers of these machines. The toddler who wanders into the Nightrider's police pursuit is in red, as is the man who accosts his mother. Red is the most prominent colour associated with the town, linking to the terrorisation of its occupants who, by wearing red or in driving a red car, are identified as the potential victims. It is then of interest that the same red should be found on the vehicle that Max and his family drive to May's homestead. Having used the van to escape from Toecutter, Jessie discovers that the lethal potential associated with red extends to the ripping of a hand from its owner, and when the vehicle breaks down, becomes an unsafe refuge just as the town's young lovers' red car had been for

them. Red's lethality thus links to Jessie's and Sprog's weaknesses just as it associated with the weakness of the townspeople.

In *Road Warrior*, Max's strength associates with his black uniform and car, whilst his weakness is linked to an absence of clothing – during his recovery from assault. This is a very short phase, because it merely sets the narrative motivation for his change of mind – he will now fight on the side of the survivor group against Humungous, having first been severely injured and his companion dog shot. This is classic western-style story-telling, where the villains are always strong, the hero bearing the brunt of a major assault and being temporarily incapacitated (Wright 1975). When Max resumes his black uniform, his strength is returned to him and he is able to defeat his enemy. Nudity (and semi-nudity) is also used as a signal for absence of strength for Humungous' band, in that their ability to function as villains is curtailed – Humungous also falling victim to Max's bravery. The survivor group, clad mostly in whites and pale colours have plentiful resources but are unable to proceed with them to their destination, needing Max to solve this dilemma. Their colours are thus linked to their weakness as a group rather than as individuals.

The colours in *Beyond Thunderdome* produce little differentiation, and indeed the film does not portray any of the social groups as being weak – both have considerable resources, both have generated a means of survival in a hostile environment and so both have considerable strength. The children's society, despite its naivety, demonstrates its strength in survival, and Bartertown's residents have established strength in regrouping and reinstating technology as their means of continual survival. Max is seen at his strongest in black, and at his weakest when recuperating from his desert ordeal. Here he is still in black, but his appearance is symbolically denuded by the cutting of his hair – a biblical reference to the loss of strength (Judges 16:17), but simultaneously 'cleaning' him up. He loses his psychic harshness, becoming vulnerable to the plight of the children. The semi-nudity of Blaster also signals his weakness, firstly as the mentally handicapped slave of Master, and secondly as the defeated opponent inside Thunderdome. Pig-killer, Max's accomplice within Bartertown, is also semi-nude and despite his bravery, is severely wounded in their escape. Others, particularly amongst Aunty's guards, are also semi-naked, and several meet their deaths in non-heroic ways.

Semi-nudity features as a sign of weakness in *Crocodile Dundee II,* but it also appears as a sign of strength. Mick is seen semi-naked in enforced solitude, waiting for Rico's call to give him clues as to where Sue is being held. In this mode he is weakened, unable to move forward. Later, he dons a crocodile skin to deceive Rico and Miguel into thinking that Walter had been taken by a reptile. This latter demonstrates Mick's versatility and strength, although the focus of the rescue, Walter, is also established as the cause for the subterfuge as Mick's close friend and partner, and so is another person in need of saving from the villains. Just as Rico's strength diminishes as he takes on more black, so too does black hinder Mick's ability to carry out his plans. In taking on Rico's clothing, Mick makes himself vulnerable to misperception, and this results in his being shot.

5.4.4 The Civilization-Wilderness Binary and Colour

For Wright (1975: 57) the civilization–wilderness binary demonstrated a distinction between the hero and all other characters, aligning the hero with the landscape. In the dickflick, the hero is always a civilizing influence, reducing the chaos created by the villains and providing, in their defeat, safety and security for the future of the 'good' society. Certainly, when the dickflick hero is at his most civilized, that is, when he is at the bidding of female characters, he is also at his most inactive. Therefore, a reassertion of his dominance as fighter and problem-solver accompanies a move towards wildness and wilderness.

Wilderness and civilization are linked closely with the societies represented in *Stone*. Civilization has two themes in colour – the colourful world of the free-speech participants in the park that opens the film, and the pristine white world inhabited by Amanda. Both worlds are brightly coloured, clean and, in the case of Stone and Amanda's abode, elegantly furnished. Wilderness also bears two colour themes - the browns, greys and blacks of the abandoned but defensible seaside fort where the blue-clad Gravediggers are based, and the black-and-yellow worlds of the assassin and his covert activities. The fort contains women in simple but many-hued costumes and despite its lack of furnishings has its own version of civilization. The black-white-blue assassin's world is elegant and expensive but spawns villainy – its wilderness credentials endorsed by the coldness and distancing of its interactions. Stone is linked to two of these worlds, one through origin (his white home) and the other through aspiration (the Gravediggers' fort). There is a class

element here that exists also for the assassin – his world of origin (the political world) boasts higher class than the Gravedigger's world and that of the general public, but the colour differentiation positions the Gravediggers within civilization and the shady political world as other. Stone's presence in or influence on these worlds disrupts them and causes a realignment of their respective civilizing activities.

Mad Max locates civilization as having many colours and wilderness as having few, including the environment which has a character-like function. There is a major contrast between the city – seen primarily through greys, browns and blacks – and the countryside where Max confronts Toecutter's gang – mostly ochres and greens and blue skies. The murkiness of both interior and exterior of the 'Halls of Justice' invites a reading of the equally sordid activities contained within these walls. The Halls of Justice oversee a violent world in which there is little to differentiate the villains from the heroes, where uncivil society protects a wild-ness into which civilization has not intruded. Fifi's plants, orange watering can and semi-nudity in the office feminises this space, civilizing it somewhat, and securing a claim to goodness –thus linking these binaries. Yet this is a very different world to Jessie's, May's or that of the towns-people, worlds that contain both an abundance of female characters and colours. Max has roots in both worlds, moving uneasily between the two. In his dark world he wears the uniform of brotherhood – black and blue – and in the world of women he wears white and blue. Civilization and wilderness are linked in Max to these colours, which also denote his relative strength to overcome challenges. In each world he causes change, whether by action or inaction.

The environment in *Road Warrior* is closely related to the traditional western genre – wide open spaces, sparsely populated and with hostile natives threatening potential settlers. However, both potential settlers and natives are seen to have some civilizing elements in their organised and internally beneficial activities. Humungous at first offers free passage to the survivor-settlers in exchange for their property, an offer made in bright daylight against blue skies, and suggesting civility. His revocation of that offer occurs in a black and red night, his continued ranting a sign of wilderness. Neither group is prepared for Max, whose solitary existence bespeaks loyalty to neither, and therefore represents a threat. When Max wears the white bandage he temporarily aligns himself with the settlers, enhancing their capacity for retaining their civilization. That choice positions him against Humungous and his social group, resulting in their inevitable destruction. And there is a

further colour differential to represent this binary – wildness and wilderness are linked to red, with Max, his dog and Wez all using this colour as costume. Civilization occurs in the form of pink – a whitened unsaturated red worn by the youngest, cleanest female settler. Her refusal to escape the compound with GyroCaptain because of 'family' enshrines her appearance as civilized. GyroCaptain's costume is multicoloured and although he lives as isolated an existence as Max, his transition to member of the survivor group is signalled as inevitable in his pink sandshoes. Acceptance of GyroCaptain by the survivors also ensures their and his continuing success because his technological skill replaces their lost mechanic – he has settled into a niche. Max cannot do likewise.

Beyond Thunderdome's world is wilderness, whilst remnant pockets of survivors attempting to keep traditions alive signal civilization. In this film there is little to differentiate the two – both social groups are subsisting rather than thriving and whilst both have potential for ongoing civilization, environmental constraints threaten a wilderness takeover. Nonetheless colour differentiations are made. The children's oasis, offering comfort and safety, also exhibits green – a colour associated with lushness, fertility and abundance (Hutchings 1997) – whilst Bartertown's pretensions of prosperity are linked to dust and dirt and brown, the colours of the wilderness. The link to civilization or wilderness is further made by the reception given those who enter beneficent oasis or mercenary Bartertown respectively, as well as the link with femininity. Although Bartertown is headed by Aunty, she is not in complete control, so her elegant grey costume reflects the subjugation she bears at the whims of MasterBlaster. Her defeat, in bright sunshine, enhances the grey with a silver sheen, and she reverts to civilized behaviour, allowing her enemy to live. The children's oasis however contains many girls at many levels of enterprise – it is orderly, caring and compassionate, it is civilized. The disruptive element here is Max – a black-clad outsider who brings wilderness into their societies and catalyses major restructuring.

In *Crocodile Dundee II* wilderness and civilization are clearly marked as Australian/Columbian outback and North American city, with a multitude of colours in the city, and primarily greens and browns in the country settings. Rico is at home in both the North and South American locations, but falters when confronted with the Australian outback. Nevertheless, non-masculine trinity purple and red in the costumes of Miguel and Rico respectively help to locate them as foreigners in the mainstream society and to distinguish them from their compatriots in the city. Miguel's purple is most prominent

during his rendition of a drug-crazed psychopath to Rico's performance in red as the dominant gentleman mastermind of Sue's kidnapping. Mick, a new immigrant to the city, is at home in the outback, although his adjustment to city life (civilization) is seen as welcome if somewhat unusual. The colours used to signify environmental wilderness and civilization are modified by the use of day and night light. The city, heart of civilization, is dark whilst the outback wilderness is filled with light. This echoes Mick's perspective that the city is a less safe abode than his homeland. In the city, Mick stands out because of the peculiarities of his brown costume – in the outback it is Rico and Miguel who fail to blend into the scenery.

5.5 The Chicks in the Dickflicks

The civilization is presented as having a higher proportion of female characters than those available in the wilderness. This increased number of women suggests that civilization and the feminine are interlinked, despite women playing only minor roles in the dickflicks. As signs of civilization, Amanda and the Gravedigger women in *Stone*, Jessie and May in *Mad Max*, the survivor women in *Road Warrior*, Aunty and Savannah in *Beyond Thunderdome* and Sue in *Crocodile Dundee II* all stand as causes for much of the problems arising for the hero. None of the dickflick women is restricted to the masculine trinity colours (blue, brown, achroma), and in most cases they present the only other colours in the film outside these basic three. Certainly their colours are generally brighter, more saturated and cover a larger area of the body than do similar colours on male characters when these occur. Colour thus is seen to link to the feminine in ways that it does not adhere to the masculine in these films.

The strongest hues in *Stone* are red and purple. Purple occurs as part of the costumes of several of the biker women, and as the lining of Dr Death's cape. On the women, purple is prominent for the widow of the buried Gravedigger, and appears on a different female character for Stone's initiation. Dr Death's purple is hidden until needed – as part of the ceremonial garb for specific rites of passage. Each use of purple links the colour to the transition from one form of personhood to another, and as such, purple attaches to a feminine form of power (internal-spiritual-emotional) that differs from the more aggressive power emblematic in the blues of the Gravedigger uniform. Red appears on Amanda who wears it in a peculiarly feminine way – as a form-fitting garment which accompanies her

attempt at dominating a situation. She expects to win her demand for Stone's release from his assignment because she is adept at manipulating situations to her advantage. Nonetheless she is unsuccessful in attaining this goal, and so although red has traditional links to power and dominance (Luscher 1969), it links here to Amanda's lack of sufficient leverage to maintain that dominance.

Jessie in *Mad Max* wears bright greens, pinks and whites, whilst May's colours are blue with some red. Both women are feisty and capable of defending themselves up to a point. Both are concerned with the safety of Sprog, Jessie and Max's child, and so attempt to extricate themselves from Toecutter's gang's activities. Although May escapes their revenge, Jessie and Sprog do not. Jessie appears firstly in white and it is the colour most associated with her devotion to Max and the angelic qualities of love and trust (Dyer 1997). In her green and pink costume she acts as an independent and capable person, retaliating against Toecutter's activities by assaulting him and escaping with Sprog. But she also displays distress and fear, enhanced when she discovers a hand attached to the chain that had been caught on the panel-van's roof-rack. When Toecutter's gang return, Jessie is in white and brown, and her ability to defend herself is markedly diminished. Pink and green when mixed create a version of brown (Mollon 1995), so her earlier feistiness (pink) and lunge for freedom (green) have been replaced by a link to her environment (brown = earth). It is May in blue and red who takes control and forces the gang into a locked area, but she is unable to save them after the gang escapes again. May's actions are those of a concerned parent – comforting, organised and methodical – as she prepares to defend her home and her guests, but her age and lameness preclude her success.

There are no women partnering Max in *Road Warrior*, although both Humungous' tribe and the settler societies have women in their midst. In the barbarian tribe only one woman is seen, and she is engaged in the sexual act. In the settler society there are several women, most of whom are fighters and carers. The fighter women wear white and grey, the carers blue, although all the colours are desaturated, reducing their emphasis on-screen. Three female characters stand out. The first is an active and competent fighter. Her white helps her stand out from the less pristine whites of the other troops. The second is the grieving mother of the moribund survivor Max returns to the compound in exchange for fuel. Her blue is brighter than the other nurturers and she argues against Pappagallo's decision to refuse Humungous' offer of safe passage. The third, the pink-clad girl mentioned earlier,

becomes a person of interest to GyroCaptain but plays no part in the fighting or nurturing. Rather, she is the reason for GyroCaptain's joining the survivor society. These women represent the various qualities to be found in this civil society – protection (white), nurture (blue) and honour (pink). Both the woman in blue and the girl in pink are spared destruction, but the fighter woman in white bears the same fate as the other fighters – she is killed.

Beyond Thunderdome features two female characters – Aunty in silver-grey and Savannah in brown. Neither is linked to Max in a personal way – Aunty hires him for his special skills and Savannah defies him to lead a group of children towards Bartertown. Aunty's costume distinguishes her from the remaining Bartertown residents in both style and colour, and she assumes a class-based superiority that is supported by black-clad guards. Savannah's colour appearance coincides with the other children's costumes, so she is located as one of many rather than as someone with special social status, despite being honoured by the group for finding 'Captain Walker'. Although both women have a larger part in the film than the women of the other dickflicks, theirs remain subordinate roles, designed to permit Max's qualities and actions to be emphasised. Thus Aunty's grey elegance, while contrasting with Max's 'raggedy-man' appearance, positions them as equals in the fight for survival, and Savannah's brown stubbornness forces Max to act on the children's behalf despite his initial unwillingness to do so. Both women are catalysts for Max's eventual actions and choices.

Sue's mainstream world (*Crocodile Dundee II*) contains positive (her socio-economic status) and negative (her kidnapping) elements that she expresses in traditional achromatic costumes - white for her enjoyment of her life and black for her resistance to her kidnappers. She wears one other colour – green – which she puts on over her white nightdress. Green is an unusual colour for a dickflick heroine because it does not align with common everyday concepts such as found with red (sex and violence), pink (child-like adoration) or blue (nurture and understanding) (Birren 1978). Green links Sue to her former husband, the journalist whose photographs (taken from a lush green hillside vantage-point) lead to her kidnapping and acquaintance with Rico and Miguel. Thus green is implicated in Sue's loss of freedom. In Australia, Sue wears blue at the billabong, an interlude where she questions Mick about his ownership of 'Bilongamick', but later, when she takes an active role in the fight with Rico and Miguel, she is in white and dark grey. In

these latter colours she assumes the masculine role of hero along with the masculine trinity colours, shooting Miguel as he shoots who both assume is Mick.

Most importantly, most of these women's representations feature their nude (or near-naked) bodies as a major part of their interaction with the heroes of their respective films. Only *Beyond Thunderdome* does not feature female nudity, although Aunty's figure-hugging wide-shouldered grey costume sexualises her appearance. Nudity seems an important element of films aimed at an adult audience (Carrigan 1988), and in these films there is an unequal gendered distribution of the amount of flesh seen. In *Stone*, for example, where the nude scene of the Gravediggers enjoying a dawn swim offers full-frontal nudity of both males and females, there is a hazing out of the lower half of the screen to preserve 'decency', a censorship requirement that prevents a view of the penis, but permits clear view of the female torso. This scene contrasts with the more sedate and covered nudity displayed by the 'upper' class Amanda which is neither complete nor public. A covertness associated with nudity occurs in *Road Warrior*, when Max's precipitous ride through Humungous' camp exposes a copulating duo. Here, it is the female's body which is put on display, her body acting as cover for the male nude. *Mad Max* offers limited nudity – it is Max whose nudity is referred to by his wearing of a yellow towel around his lower torso. Jessie's body remains covered during their interactions, and even when later large areas of her flesh are seen, it is because she has gone swimming. Sue's role gives opportunities for hints at nudity – a revealing nightdress, her shower, the interlude beside the billabong – all permitting her body to be sexualised in a way that Mick's is not.

Women's bodies therefore seem to support the hero functions by encapsulating the vulnerability of the hero's position without his having to appear vulnerable. The women hinder the heroes' trajectories in various ways – and their colours link to these alternatives. Each film composes this female-effect differently, but in each case it is the woman's actions that precipitate a crisis for the hero to negotiate and overcome, spurring him into action. When Amanda (*Stone*) attempts to call for assistance after the Gravediggers mete out punishment, Stone prevents her from this despite his injuries; Jessie (*Mad Max*) assaults Toecutter, bringing his wrath down upon their family; the warrior woman arrests Max and the woman in blue argues for the group's surrender, both interfering with Max's ambitions; Aunty expels Max from Bartertown and Savannah defies Max's edict that no-one leave the oasis (*Beyond ThunderDome*); and Sue's marksmanship (*Crocodile Dundee II*) prevents Mick

from capturing his enemies. The colours each woman wears brings her to attention on-screen, allowing her to carry out her function so that the narrative continues and the heroes can demonstrate their ongoing prowess. In each film also, these colours link to specific activities and motivations, and although use of some colours adheres to everyday concepts, each bears a logic internal to the dickflick in which it appears.

Conclusion

The similarities between Wright's (1975) exploration of the popular western genre and the dickflicks of this study demonstrate a commonality of themes that underpin the male-interest genres. In the case of this present study, the commonality includes a limited palette for male character costumes and a gendered distribution of other hues. The five films in this cohort use the masculine trinity colours in their representation of all four of the binaries, so that white and black link most distinctly to good and evil respectively, and red to danger, dominance and suffering. Blue and brown are the most ample costume colours accompanying achroma for heroes' costumes, with red appearing only as a minor part of the ensemble. The female characters of these dickflicks most commonly appear in blue and white. Red, purple, pink and green costumes provide difference in the visual service that the presence of the dickflick heroines provides. Red is used to indicate power and sex, pink is set up to represent innocence, green links to constraint and purple to transition. The colour constructions are created to enhance certain aspects of the dickflick narratives, using imagery that links to prevailing attitudes and understandings of their audiences. By linking these pivotal narrative points with specific colours, the themes of the films are emotionally enhanced whenever the colours reappear.

The gender divide in the presentation of colours is perhaps the most obvious of the colour differentials in the study. As will be seen in Chapter 7, these differentials persist even in the more brightly coloured chickflicks. But first it will be necessary to establish the chickflick binaries, a task to be addressed in the next chapter.

Chapter 6 Structure in the Chickflicks

Introduction

Whilst Wright's (1975) hero-functions can easily be adapted to the more generalised action-adventure, and his binaries have shown high correlation with the dickflick narratives, the further the genre is removed from these, the less likely these hero-functions will fit. The chickflicks, and romantic comedies in particular, show little allegiance to Wright's categories for either hero or heroine. The links between colour use and the binaries in the dickflicks is also easily established, but the generally more colourful romance films offer a wider scope for analysis. To facilitate this, it is firstly necessary to undertake a structuralist analysis of the study's chickflicks to ascertain their underlying narrative form. This is the challenge of this chapter, and leads to Chapter 7 where I will present the link between the binary relations arising from the chickflick hero-functions and the colours used to present these concepts.

Romantic comedies have two characters – a man and a woman – the 'leading role' shared and the narrative oscillating between their respective trajectories (Grodal 2004; Garrett 2007; Richter 2007). The romantic comedy does not carry the viewer along into the future with its hero-heroine pair as it does for the western-hero when he rides into the sunset. All of the dickflick heroes are male, but the romantic comedy is just as likely to have a female lead, and their goals and activities bear little relation to the struggle between good and evil that permeates the dickflicks. Therefore to differentiate the chickflick lead characters from the hero and heroine of the action-adventure genre, it is necessary to refer to them as *rom-hero* and *rom-heroine*, and if the issue attributes to both, as *rom-hero/ine*.

In romantic comedy, the lovers are accorded privacy at film's end, time to extend this moment of their bliss into an eternal one, forever wed to the parting shot (Kuhn 1985). There is no intention to follow the rom-hero/ine through the realities of domesticity and the everyday. In the western, the viewer is invited to return and enjoy another such adventure – a driving force in the production of narrative franchises such as *Mad Max* and *Crocodile Dundee* (Cucco 2009; Kim 2009) – but in the romantic comedy the finale is just that – the end of the story. The viewer leaves with the fantasy of an idealised relationship

that never translates into everyday experience, yet offers hope that it might (Gripsrud 2000; Torben 2004). And therein lies much of the appeal. The potential variations of the narrative revolve on one premise – heterosexual pairing is for everyone, a natural outcome of following the 'rules'. These rules are the rom-hero/ine functions to be explored in this chapter. The dickflick hero-functions differ from the rom-hero/ine functions in that there is no specific enemy to be disposed of, and because it is fate alone which conspires to place the protagonists within the same space-time so that they can realise that their partnering is the most obvious and 'correct' choice. The western is based on dramatic situations and valorous conduct, a highly expansionist, extroverted and active narrative (Wright 1975). The romantic comedy is based on the close investigation of relationships with a focus on the minutiae of interactions, creating a more introverted and passive narrative (Garrett 2007).

6.1 The Chickflicks – an Overview

There are nine Australian romantic comedy films in the top-100 cinema releases in Australia for each year between 1961 and 2009 (mpdaa.org; boxofficemojo.com). Most of them were released in the 1990s, although the pulling power of non-Australian stars ensures that three of these films - *Age of Consent* (1969), *Green Card* (1991) and *The Man Who Sued God* (2001) – are in the top-five of this list. The other two films are *Strictly Ballroom* (1992) and *Muriel's Wedding* (1994). A synopsis of these films' plots follows (see also plot outlines in Appendix B).

***Age of Consent* (1969) -** Position 13

Brad is a middle-aged artist concerned he is past his artistic prime. He retires to an island for a prolonged break where he meets Cora, an independent spirited adolescent on the verge of womanhood. Together they explore relationship as Brad regains his artistic gifts.

***Green Card* (1991) -** Position 6

Bronte needs a husband-in-name so that she can acquire the apartment of her dreams. Georges needs an American wife to obtain his green card so that he can stay and work in the US. When investigated by immigration, they work to outwit the investigator and find love along the way.

Structure in the Chickflicks

***Strictly Ballroom* (1992) -** Position 1

Scott is a bored dancing star who wants to expand his repertoire. Fran is a beginner at the ballroom dance school. Together they challenge the ballroom dancing hierarchy in presenting their own style of dance despite the opposition of almost everyone.

***Muriel's Wedding* (1994) -** Position 6

Muriel is bored and disgusted with her life. She escapes to an island holiday where she meets extroverted Rhonda. Muriel wants above all to be married. When Rhonda is crippled they must face the challenges of their friendship, and these are brought sharply into focus when Muriel marries David, a swimming star.

***The Man Who Sued God* (2001) -** Position 29

Steve loses his beloved boat in a storm and decides to sue God when his insurance claim fails. Anna is a journalist who assists him to win over popular public opinion. They challenge the establishment together and learn about winning, falling in love along the way.

The five films of this cohort can be classified along gender-of-primary-role lines. Three films, *Age of Consent*, *Strictly Ballroom* and *The Man Who Sued God* all have a male lead character. Bradley, Scott and Steve respectively are each on a mission to improve things for themselves in some way, and none of them has a desire for relationship. *Green Card* and *Muriel's Wedding* have female lead characters, both of whom are actively engaged in the construction of a relationship – Bronte with the apartment she 'loves' (and so also with the fellow-tenants she deceives in order to obtain said apartment), and Muriel with the fantasy hero-husband of her 'good-as-an-ABBA-song' future. This difference of emotional stance at the start of the narrative, dependent upon the gender of the principal character has ramification for the structure of the subsequent story, as the rom-heroines pursue *love*, an internal goal, whilst the rom-heroes pursue some other object of desire, engaging in relationship only to further these ends. Rom-heroines pursue their loves, rom-heroes are changed by the love which emerges only insofar as it enhances their public goals.

Romantic comedy makes liberal use of close-ups (Kolker 2000; Keating 2006). In these the rom-hero/ine emotes. Such close-ups demonstrate longing, empathy and joy, anger, disappointment or resignation, but the finale always presents the protagonists in the same

frame, close together and often engaged in kissing. The kiss occurs in action-adventure films also, but its intensity, the length of its screen-time and the multiplicity of angles from which it is filmed all point to the importance of this narrative device to the plot of the romantic comedy (Goffman 1976). Just as the fight between hero and villain in the action-adventure film creates a climax, the kiss produces its equivalent in the romance narrative. The attractiveness of the romance couple is therefore a major consideration in the selection criteria for cast members, the male lead especially needing to satisfy feminine viewer fantasies (Dyer 1982; Neale 1983; Grønstad 2003; Padva 2005). The rom-heroine must successfully transform herself in some way to attract the attention of the rom-hero, and the rom-hero must open to a previously unnoticed need for her. This transformation becomes a permanent feature of her (happily-ever-after) future, whereas rom-heroes, if they attempt transformation at all, usually fail and are rewarded with a woman for being their 'true' selves.

6.2 Rom-Hero/ine Functions

In the study of chickflicks, there are differences in the functions of the lead characters, depending on whether a male or female character takes precedence in the narrative. The trajectory to love – the ultimate destination of the romance – differs in male-driven and female-driven narratives due to gendered assumptions underlying the narratives. Rom-heroines are actively engaged in the search for their love, whilst rom-heroes have it thrust upon them as a reward for correct action (Mulvey 1975). These men remain relatively passive in the romance narrative until its climax, and then take decisive action. For the rom-heroines, action is taken first, and the comedy chronicles the resultant relationship conundrums. Both gendered sets of actions are motivated by desire, and the bonding of the aspirants at the end of each film arises from a joining of these desires. Narratively, there is a sequence of a co-joining of characters' motives and desire through to quarrel, separation and eventual reunited mutual joy. The simple formula of boy-meets-girl, boy-loses-girl and boy-regains-girl equates to the three acts of the chickflick narrative (Garrett 2007). The steps in this narrative sequence are relatively short, looping several times in order to maintain the comedic element and sexual tension in the film (see Appendix D for a full listing of these loops).

Structure in the Chickflicks

I have identified nine axes of reference in the chickflick cohort that equate to those of Wright's (1975) hero-functions. They also demonstrate separate male-centric and female-centric variants. The primary hero/ine functions are as follows:

1 The rom-hero/ine fiercely desires something.

2 The rom-hero/ine takes action to obtain that desire.

3 The rom-hero/ine achieves early success.

4 The rom-hero/ine's success begins to unravel.

5 The rom-hero/ine engages in confrontation with the disruptive element.

6 The rom-hero/ine disengages and reviews the issues.

7 The rom-hero/ine takes action to redress a wrong

8 The rom-hero/ine gives up the struggle

9 The rom-hero/ine's efforts are rewarded

6.2.1 The rom-hero/ine fiercely desires something.

As indicated above, the first hero/ine function is clearly gendered by the relationship between the subjects and objects of desire. The three male-lead films each feature a female 'sex-object' for the man, but this sex-object is not what motivates the characters. The men's search is for a '*redress*-object' – the redress for some negative experience of their lives. The women whose love they receive for a satisfactory conclusion to their quests are an incidental part of the narrative. For like Wright's (1975) heroes, the rom-heroes must win in the end. Brad (*Age of Consent*) is searching for renewal, for redress from the artistic exhaustion that had gripped him in his native home; Scott's (*Strictly Ballroom*) frustration at the restrictions of the ballroom dancing academe wants redress for the slights to his burgeoning masculinity; and Steve's (*The Man Who Sued God*) lawsuit against the insurance company and God's representatives seeks redress for a sunken boat. Cora, Fran and Anna, the 'sex-objects' in these films respectively, assist in this quest, facilitating the heroes' success and aligning their own desires to those of *their* man, and in so doing relinquishing any separate goals of their own. This allows each woman to achieve in a different manner from her initial intention. Simultaneously, as part of the on-going subtext, they also reinforce the traditional feminine role of a woman at the side of the (heroic) male, providing for him a domestic space with her body in which she basks in his reflected glory (Chopra-Gant 2004).

Brad (*Age of Consent*) has no interest in Cora outside of his breast-beating struggle with his lost artistic spirit and its gradual renewal. It is Cora, with awakening sexuality spurring her actions, who is responsible for initiation of relationship and love. Scott (*Strictly Ballroom*) is frustrated by the lack of right to express his artistry on the dance floor and accepts Fran as his partner only reluctantly, and only after she verbally abuses him and makes her suggestion of a partnership a demand. The startled look Scott portrays at this clearly demonstrates his shock and bewilderment at being wrested from his habitual, and (as attested to by mum, Shirley) increasingly narcissistic focus. Fran, on the other hand, is never in doubt of her intent – she wants to dance also, but only with Scott. For Steve (*The Man Who Sued God*) the issue is one of anger. He has been the victim of an 'Act of God', and so intends to demand his due from God's representatives on Earth. His accomplice, Anna, is embittered about love relationships and has no overt desire to engage in another, yet her loyalty to Steve's quest at what appears minimal gain for herself, in other words, her *self-sacrifice*, has all the hallmarks of love. She, like the other sex-object characters, becomes focussed on *him* and *his* concerns. Each of the women also is the first to recognise the love-change in their relationship with the lead man.

The men, in contrast, maintain their interests outside the relationship, accepting the women's love as a due reward for correct action on their part. Correct action is the development of an awareness of a need for the rom-heroine (Garrett 2007). This is true whether the male is the leading character or the main support in the chickflicks. *Green Card*'s Georges wants his American green-card rights assured and is quite content to romance Bronte in order to obtain them, a narrative device mirrored in David's albeit-reluctant marriage to Muriel, for the greater prize of his Australian citizenship. It is notable that each of the masculine-desires is in the common-knowledge of the films' other characters, whereas the desires of the female-lead films remain secret to a greater extent. For the female-lead films, the emphasis on fierce desire is for something to satisfy an internal yearning rather than an external goal. The external rewards (Bronte's apartment, Muriel's 'success' wedding) are, even for the characters, merely signs of that which is to be satisfied within themselves. Bronte wants the single life *as well as* the apartment available only to married couples; Muriel's wedding is merely a substitute for her desire for fulfilment. The object of desire for Bronte's and Muriel's actions is based on love, although the love-object is not human and both women are prepared to use the men in their lives to obtain their own ends. In neither film is the individual *man* desired, instead; it is *what the*

man can provide with his presence in the women's lives that is of importance. Marriage to a stranger (the sub-plot of both films) facilitates this attainment of what can be provided.

Bronte has a potential lover, Phil, but she does not love him, despite her protestations to the contrary, both to him and to her green-card husband Georges. She does not want to share her love, her apartment. Instead, she will do anything to prove herself worthy of a tenancy at the apartment block of her dreams, even if it is to marry a complete stranger. Bronte's marriage is also a perfect solution to the problem of the over-eager Phil, whose apparent adoration would include marriage and the sharing of her beloved space. As a minor character, he disappears from the narrative when Georges' presence becomes dominant, and this coincides with his own attempt at dominance. With or without Phil or Georges, however, Bronte is focussed on her love-object prize. Muriel too has a strict focus on her love-object prize, the wedding, and practices assiduously for it, spending long hours in a fantasy world of ABBA songs and pictures of bridal gowns. This dichotomy in the way that the rom-hero/ine desire is established produces a clear distinction. In each chickflick's narrative the attainment of some visible prize within the 'real/public' world exists for the rom-heroes, but it is satisfaction of a secret yearning (the 'private' sphere) for the rom-heroines. The rom-heroes are thus represented as externally-focused and the rom-heroines internally-focused.

There is another major gender difference in the enunciation of the rom-hero/ine's desires in these chickflicks. The females in the male-lead films willingly give their assistance to a male-voiced desire, whilst the men in the female-lead films are kept unaware of the female-leads' motivations and so have little input into their rom-heroine's activities. The men speak their desire, the women exhibit their desire through their obsessive actions. The rom-heroes accept rom-heroine assistance as their due, utilizing its benefits without necessarily needing it to succeed in their quest. Rom-heroines on the other hand, cannot proceed to a satisfactory conclusion without the rom-hero's assistance. This is seen in the way in which the rom-hero/ine proceeds to obtain their desire. For Brad, Scott and Steve the fight to obtain the desire is outward, directed at the world, and in the public space of social action. They make no secret of their intentions and even repeat their motivations to ensure the support-heroine does not misunderstand. Both Brad and Scott remind the support-heroine that theirs is not a love-relation, and Steve quarrels bitterly with Anna. All three treat the support-heroines badly, even abusively, until the women align their goals to

those of the heroes *in the manner that suits the heroes*. This tendency to disavow relationship in favour of other goals is also seen in the supporting-hero roles of Georges (*Green Card*) and David (*Muriel's Wedding*). Georges and David both tell their wives that they don't love them, yet both are prepared to continue the marriage in order to obtain their desires. The other supporting-male characters of these two films, Phil (*Green Card*) and Brice (*Muriel's Wedding*) it is interesting to note, are in love with the heroine, but theirs is not an openly declared love. Both men are portrayed as somewhat reticent to lay their desire into the public sphere, and are thus both disregarded when the rewards for right action are eventually granted. Neither Bronte nor Muriel is able to explain fully what their desire is, beyond the attainment of something very specific – the apartment and the wedding. These desires are made strange, almost delusional, because of the fierceness with which the rom-heroine's emotions are involved, whereas the rom-hero desires are straightforward, rational and 'normal'. In this way, normative masculine and feminine 'attributes' are inscribed onto the characters' psyches (Foucault 1978).

6.2.2 The rom-hero/ine takes action to obtain that desire.

The initial action taken by the lead rom-heroes Brad, Scott and Steve, is directed at flaunting their abilities in the face of opposition. Brad removes himself to an isolated island where he is able to give vent to his artistic claims by re-painting/decorating his shack, and then, when given the opportunity, uses the sleeping figure of Cora to model a nude sand sculpture. Scott tries out his new steps in a dance competition, generating both the acclaim of the audience and the opprobrium of the critics/judges. Steve files a legal complaint against the insurance company and the church, using the claim that God (through His ambassadors/representatives the churches) had contravened the Trade Practices Act. All three men display their talents in the public arena, opening themselves to ridicule and angry retaliation, yet all three remain stalwart in their dedication to their quests. Even support rom-heroes Georges and David take public action to find a wife of the desired nationality, although the opposition, when it comes, is in the form of opposition to Bronte's and Muriel's desire rather than specifically to their own.

The lead rom-heroines, on the other hand, use deceit to obtain what they most desire, regardless of their leading or support roles in the narratives. Whilst the rom-hero's action is outward-directed, the rom-heroine's action is more surreptitious, and is kept as a secret

by each woman. Bronte lies to hide her real intentions. The tenancy committee, Phil, her parents and her friends are all unaware of the extent of Bronte's untruths, and the deliberate falsehoods told to the immigration inspectors all serve to keep Bronte's real motives secret. Muriel steals, lies and changes her name to Mariel in an effort to obtain her desire. Neither Bronte nor Muriel are punished for their transgressions; instead it appears that the rewards for these women can only come about at the expense of truth.

For the support rom-heroines, Cora, Fran and Anna, deceit is practiced primarily upon others rather than on the hero in order to obtain what is desired. Cora lives her life free of rules, and has long practiced deceit in her plans to escape the island. Cora steals from Brad (as a stranger), from her grandmother and from other residents of the island. Once she has aligned her goals with Brad's, Cora steals *for* him rather than *from* him, albeit in a mistaken belief she will win his support. Fran's more civilized character does not steal, but instead she engages in 'white lies' to evade her family responsibilities so that she can continue to escape home and conduct a clandestine dancing relationship with Scott. And Anna practices lies-by-omission in withholding certain information about her past from Steve and about her motivations from her boss. In none of these female-originated anti-social behaviours is the male lead-character implicated or harmed. The covertness of these rom-heroines suggests that the masculine prerogative of being in charge (Yeatman 1994) is neither openly challenged nor undermined.

6.2.3 The rom-hero/ine achieves early success.

As is the case with the previous two rom-hero/ine functions, the manner in which the early success is achieved differs according to gender. For the male lead-characters, the success is facilitated by the supporting female characters, and whilst pleasure accompanies success, it is not the ever-after happiness sought in the romance narrative. The female lead-characters are, in contrast, most blissfully happy with the result they have achieved. Here the success is due entirely to their own efforts, rather than to the combined efforts of lead-and-support found in the male-centred narratives. Happiness of this sort is contaminated by the subterfuge and deceits practiced earlier, and so must also be hidden from others, again reinforcing traditional binaries such as overt-covert aligning with public-private and male-female (Banner 1992; Russi & McGraw 2000; Mizjewski 2005). Success for men is part of a normal gender role, whereas for women, excluded from formal power, it requires

use of informal means to expand their sphere of influence (Butler 1990). Once again the gendering of the romance trajectory places male-success in the public realm, attaining acclaim and notoriety, whilst female-success consists of the private satisfactions and gratification of an inner world.

Male-centred narratives give little thanks to the efforts of the supporting-female characters, the men taking for themselves the responsibility of training their rom-heroine and any reflected glory from their female-protégé. Brad is excited when his artistic talent is inspired by Cora's nubile form, but he does not credit her with any generative power in this process. His use of her body as a somewhat catatonic medium for the flow of his artistic juices is, for Cora, novel at first, but she soon tires of his obsession with her body rather than with *her*. The story is similar for Scott and Fran. Scott's success in finding a partner to dance his steps is only possible through Fran's active participation, but his focus relates to her body as an instrument for his athletic gyrations rather than to her as a person. For Steve and Anna it is a slightly bumpier trajectory. They did not meet in fortuitous circumstances; their initial impression of each other resulted in antagonisms; they are thrown together by mutual contingency; and when their early triumph arrives, they differ over the next move. Yet the same disregard for the female-support's contribution to the man's agenda exists. These three rom-heroines have been the catalysts through which the men's early success has been possible, but it is the men's glory, not theirs. Instead, the female-support characters display additional narrative aspects in common – they each recognise and seek to exploit an asset in their rom-hero long before he is aware of their combined strength, and they are also content to remain in the background and permit him to shine. These are classic heroine attributes (Mulvey 1975).

The female-lead characters have attained their success through their own efforts, the supporting rom-heroes providing a necessary complication in their endeavours. Bronte and Muriel have risked much to attain their goals, and whatever they have gained has resulted from their own clandestine activities. Bronte's meanderings amid her greenhouse plantation and Muriel's 'good-as-an-ABBA-song' life in Sydney happened only because each woman had deliberately taken whatever steps seemed necessary to achieve those goals. Bronte and Georges, having obtained what they needed from each other are now content to continue their lives as before, separate from one another. David's need for urgent Australian citizenship serves his ends also, and his ends too are outside of the relationship

with Muriel. For Muriel, the marriage signals a change in status and fulfilment of her expectations of becoming a 'new-me'. She had not considered life-after-the-wedding, so although living under the same roof, she and David take on separate lives. Yet the contribution of the supporting rom-heroes in these chickflicks is not only to act as foils for the rom-heroine's actions, but also to offer an alternative to the female-lead's initial desire. For Bronte and Muriel, once their desire had been attained, it caused immense pleasure and satisfaction, but soon transformed into something less than it should have been. Personal satisfaction for these women, it seems is never sufficient – they both need to mature to understand their place in the social order and to realign their goals to the ultimate prize - heterosexual love. Both Georges and David, intruding into their rom-heroine's life, stand in for this ultimate prize.

6.2.4 The rom-hero/ine's success begins to unravel.

Just as the rom-hero/ine is settling in to enjoy this early success, it begins to lose its glamour. Here the gender differences between the portrayals of rom-hero versus rom-heroine are not dichotomised. In all cases, the disruption to the success/happiness comes in the form of an outside intrusion. Usually another person affects the relationship between the major characters, and this influence effectively destroys the burgeoning romance and/or the success to date. For Brad this comes in the form of two characters, Cora's grandmother and Brad's erstwhile friend, Nathaniel. Both of these characters insinuate that Brad's relationship with Cora is more than that of mere artist and model, and indeed that there is a grave moral ambiguity in the relationship. Similarly, there are two prongs in the attack on Scott's newly inspired enthusiasm for the dance. His skills are ridiculed by Fran's father and friends, challenging Scott to re-think his competence, and his coach and Federation President Barry arranges for him to accept a new partner far superior in experience to Fran. Steve's crusade to take God to account for his sunken boat is endangered by a potential class action, in which the floodgates of litigation against religion are potentially opened and his personal quest risks submersion. Further, his family, although estranged, becomes the target of conservative religious ire, and Steve is forced to choose between the safety of his daughter and continuing the fight. For Bronte the intrusion comes from numerous directions. The aged busy-body at the apartment block, Phil, Lauren (her friend), her parents, and of course the immigration inspectors whose

intrusion causes her peace to be shattered by Georges' moving in. Suddenly the serenity and safety of her love object is under dire threat.

For Muriel, the intrusion into a 'perfect' life-experience is both through the presence of another, but more importantly by another's *absence*. Muriel had been downtrodden at home and wanted to prove herself worthy of admiration. Her original success at one-upmanship on her island holiday is threatened by Rhonda's immediate curiosity, but more so by a very real and angry (but coincidently absent) father whose money she had stolen for the jaunt. Later, when revisiting this cycle, Muriel finds herself married but also friendless, motherless and loveless. Here her triumph has shown itself for the sham that it was – a fairytale ending to nothing despite the presence of a now-willing husband – and she must rapidly readjust in order to retain any thread of happiness. Far from regretting her actions, Muriel is instead challenged to invite insight into their consequences, and she must choose between several potential futures. It is the absence of these people in her immediate circumstances that promotes the decisions and actions she takes – their absence is an external intrusion into the fantasy that Muriel is trying to live. What Muriel shares with the other lead characters of this study is the growing awareness of the wider ramifications of her actions.

When we examine the effects of this cycle on the support rom-hero/ines, we find similar intrusions taking place. Cora's grandmother not only challenges Brad, she attempts to beat the young woman when she discovers her in self-exploration, and Nathaniel's intrusion into Brad's home also adversely affects this budding relationship. For good measure, the director has thrown in another potential lover in the ferryboat skipper whose attentions to Cora threaten the burgeoning Brad-Cora romance. Fran's intrusions come from family, both her own and Scott's. Demands by her father to attend the festival threaten her happiness, but not so severely as the news from Scott's mother that he has a new dancing partner, a star. For Anna the intrusion is in the form of her interrogation on the witness stand, where her personal issues with insurance companies are aired and her credibility questioned. Georges' immigration status comes under review, threatened by the same source as threatens Bronte. Moreover, Bronte and her apartment intrude into *his* life. Only David's life is not seen to unravel and indeed he is shown as very supportive in Muriel's threat to his continued residency status. This is most likely because his role is minor in comparison to those of the other rom-heroes generally, and it is much less

important than Bill's (Muriel's father) or Brice's. Instead, it is Bill's lifestyle that is threatened by Muriel's theft, and Bryce's shy courtship is short-circuited by Muriel's precipitous marriage, placing these characters in a special relation to the rom-hero role. But the main supporting role in *Muriel's Wedding* is played by another woman, Rhonda, whose functions fall between those of the men and the women of the films. These will be addressed later, because Rhonda's role explores gender in an alternative version to the heterosexual relations seen in the other chickflicks.

6.2.5 The rom-hero/ine engages with the disruptive element.

Eighty-six percent of the occurrences of disruption to the chickflick leads' plans are followed by a confrontation. This confrontation is not always of the rom-hero/ine's doing, yet the confrontation is necessary to propel the narrative. There are no instances of confrontation activity without prior disruption of plans, so in a sense the response to disruption is unavoidable, but male and female characters react differently. For the male lead characters, confrontation/engagement is a reluctant endeavour, whilst the female leads are more assertive.

For the rom-heroes of these chickflicks, successful engagement with the disruptive element involves a passive acceptance of the actions of others and a lack of retaliatory action. Moreover, any action taken to confront the disruptive element fails in its intent. This is the opposite of the traditional way in which men are seen to relate to challenges in the real world (Layton 1994; Connell 2000; Manlove 2007) and introduces a sense of equivalence between the rom-heroes and rom-heroines in the fantasy world of the romance. Both sexes grapple with the urgent need to do *something*. For Brad, this involves two methods of response – he struggles with himself, chiding his inability to act decisively, or else he pays off the offended/disruptive party. But Brad cannot rid himself of the offensive presence of Nathaniel, and when he chases Nat to reclaim the stolen money, he loses to the superior speed of an outboard motor. Similarly, he is unable to defend his position as recipient of Cora's largesse to Isobel, the owner of the chicken, or to Cora's grandmother. Both women are given something of value to silence their complaints. It is only in his final interaction with the police-officer that Brad appears to act decisively, yet this too is a sham – confronted with the arrested Nat, Brad chooses to let him go in exchange for the money and Nat's silence.

Scott's responses are similar. He cannot effectively control his situation – Liz (his partner), Les (his coach), Shirley (his mother), Fran's father and Barry (the dance federation president) all impose restrictions upon him, and although he tries, he is unable to overcome their demands unaided. He is engaged in a struggle against superior forces. The only person Scott can resist is Doug, his 'weakling' father, but until Doug insists on Scott's attention, and thereby insist on acting as a superior force, Scott cannot move forward in his endeavours. This is a feature Scott has in common with Brad – until a passive acquiescence to disruption's redirection of his trajectory occurs, neither rom-hero can progress. To act decisively invites failure. Scott's tutelage under Fran's critical father is a potent example – it enables Scott's acquisition of the requisite skills for his eventual triumph, but only after he has conceded the paucity of his existing skills at the *pasa doble*.

For Steve the reactions to disruption of his plans are less tied to his innate passivity in the face of superior social demands, than to an impotence to act. Steve's interactions with his ex-wife, the insurance company and Jerry the lawyer all demonstrate his being caught between two seemingly self-destructive options. Even the bizarrely exaggerated removal of the boat splinter from Steve's lower leg echoes his essential powerlessness in the face of superior forces. For Steve this powerlessness is also an extension of his quarrel with God, the basis for the narrative and the ultimate power differential. And like Scott and Brad before him, Steve must learn to react passively, to wait in silence for God's direction in order to progress.

The passivity lesson is one Georges repeats throughout the film. In each of his confrontations with disruption he acts decisively, whether it be attempting to repair a quarrel or quarrelling back, and each time he loses the battle to elevate his relationship positioning. The society Georges is thrust into is strange to him, and his attempts at 'correcting' his relationship difficulties are tentative to begin with but forceful nonetheless, and so do not progress his journey. Each time Georges jeopardises his success he is forced to return to the lesson. He must forgo his ego-driven approach and consider Bronte's wishes, so that by adopting a 'softly-softly' approach his goals are furthered. Georges finds he can persuade Bronte to pose for photos of their 'honeymoon', which permits a mutual re-evaluation; he charms Bronte's parents and her friend Lauren, but his greatest triumph in Bronte's eyes is his circuitous but effective use of Lauren's mother's translation to obtain

for Bronte her desired bequest of trees. This act, more than anything else endears him to his wife, and sets in motion her eventual gift of love. At the end of the film, he sends Bronte his music, an offer of love that must wait passively for a response.

David's trajectory is different, because of the acceptance of his predicament and the 'correct' solution at the outset, as well as his continued acquiescence to its demands. This leads him in a trajectory directly from desire to success. David's reluctance to marry Muriel is submerged under his desire for citizenship, so that when confronted by the media scrum, he allows his coach to speak for him. Thus his curious relationship with Muriel remains backgrounded and he moves on with his ambitions unhindered. This is the correct response, and because of David's passive acceptance of the reality of his marriage, he is branded with a superior ethical stance to Muriel, and stands as an exemplar for her own conduct. The potential for a love match exists, but *Muriel's Wedding* is anomalous in that the heterosexual pairing of the rom-hero and rom-heroine is not the ultimate goal of the film. Nevertheless, David's is the only story to present all of the rom-hero/ine functions in a unilinear fashion without repetitions, re-alignments or re-learning.

Bronte and Muriel respond quite differently to disruptions in their 'ideal' lives. Both are wilful, ambitious and determined - a reversal of the usual representation of femininity (Hills 1999; Williams 2000; Tonguette 2002; Hersey 07). Bronte is overwhelmed by difficulties as her initial action, to marry a stranger, begins to have ramifications in the rest of her social world. To passively permit Georges to intrude upon her space is anathema, so she tries valiantly to control him, but consistently fails and instead becomes a party to his activities. She resists engagement with him as a potential mate, because she does not want one. Her relationship with Phil is similarly at a distance, yet her active rejection of both men serves to create for her the space she requires to redetermine her priorities. So in this sense Bronte's journey is less difficult than Georges'. Bronte is aware of her function as passive female (demonstrated in her dates with Phil), but she rejects male dominance and chooses to use men for her own ends. In the process she loses Phil, and risks losing Georges.

Muriel's responses to disruption are less well-defined than Bronte's. At first we see her passive submission to her arrest, but she defends herself against her father's opprobrium, and later, is highly vocal about her rejection by Tania's group at the Breakers Nightclub. Muriel also responds passively when she is assaulted by Tania on Hibiscus Island, but in this

case her response opens up a space for the entry of a rom-hero, yet it is Rhonda who appears. In all cases she fails to progress her private aims, having no way to create a path along which she can travel assured of success. Yet she is not entirely bereft of resources. Like Bronte, Muriel is alert when opportunity presents, and she actively pursues a course that appears to offer resolution. Muriel, of all the characters in the study chickflicks is confronted by more obstructions, and consequently is forced into more circumstances in which she must make an instantaneous choice to act or be defeated. Defensive retreat does not serve her purpose if she is to create a life 'as good as an ABBA song'. So Muriel learns to win through active confrontation, and although her course is unusual, what she gains from her journey is ultimately precious.

Cora too knows early in the film that active confrontation is a better option than passive acceptance of disruption to her plans. She is unafraid of consequences, knowing and trusting that her personal strengths (both physical and mental) will allow her to accomplish her goals. So her confusion at Brad's inability to deal quickly and effectively with Nat's invasion of their island sanctuary results in a return to earlier and still fruitful endeavours. Grandmother, although still a powerful influence over Cora rapidly loses any control over Cora's actions early in the film, and ultimately loses her life when she steps over the line and Cora retaliates. When Cora is reduced to passivity, it is due to her inexperience rather than any failing on her part to engage with the situation. Even then she works actively toward a solution, exemplified best in her throwing a rope to her would-be-seducer, ensuring his continued survival and her continued virginity. In active confrontation, Cora makes her needs known and redirects attention to her goals.

The same lesson about active versus passive engagement with disruption is also demonstrated by Fran, whose actions consistently propel her towards her goals. When she surrenders her power to others, she loses by default, and her passivity is rewarded by her being marginalised by others. Marginalisation of women's activities and aspirations is a feature of gender relations (Butler 1990). Fran wants to dance at the Pan Pacific Championships with Scott. When she accedes to Shirley's persuasion and Liz's ridicule, she loses confidence and her goal slips away. Reclaiming her rights to her success is ultimately, however, not reliant on her continued struggle, but on the effects of her actions on others. Introducing Scott to her family promoted Scott's continued engagement with her, and through this her dreams began to become a reality. Her engagement with Scott's 'family'

(consisting of the dance community as well as relatives) had the opposite effect, and the distinction is directly related to the active-passive positioning of her responses.

Anna is the most decisive of the rom-heroines, set up narratively as an aggressive feminist, used to getting her own way. Anna lives and works in a world of men. She is determined, ambitious and wilful like Bronte, and actively pursues a course that appears to offer resolution like Muriel. Unlike Cora or Fran, however, Anna is acutely aware of all the ramifications of her actions. Anna is cynical and angry, and hostile to whatever stands in her way, and she does not understand defeat, so it is with an assertive response that she resolves each problem that arises in her life. Steve's passivity in the light of her superior experience and guidance in media management gains her approval because it furthers her goals, but his withdrawal from the struggle for any reason merely puzzles her. Loss of job and quarrels with Steve notwithstanding, Anna will actively continue on her quest for redress from the insurance companies.

6.2.6 The rom-hero/ine disengages to review the situation

Review of the rom-hero/ine's situation is presented in chickflicks as an abrupt passage of time more often than a specific portrayal as part of the narrative. Nonetheless both methods are used in these films. Passage of time occurs as a verbal sign ('over with the mail most days' in *Age of Consent*), a written sign ('three days later' and crossing days off a calendar in *Strictly Ballroom*), and other visual signs such as day-night transitions (seen in all the films), ripening produce indicating a change of season (*Green Card*) and the abrupt change in behaviour of a supporting character (such as Rhonda's change from tearful, dejected and fearful hospital patient to the flirtatious young woman who opens the door to her taxi driver in *Muriel's Wedding*). Time slips such as these indicate to the viewer that the following scenes are not contiguous with previous scenes, but that the narrative continues despite the passage of time. The lack of cohesive narrative flow during these times obviates the need to portray the rom hero/ine as *thinking*, an activity not as interesting as other actions portrayed on screen, but vital to the progression of the story. A perception of the passing of time is also vital to allow for a logical progression of the primary characters through the various points of reference in the narrative (Lindgren 1963).

Structure in the Chickflicks

A feature of this withdrawal to reconsider the issues is that it is a passive activity regardless of the gender of the rom-hero/ine undertaking it. If the rom-hero has passively transitioned through the disruptions to his former triumph, he proceeds to the next stage in his journey – he withdraws to reconsider his position. The rom-heroine also withdraws to rethink the problem, but does so only after she has successfully negotiated past disruption by active engagement with it. Both genders reflect upon the issues and their transit through these, and in each case there is an accompanying silence – a silence that leaves the viewer guessing as to the next stage of the journey. Regular viewers of romantic comedy are aware that the story cannot end until there has been a change in attitude of one or more participants in the romance (Garrett 2007). This change in attitude is vital to bring the characters from a state of incorrect relations to one of correct heterosexual coupling. By this stage of the narrative, the engagement between the rom-heroine and rom-hero has undergone sufficient tribulation to require a thorough re-alignment, but their trajectories remain inextricably linked.

The causes of the meditative silence of this stage of the chickflick narratives differ for male and female characters. For Brad and Cora the causes are simple. Brad wants above all to regain his art, and will do anything (including moving a corpse) to ensure he attains his goal. Thus he suggests Cora pose for him after admonishing her for her chicken-thieving, and later lies to the policeman about her grandmother's death. His contemplative efforts are directed exclusively at obtaining his desire. They are directed outwards, towards the world of acclaim and monetary reward. Not so Cora's. Cora contemplates only to reassess herself. Having warded off the amorous young man, she examines her nude body in a broken mirror, seeing perhaps for the first time, her maturation into womanhood. She certainly has a personality change thereafter – she no longer tolerates the tyrannical parental control wielded by her grandmother. After grandmother's death, Cora's contemplations are solely on the punishment awaiting her and the terror it promises. Again, this is accompanied by a personality change – no longer the carefree, winsome adolescent, she now sees gaol and lifelong misery, so she recoils in terror from the mental image, rendered catatonic by the stress. Cora's contemplations are engendered by curiosity and necessity, Brad's by obsession.

Scott and Fran also differ in their contemplative causes. Fran, like Cora, contemplates to adjust an inner emotional state. She withdraws inwards in a self-critical journey to adapt to

a major stumbling block on her path. It happens rather frequently, and Fran struggles to retain her dignity and self-esteem whilst attempting to accept criticism from others as an accurate representation of her state. And in each contemplative effort, she prepares to give up on something important to her – Scott, the competition, her hopes for a different future. Scott withdraws to recover from criticism, using the opportunity to readjust his approach to the problem at hand. He contemplates his body much as Cora does, but his goal is to push its capabilities to the most extreme limits his choreographic imagination can reach rather than to admire it for its attractiveness. Scott's self-admiration is naturalised through his activity (dance) whilst Cora's links to narcissism (Mulvey 1975; Kuhn 1985; Dyer 1993; Allen 1990). Scott also withdraws to re-evaluate some new piece of information that has relevance for his dance obsession. So he is intrigued by Fran's steps, he is envious of her father's ease with the *pasa doble*, he is challenged to show Fran that he can teach her to dance, and he falls prey to doubt when he finds evidence corroborating Barry's claims about his parents' career. Like Brad, Scott's meditative activities are focused upon his goal, an external challenge, whilst Fran, like Cora, re-examines her appearance and self-esteem, requiring an inner re-alignment.

Steve's contemplative efforts occur as signs outside himself, triggering a change in direction. Twice he is confronted by a church billboard offering advice regarding his predicament. Such potentially self-referential delusion is made comic by Steve's next religious revelation, when he asks for a sign from above, and fails to see the comet streak across the sky, seemingly in response. His fourth contemplative effort, attendance in various churches, is rewarded by an unbidden verbal sign from a passing stranger, and finally Steve's way is made clear. Each of these meditations has focused on his external goal, and all that remains is that he verbalise his thoughts in court in order to achieve it. Anna's withdrawals, like those of Fran and Cora, allow her to focus on internal goals – making a case for a better journalistic assignment to overcome boredom, dealing with the disappointment engendered by Steve's interest in the offer to settle out of court, and finally rethinking her part in the split in her relationship with Steve. Anna's meditation arises from self-evaluation, Steve's from a need to solve an external problem.

Georges and Bronte use contemplative effort to manage the problems arising from their relationship, but whilst Georges withdraws to consider his next action after Bronte's ire towards him, Bronte uses meditation time to reconsider her feelings about Georges, and to

empathically reconsider his motivation rather than continue to challenge his actions. As with the other male examples of withdrawal to reconsider issues, Georges is preoccupied with the reactions of Bronte, whose cooperation is vital for his goals to be achieved. He is aware that he is the cause of her distraction but tolerates her rudeness out of necessity – he wants his green card. Bronte is concerned with her own good self-opinion. She too wanted something from Georges, and having attained it, she had hoped she could now discard him. The disruption caused by the immigration officials presented a challenge to her status as free citizen, as well as threatening to cause her loss of her home, so Bronte again needs Georges to help her retain her social position. Withdrawal to reconsider their interactions helps Bronte readjust her behaviour and consequently she gradually warms towards Georges. Her motivation for this comes from within, and the change generated is also an inner one. Georges affects change through passive withdrawal, Bronte through actively directed contemplation of self.

Muriel, like Bronte, is concerned with a good self-opinion, fighting hard to create a 'new me', so when recovering from criticism, or interpreting others' actions on her behalf, she retreats to examine and adjust her responses. Each experience of such withdrawal is followed by a change in personality that brings Muriel a growing awareness and maturity that had escaped her previously. David's meditations, as with his other rom-hero functions, remain unidirectional. He has accepted the reality of his marriage to Muriel, and despite his contempt for her, focuses on how he must endure her presence in his life for the greater good of retaining his Australian citizenship. Not for him any adjustment of personality – he is not undertaking this quest for love, but for his career. Muriel's motivations are to improve herself and her self-esteem.

The process and results of withdrawal for the rom-hero/ine are thus gendered. Male characters are focused on an external problem requiring an active solution, so withdrawal serves to permit examination of the issue and gestation of alternative responses. The external problem has, by this stage of the narrative, been identified as engendering obsessiveness, and in all cases, male obsessions are about their careers – Brad's art, Scott's dancing, Steve's fishing, Georges' green card and David's swimming. Moreover, the withdrawal each undertakes is a passive removal of the physical body from the problem, enabling a gathering of strength and reassertion of ambition. Rom-heroes seek change through altering circumstances to suit themselves, regardless of the wishes of others, and

so use contemplation to further this ambition. But they are also, by virtue of the introspective effects of withdrawal, repositioned to become open to heterosexual relations, and so must incorporate a second body into their plans. Rom-heroes are thus forced to re-evaluate the contribution made by the rom-heroines to the successful progress of their quests, and to consider the potential in the arising relationships. For rom-heroines the focus and cause of withdrawal is an uncomfortable feeling, an inner conflict that erupts in self-criticism and necessitates an active mental engagement in self-evaluation. The rom-heroines are concerned with changing themselves, not others, and for their own satisfaction, not to the satisfaction of others. Yet each also engages with the rom-hero to further her goals, using his strengths or readjusting her desires to align with his. The passive act of meditation for these characters then, has very different progenitors but a single outcome – the furthering of a goal through relationship.

6.2.7 The rom-hero/ine takes action to redress a wrong

Meditative practice is a precursor of action to redress a wrong, although not all such contemplation is seen in the chickflicks to lead to action. Unlike withdrawal, which directs the rom-hero/ine to a phase of passivity, redress is an active occupation, yet its effects differ according to gender. Redress activity occurs less frequently in all the films than disruption, reaction or withdrawal, and generally signals a closing of the relationship between the rom-heroine and the rom-hero. In each of the films except *Age of Consent*, the primary rom-hero/ine undertakes more instances of restorative relations-work than the supporting rom-hero/ines, and because these instances are towards the end of the film, they indicate that the main character has undergone permanent change, and so is suitable to claim her/his reward.

Age of Consent produces two such instances of redress amelioration for each of the characters, one of which occurs early in the film, the other towards the end. Cora's response to her chastisement by Brad also alerted him to her goal of self-improvement ('a hairdresser'), and so he performs a redressive action (pays her for her modelling) in order to avoid alienating her, and thereby furthering his ambitions. Here the redress is for a perceived wrong done by him to her. Later, when he permits Nat to escape a theft charge, he is not redressing a wrong done by him to Nat, but rather he is relinquishing his right to retribution as a form of self-punishment for the greater wrong of lying about the death of

Cora's grandmother. His action also bears the marks of largesse, as his lie protects Cora from punishment. Cora's redress-activity is also two-fold. Following the physical altercation with her grandmother, and the subsequent death, Cora had been stricken with fear. Her first act of redress is to herself – she takes back the purse containing the money stolen by her erstwhile guardian. Her second act, to offer the money to Brad as consolation for that stolen by Nat, is an unselfish action designed to repair the rift that Nat's visit and grandmother's death had fostered.

For Scott and Fran, there are two instances each of mutual redress for perceived relationship damage, but Scott also offers redress to his society by agreeing to dance with Liz in the Pan Pacific competition. This pleases his mother, his coach, Liz and Barry, but alienates him from Fran. The purpose of such alienation is to emphasise the results of making wrong choices for and to Scott, so that his final adjustment has a heightened degree of dramatic emphasis. Coming between his first redress-action (following Fran home to apologise) and his last redress-action (convincing Fran to return to the competition), it offers the audience suspense. Will Fran oblige? Has Fran already given up? Can Scott reach her in time? Scott's redress-actions are presented on two fronts – as an extension of his ambitions, and as a change in attitude towards Fran. For Fran, all redress-activity is forgiveness for slights against her skills and ambitions. She accepts apologies, spoken or understood, and readjusts to align her aims with Scott's. Her responses, like Cora's, are to repair relationship as the first step to this alignment. Thus whilst both Scott and Fran work actively to repair their relationship, and neither loses sight of their ambitions, Scott remains focused on his aims whilst Fran seeks alternate ways of linking her aims to his.

Steve's redress-activity is focused on one thing alone – winning his court case. He is discourteous to others, particularly towards Anna during the first act, and he is never seen to offer apology or excuse. The closest he approaches reparation to Anna is his inclusion of her in his final argument to the court. Anna offers Steve redress from her prior refusal of his advances by indulging in sex with him. In order to approach this part of their relationship, Anna had already been portrayed on screen as *thinking*. Alone at home after Steve's departure to protect his daughter, she gazes at the sky, and is seemingly still there when he returns. Thus Anna had used the withdrawal time to reconsider her relation to Steve, and her openness to willing engagement with him led directly to their coupling. Like

the other rom-hero/ines of the male-lead films, the male's focus is outward, and the female's is inward.

Bronte redresses negativity through a reconsideration of feelings, others' as well as her own. Having quarrelled with Georges over her garden, she notes the species he has planted and acknowledges the overture of friendship that was their intent. She apologises for her angry response to his work, and in so doing alters her own behaviour. Later, when confronted by an inquisitive neighbour, she rescues Georges from a potentially embarrassing confession by telling a lie. She may have disrupted a social ethic in marrying a stranger, but here she disrupts a personal ethic by letting a man into her life. Her seemingly altruistic rescue of Georges is rather a protection of her own interests, and a means for prolonging a secret. Towards film's end, to the silence of an ageing tomato bush and a cup of tea, Bronte is presented as melancholic, the tomatoes signifying an absent Georges. In true romantic comedy tradition, reparation here can only lead to her meeting Georges once more and declaring her feelings. Like Anna, Bronte is seen to *think* about the issues and her apology, rescue and gift of love all promote the development of the romantic relationship.

David, like the other rom-heroes acts to redress a wrong in order to maintain his ambition, whereas Muriel's redress activity involves adjustment to relationships through a self-directed change. David offers Muriel his body, having been moved by her grief and naked humanity. His is not an offer of love, but a bargain, a contract, whereby Muriel retains her status and he enjoys her sexual favours. Such a bargain is as likely to result in a satisfactory as an unsatisfactory marriage (Xiaohe & Whyte 1990), and David, having reviewed the situation, is prepared to take the risk. Marriage, however, is no longer Muriel's goal. Muriel's reparation activity takes place in rapid succession at the end of the film. Having at last moved on from her obsessive wedding dreams due to her mother's suicide, she is confronted by several issues at once. The funeral and its introspective atmosphere is thus a perfect site for the decision to kill off her toxic relationships. She gives David his freedom, saving herself from a marriage that would degenerate into open antagonism if prolonged; she returns half of the stolen money to her father and refuses to accept parental responsibility for her siblings; and most importantly, she offers a sincere apology and freedom to Rhonda, thereby restoring a friendship that had been severely tried. In this way, Muriel has realigned her ambitions for her 'ABBA song' life, granted herself

permission to plan her own life and repaired the most important relationship she had, all goals requiring an internal adjustment of motive and viewpoint.

Male and female positions in acting to redress a situation can be seen to have gendered foci and consequences. For the rom-heroes, goal attainment is uppermost as a motivating factor, and protection and repair of relationships an added necessity. For the rom-heroines the primary motivation for redress-activity is repair of relationship, although realignment of personal goals and protection of secrets also feature. Thus the focus for rom-heroes remains external, in the world of the observed, whilst that of the rom-heroines is their inner world of sharing with and caring for others. The consequences find the male-centred films' rom-hero enjoying acclaim for successful negotiation of his trials and his rom-heroine relaxed and happy in the comfort of his reflected glory, her ambitions and interests safely subsumed by his. The female-centred films' rom-heroes fade into oblivion, assured of eventual success by the rom-heroines' good wishes or favour, because they no longer have a role to play in the narratives. Georges will relocate and David will find another wife, and they will fulfil their desires later. This potentiates separate narratives. Muriel and Bronte, like the supporting rom-heroines, have undergone an inner journey, and as a result their ambitions, their *loves*, have changed. Realignment has taken place but it is not to the rom-heroes' goals, but of their own goals, and thus theirs is redress for an unsatisfactory internal state.

6.2.8 The rom-hero/ine gives up the struggle

Redress is followed by a period of waiting in a variety of time frames. Having undertaken corrective action, the rom-hero/ine is forced into a period of passivity whilst s/he waits for a response from the recipient of the correction. No further action is possible, and narrative flow ceases as the recipient evaluates the redress action. Fans of romantic comedies know that the moment the narrative stops in this way is the film's climax (Garrett 2007). The rom-hero/ine must hesitate to ensure correct reception of the redress before accepting and ensuring a happy ending for the film. Happy endings are the mainstay of both comedies and romances and their impact is heightened by the drama surrounding reparation and the wait whilst the rom-hero/ine gives up the struggle. Although a passive response, each of the characters nevertheless gives up on something unique to their

particular narrative. Thus each narrative produces a 'twist' which hooks the viewer emotionally.

Brad, having retreated to his hut, now has to wait for Cora to return willingly, and when she does, he risks losing her again as he refuses her money. For Cora's part, a surrender of autonomy to the greater wisdom of Brad in dealing with grandmother's death has altered the balance of power between them. When she offers her savings, she is also offering herself along with the loss of her dream future. She is willing to surrender all this in favour of a life as Brad's model, yet she cannot be certain that he will accept this gift. In this, both are surrendering to the whims of the other.

Scott's surrender is to Barry's demand that he leave the floor, disgraced as well as defeated in his attempt to demonstrate his dancing skill. When Doug begins a slow clap, Scott is motionless, awaiting a response from the audience before he can resume the dance. His surrender to Barry and subsequently to the audience's favour is also a surrender of his vanity. Once gone, pride is replaced by love, and the dance demonstrates its intensity. Fran too is conscious of Barry's and the audience's demands, but takes her cue from Scott. She watches, uncertain about how to proceed, begins to acquiesce with the order to leave, then is caught up in Scott's renewed fervour. Scott's surrender, like Brad's, is to the threat to his art; Fran's, like Cora's, is to the threatened loss of her relationship with 'her' man.

Steve's decision to withdraw from his legal battle risked his financial ruin and that of those close to him. Having launched his best rhetoric, he awaits a judicial decision, receiving instead a heavenly one. There is considerable awe inspired by the sudden appearance of a cockatoo blown into the courtroom through the shattered stained-glass window of Hope, and its effects on the judge ensure a favourable response to Steve's petition. Anna's surrender to Steve's sexual needs prior to this last court appearance is a precursor to her adoring silence in the courtroom the following day. Anna has already been removed from her regular employment, so aligning her career aims with Steve's needs is made effortlessly – there are no other options to consider, and she risks only her heart. For this rom-hero and rom-heroine, giving up the struggle to win the lawsuit frees them to open to each other, to a shared future.

Bronte's ambitions having been fulfilled, she is now available for new goals, and her desire turns from the apartment to the man with whom she had shared it. The ripening tomatoes bear witness to the lengthy period elapsed since Bronte and Georges parted. Bronte does not know that Georges had failed his test, and is therefore unaware of what awaits her when she prepares to meet him again. Her hopes are high, she waits quietly for him to appear, and when he does, she is informed of his imminent deportation. She is powerless to prevent this, and has no choice but to accept that Georges cares for her and will return. Georges for his part had known the ramifications of his failure to satisfy immigration, yet had kept this information from Bronte. Their meeting is a test of their commitment. Neither can alter the chain of events that has led them to this, nor change the direction of the immediate future – they have only the eternal now. But in surrendering to their emotional links to each other, they create the promise of a better long-term future.

For David, the transition from comforting husband to life-long mate had begun with the consummation of his marriage to Muriel. The audience is given little information about David's intentions, hopes and dreams. Having such a minor part in comparison with those of the other rom-heroes, his motivations are inferred rather than demonstrated. From his wide-eyed 'I could get used to you' it could be surmised that his religious beliefs precluded divorce, although it is made clear during their initial meeting that Muriel's commitment to the marriage need only extend to four months. His ambition attained, he had no further need of Muriel. Nevertheless, the repugnance he associated with his bride disappears in one night of sexual congress, and he now awaits her answer – will she accept him for life too? He is risking his potential freedom. Muriel's issues at this point in the narrative are beyond a relationship with David. The film being partly a coming-of-age narrative, Muriel has woken to the reality of her situation and she has made a careful assessment of her alternative futures. Muriel's resignation to possible failure in her chosen path is shown in her final confrontation with Rhonda – she makes Rhonda an offer, she has burnt her bridges, she is prepared to accept whatever scorn and opprobrium that might come her way, acknowledging in the act her culpability. If she loses all she has her memories to guide her onto a better path, but for now she awaits Rhonda's response.

6.2.9 The rom-hero/ine's efforts are rewarded

In romantic comedy the audience does not have to wait in suspense for the rom-hero/ine to receive their reward for correct action at each functional nexus. The declaration of love at the heart of each surrender achieves the desired goal and the rom-hero/ine receives according to a gendered agenda (Garrett 2007). Rom-heroes, satisfied with their performance and now awaiting recognition, receive rom-heroines as gifts. The ancient tribal act of women being used as objects of exchange (Levi-Strauss 1966) is reinforced in the images of an ecstatic rom-heroine in the arms of her beloved. His attention is already on future exploits, but for now he is content to receive the adoration of the love-interest in each film. The supporting rom-heroines in turn, having surrendered their ambitions at the feet of the men, are assured of a returned love and now their lives are complete. Rom-heroes receive women, rom-heroines receive the opportunity to serve their men in the execution of their ambitions.

Only David's reward differs. Yet even here there is a promise of nubile choices with whom to wench once his plight as divorcee is highlighted by the sports media. So even though David exits the narrative prior to the awarding of his spoils, their acquisition is assured – he is after all an extraordinarily good-looking young man. For the remaining rom-heroes the reward is a physical connection between them and their ladies, be it a kiss (*Strictly Ballroom* & *Green Card*), an embrace (*Age of Consent*), or the intimacy of journey by rowing boat (*The Man Who Sued God*), the connection is made. When David reaches for Muriel for a farewell embrace, she withdraws. Their intimacy is at an end and her story continues.

Unlike the supporting rom-heroines of *Age of Consent*, *Strictly Ballroom* and *The Man Who Sued God*, Muriel and Bronte bear an additional burden in the achievement of their rewards. In order to satisfy the narrative imperative that the lead character is the ultimate winner (Neale 1980), both Bronte and Muriel retain that which they set out to gain. Bronte does not lose her precious apartment. What she loses is Georges' company, and whilst they exchange promises of a renewed engagement, he must leave and she must continue with her life. Bronte is unlikely to give up on the hard-fought-for apartment, and as principal character, it is not necessary – whether she waits or meets him on the way, Georges will return to her; they are, after all, married. This is not Muriel's goal. Her marriage to David was an artifice created by the fertile imagination of an insecure but determined young

woman. There was never a plan for the future, and this lack of forethought produces an emptiness that makes divorce a simple option/solution. Muriel walks away from 'her' man because she does not need him – her life was fulfilled before she met him, and now that she is aware of this, she intends to recapture this state. David has no place in this future, but he insists she retain the money she was paid, clearing the way for her to return part of it to her beleaguered father. Her restitutive efforts further bring her to Rhonda, where she awaits an answer to her offer to take Rhonda back to Sydney with her – Rhonda's acceptance is the reward. Muriel's 'right' relationship is with another woman, a friend, with whom she can grow and explore a bond founded on mutual trust and respect. In this respect, Rhonda has usurped David's function – she is a woman, but her role is commensurate with that of rom-hero. The way in which this highly unusual situation is represented will be addressed next.

6.3 Rhonda: A Special Case of Rom-hero/inism?

The narrative produces Rhonda in the second stage of the rom-hero/ine's trajectory, and it does not extrapolate her ambitions. Nevertheless, Rhonda's entrée into Muriel's life is a deliberate attempt to befriend her. She identifies with Muriel, another outcast from the social 'in-group' represented by Tania, Cheryl, Janine and Nicole – women who Muriel aspires to emulate, and who Rhonda despises. Rhonda's approach is opportunistic, capturing Muriel's attention and confidences, so in this respect, the action she has taken is evocative of the rom-heroines, but this is not the entire situation. In befriending Muriel, Rhonda becomes privy to Nicole's secret, and so she flaunts her knowledge, inflicting irremediable harm on the quartet in the process. This is rom-hero behaviour. When Rhonda and Muriel triumph in the talent contest, Muriel is shy in the spotlight, while Rhonda is bold and revels in the acclaim, demonstrating that she is in rom-hero mode. This masculine confidence continues as she supports an emotionally fragile Muriel afterwards beside the pool.

When her success in creating a fun life in Sydney with Muriel is disrupted by a spinal tumour, Rhonda's restriction is immediate and complete. Whatever hopes she had carried, they were now shattered, and although her attempts to engage with her condition through physiotherapy were providing results, it is the effect of her condition on others, specifically Muriel, that provides narrative impetus. Action influencing others is a rom-heroine

function, so in confronting Muriel about her obsessive pattern in the bridal shop, Rhonda assumes a feminine narrative role. This functional response continues at the wedding, where Rhonda's exasperated 'you're not half the person Muriel Heslop was' assures the audience of her female status – rom-heroines attack, rom-heroes are attacked. Yet Rhonda's crippled state is also a sign of impotence. Like the rom-heroes at function 5, her actions are powerless, and she cannot win through to her goals unaided. Her previous aide had been a woman, Muriel, and now she is forced to surrender her freedom and dignity in order to be 'pushed around' by Tania and her friends, also women. Impotent actions resulting from lack of rom-heroine support are a rom-hero characteristic.

When David appears in Muriel's life, Rhonda's story is left behind, and she returns to the narrative only at the end, when Muriel apologises and offers her an alternative lifestyle. Like other rom-heroines, Rhonda is seen to be *thinking* – considering the proposal, and evaluating others' responses to it. As a rom-heroine response, her acceptance of Muriel's offer redresses the wrongs committed upon each other. Her acceptance of her physical handicaps had been the site of a bitter struggle, but in accepting Muriel's proposal, Rhonda gives up all pretence at strength and independence. In their triumphant leave-taking from Porpoise Spit, Rhonda again assumes the rom-hero function. She is rewarded for correct action with the love of a woman.

Rhonda's ambiguous gender-related functions in *Muriel's Wedding* are part of the quirkiness associated with Australian comedies. A typical Hollywood romantic comedy would have constructed the love triangle with Muriel at the centre and the rom-hero functions shared between David and Brice, her Sydney lover, or with David at the centre with Muriel and Rhonda competing for his attention (Garrett 2007). In assigning some of the rom-hero functions to Rhonda, she is constructed both as a female friend and as a potential lover. Her crippling therefore is necessary to relieve the film of homosexual overtones, transforming the love-relation between the two women into an abiding friendship, their heterosexual qualifications having been already and dramatically demonstrated.

Structure in the Chickflicks

Conclusion

This examination of the chickflicks for consistent narrative forms has produced nine pivotal loci which have equivalence to Wright's (1975) hero-functions. The simple formula 'boy-meets-girl, boy-loses-girl, boy-finds-girl-again' is thus expanded to produce a series of narrative crises requiring solutions commensurate with the romantic comedy genre. At each of these foci there appears a gendered response, with rom-heroes connected to and in the active, external world more often than in the internal, passive psychic world. For the rom-heroines this is reversed – they are more internal in their responses, often seeking to evade active involvement and waiting passively or surreptitiously in order to produce the desired result.

The functional sites demonstrate an externality for rom-heroes in their articulation of, movement towards and acquisition of goals in the early stages of the narrative, whereas the rom-heroine's desires can only be established through longing glances and covert activities. It is when the rom-hero/ines pool their resources, however, that they appear to gain a desired objective. This completes the first stage of the chickflick narrative, and sets the stage for a major disruptive element. The response of each rom-hero/ine to this crisis leads to progress in the narrative or requires a repetition of the lesson. For all rom-hero/ines correct action occurs after a reversal of the usual and expected gendered behaviour (to be examined in detail in Chapter 7). Successful negotiation of this locus ushers in the final act, where the rom-hero and rom-heroine resume their gender-congruent conduct, this time in relation to their relationship rather than to their original goals, and gradually the romance reaches its conclusion.

The practice of internalising their states (functions 5, 6 and 8) is difficult for the rom-heroes and is brought about by the rom-heroines' insistence on being recognised for their contribution to the rom-heroes' success. The rom-heroines, living more within their psychic state than acting in the external world, are less perturbed by their transit through functions 6 and 8, but their response to function 5 must be an external one for their psychic states to be brought to the fore. By becoming active (often quarrelling), they draw attention to themselves in a 'feminine' way, using methods sanctioned by a patriarchal society where deliberate disruption of a male activity by a woman can only be permitted if

emotions are involved (Butler 1990, Yeatman 1994). Reasoned argument by women is not a feature of any of the rom-heroines.

These gender differences will be expanded in Chapter 7, where the rom-hero/ine functions will be subjected to investigation for binary relations, and links to colour use uncovered.

Chapter 7 Colour and Binaries in the Chickflicks

Introduction

The romance narrative begins by introducing the primary rom-hero/ine as having a strong desire (function 1) that leads her/him to undertake some action that is risky (function 2). There is an initial success that supports the rom-hero/ine's actions (function 3), but intervention from someone/something else spoils the resultant happiness (function 4) and a confrontation ensues (function 5). Following this, the rom-hero/ine retreats and reviews her/his goals (function 6), then undertakes some redressive activity (function 7) that places her/him in a position of supplication (function 8). Having surrendered to fate and the whims of the rom-hero/ine's romantic partner, the rom-hero/ine is then rewarded for correct action (function 9).

Having established a set of rom-hero/ine functions (see Chapter 6) for the chickflicks, the next step in this study is to examine them for binary positionings in relation to the narratives that extend the gender divisions. Binarist positions of the protagonists of the romantic comedy are essential to maintaining the heterosexist stance of these films (Henderson 1979). As the rom-hero/ines make their way towards the romantic culmination of their individual quests, each provides a different 'kind' of characterisation – variable and unpredictable in their enactment of the narrative. Yet the basic trajectory remains the same. So too do the signs within each film, binding the narrative to visual themes that are recognisable significations of the concepts to which they adhere. In this chapter I intend to examine the binaries that arise from the chickflick narratives of the study films, and then to expose the colour signs that are used to promote these different types of rom-hero/ines. This will uncover what variations in presentational symbolism are used for rom-hero/ines to position them within the narratives as particular *types* of lovers and to demonstrate that change has taken place by narratives' end.

The binaries of the chickflicks exist on several levels or 'orders' of representation. The first-order binary (boy-girl) governs the genre. Without this gendered relation the film does not 'read' as a romance – a problem that will be addressed in relation to *Muriel's Wedding* in Chapter 8. As the over-arching narrative, the rom-hero/ines must undergo change which

allows them to transmute from the single (and often narcissistic) state to one of sharing which presents a traditional sexist hierarchy (Kuhn 1982). This occurs at the second-order of binaries and involves the interactions of the rom-hero/ines with others and circumstances in the narrative as well as wrestling within themselves. This is often represented as conflict between the external 'what-is' and the internal 'what-might-be'. The external-Internal binary is enacted differently according to the gender of the rom-hero/ine, and this is manifest through additional binaries which govern the individual acts within the narrative. The style of each rom-hero/ine is thus readable on multiple levels, and as a gendered, external-internal conflicted entity whose individual trials and responses produce a narrative that is accessible to those who understand and appreciate the romance genre.

Representations that identify each of the rom-hero/ine's gender performances in the study chickflicks are established as heterosexual from the outset. The greatest presentational differentiation occurs at the first-order binarist position of gender relations. This involves costume and hairstyles as much as colours (Gaines 1990b), but in each film specific colour symbols appear to provide 'colour' in the filling out of each character's psychic state. The colours link strongly to the rom-hero/ine's position on the narrative strand and what is supposedly occurring within their psychic space. The gender binary is never addressed in these films as anything but a given, and this identification process is also linked to the colours used on the bodies of the characters. The rom-hero/ines exist in a caricature of everyday life and they undergo experiences that are exaggerations of everyday social conundra faced by viewers (Garrett 2007). The colours used direct audience attention to the special characteristics and themes of certain characters and to changes of tempo and mood (see section 2.3). Each of the chickflicks provides normative colour use in ambience and costume, thereby normalising the experiences for the viewer, but there are also uses of colour to deliberately enhance an atmosphere. Recognition of the change that must take place for the romance to succeed is also facilitated by each film's use of colour on the bodies of the rom-hero/ines. The second part of this chapter presents some of these colour significations as they relate to the binaries arising from the rom-hero/ine functions. Firstly however it is necessary to examine the binaries as they emerge from the narrative.

7.1 Rom-hero/ine Functions and their Binaries

The primary, essential binary in romantic comedies is the male-female dichotomy, vitalised by a narrative of normative heterosexual relations (Kuhn 1985; Garrett 2007). This binary permeates all the activity on-screen, with 'essential' masculine and feminine characteristics played out in a dance of external influences and internal changes. The internal-external binary is therefore also vital to the romance plot as it enables the 'lesson' of correct heterosexuality to be enacted in a series of larger-than-life close-ups of desirable people. Unlike the dickflicks, where physicality is of utmost importance in the 'correct' way of portraying masculinity and sexual/mother representations of femininity restrict the adventuress, in the chickflicks the primary non-visual means of communicating gender is through the establishment of verbal repartee. There is thus a flow of narrative from the external/physical responses of the rom-hero to his eventual softened internal change due to love. For the rom-heroine there is a narrative of adjustment to the rom-hero's needs and desires that reinscribes her as a different kind of woman at the end of the film than the self-centred/obsessed femininity of her introduction. This transformation comes as the result of a redirection of personal goals to those of her rom-hero.

More specific to the nuances of individual romantic comedies is the second order binary and its attendant inversions and twists – which represent the narrative variations that carry the romance to its inevitable conclusion. The external-internal binary (EI) engages with the broad romantic themes through its rom-hero/ines' trajectories – that is, EI determines the sequence of the rom-hero/ine functions. How the transition from bachelorhood and spinsterhood to couple transpires involves additional binary variations, each with unique roles in the development of the rom-hero/ine trajectories. These focus on the methods used by rom-hero/ines to overcome their problems. They present distinctions between rom-hero and rom-heroine which are related to gender 'attributes' and the interplay of the physical, verbal, active and passive responses to their dilemmas. More significantly, they indicate the extent to which love is transforming both their internal and external lives. These latter binaries interact in concert as well as separately, and are linked to the rom-hero/ine functional sites. Each presents the rom-hero/ine as engaging in specific forms of psychic responses and actions on a trajectory that aims to reinforce commonsense versions of normative sexuality. In this way, the first order binary (male-female) produces a second order (external-internal) which governs the broad functions of the romance and extends to

presentation of individual variations on these romance themes and rom-hero/ine response possibilities.

7.1.1 The Male-Female Binary in the Chickflicks

The chickflick romance pits the rom-hero/ines against each other in a process that eventually brings them into partnership to overcome the obstacle in their lives. Rom-hero/ine quirkiness sets them apart from the remaining characters and their societies, contributes to the flow of the narrative, and allows for the exploration (through a suitably heterosexual matrix) of males engaging in passive reactions and females engaging in active responses to their challenges. For each chickflick function the rom-hero/ine will respond by engaging with the functions' demands through a gendered interpretation of the various binaries. At its simplest, the trajectory involves a disparity between internal and external realities (function 1) which evokes an activity in the external world (function 2) that results in immediate reward where internal demands are satisfied by external realities (function 3). Yet this 'easy' conquest is an uneasy construction because the rom-hero/ine is self-absorbed and so a hindrance arises to continued happiness (function 4). Confrontation requires a response, and the rom-hero/ines are forced to engage with each other in order to solve the immediate problem (function 5, an external problem). If this is done satisfactorily, they are shown to actively participate in the restructuring of their psyches (function 6, an internal solution); if not, then there is a repetition of the disruptions until the process is concluded 'properly'. Having passed through the restructuring phase, the rom-hero/ine then engages in restitution, an external requirement (function 7, an active offer) that leads to a state of waiting for the response of their partner (function 8, a passive surrender) and eventual happiness through shared objectives (function 9 , a balanced life). Each of the early successes then builds to create a pressure for change, eventually precipitating a striving for a common goal.

The comedic element in the chickflicks is vital to allay the psychic anxieties engendered by the rom-hero/ine representations, and involves the looping of the narrative where functional positions are revisited. Looping ensures that tension is maintained in the narrative, promoting the romance as a series of stumbling blocks to be negotiated and so sustaining audience interest. This trajectory can be displayed pictorially (see Figure 7.1) to demonstrate the number of times that the functions are replayed ('looped') for each rom-

hero/ine until negotiated correctly. Rhonda's trajectory has been added because of her special relation in *Muriel's Wedding* and will be addressed separately in Chapter 8.

Figure 7.1: Frequency of Rom-hero/ine transition through the Nine Functional Nodes

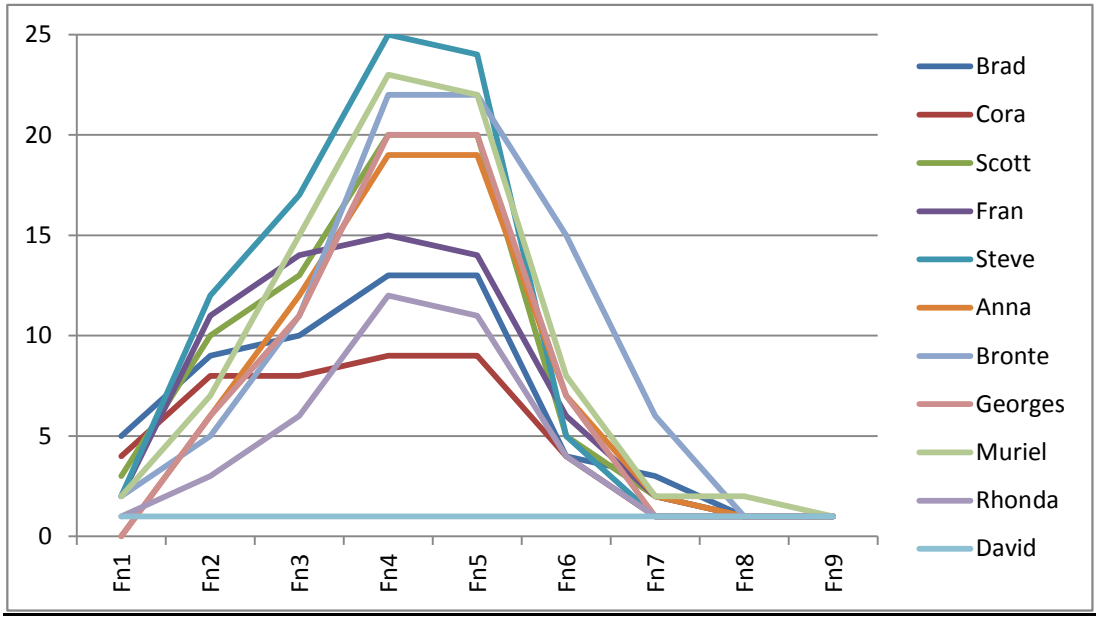


Figure 7.1 demonstrates that the rom-hero/ines' journeys oscillate around function 4 – the unravelling of apparent successes – creating a roughly bell-shaped curve. This is important because at this function the tension of the rom-hero – rom-heroine struggle is at its greatest and they are forced to join together to overcome the problem, requiring several attempts before getting it right. Function 4 is caused by an outside influence, and leads to two sorts of responses, either to retreat to an earlier functional position or to advance to the next position. As each rom-hero/ine adapts to this challenge (i.e. gains practice at correct heterosexual relations) the journey to the reward becomes a more gentle slope than the sharp incline from desire to disaster apparent in the left of the graph. There is one exception. David's trajectory (*Muriel's Wedding*) involves a direct advancement from function 1 to function 9 with no repetitions or issues to be revisited in his journey. He is the 'perfect' rom-hero, moving directly through his challenges from desire to fulfilment in nine basic steps, but his story is also the least important to the narrative of any of the comedy-romances, and he is the only rom-hero not to keep his woman-prize. Nonetheless, the lessons he demonstrates on this failed romance suggest his eventual success with some other woman in some other (future) romance narrative.

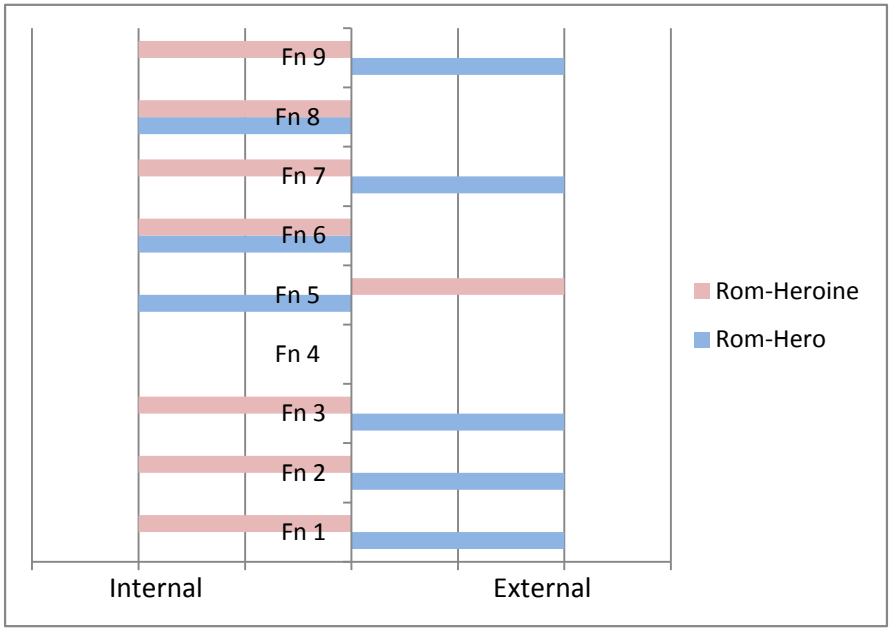
7.1.2 The External-Internal Binary in the Chickflicks

Gender, the all-encompassing reality, influences human expression through the actions and reactions of each rom-hero/ine (Garrett 2007). For the romance genre this divides existence into an external and internal state, each polarised by their method of expression (Kuhn 1985). The romance involves a change of behaviour from that displayed by the rom-hero/ine at the beginning of the films to the inevitable 'in love' conclusion. In the study chickflicks, this change takes place in both the internal and external worlds. There is a change of attitude (internal) and a change in status (external) for both protagonists, although there are gendered elements to this transition. The rom-heroes undergo a profound internal change in relation to the rom-heroine, 'finding' a need for her that had previously been absent. Rom-heroes are presented as externally competent and not requiring of external change, but also as unaware of the need for internal change. Rom-heroines are shown as internally torn and with a resulting incompetence in the external world, so are in need of repair in both internal and external loci. Thus when rom-heroines find themselves privileged by a change in status from (unfulfilled) single to a partnered state, they are achieving their success on multiple levels. The rom-hero does not change his external status or abilities, although the addition of the rom-heroine to his life can be argued as a positive change. For the rom-heroine the addition of a rom-hero in her life makes it 'complete'. She does not need to demonstrate external competencies as the rom-hero is there to guide and protect, and so she is set up to accept the burden of his internal state as the basis of the romance's gendered exchange (Kuhn 1985; Butler 1990).

The external-internal binary (EI) links to the chickflick functions as two major waves of progress. The first involves the functions 1 to 5, with which the rom-hero/ine struggles in the comedic sequences. As the romance progresses to a mutual awareness of each rom-hero/ine's importance for his/her partner, the second wave, from functions 4 to 9 leads to the romantic ending. The first wave is characterised by an intense focus on the rom-hero/ines achieving their goals for *themselves*, the second wave demonstrates a focus on goal attainment through the consideration of *another*. Furthermore, each function produces a challenge that the rom-hero/ine must negotiate by recourse to a particular gendered trajectory in order to achieve success.

The first wave of narrative progress begins (function 1) with an imbalance of the external-internal binary. This is presented as a conflict between what exists in the external world and what is desired by the internal world of each rom-hero/ine. Function 2 strongly dichotomises the ways in which the rom-hero/ines respond to their lack (see figure 7.2). The EI imbalance triggers an action which for the rom-heroes is an overt display of their skills in the public arena, while in contrast, the rom-hero/ine acts covertly to gain her desire. For both, this leads to a success of sorts (function 3) which leads to a balance of the external-internal binary, seen as the rom-hero/ine's desire seemingly fulfilled. However, this success is quickly degraded by a disruption (function 4) causing a temporary reactivity which leads to another response by the rom-hero/ines. This second response (function 5) is crucial in positioning the rom-hero/ine as progressing along the romance path or being deflected from it to repeat earlier lessons. For the majority of times this function is encountered, the rom-heroes respond by repeating their initial activity (from function 2), but the rom-heroines are more likely to respond by some verbal reaction, usually defensive and quarrelsome. The rom-hero thus retains his expression in the external world, whereas the rom-heroine mixes external and internal realities to produce her response. Neither of these strategies allows the romance to proceed.

Figure 7.2: Intersection of the Male-Female and Internal-External Binaries at each of the Rom-hero/ine Functions



The second wave of narrative progress starts with Function 4's disruptive power, but the responses by the rom-hero/ines differ from the first wave. Figure7. 2 shows this distinction

as a reversal of the usual internal-external presentation of the rom-hero/ine. Rom-heroes in the first wave are focused on the external world, but in the second wave, they display equal competence in both arenas. At function 5, following disruption (function 4, when shock prevails) they must respond by remaining internal in order to proceed. An external response replays the previous functional positions, but successful learning at this site enables their progress to happiness. For the rom-heroines, the situation is reversed. Profoundly internal in their conduct, they must respond at function 5 by engaging actively with their worlds before resuming their internal trajectories. Rom-heroines are not encouraged in either wave to maintain competence in the external world. The rewards attained for their correct negotiation of the second wave of activity reflect their primary locus. Rom-heroines achieve a change in both personal and public status (Kuhn 1985, Garrett 2007), the internal reward of a focus for their 'love' and an external reward that attaches them to the rom-hero's goals. Rom-hero transition is signified by the award of a prize (the rom-heroine's body, an external reward, and her emotional labour, an internal reward), but public status, whilst enhanced by the efforts of the rom-heroine, remains largely unchanged.

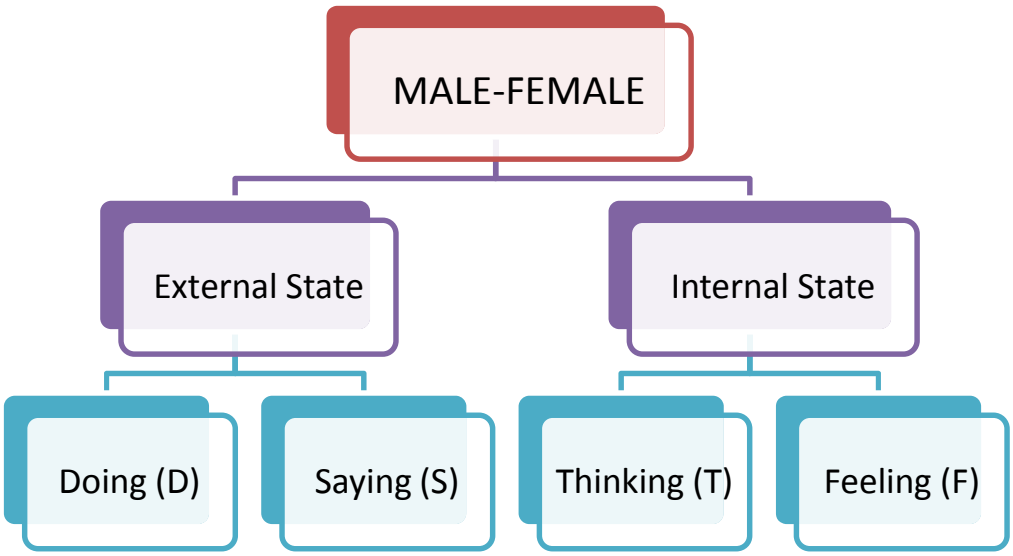
The gendered product of the EI binary produces further permutations of responses that can appear separately as well as in concert. Externally, the rom-hero/ine's actions appear as a physical activity, a verbal activity or a combination of these. Internally, the rom-hero/ine presents a dichotomy between active thinking and a passive state similar to reactions such as surprise, shock and submission (non-thinking but simultaneously highly emotionally-fraught). These define the individualities of the rom-hero/ines. These responses are also binarist in nature, extending the themes of masculinity and femininity to encompass a variability of actions through which audiences can more easily undergo character-identifications.

7.1.3 Additional Binaries in the Chickflicks

The romance themes extend the rom-hero/ine internal-external state through reflection and interplay of commonsense assumptions and beliefs. These appear as physical, verbal, contemplative and reactive possibilities. The relation between these binaries can be imagined as a triangular structure (see Figure 7.3). The external state is dichotomised through the distinction of activity from verbalisations – doing versus saying. Gender

governs this as a binary potential with rom-heroes more likely to use doing to demonstrate their externality, whilst the rom-heroines are predisposed towards the privileging of words (saying) for the same purpose. Thus, as commonsense notions would have it, men act, women talk. Similarly, the internal world is bifurcated to produce an active thinking about/through an issue and reactive responses (where little if any consideration has a place in the priority of an immediate psychic response).

Figure 7.3: Primary Binary Relations in the Chickflicks



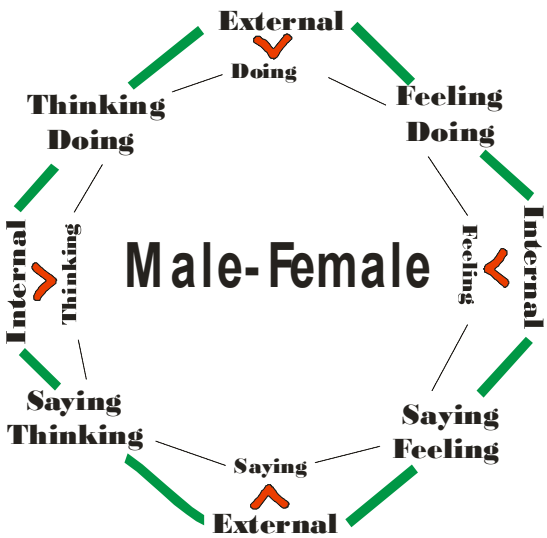
The amount of screen time spent in each of these binaries provides information about the kind of narrative problems faced by the rom-hero/ines. Moreover, the interaction of the rom-hero/ines in these films brings to the audience anxieties common to many in a manner that consistently mythologises gender relations (Garrett 2007). These three sets of binaries interact in a complex interplay, depending on the 'type' of rom-hero/ine portrayed, and guide the response given to the challenges presented. Each character is seen as having particular strengths and weaknesses. Brad's strengths are doing and feeling, his weaknesses, saying and thinking. Scott's strengths are in doing and thinking, his weaknesses, saying and feeling. Steve excels at thinking and saying, but is poor at doing and feeling, and the verbally-challenged Georges is strong in thinking and doing, yet there is little evidence of his feeling capacity. Similarly, the highly emotional and verbal Bronte fails at doing and thinking, contrasting with physical Cora whose doing arises from her feelings, but who has difficulty in saying or thinking. Anna excels in saying and thinking, whilst avoiding feeling and doing, and Fran's primary drivers are feeling and saying, her

failings, doing and thinking. The couples' relationships highlight these differences and allow idiomatic spaces for everyday notions such as 'opposites attract' (Scott-Fran and Bronte-Georges) and 'like attracts like' (Brad-Cora and Steve-Anna). Such couplings open a variety of possibilities that tell the same story over and over, but with differences enhanced through various permutations of these binaries.

7.1.4 Binary Permutations in the Chickflicks

Presented as versions of the inside-outside conflict, the doing-saying and thinking-feeling binary relations are further refined in their production of 'types' of rom-hero/ines (see Figure 7.4). This relation places gender (the male-female binary) as the core, EI binarist relations as the bifurcated support, and the doing(D)-saying(S) and thinking(T)-feeling(F) binaries extending out to allow for further complexity in the unfolding of the romance narrative. In this schema, each of the D, S, T and F loci can occur individually or in combination, providing a further layer of representation that enhances the characterisations.

Figure 7.4: The Performance Relations Between the Binaries in the Chickflicks



Acting on thoughts, or thinking about actions are designated as DT (doing-thinking). This emerges as a planned response, a self-imposed restraint, and can emerge as a cessation of a hostile action (such as George's short-circuiting his threatening movement towards Bronte) or as a concentrated effort to acquire new skills, demonstrate these skills or teach them to another (as Scott does with Fran). It is deliberation in and of action, and so shows

a clear intentionality. Reactivity through action (DF) in contrast, is an unthinking, emotionally-charged physical response. It enables enaction of a psychic state without the benefit of inhibitions or controls. Cora's attack on her grandmother is a good example, as is Bronte's eviction of Georges from her apartment. Closely tied to such physical reactivity is verbal reactivity (SF). Here words are used instead of actions to convey the psychic state, usually as a quarrel between the rom-hero/ine pairs. Its opposite, carefully thought out verbalisations (TS) present as important rites of passage for the rom-hero/ines on their way to true love.

These binarist positions indicate a difference between rational and emotional states that link to traditional views of the male-female dichotomy, where males are the 'thinking' creatures and females the 'emotional' ones (Butler 1990), despite their presence in all gender portrayals of these films. Here, rom-heroes engage with issues through action more often than rom-heroines, whose responses are presented more readily in verbal interchange. Thus the rom-hero will more likely think about his actions (DT) or react unthinkingly to environmental triggers (DF) than the rom-heroines, whose responses are thinking about what they say (and to whom) (TS) or reacting verbally to a problem (FS). This means that rom-heroines initiate the quarrels, and indeed all the female characters in these films were more likely to entertain verbal aggression as their first response to stress. However, there is also a greater incidence of rom-heroines expressing emotions through both physical and verbal reactions than their male counterparts. Rom-heroes are pre-disposed to be more thoughtful about both their actions and words. These alternate variations of the binaries are not evenly distributed across the characters, nor indeed across any one character's portrayal throughout the films.

All the rom-hero/ine binaries operate as dichotomies, and the amount of screen time spent in each of these defines the type of character that is being portrayed. Figure 7.5 presents the binaries most frequently presented in the characterisations, showing the comparative responses of the various rom-hero/ines. Each rom-hero/ine is presented as a different 'kind' of person, yet all traverse the same eventual path. This reinforces ideas that any kind of person may succeed in finding love and romance. Thus 'bumbling' rom-heroes such as Brad (strongly internal, moderately active and with low verbal reactivity) can be rewarded in the same way as 'perfect' rom-hero David (strongly physically expressive, moderately restrained and low on verbalisations).

Figure 7.5: Incidence of Binary Expression by the Rom-hero/ines

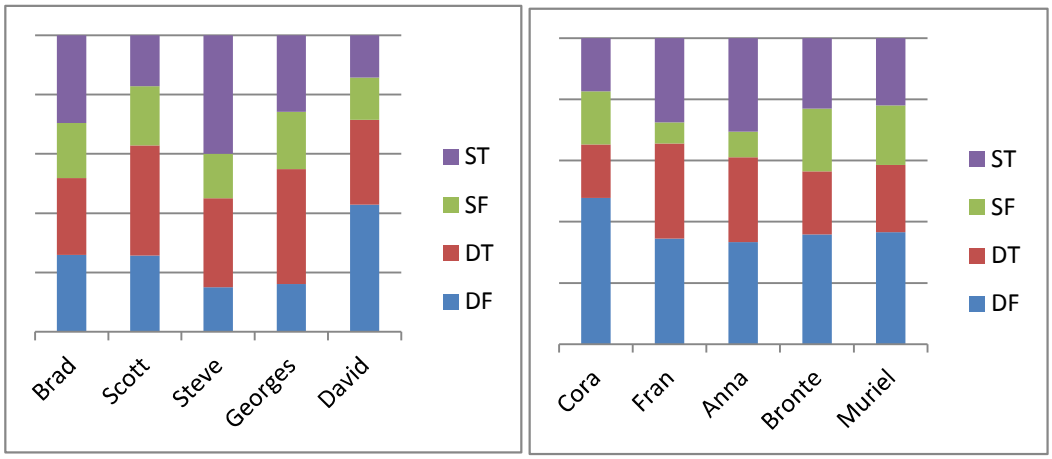


Figure 7.5 shows that the rom-heroes are lower in verbal expression of feeling (SF) and higher on thinking actions (DT) compared to their other binaries, whilst the rom-heroines are stronger in acting out emotions (DF) and low on speaking their feelings (SF), despite their tendency to initiate quarrels. This presents the rom-heroes as 'strong-silent' types, and the rom-heroines as impulsive, over-emotional and quixotic, in line with general everyday expectations of gendered behaviours (Kuhn 1985). This demarcation of potential reactions to narrative circumstances therefore follows socially expected gender performativities – males operate in a rational, decisive manner whilst females are contaminated by emotional flooding of their actions (Butler 1990). Chickflick rom-heroes are less effusive, more stable, less changeable and more rigidly focused on their goals than are the rom-heroines, and they undergo less political/public change.

Furthermore, the performativities demonstrated by all the other characters in all the chickflicks is similarly gendered – it would be illogical and counterproductive to the romance narrative to have such characters appropriate continuous gender-incongruent performances. Whilst the comedy genre permits such cross-gendered behaviour, the romance narrative is more rigid – the rom-hero must be powerful, the rom-heroine surrendering herself and her interests in his favour, in order for the romance to culminate (Garrett 2007). Others in the film must hold similar gendered relations. The influence of gender remains paramount, since rom-hero/ines are presented as incomplete entities until they merge as a heterosexual unit at the end of each film. Reward for the rom-heroine thus exists in service to the man who has made her dreams come true, whilst his reward is achievement of his goals *plus* the gift of love (personified as a female body) – hers is not the receipt of a body for her pleasure as much as it is the opportunity to *become* such a

body, given to the pleasure/service of another. Gender thus provides the nexus through which the internal and external lives of the protagonists can be brought into balance, the end point of the romance.

All these sets of spaces must be aligned for the romance to proceed, and this is accomplished through the lessons of functions 4 and 5, so that, through the meditative experiences of function 6, function 8's parallel withdrawal from external striving clears the last hurdle before the desired goal. Success (function 9) occurs when all these experiences flow smoothly. The heterosexual relationship is thus seen to arise from the various gendered ways in which individuals 'do' the various functions of the romance. This 'doing' produces the comedy, which creates a narrative that is at once comforting (it ensures that love wins every time) and non-threatening (the rom-hero/ines are better off in the end than they were at the films' beginnings).

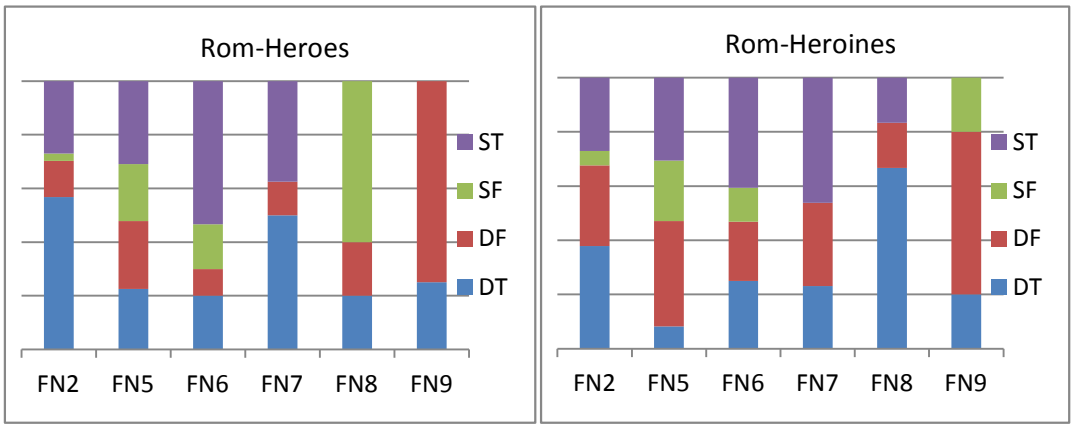
7.1.5 The Binary Potentialities and the Chickflick Functions

All the binaries (excepting the male-female binary) are enacted by all the rom-hero/ines to varying degrees, but not all play a dominant role in the narratives. This is because the romance narrative hinges on interpersonal communication across a gendered 'barrier' which, when overcome, brings the narrative to a satisfactory conclusion (Garrett 2007). 'Strong-silent' rom-heroes must engage in declaration of feelings, just as rom-heroines must display their intentions through unambiguous activity before the romance reaches its conclusion. This occurs at the final loop of the narrative functions, when the trajectory of each major character becomes aligned to that of their romantic partner. This is accomplished primarily through declarative events, wherein rom-heroes offer their love to the rom-heroines in a verbal expression and rom-heroines accept the offer in silence, demonstrating acquiescence in their embrace-kiss response.

For all the rom-hero/ines function 1 (desire) associates with an imbalance of the internal-external binary. Function 3 (initial successes) in contrast, offers an equalisation of internal desires and external conditions. At function 4 (disruption), all rom-hero/ines are distracted and so forced to change their trajectories. But for the remaining functional sites, the binaries appear in combination and these vary according to gender. The potential responses emerging at these functional sites produce an association with specific rom-

hero/ine characterisations, some of which occur more commonly and so associate with these sites, whereas others do not appear at certain sites at all. The binary in use differs according to gender but it also aligns with the 'correct' action to be taken by the rom-hero/ine in order to attain the desired romantic goal. Thus whilst all the rom-hero/ines are different in their presentations, they must all respond in the same gendered way to advance along the romance narrative. This is easily ascertained for the external-internal binary but becomes less clear at the permutations of this binary. The sites at which this variability of binarist responses occurs are functions 2, 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9, and it is here that once the 'correct' actions are produced, the 'happy couple' are able to emerge from the discontented bachelors and spinsters seen in the beginnings of the films. These binary distinctions are represented in Figure 7.6.

Figure 7.6: Incidence of Rom-hero/ine Binaries at Functional Sites



Function 2 (activity to attain a goal) is strongly associated with planned action (DT) in the rom-heroes, but the rom-heroines are just as likely to be demonstrating some physical reactivity (DF) to the initiating narrative events, or to verbalise their goals (ST) to a trusted confidant. This means that in order to move towards their goals, rom-heroes proceed with a considered plan, whereas rom-heroines are just as likely to commit to some impulsive, unconsidered behaviour. Planning is associated with internal dialogue or *thinking*, a posture not generally seen in the rom-heroes at first, although they all engage in this as their journey progresses. The rom-heroines in contrast, begin with a silent thinking mode and then proceed to translate this into action, albeit a reactive form of expression. Steve and Georges show this internal dialogue most clearly of all the rom-heroes at introduction, yet this is a gendered posture. Steve does not appear to engage in thinking so much as present a confidence borne of expected outcomes of his precipitous haste towards

harbour. There is a similar confidence in Georges' initial meeting with Bronte. Neither man has any inkling that their plans might go awry, nor have they any specific purpose to achieve apart from their already-ensuing activities. Later narrative re-visitations of function 2 spread rom-hero responses across targeted communication and, to a lesser extent, reactive states. Rom-heroines' responses are more evenly distributed across contemplative external responses and physical reactivity throughout the narratives. Verbal reactivity (SF) is minimal for all rom-hero/ines at this site.

At function 5 (reaction to disruption), rom-heroines are even more likely to respond reactively/impulsively (DF) whilst rom-heroes responses are more equally divided across all these binary permutations. This suggests that rom-heroes have a wider choice of potential reactions to crises, and so are more likely to be stable in their enactment. Indicative of gender influences, rom-heroines have a markedly reduced planned-action (DT) response arising from their disrupted realities, and so are seen to initiate reactive quarrelsomeness into which the rom-heroes are drawn. In each case it is also the rom-heroine drawing attention to herself that disrupts the rom-hero's trajectory. This critical function requires the rom-hero to undertake 'feminine' responses (largely internal) in order to progress, whilst the rom-heroine must overcome her reactivity and target her responses more effectively. Failure to do so ensures the narrative loops back to function 1 (desire activated).

Function 6 (reflection) sees the rom-heroes primarily engaged in thinking and expressing their thoughts (ST). This is an important process since it is the result of this contemplation that governs the steps taken next. Rom-heroes do not visit this site very often – theirs is a life filled with *doing* rather than thinking. Rom-heroines in contrast, are stronger in physical responses to reflective intents – they act out their thoughts and regrets. Cora's hunched posture and subsequent 'modelling'; Fran's tearful acceptance of Scott's career priorities; Anna's pacing outside Jerry's 'gentlemen's club'; Bronte's nail-biting as she awaits Georges' arrival at her home; Muriel's desertion of her parental home to escape the consequences of her theft; all rom-heroines are clearly demonstrating what is happening internally. The thrust of rom-hero thinking on the other hand is less easily ascertained.

At function 7 (reparation) all the rom-hero/ines are most likely to apologise for their earlier actions (ST) and this is directed most often towards their romantic partners. Along with

this, a gift of some kind is made by the rom-hero. Brad pays Cora, Isobel and Cora's grandmother as well as offering an apology as reparative efforts. Scott chases and offers Fran a place at his side, his apology an important part of this narrative stage. Georges returns Bronte's wedding ring, and David brings a bereaved Muriel a glass of water – both offerings that accompany a consideration of the rom-heroines' value and psychic state. Steve alone does not offer Anna a gift – but theirs is not so much a romance as it is a partnership 'with benefits'. The rom-heroines in contrast rely heavily on the judicious use of language to offer reparation. Non-reactive verbalisations are brought out as prime technologies of healing the relationship rifts. There is also some gifting by rom-heroines at this function, but these gifts do not enhance the romance relationship as readily as the gifts from rom-hero to rom-heroine, and indeed they are of less value to the rom-hero than the rom-heroine's body – the ultimate prize which she offers freely. There is an unusual deviation at this site in *Muriel's Wedding*, which indicates a more fluid gender relation, and this will be addressed in Chapter 8.

Function 8 (supplication) shows the strongest gender disparity in terms of the binaries. Having presented the rom-heroines with their verbal assurances of love and a gift, rom-heroes now push their advantage through 'speaking from the heart' – a reactive verbalisation (SF). Here they must expose their innermost feelings, a declarative effort that occurs only once, towards the end of each film. In this way, rom-heroes seek absolution through words whereas rom-heroines engage in self-restraint (DT). The rom-heroines place their bodies on the line, offering themselves as objects for acceptance or rejection at the rom-hero's whim. Since the rom-heroines are more likely to have realised the love potential of their partners earlier than the rom-heroes, they also enact this aspect of the function 8 response more frequently. Thus the rom-heroines align their goals with the rom-hero goals rather than the reverse occurring, having practised this stance from early in the narrative.

At function 9 both rom-heroes and rom-heroines are involved in physical reactivity (DF) - a hug (Brad and Cora, Bronte and Georges, Steve and Anna) and/or a kiss (Scott and Fran). Muriel and David also engage in this but their romance is not the endpoint of the film. Muriel offers David his freedom and money, and he exchanges these with his esteem/respect for her. Moreover, rom-heroines are also more likely to verbalise their

reactions (SF) to the rom-hero at the finale. Rom-heroes do not speak at the end of these narratives – they smile.

These binaries demonstrate a propensity for gendered performances that underpins the romance styles. Each function oscillates around the internal-external dilemma, but there are gendered potentials within this binary emerging from the data that indicate the most likely responses. For rom-heroes, function 2 is a planned activity, function 5 generalised action, function 6 a period of thoughtful reflection, function 7 an apology, function 8 further psychic self-exposure through words; while function 9 bestows the opportunity for reactive physicality (intimacy with the rom-heroine). The rom-heroines are engaged in random activity at function 2, are highly reactive at function 5, and demonstrate their distress at function 6 through physical signs. At function 7 they also offer verbal restitution, but at function 8, unlike rom-heroes, rom-heroines will deliberately place their bodies in positions of potential psychic danger before joining with the rom-heroes in intimacy at function 9. Gender thus remains the overwhelming force that determines how a rom-hero/ine will enact their role. Colour markers contribute to these enactments by guiding attention and providing clues to characterisations and conflicts. This will be addressed next.

7.2 Colour and the Rom-hero/ine Binaries

The interweaving of the binaries of these romantic comedies creates enormous challenges for a reading of its colour symbolisms. Unlike the dickflicks, where costume colours are rarely changed for the hero and offer minimal information about the heroine, the chickflicks present the viewer with a vibrant array of hues, particularly for the rom-heroine. Nonetheless there are specific colour cues accompanying changes in their costumes and surroundings that signal differences and changes in the rom-hero/ines. The most obvious difference involves colour use and the gender binary (see section 5.5), but colour difference and changes can also be demonstrated in the other chickflick binaries, particularly at the functional sites of their most common presentation. In this section I address the presentational use of colour in each of the binary sets as they pertain to the five chickflicks of this study.

7.2.1 Colour and the Male-Female Binary

Despite the greater latitude for colour use in romantic comedies, the gender of the rom-hero/ine (and the other characters in general) has the greatest bearing on the use of colour for their costumes. Males in these films, like their counterparts in the boy-films, are restricted to the 'masculine trinity' palette of blue, brown and achroma (the black-grey-white continuum). Female characters have no such restriction, so when one occurs, or when another hue is introduced to male costume, then it becomes noteworthy. Such incidents are scattered throughout the films. Additionally, the gender of the primary character will also determine the amount of colour change that occurs across the narrative. Where the primary character is male (*Age of Consent, Strictly Ballroom, The Man who Sued God*) the colour and costume changes for the rom-heroines is minimal. The colours and costume changes increase dramatically for the rom-heroines of *Muriel's Wedding* and *Green Card*, whilst their rom-heroes are severely limited in colour scope.

Each film presents the romance differently – from the rom-hero's or the rom-heroine's points of view - as well as containing varying combinations of sobriety or silliness, action or emotion. Each also uses different colour schemes as well as using individual colours differently. Within each film, however, there is a congruence of colour changes that links to the type of narrative on-screen and the 'type' of rom-hero or rom-heroine being portrayed. This colour congruence is also more common across the films for male characters than for female characters, partly because females are more likely to be wearing multi-hued garments than males. Colour use for the rom-heroines is thus more complex in its significations. Presenting multiple colours in garments, make-up and surrounding environments, the rom-heroine is a focus of colour, and as such purports to be 'unreadable' in colour symbolism terms. This is in keeping with prevailing Western beliefs in the 'mystery' of femininity, which is always concealed, deceptive and quixotic, and so cannot ever have its essence captured (Kuhn 1985, Butler 1990). In colour terms, the rom-heroines are the 'colourful' gender, and the rom-heroes, whilst not colourless, are more stable in their appearance, attesting to their supposed greater social stability generally. The display of various colours in their costuming gives the romances the appearance of a passage of time. Rom-heroes do not engage in this time-slip using colour in quite the same way as rom-heroines. In maintaining the same colours for their costumes, rom-heroes are presented as existing in a non-temporal space – they change, but it is invisible change, the

'real' rom-hero an enigma to all except the rom-heroine. The rom-heroine's status change, her external reward, is in contrast signalled in dramatic colour changes. Her role is to inform the world at large of her difference.

The association of the main character with a colour draws attention to important elements of the plot or characterisation. *Age of Consent*, *Green Card* and *Muriel's Wedding* restrict rom-heroes to the masculine trinity colours for their costumes, and although other characters provide colour (Nat in *Age of Consent*, several males in *Muriel's Wedding*) these are very restricted in scope as well as in brightness and saturation. The hues most likely to appear in association with the rom-heroes (apart from the masculine trinity colours) are red and yellow. Each of these colour signals is associated with a specific function and so works non-discursively to promote recognition of change in the rom-hero's state. The gradual transition from one kind of person into another occurs alongside these colour markers, giving clues as to the type of person now being represented. Each film has such hue-markers and each uses them slightly differently in order to produce visual coherence. With a greater variety of hues used for rom-heroines, their colour presentation is not as consistent across the chickflicks, although they remain internally consistent with plot elements.

7.2.2 Colour and the External-Internal Binary

Inside-outside binarism occurs on two levels. Notwithstanding its psychic function for the rom-hero/ines, which will be addressed shortly, the inside-outside binary is also represented as a differentiation of social groups from which disparity emerge the principal lovers. The rom-hero/ines emerge from different *types* of social groups – Brad and Cora (*Age of Consent*) represent the city-island divide, Bronte and Georges (*Green Card*) and Muriel and David (*Muriel's Wedding*) portray different nationalities, Scott and Fran (*Strictly Ballroom*) different cultures, and Steve and Anna (*The Man who Sued God*) the city-country dichotomy. Rom-hero/ine activities can be regarded as a project that leads the characters from within their respective social groups to the periphery and back again to a familiar-yet-different amalgamation of the two groups' social conduct. The colours of these contrasting social worlds become a differentiating factor that symbolically evidences 'type' without the need for directly addressing this issue. It also creates audience interest by highlighting these differences as an external obstacle to be overcome.

Brad's world is one of dark corners and sombre conversations about his lost creativity, whilst Cora lives in a world of glorious sunshine, sand and sea. Bronte's world is muted in colour, and since we do not see Georges' world, it can only be represented as more colourful by his exotic status (through verbal accent), continued optimism and attempts to 'brighten' Bronte's life. Scott's social world is a whirl of vibrantly coloured dance costumes, whereas Fran's is screened in night, and exhibits mainly darkened colours, primarily brown and black. Muriel's social world is divided between the magenta (red-purple) of the group to which she aspires and the lime-green world of her parental home. Although David's world is not represented as refusing colour, its emphasis on his occupation (champion swimmer), residency status (alien) and lack of narrative depth prioritises the use of the blue of his eyes to the exclusion of other hues. This blue is the main feature of his virtue presented onscreen, and is echoed in the blue curtains, water, towel and shirt, all associated with his body and environment. Additionally, David's frustration and anger – indicated by red light, rebellious glance and a nocturnal (unpopulated) pool – is quickly transmuted by the blue water into an opportunity for more training, indicating that his sights are set far beyond his marriage, in a brighter, more colourful world. Steve and Anna come from worlds that are more colourful than the sombre black-and-white world of the court where much of the action takes place, but Steve's association with colour is much greater than Anna's, whose 'butch' appearance and behaviour belies her rom-heroine potential. This is in contrast to all the other chickflicks, where the gendering of colour use allows greater costume colours for the rom-heroines, but as Anna also has an affinity for bold orange hair and bright red lipstick, her 'colours' are more visible and intrusive than Steve's. Anna's colours help her retain a normalised gender presentation simultaneously with her difference from the formal society in which she is also a player.

Reintegration with their originating social groups occurs for all rom-hero/ines and is also presented as a colour signal. Rom-heroes however have an easier adjustment to their social mobilities and to the rom-heroines' social groups than the rom-heroines. This is in part shown as a limited palette for the male characters generally – reinforcing that males are males everywhere, easily recognisable and not in need of explaining their maleness (Butler 1990). The rom-heroes, more engaged in external-active interactions, move in and out of their social groups without risking their integrity. Their colours remain relatively consistent throughout. Brad prioritises blue and white, Scott black and white, Georges

black, and David, as noted earlier, is associated with blue. Steve, whose colours are more adventurous, is also presenting this social divide but in reverse – all the other rom-heroes present more chromatically restricted personal origins than their respective rom-heroines. Whilst Steve is seen in more colours than Anna, Anna maintains her difference from both Steve's and her own social group through her colour presentation as an orange and red 'talking head', the remainder of her body disappearing into black and grey. She thus never quite achieves the acclaim due a rom-heroine for having successfully negotiated the heterosexual coupling rituals. The other rom-heroines, in contrast, indicate their changing status through the changing colours of their costumes, incorporating the colours of their rom-heroes' social groups into their colour repertoire.

The journey from drabness to colourfulness occurs on a psychic level for the rom-heroes, accompanying their plunge from external obsession into the world of the inner self. For the rom-heroines, this journey through the palette exists as a physical reality. Entrée into the rom-hero's society offers an increase in the hues and saturations available for the rom-heroine's use. This makes his society appear more desirable than hers, and at film's end, each rom-heroine has adopted the colours of the rom-heroe's societies. Thus Cora enters Brad's social world through his art as his muse, and the colours he chooses to render her image are much brighter and more vivid than her usual sun-bleached garment or tanned body allow. Similarly, Fran's acceptance into Scott's social world links to her transition from pink to red, symbolising her sexual maturity, a process that begins with gawky adolescent longings and ends in shared triumph as the legitimate partner of the star, Scott and as a mature woman. Bronte transitions from a deep grey-green in which she marries Georges to a lighter green and orange in order to meet him and declare her love. Pink roses feature in the costumes of both Fran and Bronte during the phases when they are vulnerable to major psychic change and external forces, and must act on rapid decisions rebounding from internal contemplations. Muriel's marriage offers her a high status, and so her 'colour' becomes associated with her face on a popular magazine whilst her body becomes clothed in dark hues. Sartorial elegance in the 20th Century was associated more with achroma than widespread use of colours (Eckert 1978, Cook 1996), so this change from her previous presentations resonates with an image of higher social status.

It is no coincidence that the inside-outside binary is the first to be addressed by the rom-hero/ines. Before their activities or lack thereof can become meaningful, motivations need

to be established, and this is done through the sequential presentation of external opportunities and conundra juxtaposed against exhibited desires and repulsions. Once internal-external balance has been attained and new ways of managing the subsequent disruptions examined, the narratives can move on to balancing external responses with internal needs (contrasting with desires). The most important need for rom-hero/ines is presented as heterosexual love, but because desires are more easily demonstrated, the active-passive balance occurs only towards the end of the film, when needs take over from and are melded with desires. Each of these phases is presented in association with particular colours. A closer examination necessitates turning to each of the films separately, presented here from least colourful to the most complex colour use.

7.2.3 *Age of Consent*, the Chickflick Binaries and Colour

Brad and Cora have the most restricted colour use of all the chickflicks, primarily because the film was intended to display the natural settings of a Pacific island paradise. Vivid blues (skies and ocean) and greens (plants and water) and white (sand and clouds) comprise the background against which Brad and Cora enact their narrative. In this sense, the environment becomes a 'character' in its own right, displaying intense beauty and sombre, shaded views that complement the narrative (Ford 1994; Zonn & Aitken 1994). It offers a fantasy of innocence that stretches social mores about adult-child contact in an unthreatening way, and although there is continual reference to potential breaches the 'outside world' does not intrude. The outside world is portrayed as offering colourful allure to the bedazzled Cora, but as jaded and manipulative by Brad. The 'town' is depressingly dark in colour and in honour. The colours that Brad and Cora encounter are thus also different – Brad aspires to the colours of his art, Cora aspires to the colours of the wider community and opportunity. Both are conflicted by issues that are identified by specific colours, and it is these that demonstrate the various binarist positions.

7.2.3.1 Brad

Brad's initial brooding review of his discontent occurs in black and blue garments, but once relocated to Australia, this becomes blue and white, and frequently, semi-nudity. This is Cora's world – sea and surf and sand and sky, and freedom. Embracing the role of insider in such an environment, Brad asks only to be left in isolation to enjoy the orienteering and

the resurrection of his artistic potency. So it is with irritation that he encounters other island inhabitants and finds his plans upset. Brad's dark blue accompanies such interruptions to his internal state, whereas when his plans are proceeding according to his expectations, his blue is a paler version. Here shade and tint of blue are utilised to position Brad's internal and external states as oppositions. In dark blue he shuns companionship, preferring to create his paradise out of painted flotsam and jetsam, and searching within for inspiration. He is engaged in internal dialogue and absorption of experience. In light blue he works to achieve a goal, manifesting excitement and expectation as his work proceeds, an external process.

Brad's frequent semi-nudity establishes him as having entered Cora's world, with its informal, limited attire. This acculturation is an assured act, his masculinity announced by his beard, but with such paucity of costuming for both Brad and Cora, the links with colour necessarily extend to the other characters and props in the film. Yellow features prominently, aligned with disruptive elements in Brad's trajectory – with function 4 and its commensurate inability to respond appropriately. Nat, the intrusive 'friend' is associated with yellow, yellow appearing also on the boat and wharf fittings where Cora steals some of Brad's supplies, and at film's end, Isobel appears in yellow to inquire after Nat's return. In each case, yellow serves as a marker of disruption to Brad's plans, even when he is not immediately made aware of it. Brad himself creates a yellow 'sun' for his hut, ostensibly to brighten the atmosphere, but its presence dominates the screen when Nat, having just met Isobel, decides to stay for a while, a major disruption to Brad's artistic freedom. It is Brad's ability to overcome the yellow that leads him to his reward – he lets Nat off the theft charge on condition he never returns, and he tells Isobel that Nat is gone for good, making it clear that he has no intention of entertaining further conversation.

Red, on the other hand, appears only four times for Brad – in the background of his London agent's flat, as a blanket in a motel room, on an unnamed man dominating the foreground of Brad's visit to the race-course with Nat, and then as fuel tank on the wharf at Cora's island home. These flashes of red are all linked to traditional ideas of red-for-potential-danger (see Chapter 2). They also represent opportunities, usually overlooked or missed. Initially, Brad rejects his agent's offer of continued commercialisation of his art, then his bed companion (a potential muse) is disregarded, and at the racecourse Brad fails to disappear into the crowd and so desert the unwelcome Nat. On the island he fails to

identify the stolen groceries and so remains unaware of Cora's presence. Yellow and red here associate with restraint and failure respectively. Red indicates a need for determination, resources and activity (none of which Brad enacts directly) as opposed to yellow's losses and inability to retaliate (his continual torment). In this way, red is established as a goad to action, whereas yellow halts activity and indicates enforced passivity. In terms of the binaries, yellow is Brad's signal of psychic struggles with reality – he wants desperately to extricate himself from the problems signalled by yellow, and until he is able to master this, he continues to function as a victim.

7.2.3.2 Cora

Cora's main garments are a purple smock and brown hat. The hat appears when Cora is engaged in the external – stealing food, fishing and selling her catch to Brad. It disappears when she is engrossed in her inner world. The same colours (purple and brown) appear on Isobel, her brown hat threatening to fly off as she approaches Brad's hut, and when it succeeds, she responds instead to the internal – the lure of a familiar smell. So the two women are chromatically introduced as potential rivals, offering the same (or at least similar) promise. This offering of an alternate female for Brad's appraisal appears in a second guise involving Isobel, using magenta, and there are also additional links to Cora's lime-green 'town' dress. The lime green dress is a repetition of one worn by an unnamed blonde to whom Brad speaks at the racetrack. This young woman performs the same potential function as Cora for Brad – she offers him an alternative view of the world through which he can express his art. She is a potential muse. But his irritation with Nat, who had introduced them, precludes this relationship. He similarly does not respond to Cora's assumed seductive potential, a lure not overlooked by the eager young skipper.

Magenta appears both as a symbol for Cora's dreams, as well as for Isobel's hopes, made plain when Brad visits to compensate for the stolen fowl. Cora's magenta handbag was an instant love-affair –a promise of future successes. For Isobel, magenta signalled the fading of her feminine charms and her anxiety that she not abandon her mystique. Both women are exhibiting the same colour to indicate their changed status, to provide a sign of external social position with an internal conundrum. Cora needs time to adjust to her new-found adult femininity, whilst Isobel's feminine charms fade along with her rendition of most of the hues she wears.

Cora's demeanour in the return journey following her handbag purchase links the opportunity that had been offered her (lime) with her dreams (magenta). She enacts the higher status she intends to occupy, practicing its nuances in a fantasy that is entirely internal. The reality of her near-rape intrudes only briefly - she rescues herself and the would-be rapist and hurries to engage in her new psychic (and physical) reflections. Unlike the obvious vested energy in the 'town' dress, Cora's engagement with the magenta handbag is one of secret longings and symbolism. Magenta and lime then, located as opposites in the spectral wheel, are also used to identify the extremes of Cora's internal and external states. Cora appropriates these two colours as signs of the society to which she aspires, and so conflates their value.

For Cora, the physical-reactive state is indicated by her youthful enthusiasm and affinity for instantaneous-opportunistic reactions to problems. The contemplative Cora is the one on Brad's canvases – the one whose enigmatic smile suggests but never tells. Cora's everyday 'colours' are sun-faded but her image transferred to these canvases is notable for its vibrant colour. This Cora, the one captured in art, is a passive creation that has no say in its appropriation, whereas the living Cora exudes energy and intention, not to be appropriated by anyone unless she wills it or is tamed. This colour differential transposes onto Cora's nakedness – in it she provides the voyeur with opportunity to appropriate an inanimate female body, remaining immobile as the model for the study (Herzog 1990; Bruzzi 1997). Cora's workday colour schema therefore becomes her naturally coloured body, devoid of accoutrements or embellishment. Here she can escape only into her fantasies, her focus driven inwards. When released from her modelling 'occupation', Cora resumes her clothing and resumes her 'colourful' activities.

7.2.4 *Green Card*, the Chickflick Binaries and Colour

Green Card presents a much darker film in terms of its lighting. Neither Bronte's nor Georges' bodies are seen in an unclad state, and even the sequence of their 'honeymoon' construction in photographs fails to provide the sort of voyeuristic quality that focuses on them as sexual beings. The narrative also involves law-breaking in a more directly accountable way – these rom-hero/ines had no intention of becoming a couple, so the narrative, the most serious of the five romantic comedies, reflects the gravity of the

situation they find themselves in through a commensurate paucity of hues used in their costumes and their surroundings. Georges' primary colour is black, whereas Bronte's are green and achroma. For this reason, colours in the environment and associated with other characters play a significant part in construction of the narrative and rom-hero/ines' responses. This is more obvious for Georges, whose ever-present black excludes an in-depth colour reading, whereas Bronte's trajectory is mapped through its colour presentation.

7.2.4.1 Bronte

Bronte's primary 'colour' is achroma, and in it she is most involved in the doing of things in the external world. This sits well with her initial presentation as a self-assured and ambitious single woman determined to achieve her objectives, but these are all attributes of masculinity (Butler 1990). By using the masculine trinity colours, Bronte's goals are immediately accorded worthiness, despite their being based on deceit. Bronte's external struggle is to retain the dominance in her life that had inspired her choice of pseudo-marriage as the perfect solution to her housing crisis. Achroma adds weight and authority to those decisions and actions. When she forays into the various hues however, Bronte loses control of her situation and needs the guiding advice of others. The brighter her colours, the less assured she becomes and the more she must rely on others' goodwill to sustain her goals. By film's end, she strides the streets in orange and green, hurrying to meet Georges and declare her love. In between, Bronte's portrayal of rom-heroinism is one of high anxiety, and her early response to Georges critical and waspish.

Orange marks achroma's symbolic opposite in this chickflick, symbolising Bronte's uncontrolled and unassured internal state. Orange is introduced after Bronte's inner-city garden lifestyle is threatened by the immigration officials. In orange she waits apprehensively for Georges' arrival, dreads the outcome of her parents' surprise visit, and waits disconsolate, for news of Georges before waiting some more at the café for his appearance. In each of these orange costumes she is positioned as devoid of the ability to act, and so has retreated into her inner psychic world until the problem she faces is resolved – primarily through enforced *waiting*, a feminine position that sits uncomfortably on the insular Bronte. Orange links to function 5 –physical and verbal immobility following disruption of some kind (function 4). Bronte engages with the orange, refusing to let it

bind her responses, when she pairs it with the vibrant green of her final costume. Here she is the picture of serenity – still waiting, but this time for the *proper* outcome – the arrival of the rom-hero who will make her life complete.

Green is important to Bronte – she is presented as a 'greenie' in political/activist terms, and her garden is her passion – as well as to the logic behind the film's narrative and the inferred freedom in its title. Most conspicuous though, is the green clock whose betrayal of the time precipitates the most active sequence in the film – their cross-town run to keep their immigration appointment. Green thus links to activity. In Bronte's costumes, green has two depths – the initial dark green of her introduction and the bright green of her final scenes. Her deep/muted green coats link to Bronte's active search for solutions. This hue accompanies her on her forays to marry a stranger and to seek legal advice when her previous action had created a dilemma. In contrast, the more saturated/brighter greens of her costumes and environment accompany her delight in her new home, and show her engaged in reflective thinking. The green saturation-brightness dichotomy thus sets in motion two opposing forms of conflict resolution – acting and thinking. Neither effort is entirely successful - Bronte's thoughts and actions are initially desperate leaps between competing options. However, this occurs when her green is linked to blue. When she pairs it with orange, she succeeds in attaining the proper goal and everything else along with it.

For Bronte, balance of the external-internal dichotomy occurs in relation to blue - also divided into pale and dark variants. External-internal balance signifies harmony of experiences in the external with internal needs and desires. In her pale blue pyjamas she wanders contentedly through her garden, mutely appreciating her good fortune. How she feels is what has manifested in her life. The internal is reflected in the external and the external feeds back into the internal. In dark blue, Bronte engages in earnest dialogue with her solicitor, distraught at the advice he offers. Here the picture is not one of contentment, but rather agitated distress, yet it demonstrates an equal measure - a balance - of external pressures and internal turmoil. In both situations feelings and doings are synchronised and so display congruence.

Blue also associates with Phil, Bronte's erstwhile lover, when he is first introduced, and with Georges in the restaurant where they all meet and Bronte's perfidy is subject to potential exposure. These blues are disruptive to Bronte, as is the chance meeting with

Lauren at the supermarket. Here Bronte is wearing orange, but it is the blue-lit shirt on Georges (and the incidental bright blue on an unnamed female shopper) that signals disruption to her plans when he invites Lauren to lunch at 'home'. Blue is orange's chromatic complement (Gerritsen 1975; Whittle 2002) and so the two hues produce harmony – Bronte allows the visit of her closest friend, and she restrains her anxiety. When her blue is linked to green however, she is unable to produce the results she desires.

The green-blue (turquoise) blouse Bronte wears to the society dinner with Lauren's family, instead of proclaiming her satisfaction at her attainments, and impending success with her current quest, witnesses her defeat. Instead of securing a bequest of trees from Lauren's mother, Bronte's anxiety at the refusal makes her request seem opportunistic self-interest rather than the altruism that she intends. The balance of goodwill moves away from Bronte because the proper position of supplicant is submissive, and she has chosen to be assertive in her request – the blue is 'contaminated' by green. So her failure occurs at two levels – the blue is not 'right' for the positive internal-external association that had accompanied her contented stroll through her garden, and secondly, any colour other than achroma is in stark contrast to the other guests. Bronte fails to achieve her goal because she is not an insider nor can she fake internal-external balance, and this is made apparent chromatically.

Disruption itself occurs in the presence of red. It appears whenever she is subject to intense scrutiny, but it also indicates a precipitation from internal satisfaction to external uncontrolled reaction. The first red she meets is the sign of the Afrika Café, and then the carnation worn by the agent who introduces Bronte to Georges. She scrutinises whilst being scrutinised, judges whilst being judged – using masculine attributes (Hills 1999) which are extended to her later assumption of hard physical work. The red washing overhanging the community garden she and her team construct attests to the labour, but it also signals the need for a celebratory meal which disrupts her desire to return to her new abode. When she recognises Georges at the restaurant, Bronte attempts to hide behind the red menu cover, but instead is forced to place her order whilst witnessing the disagreeable interaction between Georges and Phil. More intimately, Bronte has two garments – a blouse and a scarf – which have red rose-buds on a white background, and in these she is forced to take charge of the circumstances surrounding her in a highly confrontational (and possibly uncharacteristic) manner. Bronte's state is modified by a sudden disruption to her

equanimity, which becomes externalised in a display of passion associated with her growing frustration/passion and indicated by her red. The red roses on her blue pyjamas are the first 'bright' colours Bronte wears, and it is in these that she receives the initial call from immigration. The balance of her internal-external state (blue) is thus shattered (red) and Bronte must learn new ways of responding to the cues from her environment.

Red also appears in a desaturated form, pink, which does not have any associations for Georges or any other character, but is linked exclusively to Bronte. At home, Bronte appears in a pink dressing-gown that accompanies two emotional conflagrations. Her irritation at Georges' perceived invasion of her home to provide evidence of co-habitation is also conducted in the presence of pink walls.

The pettiness and anger Bronte demonstrates in these scenes is quickly rued but not easily resolved. The awareness of her transgression and attempts at restitution position Bronte as passive – she does not know what to do, and cannot think of any solutions. She must await responses from another before the situation which prompted her outburst is moved to the past. Bronte's outbursts are in stark contrast to her generally demure characterisation, and her loss of emotional control is presented as a sign of immature response to provocation. This links pink to unconstrained emotionality and juvenile femininity, but it also demonstrates that she is softening in her approach to life. Thus pink relates to reactivity, to emotions not under control, like red, but unlike red, pink's responses are regretted and Bronte must seek restitutive methods – function 6 activities.

Grey, of all the achromas, features at the finale, when Bronte's actions of hurrying to the café and prolonged period of passive waiting are rewarded by Georges' return. By covering her final costume with her grey coat, Bronte resumes her achromatic presentation of control over her destiny, an echo of her opening scenes. However, unlike the opening scenes where deep grey-green presides over a misguided Bronte, a pale grey now associates with bright orange and green to indicate a change in character and conduct. Bronte's correct action of awaiting a response from Georges ensures that the romance concludes with the accepted vision of a colourful and 'feminine' physical and psychic state that differs markedly from the drab, masculinized appearance of her opening scenes.

7.2.4.2 Georges

Georges is not so easily tracked in colour because his characterisation is not as important to the film as Bronte's. We are given little guidance about Georges' motivations, aspirations and intentions. Instead, Georges is presented as a person who does rather than waits for things to happen. Internality is associated with brown for Georges. We first see this when he moves in to Bronte's apartment. Here he is assuming the internal role of what he already has externally – a marriage. His first tentative steps at getting to know his bride are fraught with danger and so an internal focus for his responses is created. And again, later, when he is wrapped in a brown blanket as Bronte evicts him, his plight presents struggle at the internal-external binary in its emphasis on his confusion, a profoundly internal experience.

Georges' primary costumes are however black, a colour which positions him as well-rooted in the real world of external business (Gage 1993; Pastoureau 2008). In black, he takes the initiative to calm Bronte's fears and lead her through the processes of mutual understanding that must be portrayed to the immigration officials. Georges does not demonstrate any of the stress or anxiety given out by Bronte, and even when challenged to prove his credentials, manages to do so without exposing his secrets. Black is his external face, and like the colour, subsumes all characteristics within it. Georges is thus able to meet expectations in novel and highly original ways without ever betraying his innermost desires. It is therefore of note that black's opposite, white, is used to denote disruption to Georges' progress. He wears white when he serves Bronte and her party at the restaurant, and again at the final immigration interview where he is unable to maintain his deception. Black and white are thus situated as peace and dislocation respectively for Georges, and when both are present his location on the external-internal binary is in balance. This permits him to control the external as well as the internal environments, and in so doing, show that he is a *just* type of man. This point is reinforced when (in black) he uses his pianist virtuosity to seduce Lauren's mother (in white) to contribute to Bronte's 'good cause'. This endears him not only to Bronte but also to the other guests at the dinner. Lastly, his goodness is solidified when he, in black and white, takes responsibility for the deception about his marriage to Bronte, but does not alert her to his exposure during his immigration interview.

Phil's blue signals disruption for Bronte, but for himself it indicates the ability to dominate activities. Similarly, Georges is caught up in activities when associated with blue, and his actions dominate the outcome. This occurs four times. Firstly, Georges, in front of a blue background waits on Bronte's table, engaging her in conversation whilst actively repudiating Phil. Here he is dominating the outcome of the celebratory dinner, in particular for Bronte's tranquillity. On the third occasion, Georges is clad in blue overalls when Bronte's parents pay a surprise visit. Here his activity is acting as a tradesman as much as keeping secret the true reason for his presence in her abode. The fourth occasion sees him before the blue-shirted immigration official, taking responsibility for his blunder. His actions have dominated the outcome of the encounter, this time to his detriment. But most interesting is the second occasion, which is actually either a slippage of continuity or the effect of a deliberate lighting choice. The black-brown shirt of his arrival to co-habit with Bronte becomes, in the supermarket, blue, remaining so until they meet Lauren, when it again is seen as brown. During this time it is Georges who is actively learning the niceties of shopping with Bronte, filling the trolley, but it also shows him dominating an otherwise awkward social situation when he invites Lauren home.

One non-masculine-trinity colour is associated with Georges –red – albeit only briefly. During the final interview with the immigration official, Georges wears a red tie. Red's indication of the passionate turmoil he is experiencing is matched by the official's similarly-hued tie, so neither man is able to best the other in a show of chromatic superiority. The blue-suited official before him visually entices information from Georges, and because Georges is confined by the need to verbalise his memorised information about Bronte, his state is one of agitated internality. The blue-clad official is, in contrast, alert and ready to pounce on any advantage – an echo of Georges' own performance at the restaurant. The red works to warn against complacency, yet by also appearing on the official, it binds the two men in common quest. This bonding assists in creating a false sense of security which leads directly to the exposure of Georges' secret. He is unable to prevent this, giving away his slip through further revelations. In many respects this is confessional, and so relates to functions 6 and 7 for Georges – physical reactivity and verbal consideration vie for supremacy in a character marked as 'good' and therefore not by nature deceitful. His deceits are thus transposed to Bronte.

7.2.5 *The Man Who Sued God*, the Chickflick Binaries and Colour

The Man Who Sued God has a greater emphasis on comedy than any of the romances, an emphasis that is reflected in its colour usage. Clownish 'colour' is Steve's, although the hues of his costumes remain muted, and Anna's primarily achroma costumes suggest an inversion of the usual rom-hero/ine colour presentation. Nevertheless, as neither Steve nor Anna use much colour in their costumes, so the colours worn by or associated with other significant characters take on greater import. Colour also adheres to types of landscape - an idyllic life at the ocean edge, both bright and multi-coloured, contrasted with the machinations of city life in muted, dusty red and minimalist colour variation. Anna is a creature of the city and is ungainly and in danger in the seaside whereas Steve is equally at home in both spaces. Their environments link to their internal-external status - Steve is quite vocal about his preference for the fisherman's life and disdain for the city, but there is no such declaration from Anna who appears quite at home in this potentially hostile urbanity. They are both introduced in white, and it is also the colour of their finale – Steve's and Anna's romance does not result in passion satisfied. Their sanitised romance remains subordinated to the comedy elements.

Anna's severe red hairstyle, vibrant red lipsticks and adoption of achroma costumes aligns her with masculine attributes. These are counter-poised against Steve's nurturing and 'feminine' attributes signalled in the colours of two of his shirts - a muted, blue-ish version of red (magenta) and a greenish blue (turquoise). Anna signals her changes by muting hair colour (under a brown hat) and lipstick colours by film's end. As a character she plays a highly ambitious woman at a career crisis, but is not explored in any great detail. Her presence as a rom-heroine is also less appealing than expected of a major female character. In this respect, the film is more akin to the 'buddy' genre than to romance. Anna's colour journey will therefore be addressed only in relation to Steve's.

Steve's journey is surrounded by colour, and although he is seen primarily in black and white, it is his relationship to red (and its desaturated version, pink), yellow and blue (and their admixtures) that I wish to explore in this section. For the sake of brevity, I will ignore achromatic and brown garments. Steve's relationship to the hues red, pink, and blue is played out in his relationships with the three female characters in his life – Jules (his ex-wife), Rebecca (their daughter), and Anna, the rom-heroine. Jules and Rebecca are

associated with blue, red and pink, whereas Anna links with blue and the aforementioned orange. Yellow, on the other hand, links to other important male characters. Each hue in turn associates with particular types of activity, linking back to Steve's rom-hero functions and their binaries. What follows is a colour tour through the narrative.

Steve (in blue) is met at the wharf by an anxious Rebecca (in red and blue) whose concern extends to the hospital, where his ex-wife, Jules (in splashes of pink) and partner Les (in blue) attend. Steve was injured whilst returning for a forgotten lobster/gift – and this sequence of events suggests a link between blue and concern for others. Wearing magenta, Steve reassures Les (in blue) about his insurance status but is given bad news by the timid insurance assessor (also in blue). Wearing turquoise Steve discusses his claim with the local insurance manager (in very pale blue tie), then goes home to phone his brother, David (in blue). David's primary colour is blue, and it links him to the advice that Steve seeks repeatedly and is given if not followed. Ruminating on the drive to the city about his immediate past with worried Jules (in blue) and his discussion (in blue) with a blue-clad Rebecca, the link between blue and care of/for others is established through the medium of communicative activities.

This initial signification of blue is closely followed by representation using red. Red had appeared on Steve's boat, and could be linked visually to his race towards harbour. Rebecca had also been in red when she met Steve on the wharf, and she witnessed Steve's injury, so red's traditional link to danger can be asserted. Jules appears in splashes of pink for the hospital visit, although her most frequent colours are red and blue, the colours subsequently accruing to Rebecca. The saturated red accompanied an authoritative stance by Rebecca in terms of Steve, whereas Jules' pink serves to link her with an inability to act. This reverses the usual adult-child relationship, with Rebecca presenting as the wise competent adult and her mother as the frightened incompetent child. When Jules wears red, she interrupts Steve, guesses the truth about Steve's evasions, and generally takes the role of the carping wife. In pink she is all concern but unable to provide support. Rebecca also wears pink when the caravan park is attacked by the fundamentalists, reinforcing the idea of inability to act associated with this hue. However, when pink links to Steve and Anna it is to the sexual culmination of their romance, an ambience that began in the previous scenes as their 'love declarations' are made in a pink-lit room. All three females' pink thus serves to establish feminine love/vulnerability linked to loyalty. Most telling

however, is the televised appearance on Cressida's show – an overdose of pink through which Steve is able to charm the audience. These are all internal conditions and serve to demonstrate Steve's innate value (as husband, father, lover, honest and principled interviewee) despite the sacrilegious bent of his activities. Most importantly, pink links to Steve's irresistibility – he inspires love and devotion from others.

Red further links to Steve through the car that he drives to the city, in whose enclosing embrace he ruminates about the conversations with Jules and Rebecca. His processing of these thoughts is an internal function, and red repeatedly aligns with Steve's sudden insights. Red reappears prominently onscreen as he receives spiritual advice from a church billboard and returns to the city, where red features environmentally as he reclaims his legal practice registration. Later, returning home by bus, a red-clad female passenger initiates the sequence where Steve is again given divine guidance. This insight arrives as a response to the disruption of his thinking, so red links to his function 5 and emotional reactivity.

Steve is repeatedly presented in two tertiary hues – turquoise and magenta. These two colours present two different views of his activities, and represent alternate responses to the issues he faces. In magenta, Steve is assured, confident that his plans will unfold, whereas in turquoise he appears overwhelmed by the restrictions imposed by reality. Magenta appears whenever some intentional activity is enacted by Steve but is baulked, and turquoise as he attempts to find alternative ways of achieving his goals within these newly arisen constraints, so these two colours present as oppositions in his progress. In terms of the romance, they also produce links to the nurturing effect of blue – at no stage does Steve's goal become entirely self-focused (blue's effect on red) nor does he refuse to extend his cause to accommodate others' needs (blue's effect on green) so blue continues to influence Steve's journey as quasi-philanthropic interludes between the business of the law courts and his personal interests.

An example of Steve's magenta activity involves his confrontation with the insurance company executive. Here he presents as assured of his rights and the successful outcome of his quest, but is faced by opposition so he reacts with a threat of physical harm and is evicted. The insurance company executive had been wearing yellow, and now Steve is confronted with a further yellow – a parking ticket. Yellow had also appeared on his boat

in the opening sequence, so now yellow is slowly revealed as a signal of impending disaster and seemingly insurmountable barriers, a clash with reality. In this respect it evidences function 4 (disruption) and carries no specific binarist position. Instead, yellow-red (orange) takes its place as the most disruptive feature in the form of Anna's physical appearance. Anna exhibits few nurturing attributes, and her acerbic review of the lunch ruined by Steve's boorish drunken actions initiates a vitriolic response from Steve conducted in David's orange kitchen. Blue and orange are spectral opposites, so the link between Steve and Anna is visually inscribed as the 'correct' pairing despite their differences – the 'opposites attract' position. For Steve, orange replaces yellow as harbinger of disruption, whereas for Anna it signals her survival in a world of male competitors and so her assured defiance of social constraints. As she becomes less public in her sphere of operations, retreating into the private world behind Steve's public persona, so the orange also becomes subdued.

Turquoise features prominently when Steve attempts to avoid 'unwelcome' encounters. He attempts to escape from the media and Anna in his boat, he tries to evade Jules' inquiries, he reluctantly listens to the stories of other potential plaintiffs, he meets Jerry (the opposition lawyer). But Steve also wears turquoise when he presents his most formidable arguments, supporting his case on television. In each of these situations he is cast into the limelight for public scrutiny and his internal turmoil is hidden under a veneer of indifference to opposition. Once committed to the case however, he ceases to wear turquoise and assumes the masculine trinity colours for the remainder of the film.

Red's chromatic opposite, green, becomes important when Steve returns to the city to file his writ against the churches as representatives of God. The law clerk registering Steve's writ in his green office is clearly amused at the unusual charges but chooses to refrain from comment. Steve's caravan has green curtains and a part-green exterior that features when Anna collects him to discuss the potential media appearances that she can provide. Their picnic on the green hilltop results in a collaboration that continues in Anna's green flat, and Steve's 'soapbox' appearances have him backgrounded in green. In this way, green becomes linked to enactment of correct choices, because Steve has responded appropriately, a position reinforced by Rebecca's support (in green and blue) against her mother's protestations. But it is the link of green with orange that recurs most frequently.

The interior of Jules' home is orange and green, a space where opposing views are voiced – usually Jules against everyone else. Anna's personal space is also green and she herself provides the orange. This site allows the space for their discussions to remain focused on Steve's problem, just as Jules' orange-green home had offered similar sanctuary. Both women are able to express themselves freely here, and Steve listens just as he had listened to Anna (wearing green) in Jerry's (orange-toned) office – the comedy here involves his apparent *lack of listening*. Orange and green are potent western symbols of religious debates about orthodoxy and heresy, so help to establish the subsequent plot as just this sort of conflict. As the clergy digest Steve's writ, various shots outside link orange and green, and this theme recurs in the radio studio where orange Anna and green-clad Dirk spar over the meaning of Steve's lawsuit. Orange, representing crisis involving heightened passions, and green, representing values and beliefs, thus become confirmed as the core of the comedy narrative. The mental activity required in these scenes links orange and green to the rom-hero/ines' purposive thinking and reactive emoting respectively.

Juxtaposed against orange and green are red and blue. Already associated with Jules' 'carping ex-wife' performance and Rebecca's rendition of adult reasoning, red and blue take on further importance for the court appearances and for Steve's relationship with Anna. The court associates with red – the judge wears a red tie (usually when stamping authority on the proceedings) - whilst Anna provides three expressions of blue - her car, her nightwear and the exterior space at her flat which is a blue-lit nightscape except for the scene in which Anna repels Steve's advances over a glass of red wine. When Steve arrives to stay at Anna's, she wears blue, making up a bed for him as they discuss their next steps. As the only bright hue Anna wears, this blue is significant in both reinforcing the links between blue and nurturing, as well as in associating Anna with feminine pursuits – that is, care for a male. Red's appearance confirms its reading as dominance and blue as communicative nurture, so the two colours link to physical activity and verbal activity respectively (Gage 1993; Hutchings 2004).

The red-blue and green-orange combinations reappear frequently in the background as Steve's lawsuit progresses. These four hues are also appropriated by the media coverage - the threatening bushfire (red) versus the trial (blue), the televised comments by the Pope (in green) on Steve's case (highlighted in orange) – the colours positioned as opposites. Red and blue are set as potential opposition to Steve's quest whilst orange and green are

offered as aids to his thinking. His reactions to these differentiate activity from contemplative efforts. Each of these colour changes accompanies a change in the binary positionings of the rom-hero/ines. Blue links to external-active behaviours that involve both nurturing and communicative activities, but when blue is accompanied by red, the result is an angry and/or fearful confrontation, usually by Jules directed towards Steve. When blue links with yellow (as in green, turquoise) there is a large component of intellectual and emotional readjustment for Steve. Green ushers in space and time to complete an aspect of the narrative and allows for realignment to new challenges. Red alone excites and warns of the need for urgent response, whether this be searching through available solutions or temporary suspension/inactivity through lack of apparent options. Red with yellow produces awareness of crisis and focuses on the actions necessary to overcome these, whereas as a mixed colour red-yellow (orange, gold) warns of major challenges. Orange and green occur together as separating survival strategies (orange) from opportunity values (green), and vacillate between proactive and reactive, internal and external states. Yellow stands for the intervention of reality in Steve's trajectory. Pink reduces the passion of red to establish connections between people that are non-judgemental and loyal, but as neither Anna nor Steve is ever seen in pink, their surrender to the romance remains ambiguous, and there is no closing embrace, an unusual ending for a romance.

7.2.6 *Strictly Ballroom*, the Chickflick Binaries and Colour

The romance between Scott and Fran is what could be considered a 'classical' love-story. The protagonists are young and ambitious, and they face competing social mores that threaten to separate them before their relationship can blossom (Garrett 2007). Fran's character is fleshed out in greater detail than the division accorded the supporting rom-hero/ines in the previous romances, and they declare their love in a public (therefore chaste) kiss, the traditional ending to the romance. The use of colour is also traditional. Scott's colours reflect the circumstances of his activities – in flamboyant competition dance displays he wears yellow and red, whereas throughout the majority of the film his colours are achroma. Colour in Scott's world adheres to the women – yellow for his partner Liz, bright magenta for his mother Shirley, and pink/red for his love-interest Fran – as well as the men – his friend Wayne is associated with green, his father Doug with brown, and his coach Les and Federation President Barry with differing tints of blue. The colour range

between opening sequence and finale for this rom-couple is minimalist – Scott adds a touch of Fran's 'colour' to his costume, whereas she has transformed from the pale unsaturated pinks of her early rebellion to the flamboyant red of her final costume, indicating a major change in her status both internally and externally.

Like the other rom-couples, Fran's and Scott's societies are differentiated by colour – Scott's is a whirl of vibrant hues on the dance floor, Fran's is the subdued darkness of traditional ethnic working-class poor (the family lives next to a rail line, grandmother has to sew their clothes, and they operate a small convenience store). Their social states are thus exemplified by the colours used – bright, saturated colour and externalised passion/glamour of Scott's world contrasts with the sombre blacks, browns and greys of Fran's suspicious familial-social world. Fran aspires to the glory of the dance community, Scott gradually realises he has much to gain by learning from Fran's social group. The colours of their final costumes indicate that both have achieved their goals - Fran's red dominates the floor and Scott's presentation of yellow and red echoes the colour characteristics of both Fran's and his own social groups, reinforcing that he has mastered both sets of social mores. Fran is thus adopted into Scott's world through her perseverance and the enormity of her triumph. Scott's indicator of transition into Fran's world is the adoption of her father's dance jacket – a gold rather than yellow costume in which he amalgamates the yellow of his earlier (physically-active) costumes with the hidden wealth of newly-acquired skills and knowledge.

Liz (yellow) and Shirley (magenta) provide the comedic performances for the film – the former a talented and self-absorbed dancer, the latter an ambitious 'stage mother' – both women portrayed as hysterics. Scott vacillates between the potentials attributed to these women – the reality of his successful performances with Liz's yellow versus the potential ambition embodied in his over-involved mother's magenta. Red binds these two together through the regimented passion associated with the competition dance hall furnishings – yellow challenging for supremacy and magenta capitulating to its demands. Liz's foray into orange (whilst partnered with the alcoholic Ken) serves as a lesson to Fran, confronting her with a reality designed to dash her aspirations.

Les and Barry, who represent the dance orthodoxy and provide competing strategies for obtaining Scott's compliance, present two different saturations and brightnesses of blue.

Barry's blues are invariably darker than Les's blues, indicating that these two characters have commonalities as well as major differences. Here blue is established as representing two different faces of conventionality – the benign, supportive (nurturing) pale blue of Les contrasts with Barry's vibrant and deep blues of officialdom and authority. Both suggest the same nurturing-through-communication strategies identified in *The Man Who Sued God*, but the two blues also feature as signifiers of goodness and badness – Barry's saturated blues providing the 'bad' whilst Les in pale blues is the 'good' support of Scott's blossoming career. Whilst both men are attuned to the requirements of the dance regimes, it is Barry's hegemonic approach that sees him cast as villain leading to an inevitable clash with the more 'angelic' blue of Les.

Facilitating this clash is the struggle between truth (seen in Wayne's performance as the un-committed friend, whose loyalty to differing causes both weakens and strengthens his morality) and power (signified in the liberal use of red throughout the film). Wayne's colour is green, and it appears when choices based on values need to be made, rewards accruing when correct choices are negotiated. Wayne is offered the opportunity for career enhancement, but his choice to expose Barry's perfidy earns him the undying mateship of Scott, a far greater prize. Barry's consort is clothed in red and the judging panel and dance floor are draped in red curtains, adding to the solemnity of the proceedings – similar red curtains adorned the judge's dais in *The Man Who Sued God* with similar visual effect. The challenge of green becomes an acute problem for Scott when he is offered champion Tina Sparkle (in green dance costume) as his partner. The correct choice is made, and he turns to red, but it is Fran's red, grown out of pink, not the authoritative link to red's association with blue, so the audience knows that his choice is based on love, not mere passion.

Fran's introductory colour is pink, quickly related to her adoration (love) of Scott, but a muted enough shade that her presence in the early stages of the film is easily overlooked. In these pink scenes, Fran is also without make-up, emphasising her youth and marginalisation, evocative of an internalised passivity – an inability to act. In contrast, Fran's final scenes, in red, are representative of the sexualised woman in full potency, external and active. In between, as she perfects her skills as Scott's partner, she adopts his achroma, copying faithfully the lessons he provides, and as his vision begins to overpower hers, she relinquishes the last of her pink (glasses) and adopts a dark red. Her clumsy disavowal of love in this deep red contrasts with her red finale, where she stands

competent and acclaimed. Fran's transition from pink through white to red is a journey from social invisibility through translucence to primary focus – from childhood to (heterosexual) maturity. This maturity is acknowledged by Liz (back in yellow) when she re-sets the music after Barry's abortive attempt to eject Scott and Fran from the Pan Pacific competition. The colour message is that whilst yellow may offer technical skills and expertise, passion resides in red, brought out best when filtered through love (pink). The last the audience sees of Liz is dancing ecstatically with Fran's father – and in so doing she comes closer to the wisdom associated with his dance practices (the gold jacket), to which she is now converted.

The film abounds with nuances of colour juxtapositions, yet the story remains a simple romance, and the colours used to identify aspects of the romance trajectory are similarly restricted. Despite the vibrancy of the worlds on the screen, Scott's black-white persona resonates with normative masculinity and Fran's pink-red transition echoes the change from childhood (pink-for-girls phenomenon in the West) to adulthood (red's association with passion and sexuality) (Paige 1996; Kendrick 2006; Coates 2008). The interpellation of yellow offers alternative strategies for Scott's progress, either as yellow (Liz) or green (Tina), so demands of him a considered choice. Moreover, the opulence of the gold jacket he wears at the finale indicates that his choice has been the correct one – yellow has turned to something precious, knowledge and skill have transmuted to wisdom. For Fran yellow appears only twice – behind her as she stumbles with her denial of love for Scott, and on her mother's dance dress, modified by grandmother, in which she grapples with her sexual identity through self-critique and the elderly woman's wisdom. Yellow thus codes for both overt and covert knowledge, contributing to Liz's spectacular change of attitude to Scott's dance forms. For Fran, yellow intimidates when linked to Liz's criticisms and encourages intellectual growth when she wears it herself. Yellow is therefore also linked to Fran's internal states - reactivity and reflection.

From the film's opening red curtain and blue backgrounded dance floor, this film promised to deliver binary concepts in a traditional romance narrative, red and blue being linked, in western representation, with heterosexual gender differences (Birren 1950; Sharits 1966). Nonetheless, the film ends with red-gold as the winning combination, with dance president Barry (blue) and his female lover (red) – both traditional and so 'correct' heterosexual types

- relegated to the background amidst the celebration of change through overthrow of a tyrant and the culmination of a romance.

7.2.7 *Muriel's Wedding*, the Chickflick Binaries and Colour

Muriel's story begins with a bright blue sky, a motif repeated to indicate onset of each of the three acts of the film. As the most colour-complex of the romantic comedies, it undergoes three distinct colour 'phases', exemplified by the colours worn by Muriel, and supported by her transition through her 'Mariel' phase. There are also three distinct objects of desire for Muriel, each relating to the specificities of the three acts. In Act One, Muriel desires romance, and is prepared to risk all for the white dress. In the second act she enacts her search for a husband through the blue-magenta costumes she unconsciously shares with Brice, an alternate rom-hero to David, her eventual spouse. In the third act, Muriel's costumes become more visually-sober when she adopts achroma, enacting simultaneously the decisiveness associated with their seriousness. In each act Muriel is challenged to fit into a social group, and it is after her reversion to a 'new' Muriel – in black and brown – that she is able to find the acceptance (love) she seeks.

David remains an ancillary part of the narrative, just as Brice had been, and both men are discarded, their rom-heroism an unnecessary aspect of Muriel's transition to loved and loving adult. There is however a marked difference between the colours used by these rom-heroes, as well as their contrast with the colours associated with Bill, Muriel's father. The relationships between Muriel and her mother (Betty), and Muriel and the bridal party (Tania, Cheryl, Janine and Nicole) are also all important for their colour differences, but most important are the colour significations portrayed in the relationship between Muriel and Rhonda. Because this last relationship is central to this thesis and so requires close inspection, it will be dealt with in Chapter 8, whereas Muriel's interactions with the other characters will be examined here. For the sake of continuity these relations will be examined in order of their appearance.

7.2.7.1 Tania and the bridesmaids

In the first act, Muriel vacillates between two social worlds – the magenta-white world of Tania's wedding group and the lime-green world of her parental home. The reality of home

is chromatically opposed to the fantasy 'successful' lives of Tania and her coterie, as are the representations of the two social scenes – magenta associated with social acceptance and lime with social opprobrium. Muriel aspires to the former but is restricted to the life of the other, so setting in train the activities that form the narrative. Catching the bridal bouquet earns Muriel criticism from Tania's group, as does her surrender of it, but the closest Muriel can approach their magenta worlds is in the darker version she wears to gaze at her dream – the bride through the salon window. Later, at the Breakers nightclub, Muriel's blue blends her into the background, Tanya's group contrasting in red and white. Muriel's attempts to fit in instead formalise her ostracism, her physically reactive wailing response anathema to their mores.

At the Hibiscus Island resort, the multicoloured fantasy of the holiday spirit signifies the shallowness and superficiality of Tania's life-style and so visually portrays Muriel's immaturity at aspiring to these same goals. Magenta is revealed here to be Cheryl's colour, thereby linking this colour with ambitions, Cheryl being the most aspirational of the group. Nicole's association with yellow is also confirmed. A yellow doorway had revealed to Muriel Nicole's sexual liaison with Chook, Tanya's groom. This secret is exposed to the group by a dark red and white clad Rhonda, visually related to the magenta and white costume Muriel had worn earlier outside the bridal shop, so linking their goals. This scene prepares the way for a binary presentation of red and green – two complementary hues (Varley 1991) - Tania's rage represented in red and Nicole's defiant guilt in green. Here Cheryl, forgoing her trademark magenta for white, and Janine, in black, sit between the two warring women, visually absenting themselves from entering into the quarrel. Red Tania and green Nicole on the other hand exchange antagonistic facial signals before launching into a mutual hair-pulling frenzy. Janine's role, the least well-represented, is not linked to any specific colour.

In act three these women reappear (without Nicole) as Mariel's bridesmaids, dressed in orange. Orange is a rare colour to feature in the chickflicks, so it is noteworthy that its appearance here coincides with the drama and confined outrage associated with its presentation in other films. The bridesmaids become reacquainted with Rhonda, eagerly taking on the roles of potential carers despite Rhonda's obvious distaste. In the final scenes, the colours for these women are most subdued, indicating a change brought about by experience, but Tania's plaintive "I'm beautiful", declared in white and blue, visually

links her emotional fragility to the blue/ white distress seen in Muriel's Breakers nightclub scene. These colours also link to Rhonda's physical incapacity, as she also wears blue and white in this scene. The difference however lies in Rhonda's red socks – a symbol of power on her otherwise useless feet (see Chapter 8).

7.2.7.2 Betty and Bill and Deirdre, his paramour

Bill is unusual as a male character because he wears multi-hued shirts. Inside his lime-coloured home he is the dominant force, a raging tyrant whose censure of his family extends to public humiliations. For these, red and blue feature prominently. Most powerfully, the redness of the restaurant to which Bill takes his family and foreign investors is a stage where he demonstrates his power over family and community alike. Blue is established early as duty, both within the home and in terms of social control – the police who bring Muriel home after her arrest for shoplifting are in blue, as is Betty, Muriel's mother. Bill uses his social power to charm the young policemen and so in taking control, Muriel's theft is sidelined. The blue/red opposition as environmental colours establish Muriel's victimization – the red restaurant where Bill publicly castigates Muriel and her siblings, and the blue nightclub where she is repulsed by Tania and her group both provide opportunities for reinforcement of her perceived failings. So it is significant that blue is used for Bill when Muriel confronts him about his affair with Deirdre – now it is Bill who is the recipient of unwelcome controls and he is unable to muster his usual sarcasm. Deirdre also appears in blue – both demonstrating a dutiful concern for each other's welfare despite the cost to the remaining family. Using these interpretations of red and blue, Bill is presented as unable to command respect (lack of red) or inspire caring relations (blue) from Muriel.

Deirdre is introduced as an alternative to Tania's world for Muriel – her bright colours (red, white, blue, yellow) representing success through career rather than success through marriage. Because Bill approves of Deirdre, Muriel adopts Deirdre's 'colours' (considered activity) and apparent success (emotional reactivity), appearing at Hibiscus Island on a holiday financed by money she has stolen. When Muriel returns to her lime-coloured home however, she is met by a highly agitated Betty, wearing yellow. Earlier, yellow had been Nicole's colour up to the point when her perfidy had been revealed, so yellow had linked strongly to a danger warning. But the reduced saturation of Betty's yellow, seen

earlier on the cheque Betty had handed Muriel, signals opportunity for Muriel (physical-reactivity) and so she turns and relocates to Sydney. Muriel's path is frequently crossed by yellow, and each time she is passively in receipt of information or something to her advantage. Betty's warning about the imminent arrival of an irate Bill and the telephone at home through which Muriel is warned about Bill's visit to Sydney reinforce this reading, as does Muriel's background in the restaurant where she confronts Bill about Deirdre.

At Muriel's wedding Bill wears the black and white of masculine formal attire, and Deirdre bridal white, whilst Betty's late arrival in pale blue and pink see her overlooked by all, including Muriel. Later, in the shop where she swaps shoes, Betty is in an even paler blue, her mind obviously not on her shopping. Her desperate call for assistance is met by stern opprobrium from Bill, who formalises their separation. Desperate to maintain some form of control, Betty attacks Perry, her eldest son, who retaliates in kind. Shortly thereafter, Betty suicides. The pale blue of her pre-demise state contrasts markedly with the animated Betty seen earlier, before Bill was made aware of Muriel's theft. Here she appeared in the same colours seen earlier on Deirdre, so when her rival appeared, Betty attempts to remain animated. But blue's effect is seen best at the wedding, where Betty observes Deirdre being mistaken for herself by David. Stunned, she recoils and so is unable to press forward to claim Muriel's attention.

7.2.7.3 Brice

In her new life as a video rental assistant, Muriel wears a deeper version of the magenta of Tania's bridesmaids, along with blue, and here she meets Brice in the same hues. Brice is presented as awkward and shy, as Muriel had been, and visually they are colour-matched – he therefore represents a potential rom-hero. But Brice is not to be the subject of Muriel's fantasies, because everything comes to a sudden halt when Rhonda is crippled by a spinal lesion. In blue, Brice attends the wedding, a discarded suitor whose interest in 'Mariel' is undiminished. Although he plays no further part, his role is to remain on the fringe of Muriel's trajectory, available to reinforce her heterosexual credentials should the need arise.

7.2.7.4 David

David's direct trajectory from desire to reward also produces the least colour information. He begins his journey in black surrounded by blue – portraying physically active functions 1 (speaking desire) and 2 (acting to obtain desire), his most startling feature his blue eyes. Next he is married to Muriel in black and white despite obvious distaste for his bride but aware of his now-altered residency status (function 3 – desire obtained). His disgust for Muriel is articulated against a yellow background (considered verbalisation, function 5), and as his resentment grows he appears in red light in a blue pool – locked into an internally active struggle between the thinking and feeling of function 6 (review). Reparation (function 7) begins with his appearance outside Betty's funeral in blue. Blue persists as the dominant theme as he supports grieving Muriel, culminating in consummation of their marriage (function 8). Next day, nude and against white bedding, David accepts Muriel's farewell, and the bargain is sealed with a shot of his naked torso against a black and white background (his wedding colours), but his reward (function 9) is now linked not to a wedding that ensures his citizenship but to the freedom to choose another bride.

Conclusion

Examination of the binary positionings of the chickflick rom-hero/ines has brought forward a number of functions that require gendered responses as well as the expected struggle between the outside world and the (inside) heart. Equally important to the chickflick narratives is this external-internal binary which bisects the available responses of the rom-hero/ines to the dilemmas of at the functional nodes of the narratives. The permutations of these two binaries produce further sets of binaries that create different 'kinds' of rom-hero/ines, facing different problems and seeking alternate solutions, Yet they all progress along the same path, from singles to couples. Attached to these binary enactments are visual clues – non-discursive symbols – that accentuate certain aspects of these binary relations, colour being a most potent carrier of this symbolism because it is received unconsciously and so unquestioningly as 'real' by the viewer. Colours are brighter and more numerous in the chickflicks than in the dickflicks, and so must be limited to certain foci in order for the narratives to have the visual coherence required for this psychic

verisimilitude – an issue yet to be addressed in film studies and beyond the scope of this research. The chickflicks certainly bear out this hypothesis.

Each of the chickflick colour presentations outlined in this chapter is attached to an underlying cultural symbolism, seen particularly in relation to women's bodies. Each chickflick has its own internal colour symbolisms and shares some of these with the other films, including the dickflicks. This colour accent accrues interest in the narratives at an unconscious level, because it permits links to be made between characters' emotional motivations and the unfolding movie. The variations in symbolism are associated with the characters' performances, depicting formality and informality in colour as well as in costume styles and patterns of behaviour. Yet there are colour restrictions in what is acceptable to each gender. Moreover, the widespread use of colour suggests similarities as well as differences in these representations. This view supposes that performativity, a fluid enactment of gender as viewed in colour (see section 4.3), has embedded within it numerous potentials, all of which are sanctionable according to current social paradigms. When a focal colour emerges, it links not only the narrative elements of the film (see section 2.1) but also attaches to the chickflick characters' gendered performance. There is a multiplicity of ways in which character types are thus made readable at a paradigmic level, depending on the colours used and the activities the characters perform. The colours are signals of the potential in the performativity of each character, but to investigate this further, we need now to examine the 'romance' between Muriel and Rhonda, in Chapter 8.

Chapter 8: Performativity and Colour – the Curious Case of Muriel and Rhonda

Introduction

In this chapter I will illustrate my argument that the non-discursive symbolism of colour pre-empts narrative elements in film in a way that produces the impression of performativity potentials, yet restricts the outcomes of gender relations to ongoing lessons about how men and women should act. Colours are worn on filmed bodies well before their revelation as plot justifications, and so can be regarded as non-discursive symbols setting the emotional states of the involved viewer to reap optimum benefit from the unfolding of plot elements. To accomplish my goal, I intend here to interrogate the Muriel-Rhonda relationship (*Muriel's Wedding*) to argue the nature of the colour-performativity links as these two characters demonstrate how to become women in the closing decades of the 20th century. *Muriel's Wedding*, as the most colourful of the romantic comedies studied in this dissertation, offers the greatest scope for analysis of the colour-gender links (see Appendix E for the full list of costumes for Muriel and Rhonda). The continued popularity of this film reflects a primary dilemma of the post-baby-boomer generations – how to take advantage of female liberation and still find social approval for actions taken (Cook 1996; Wilson 1985). *Muriel's Wedding* examines this issue by presenting the lives of two women using a 'romance' format that is played out in colour. My Illustration will review the previous chapters of this dissertation in the light of the presentation of *Muriel's Wedding* and its colour 'non-discourses'.

8.1 The black and the white of it.

Muriel's Wedding satirises traditional Hollywood gender stereotypes, yet analysis of the colour symbolism suggests that the underlying 'truths' embodied by colour-clad characters remain firmly embedded in imitation of the other nine films presented in this thesis. *Muriel's Wedding*, as in all the films presented here, displays a distinct dichotomy between the colours allowed for male characters and those allowed for females. Male characters overwhelmingly wear costumes of achroma followed by brown and blue – the 'masculine trilogy' colours (see chapter 4) – whilst female characters are permitted a greater latitude, built around red, pink and blue and incorporating many hues. The link between scripted

confusion or uncertainty and multi-hued costumes is also apparent, with males less inclined towards such costumes (Bill is an example where this is overturned – see section 7.2) and women frequently so portrayed. Muriel and Rhonda are marked as masculine or feminine using this same ploy – Rhonda appears in single-hued garments more often than Muriel until the end, when her incapacity renders her dependent on Muriel. Here it is Muriel's sombre black and dark brown that adopt the masculine heroic posture of rescuing the heroine, and it is Rhonda whose (bridal) white and (submissive) blue accepts Muriel's offer. The gender-reversal continues as Muriel 'carries' Rhonda into the departing taxi and they are farewelled by a multi-hued group of women. Colour use pre-empts the action here quite clearly, so it is notable that Rhonda's colours are echoed in Tania's costume – signalling another woman who had learnt to accept her social role.

Methodologically, *Muriel's Wedding* uses colour to denote social relations, landscape and ambience qualities (see section 2.3 for extrapolation), with the interpersonal relationships of the main characters aligning to a particular stage (a rom-hero/ine function) in the story. In the choice of a relationship between women, the film-makers have opened up a structural presentation of the colour content that is not available to those films in which the romance occurs as a heterosexual coupling. Nonetheless, the use of colour oppositions and associations helps the plot elements of *Muriel's Wedding* to retain a basic heterosexual norm for both characters. The semiotic presentation of non-discursive colour intertwines with gender in this film to offer readings on several levels, including the potential for homosexual relations between Muriel and Rhonda. As a discursive artifice, this relationship encourages exploration of the world as an alternative to marriage and traditional male-dominance, yet it refrains from attacking patriarchy directly, and so the film remains sanitised.

The vision of a traditional black-clad groom and his white-clad bride dominates the finale of the traditional Hollywood romance (Garrett 2007), and *Muriel's Wedding* uses this theme to attest to the heterosexual positioning of its major characters. The focus of the dreams of the young women in this film is the white wedding, their grooms largely irrelevant in terms of personality. But Muriel's links with black and white go beyond this basic dichotomy and attaches them to reality and fantasy respectively. Muriel's longings are presented, like a dreamscape, in a flutter of white tulle and lace. Notions of virginity and purity, attributed to white historically (Pastoureau 2008) are replaced here by linking white

to false realities, feminine beauty and fantasy. Muriel's white is her desire, yet her experiences are played out in black. This is because Muriel's romance occurs along two lines – her quest for romance itself (the white fantasy wedding) and her relationship with Rhonda (the black reality). Muriel is attracted to David because of his potential for a wedding, the primary goal of her romantic journey, whereas her attraction to Rhonda is based on mutual understanding and love. Rhonda too, purports to desire the romance of a wedding, yet she does little to appropriate this for herself. She is not interested in a life of service/servitude, the natural corollary of the wedding celebration (Xiaohe & Whyte 1990); rather, she chases hedonism, signalled by her black hair and dark garb.

Muriel's foray into black demonstrates links with danger as well as reality. Sexual hedonism, linked to Rhonda's black, is distinctly rom-hero behaviour, so Muriel's emulation of it signals a commensurate change in her desires and actions. Black here symbolises the tasting of previously forbidden fruit and Muriel's introjection of some of Rhonda's attributes. Taking her lead from Rhonda (that is, engaging in Rhonda's social world), Muriel attempts a mutual seduction with Brice, whilst Rhonda appropriates the sexual favours of others' bodies - the 'others' in this case being the obedient and well-trained American servicemen. Inviting Brice into her home indicates Muriel's appropriation of these same 'masculine' attributes, although she remains spectacularly unsuccessful.

The consultation at the hospital immediately after Rhonda's collapse puts Rhonda in white, Muriel retaining her black from the previous night. Visually, Rhonda is the innocent, naïve virgin of hospital experience, facing an unknown and tenuous future, her black-clad support at her side. For Muriel, as for Rhonda, this experience is shockingly real. However, the links between rom-hero responses and Rhonda's actions are retained – in both black and white situations she asks the questions, whilst for Muriel, the association between black and reality is reinforced sharply. Black is thus aligned with nightmare for Muriel and white serves the same purpose for Rhonda, whose black had previously been linked to her strength. But whereas Muriel in a state of shock reverts to her feminine white fantasy by trying on her first wedding dress, Rhonda grasps white as another opportunity - to dispel fears about her lifestyle – which is a rom-hero response. The visual oscillation of black and white between Rhonda and Muriel allows them to change gender roles, the switches synchronised to denote a linkage between desire and opportunity available only through a co-joining. And the perverted image of a wedding appears.

White and black together in a costume tempers the full presentation of these respective colours (Varley 1991), and there is delay and incompleteness in the consequences of this mixture. Opportunities arise, decisions are made and consequences ensue, which for Muriel signals a mixing of fantasy with reality. In the first instance, Muriel, in a black and white striped top, is making her way to yet another bridal salon, unaware that Rhonda has discovered her wedding-dress album. Muriel is also set to face up to a potentially unpleasant reality. Rhonda had appeared in a hue-identical top when she destroyed Tania's friendship with Nicole, and similarly for Muriel as rom-heroine, the pursuit of her bridal indulgence is signalled as disruptable. Muriel enacts her fantasy but is interrupted by Rhonda clad in black and purple, who had concluded that Muriel is leaving her. Muriel's tearful confession brings her fantasy life to an abrupt halt, and sows discontent and distrust between them. Muriel wears the same top to confront her father, and uncovers the reality of his guilty secret and his grudging respect for her. The fantasy of the 'happily-ever-after' and the reality of marital infidelity sit uncomfortably together through this interview, but as before, Muriel is forced to face up to reality and re-examine her fantasy. As if to embed this change in Muriel's trajectory, the reality-impinging-fantasy theme continues on her return home, where Rhonda reveals the exacerbation of her spinal lesion. All three of these scenes show Muriel confronted by evidence of consequences, and she is forced to re-examine several aspects of her fantasy life.

The black-white contrast returns in the final scenes, where Muriel adopts black – symbolic of reality (Gage 1993; Pastoureau 2008) – and Rhonda appears in white. Rhonda's dress, of blue flowers on a white background, positions her as relatively passive, re-creating her immobility in the hospital as well as including the links to blue (discussed below in section 8.3) that had previously adhered to the surgeon under whose care she had sojourned. Rhonda's white is her reality – a crippled and resentful young woman whose determination to retain independence is rapidly being undermined by the 'helpful' people around her. For Muriel, black had opened her eyes to the reality of Bill's obsession with his social value at Betty's funeral, and she is able to extricate herself from his proffered future of replacing Betty in the household. Muriel's black, and the grief it represents (Pastoureau 2008), had also mended the rift between her and David, opening a potential for a lasting relationship, but this path is rejected by Muriel. When she persuades Rhonda to leave with her, Muriel has negotiated and rectified her major errors, and her life is well-grounded – emphasising

the film's 'coming-of-age' theme. In contrast, Rhonda's white and her obvious relief at being rescued by Muriel from a life of enforced dependence forms a link between reality and fantasy that positions her as feminine rather than masculine, and so she has reclaimed her rightful social position. Rhonda's dependence (in white) on her love-object (in black) reverses their original gendering, and Rhonda is 'saved' by a 'marriage' - the prime redemptive element in romantic comedy (Garrett 2007). In Muriel's case, the links between black and groom-status allow her to take charge of their relationship, adopting responsibility for Rhonda's ongoing welfare.

8.2 Red and Green – desire and temptation

At the outset, the colours used for Muriel's and Rhonda's costumes rely on the binary chromatic settings of red against green. Such colour choices ensure that the 'opposites attract' link is recognised (Varley 1991) and the film's subtheme of personal growth is introduced to the audience. Personal growth in the black-white context remains firmly embedded in heterosexual relations, but for the green-red dichotomy, the issue becomes one of loyalty and protection. When Muriel and Rhonda meet, Muriel is wearing a glittery red dress and black sunglasses. She was recovering from Tania's assault, and had donned the colour already established as connected to her angry father laying down the law (see section 7.2). Red is thus associated with dominance, and so Muriel enacts a similar vision of control over the situation. Paige (1996) constructs red as indicative of the power of women's imagination, and here too, Muriel enacts such an imaginary power, grinning at her environment in defiance of the reality of her rejection by the group. Muriel's passion displayed on her body in this way also leaves her isolated – she is in charge …of nothing.

Rhonda's appearance in large green beads and red lips intrudes, and demands the very action that Muriel's red cannot accomplish – the interruption of men's conversation and appropriation of men's space. Rhonda moreover moves into Muriel's space and joins her despite Muriel's denial of her identity, thereby exhibiting a masculine dominating pattern of behaviour. Rhonda is also marked from the outset as both Muriel's opposite and as her mirror. Both women wear vibrant red lipstick, a visual link between them that is repeated in the next scene. Red lips are important in Muriel's characterisation, as they are linked to her joy at achievement of her desires, but the colour also links to power (Luscher 1948; Birren 1950, 1978), red lips being part of the masquerade (Doane 1982) that allows women

to speak their desire. So Muriel uses her verbal power to create a fantasy fiancée, whilst Rhonda uses it to charm Muriel and later to destroy the Tania-Nicole friendship. That red lips appear black under blue light (as in monochrome film) gives Rhonda a bizarre vampish look in all these ambiences – predatory and distinctly dominant. Red's gendered connections with sex and slaughter are readily established in the study films (see sections 5.4 and 7.2), so Muriel's red also classifies her visually as dangerous. Comedic danger indeed occurs when she gives out two confidences – one true and the other her fantasy – and sets in motion the narrative tensions designated as the rom-heroine functions (discussed in Chapter 6).

The opponency ("opposing manifestations of a single physiological process" - Wooten & Miller 1997:67) of their costume colours balances the vibrancy of Muriel's red with Rhonda's green. Rhonda displays an alienation from the world of patriarchy that appeals to Muriel, but simultaneously she appropriates patriarchy's rights to the disposal of the bodies of others. Green had earlier been linked to disruption and unpleasantness for Muriel (the green-clad store detective at Tania's wedding, Muriel's parental home), so Rhonda's green appearance promised more of the same. This is threatening for Muriel, who is attracted by Rhonda's apparent freedom, but Rhonda also wants what Muriel wants – a husband. In this, Rhonda's ambitions simulate those of all the rom-heroines – each needs a male partner through whom she may feel whole – but it is Rhonda's eccentricity and headstrong approach to life that differentiates her wish for a partner from the wishes of the other rom-heroines. Rhonda's red lips indicate disruption and dominance that works to diminish Muriel's alarm sufficiently for the relationship to become established as an attraction of opposites, one of the possibilities of the romance couple (Doane 1987).

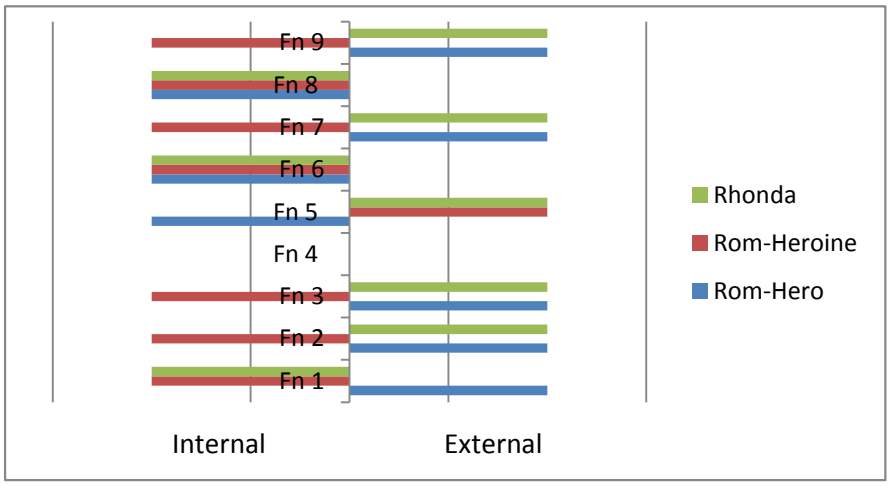
But green is not just linked to rom-hero freedom and rom-heroine frustration, it also has strong links to nature and wilderness (Hutchings 1997), both of which hold potential danger. The nature-woman link is here firmly melded in Rhonda's green, proposing the duplicitous and quixotic enactment of public activities. Her introduction in green locates all her subsequent activities under a veneer of 'feminine' attributes – suspicion, jealousy, quarrelsomeness – that are punishable by patriarchy, and although she responds to the narrative elements in terms of rom-hero action, she nevertheless is forced into her rightful female role through her punishment by paralysis. Muriel's green-based dress as she watches re-runs of her wedding video acts as a threat against complacency, and she is

'punished' through the news of the death of her mother. The only other green-wearer, Nicole, is also punished for her sexual transgression (see section 7.2). Green thus stands as a warning to these women against giving free rein to their ambitions.

8.3 Purple and Blue – struggle and obedience

Muriel's direct connection with purple is restricted to a cap she wears at Nicole's humiliation, and to her mother's photograph album. In both scenes she is struck dumb by the ensuing revelations. Rhonda's loyalty to her new-found friend (Muriel) and her antipathy towards Tania at Hibiscus Island are novel experiences for Muriel, and she does not know how to respond. This shocked state occurs later with sister Joanie's description of their mother's suicide and Bill's responses. Again, there is information for Muriel that counters her previous experience and expectations. The remaining purple associates with Rhonda, and in each encounter Muriel is defenceless against the subsequent outbursts. This links purple to shock for Muriel, but it has stronger links for Rhonda. Rhonda's struggles with functions 4 and 5 accompany the appearance of this hue – firstly as the satin sheet around her body during her collapse, then as a bra-top in which she finds Muriel's wedding-dress album, and finally as a ribbon in her hair at Muriel's wedding. At this critical function, where successful rom-heroes turn inward and reflect, rom-heroines burst forth with premature conclusions, excitable speech acts and physical exertion. Rhonda's trajectory, which had followed the rom-hero pattern from functions 2 to 4, responds by a display of rom-heroine activity before resuming the rom-hero trajectory at function 7 (see figure 8.1).

Figure 8.1 Rhonda's functional sites in relation to the Rom-hero/ines.



Performativity and Colour

Symbolism for complex hues needs to be established individually, and in the case of Rhonda's purple, this effect is linked to a 'girly' appearance. The purple sheet covering naked female breasts, the bra-top accentuating her feminine curves (and still covering female breasts), and the cute purple hair ribbon, all help position Rhonda's gender as feminine, despite the activities in which she is engaged simulating a masculine prerogative. Moreover, the transformation to feminine action is most dramatically achieved. Rhonda's cry for help as she collapses onto the floor serves the same purpose as her accusing interrogation of a bridal Muriel – she uses the more passive medium of saying rather than active doing to respond to function 4's challenge. As a rom-heroine response, her words have no power. Unlike the assertive woman in green who demanded men do her bidding, Rhonda in purple can only bring her psychic pain to the attention of others - she cannot command. For Rhonda then, purple links to her feminine potential, the disruptions of function 4 presented as a trial of her faith as well as a 'punishment' for her gender transgression. From the first appearance of purple, Rhonda's androgyny is gradually tamed and she takes on 'feminine' attributes (longer hair, and eventually, dresses).

In contrast, blue's use for both Muriel and Rhonda is more pervasive, and is also more clearly linked to well-known symbols such as melancholia and contentment (Pastoureau 2001). The use of blue as ambience plays a major role here. Blue light had suffused Muriel's rejection by Tania's group at Breakers nightclub, but it also presided over the bonding of Muriel and Rhonda following their karaoke triumph. The unpleasantness of this first dark blue exposure had also visually contrasted with the ambient blue skies of the opening scene, where azure blue promised good fortune (Pastoureau 2001). The dark blue lighting of Breakers, in contrast, presaged ill fortune for Muriel but the same lighting used poolside after their karaoke win saw Muriel and Rhonda cement their friendship. Muriel confides her insecurities, and Rhonda, in rom-hero fashion, bolsters her self-esteem. These apparently contrary links to dark blue suggest that good can emerge from the most negative of situations - that rejection and bonding belong to the same continuum. The Breakers' blue had suffused Tania's distress, the comforting being done by Cheryl, so the link between blue and nurture is also established (Luscher 1948; Birren 1950, 1978). The poolside blue replays this scene, with Muriel receiving the comforting, and reinforces pre-existing concepts of nurture that have prevailed in the appearances of blue in all the films (refer to section 5.4 and Chapter 7). This emotional support of the rom-heroine is an

important romance gambit which solidifies the rom-hero/ine relationship, and ushers in a period of mutual service.

The contrast between light and dark blues nevertheless remains an important one. It reappears in relation to Muriel and Rhonda during the latter's rehabilitation process. Rhonda, wearing the darker blues, is in despair at her inability to recover more quickly from her surgery. Muriel in paler blue now takes on the role of support, yet hers is not the confident ego-booster of the Hibiscus Island poolside scene - Muriel's support of Rhonda is based upon what Rhonda has already 'done' for her. Rhonda's blue-lit nurturing had emerged through a masculine discourse of rights and personal authority (see section 5.4), Muriel's pale blue links to gratitude, a 'proper' feminine state. For Rhonda, the shadowy dark blue had aided in recognition of another's pain and her masculine aggressiveness delivered a protective shield (her support) that Muriel could draw upon. Rhonda's lighter blues – seen also in the final scenes – link to her inability to self-nurture. This is the opposite presentation from Muriel's. Dark blue for Muriel threatens destruction of her fantasies through rejection, recrimination and remorse, so it serves to invite nurture from others. In pale blue, Muriel emerges as stronger, having survived her melancholia, and ready to offer nurture to another. Her gratitude and adoration for Rhonda are however private rather than public justifications for elevated self-esteem, so the thrust of the nurturing response is seen as 'feminine'. Moreover, once Rhonda has been thrown into her 'feminine' locus following her purple disruptions, dark blue reinforces the feminine link to melancholia by having her sit in the dark blue light contemplating a morbid future of disability. Muriel's return, in black and white striped top and blue jeans, has little comfort to offer. Muriel's emotionally exhausting confrontation with Bill and blue-clad Deirdre about their affair (also conducted in blue ambience) having numbed her to silence.

When Rhonda reappears at the end of the film, she is wearing a white dress with a blue and green floral pattern, a very 'feminine' costume in comparison to those she had sported earlier (Bruzzi 1997). The reappearance of green accompanies reappearance of the acerbic Rhonda, engaged in verbal battles with Tania and her group. Green here also signifies a return to the rom-hero role, where she contemplates the values expressed by her guests and challenges their authenticity. There is no sign of the melancholic woman in her dark blue room. Instead, Rhonda cuts through the polite conversations with animation, her incapacity notwithstanding. The light blue on her dress, however, links to the same

attitude of gratitude displayed by Muriel during Rhonda's rehabilitation. Rhonda's resentment of Muriel's marriage and frustration with her physical incapacities vanishes with Muriel's apology-request, and like the rom-heroines, she accepts her 'suitor'. Rhonda is thereby positioned in an ambiguous manner as *both* rom-hero and rom-heroine in her association with blue.

8.3.1 Pink and Magenta – love and longing

Magenta appears frequently throughout the film, and its importance in establishing Muriel's desire has been presented in her relation to Tania's wedding party (see section 7.2). Rhonda, in contrast, is linked to magenta only via a carry-all bag she wears over her shoulder as she exposes Nicole's secret on Hibiscus Island. Since this hue had been linked strongly to Muriel's desire (see section 7.2), the identical shade appearing with Rhonda suggests a similar reading – Rhonda's desire sought revenge for past injustices, and Muriel's confidences had supplied the ammunition. Yet whilst Muriel's magenta attaches to her dream of a wedding, her meeting with David brings out a darker version of the colour, thereby 'grounding' her dream in reality much as black had grounded her experiences of heterosexuality with Brice. The differentiation of dark from light magenta in this way reworks the black-white dichotomy that produced the reality-fantasy divide in Muriel's story.

Pink is used more sparingly than magenta, but plays an important role in the display of emotionality seen in the film's close-ups. Whereas red had signalled triumph for both Muriel and Rhonda when worn on their lips, pink's similar use links to a lack of power. Muriel wears pink lipstick frequently, each time surrendering herself to another's persuasion or abuse. Her inability to defend herself against her father's ire, her acceptance of Deirdre's job offer, her capitulation to perform in the karaoke competition, her acceptance of Brice's date offer – all are conducted with pink lips, and in each case it is the other person's desire that takes precedence. For both red and pink, there are direct links to sexuality (Hurlbert & Sweeting 2003; Koller 2008), with red suggesting an active sexuality that enables, and pink producing a passive sexuality that places Muriel in situations about which she can do nothing. This fatalism is most evident in the period leading up to her meeting David – she was resigned to the vicarious thrill of dressing for a wedding she never expected to have. During this phase, her lips were constantly pink. Once her heart's desire

had materialised, regardless of its bizarre circumstances, Muriel relinquished the appearance of vulnerability for the bold, bright red of triumph on her lips.

More significant is the pink cassette player that holds Muriel's favourite ABBA song collection. When she switches it on, the music carries her away into fantasy, the camera focused on the pink player, reinforcing the link between pink and unrequited desire. In the first scene, Muriel escapes from the reality of her outing as a dress thief into the world of her desire through the use of a mirror to reflect her face in a sea of bridal fashion. Her face is disconsolate, letting the viewer know that any dream attainment is currently out of reach. This theme is reinforced when Muriel collapses in tears in the bridal salon after Rhonda had uncovered Muriel's wedding-dress secret. The background in this scene has considerable pink, and the visual combination of white-pink (Muriel) and black-red (Rhonda) serves to solidify their significations. In this film, white-pink relates to fantasy-vulnerability and black-red to reality-power. Visually then, the women are set up in a gendered opposition of feminine supplication and masculine demand (Butler 1990).

The pink cassette player's second appearance occurs after Muriel has met David, and again there is a link between pink and vulnerability (Sweeney 2001; Koller 2008). In order for Muriel to claim her desire she must agree to terms that reinforce her juvenile fantasies and thereby move her away from the reality of her 'new' life. The choice of a dark magenta dress and pink lipstick for the crucial first meeting with David places Muriel at the crossroads of ambition and surrender – and she raises no objections to the conditions of her upcoming marriage. When she returns home, her silent entry through green light establishes a feeling of impending wrongness – Rhonda lies asleep in a blue-lit room, but Muriel's priority is to reach the pink cassette player and reignite her dream. Symbolically, she is moving past criticism (green) to fantasy (pink) (Birren 1950). She uses the cassette player to silence the critical voices about her matrimonial choice, the most important of which is perhaps her own. In using the player, Muriel instantly escapes from the reality of her engagement to the fantasy she had created in her photograph album. Green's warning, that Muriel must relinquish her relationship with Rhonda is thus lost to her in another reflection and its accompanying ABBA song.

The film now transfers pink to Rhonda, to the dress she wears to Muriel's wedding. The dress has a red and magenta floral pattern on a pink background, its close-up value

primarily pink, and its mid and long shots making it appear magenta. Rhonda is irritable – she wants to watch the wedding proceedings but does not want to be seen. She demonstrates the same level of interest in Muriel's wedding as Muriel had shown at Tania's wedding, but at the inevitable confrontation between them Rhonda berates Muriel, reversing the outcome of the film's opening scenes. This experience is similar to the later confrontation between Muriel and David, when they retire to their home. In this latter case, however, the confrontation is linked to blue. Blue, as a masculine trinity colour, allows David to achieve the distance he wants from his bride, whereas Rhonda's pink/magenta confrontation demonstrates her lack of success in removing herself emotionally from Muriel. Rhonda's is a mixed message – she wants the relationship with Muriel (magenta) but is unable to demand it (pink). The traces of green in the floral pattern link to Rhonda's return as a verbally aggressive person, but it lacks the assured manner of her introduction to the audience. Rhonda's performance then is an uncomfortable mixture of rom-hero and rom-heroine responses to the loss of Muriel's service, and her redirected desire is now seen to be linked to Muriel's wedding fantasy.

Pink's final appearance is as large roses on Muriel's black skirt, worn in her rescue of Rhonda from Tania's care. Here the association of pink and white with vulnerability and fantasy, seen previously in the wedding salon, is reframed by the use of black instead of white. Muriel appears as a supplicant, but she has gained a tie to reality that had eluded her in bridal white. Having made reparation to her husband and to her father, she now must repair the broken relationship with Rhonda. Muriel accomplishes this in a spirit of steadfastness and honesty, attributes that had also eluded her in her bridal white. But she remains vulnerable – she must await Rhonda's response before her ambitions are finally fulfilled. Black's earlier links with reality (Pastoureau 2008) aid this process – visually Muriel presents as caring and resourceful, rather than self-obsessed and helpless as she had in the bridal salon. Moreover, her escape with Rhonda into the unknown encapsulates a vulnerability that involves an element of will. Pink and black together code as vulnerability in matters of considered awareness, and Muriel shows she is prepared to enter this future without struggle.

8.5 Rhonda as a Pseudo-rom-hero

Gender performativity is an ongoing process that reproduces social ideas of masculinity and femininity by their appearance as actions and states of human bodies (Butler 1990). Rhonda's anomalous activities expose these gendered responses to everyday experiences as alternate ways of being. Both Rhonda and Muriel are physically female and are attired accordingly, but their styles of femininity vary considerably. The dichotomy set in motion through the differentiation of 'masculine' femininity and 'normal' femininity allows exploration of gender relations in a way not permissible in the other romantic comedies (Tasker 1998). Rhonda's pseudo-masculinity is demonstrated in the differences between her trajectory and that expected of rom-heroines, but it also remains separate from the rom-hero trajectories (see Figure 8.1). Rhonda's performance presents the entire range of 'female' behaviours at functions 1 (desire) and 5 (confrontation), yet she establishes herself through 'masculine' activities at functions 2 (active choice), 3 (progress), 7 (reparation) and 9 (reward). Her characterisation ranges from gossiping friend and spiteful harridan - 'female' behaviours (Tasker 1998) - to self-interested empowerment and sexual predation - 'male' behaviours (Ayers 2008). At each functional site she presents as enigmatic – her appearance is sexualised in the manner of objectified female characters but her actions are more often those associated with masculine expression. As a demonstration of performativity, Rhonda's role challenges norms of gender congruence, but the cost of success is high.

Rhonda's transit through rom-hero territory is fraught with many obstacles. She may display masculine tendencies but her enactment of these is often limited by her feminine physicality. Rhonda is decisive, incisive and brutal in her dissection of Tania's social value to her, unlike Muriel's timid, self-effacing contortions, and the elation she displays in the aftermath demonstrates the potency she feels in having settled an old score. The rom-heroines do not use words to deliberately hurt another – theirs is a conciliatory use of language, anger and hurt being necessary to produce hurtful words - so this verbal castigation shows Rhonda engaging with rom-hero activities, an external-active response to deal with a confronting issue or problem. Similarly, Rhonda's psychic processes are never enunciated as they are for Muriel or any of the other rom-heroines – they remain internal-passive, like the rom-heroes'. Rom-heroines do not enact external-active well – Muriel is easily silenced by others' criticism, for example – but they excel in internal-active, external-

passive responses, so their dilemmas are presented as internal issues. Rhonda is self-assured, ambitious and focused, and she is forced to confront an external dilemma that obstructs her life-path. Like the rom-heroes, she aims to change things in the social world to suit her enterprise rather than adapt to the changes of others. Unlike the rom-heroes however, she does not have much social power outside of her relationship with Muriel. Nonetheless, she, with the rom-heroes, struggles to overcome a public adversity, when the change needs to be an internal one.

Rom-heroes demonstrate an internal state that arises from the conviction of one's rightness. Rhonda exhibits this characteristic frequently - she has little patience for failings, particularly her own, and can only be coerced into introspection through the physical disability that ends her previous ambitions. There are seemingly no restrictions on her activities, but once Rhonda is disabled she must deal with her psyche's desire for freedom hindered by a broken body. She struggles with the internal-active/external-passive reality of her post-surgery life just as much as David had wrestled with his disgust of Muriel. In order to facilitate an internal change, the rom-heroes have to reflect on their confrontations with significant others, and adjust their approaches to these interactions and relationships (function 5). Rhonda is not seen to do this – she uses internal dialogue to confront herself. In this respect her conduct resembles rom-heroine behaviour. Rhonda is angry at the world for her disability, but is most angry at herself, and it is this problem that she seeks to overcome in her introspective states.

Rhonda's display of performative potentials includes behaviours that other rom-heroines can only imagine and never emulate, but this does not make Rhonda a successful rom-hero. The rom-heroes are concerned with manipulating social patterns for their own ends, attempting thereby to extend social boundaries to include their innovations (see section 6.2). Although Rhonda may struggle like a rom-hero with the internal changes that will allow love into her life, her crippled body does not have the capacity to maintain her external-active lifestyle, so she deviates from the rom-hero trajectory. Thus Rhonda's response at function 5 confirms her female gender attributes, positioning her as female, if an aberrant specimen at times. Whilst her primary behavioural responses mimic rom-hero activities, her capitulation to rom-heroine behaviour at this crucial function 5 ensures that *Muriel's Wedding* does not proceed along alternative romantic paths. The audience is in no doubt that what they are viewing is a female representation, albeit one that portrays how

not to be female, but also one that demonstrates the benefits of salvation through learning gender-appropriate skills (Smelik 1998).

Like the rom-heroes, Rhonda undergoes an internal change that transmutes her into a suitable relationship partner, but unlike the rom-heroes, her public lifestyle practices also change markedly. Rhonda's removal from institutionalised dependency to a state of reinstituted freedom has greater similarity to the public status change evidenced by the rom-heroines. Muriel's offer and Rhonda's acceptance are part of the confession and forgiveness sequence of function 7 (reparation) which is essential to the successful negotiation of the romance climax. And like the experience of all the rom-heroes (see section 6.2), function 8 (surrender) is truncated – there is no need for Rhonda to consider overly long the offer that has materialised. The site of reward (function 9) for Rhonda's story is the same as that of the other rom-heroes – she receives a female body, Muriel's, for her use. Rhonda has exchanged her anger and frustration at her inability to achieve her goals for a resurrected friendship that bears the hallmarks of a romance narrative. Muriel offers to re-align her own goals with Rhonda's and so completes her part of the narrative romance. For her part, Rhonda accepts the offer and regains what she had lost – her independence.

Rom-heroes evaluate information in relation to their goals and then act upon them – just as Rhonda does – but they do not continually re-evaluate themselves in order to change themselves to fit the situation, as do the rom-heroines. Muriel's external-active declaration opens an opportunity for Rhonda to reclaim her ambitions, and she responds by searching inwardly for some psychic space that will allow their relationship to mend. Rhonda achieves her goals without significant change to herself because she develops what is already successful – her social skills. Like the other rom-heroes, Rhonda gains an emotional supporter, someone who will use rom-heroine characteristics to ensure the construction of a new social force – the romantic duo. Yet Rhonda's relationship with Muriel is not a romance in the sense described earlier – Rhonda admires Muriel and Muriel is in awe of her friend – but it is a romance in terms of the roles played and performativities explored in the film (Kuhn 1985; Smelik 1998).

Chickflick rom-heroines are portrayed as socially weak – they emerge from a position of social compliance – whereas the rom-heroes demonstrate socially anarchic characteristics.

Rhonda treads both paths. Her apparent social strength at the beginning of *Muriel's Wedding* is in strong contrast to her disabled body's social weakness at film's end. The rom-hero path ensures that males move from a position of strength to another position of strength. Rom-heroines move from a position of weakness to a position of strength, but only in relation to the rom-hero. Rhonda's basic integrity remains intact – she retains her social capital and its strength, but she also moves from a position of physical incapacity to one of independent living via the strengths and support of her rom-heroine, Muriel. Rhonda's incapacitation allows her to become the demanding, ordering male without sexual connotations, but this pseudo-masculinity is also seen as a sham - a deliberately constructed persona whose function is to ward off insecurity. She is constructed as an exemplar of how a bad, poor and inadequate femininity can be reclaimed and resurrected as 'proper' femininity through channels that mimic the romance narrative (Doane 1989). More importantly, the film offers alternatives that nonetheless retain heterosexual relations as the primary driver for all further interactions. Muriel and Rhonda may play the parts of a romantic couple, and may even bond in a sisterhood reminiscent of the 'buddy' relations between the heterosexual men in the dickflicks, but their gendering ensures that their heterosexual femininity is never challenged (Butler 1990). Colours add to this process the comforting assurance that masculinity does not flaunt itself this way and helps to explain just what kinds of women Muriel and Rhonda represent.

Unlike the other romantic comedies, *Muriel's Wedding* does not end at the point of heterosexual triumph. Instead it continues and establishes an alternate reading – that of having overcome one's 'heart's desire' to attain something of greater value. Muriel's transformation energises her future actions, and leaves the audience with any number of speculative sequelae, thereby inviting, even encouraging, its female audience to likewise, challenge their gender-defined expectations. Muriel's wedding fantasy had dominated her life using a display of colours that marked her as feminine. Once released from this through the intrusion of reality, Muriel adopts brown and black, two masculine trinity colours, and with them masculine activity – signalling her disgust at the funeral, freeing David, making amends with Bill and rescuing Rhonda. Muriel takes control of her destiny in these scenes, demonstrating power and maturity. The pink in this costume (seen only in her visit to Rhonda) remains definitive of femininity, and so Muriel claims Rhonda but cannot dominate her. The decision to leave must also be Rhonda's – and so the two

women are repositioned as switching gender roles back and forth. This fluidity demonstrates the potentials in gender acculturation (Butler 1990).

Muriel's Wedding could easily have become a lesbian romance, as the story of two girls who meet, fall in love and overcome challenges (Muriel's wedding dreams, Rhonda's paralysis), had it ended with a kiss. The traditional upturned face of the 'bride' – in this case, Rhonda's - and the downward leaning 'groom' (Muriel) produce a virtual 'kiss' (Kuhn 1985), as Muriel helps Rhonda into the taxi, but its reality is narrowly averted, and attention redirected towards Rhonda's farewell to her mother. The look of love passing between Muriel and Rhonda as they triumphantly leave Porpoise Spit is further sanitised by their physical separation (no-touching) and by their turning away to gaze out of the taxi windows. Here the white-blue pseudo-bride and the brown-black-pink pseudo-groom are visual signals of a change towards their development of gender equality.

For Muriel and Rhonda, the traditional masculine ideas of dominance and submission, so redolent of male-female interactions (de Beauvoir 1953; de Lauretis 1984; Butler 1990), are played with, twisted and reversed, in a dance of symbols and actions that ensures retention of the film's interest value. Both women 'do' masculinity and femininity at different times and in different ways, so that by film's end they remain in an ambiguous space between genders, ostensibly heterosexual, but bonded in the same way that the lovers of the other films are linked. The previously androgynous (now turned feminine) Rhonda and childish (now matured) Muriel are shown as contented as any romantic couple as they disappear into the distance. Rhonda's role in particular sits across the male-female boundary and the colours worn to enact the narrative provide both an alternate reading for this chickflick and an example of how Butler's (1990) notion of performativity is enacted in a scripted genre designed for female consumption.

Conclusion

Of all the films in this study, *Muriel's Wedding* provides the largest scope for an analysis of its colour symbolism. Colours are used in specific ways to indicate gender associations beyond the customary black and white view of heterosexual expectations. All the colours, including black and white, appear in traditional as well as non-traditional linkages, primarily through the presentation of gender relations. Black and white code for opportunity and

desire, but in a more amorphous way than that allowed by the use of the other hues. White portrays situations of intangible and uncertain outcomes, whereas black is used for opportunities that offer known delights and expectations. For the hues, however, such apparent dichotomies are missing. Red and pink offer an opposition based on saturation as do the pale and deep blues, but these are not necessarily set in opposition to each other in the same scenes. Red's outward expression and dominance contrasts rather with pink's passivity and inward-focussing attributes. For both there is a sense of staying power, as red confronts and demands, pink absorbs and supplicates. For neither colour is there a removal of self from the situation. Red will not quit the scene, and pink cannot. More importantly, red's links to power are matched to green's links to usurpation of the masculine prerogative, and so help to construct Muriel and Rhonda as different 'kinds' of women. Similarly there is an opposition of red and blue in the presentation of ambiences for confrontations, yet blue's use in different ways according to gender portrayals is also linked to differing saturations.

All these colours - black, white, red, green, pink and blue - have well-established everyday 'meanings' when used as everyday symbols (Luscher 1948; Birren 1950, 1978), but this cannot be claimed for magenta. Magenta's association with goal attainment, whether the goal is marriage or some other coveted situation or experience, must be deliberately constructed in order for it to be readable to an audience. The presentation of magenta is evocative, appearing on each occasion that expectations are being met and wishes fulfilled. Purple, too, must have its symbolic links constructed, and its limited appearance is linked specifically with Rhonda and her struggles rather than to Muriel's trajectory. As a romance, then, these colours help to construct the narrative along traditional genre lines whilst presenting the primary protagonists, Muriel and Rhonda, as potential lovers, yet non-lovers as well. Audiences are left with assurances of the heterosexual nature of these characters due to what they do not do (kiss for example) rather than through the colour representation which links them in a secure love-relation. Colour symbolism is used here to underscore the masculinity and femininity of each character, visually portraying the lessons each learns in their journey.

As non-discursive symbols (Langer 1979), the colours both set the mood for the audience and point to the likely outcomes of each interaction. Appearing in advance of each scene's culmination, the colours promote expectations of how the characters will act next, and

what outcomes will apply to any given character activity. The wide variety of colour significations emerging in the film demonstrate the lessons to be learned by two types of femininity – the childlike Muriel versus the worldly-wise Rhonda – in a portrayal of anomalous femininities that must be curbed and trained to respond appropriately. The colours also allow for presentation of 'masculine' femininity as an error available for correction, particularly in the case of Rhonda, whose pseudo-masculinity threatens to undermine the genre. Rhonda's transgressive foray into the world of masculine privilege is therefore quickly punished, and her rehabilitation as a 'proper' female begun. By film's end this process remains incomplete – Rhonda is 'rescued' in true rom-heroine fashion by Muriel, but she also retains her masculinist domination of the outcome. Their relationship likewise retains the ambiguity of cross-gendered performances, clearly demonstrating the fluidity of the performativity process. The character's 'colours' however ensure that their status as heterosexual women remains unquestioned.

Chapter 9: Conclusion to the Thesis

Introduction

The purpose of this thesis has been to examine the intersection of colour and enactment of gender through the lens of representation in Australian narrative film. Narrative film, consumed in a variety of ways, is a pervasive aspect of everyday life in contemporary Australia, and this thesis has attempted to show some of the links between the portrayal of gender in film and the broader ongoing social construction and reconstruction of gender.

The films I have reviewed indicate that colour symbolism aids this process, and in particular, promotes concepts about human behaviour linked to colour that defines 'types' of people. This issue has been addressed by Dyer (1993, 1997) with regards to black and white as a discourse about race. He differentiated the 'white' woman from the 'black' woman, touching on gender differences in the clean/pure versus dirty/impure dichotomy that was used to denote class relations. My work has taken this a step further, seeking to identify other colour-links in the production of gender that are consumed subliminally by avid film-goers and potentially influence their construction of gender relations.

To associate colours with meaningful themes is to investigate the minutiae as well as the overall view, and in this, it is possible to make comment on the general use of colour. The traditional 'opposites' of black and white most clearly separate into binary symbols, but this is not as readily apparent with the hues. Some hues are more clearly defined in their use than others, with 'commonsense' notions of colour meanings (red for spilt blood for example) placed alongside specifically constructed meanings (magenta for ambitions in *Muriel's Wedding* for example) in a dance of colour symbols that promote narrative flow. In terms of gender reproduction, colour provides a greater scope for understanding female activities than the colour information obtainable from male activities. In films, these relations provide clues to the types of activities and people that are being portrayed, and it is this that has inspired this present research. In this final chapter, I will summarise the thesis chapters to bring together the themes that link to colour symbolism and highlight the value of this research to sociology. In the process, I also offer ideas related to the

significance of this research, discuss the sociological implications of the study, and offer research initiatives in this newly emerging area.

9.1 Significance of the Research

The literature's lack of attention to colour's symbolic value outside commercial discourse supports my view that colour's 'natural' status allows for unquestioning interpretation of colour symbols within a society. Naturalisation of colour symbolism as part of everyday life produces everyday understandings. Attention to this aspect of colour through examination of films provides a replicable context in which to examine the gendering of fictional characters, and so to point to commonsense beliefs regarding the types of people encountered in everyday life.

Black and white have long been used for this analytical purpose, and the symbolism associated with these BCTs are long-standing and unchallenged. Elucidation of the symbolism of white and black brings out its dual nature – signifying goodness and badness respectively, but also providing a demarcation between truth and falsehood. As a marker of race in Australia, whiteness has been traditionally linked to the European, whereas blackness accrues to the Aboriginal peoples. The symbolic connotations of these BCTs ensure that Aboriginality remains devalued. For the other BCTs the differentiation into dichotomous relations is less specific, because colour perception can and does produce multiple binaries with different colours to create different meanings. Links between colours and concepts are, like linguistic signs, arbitrary, and so would be expected to be strongest for the colour signs that are well-established in social life. The polysemy of films incorporates existing as well as constructed symbols (Wollen 1972), drawing on perceived universal *and* contextual themes that suit the usage of colour well. Colours such as purple, orange and magenta (purple-red) must have their symbolism specifically composed whereas blue and red have a long theatrical history to draw from, and so require little discursive extrapolation in the films; recognition of the colour is sufficient to evoke the emotion-links. This enhances a film's claims to naturalism, and so transmutes its colour content into self-evident 'truth'.

The everyday truths of colour symbolism relate to emotional states, a branch of sociology as yet in its infancy. As an inescapable part of the human experience, emotionality has

been portrayed as the opposite of rationality, and logic as an information-processing practice, with emotions traditionally regarded as having a negative effect on human interactions. This relation also links emotionality to femininity, which, until the advent of second wave feminism, resulted in a lack of academic interest due to the assumption that emotions (like women) 'contaminated' research (Salih & Butler 2004). Analysis of the rational basis of social action has been a hallmark of sociology since its inception, so an investigation of emotions and non-discursive symbols is a rare occurrence. In many ways, this present research is unique in approach and content, but opens the door to further investigation of the links between non-discursivity and symbolism as well as the links between colour presentation and conduct. In breaking new ground, this study challenges cultural academics to re-examine film structures and to incorporate the emotional content of the cinematic experience into the film's 'language'.

9.2 Summary of the Thesis

In Chapter 2, I presented the history of colour film as a struggle between 'serious' and 'frivolous' films, an attitude which continued well into the 1960s. Colour has replaced monochrome in most contemporary films, providing a 'realistic truth' in films (Mitry 2000) that is enlarged and enhanced to produce identification links for viewers. The intersection of film and gender studies has a long tradition based almost entirely around discourse analysis, and the ideas extrapolated therefrom have helped to situate gender practices in films as representative, reproductive and rebellious. Representational aspects of filmic gender construction arise from stereotypical everyday experiences, and so reflect practices within the society from which the film emerged. Representation, when relayed through the medium of film, takes on the additional role of reproducing gender norms by encouraging identification between audience members and the 'stars' exhibited on screen. Although gender reproduction can also be portrayed as gender rebellion, in the more popular films comfort can be found in the repetition of generic 'truths' that replay the same themes over and over. Colour, as an additional variable, allows a short-cut to verisimilitude and the result is a film that links character and conduct to pre-existing colour concepts.

The difficulty in addressing non-discursive symbols through a discursive approach is addressed in Chapter 3. Here, film discourses are examined with regards to their semiotic

potential. Far from the more rigid structure of language, narrative film provides images and experiences that are consumed vicariously, deriving their value from the variations on a limited number of basic themes, the genres. Genres reinforce mythic themes about human struggles and have the added advantage of coming to a satisfactory conclusion at film's end. Genres help audiences make sense of the images and offer opportunities for revisiting the same themes in an endless variety of characterisations and narratives. The intersection of film, gender and colour brings to the fore a new way of examining these narratives by allowing focus to move beyond text and sub-text concerns to emotional ones. Colours on the screen are given as clues to the action as well as to the general intentions and activities of the characters being portrayed.

Notwithstanding the ample research into gender and semiotics, studies of narrative films have concentrated on analysis of individual films and/or auteurist renditions of the traditional genre approach. None of these studies includes a clear exposition of methods used to garner the data, so Chapter 4 addressed this deficit by presenting the problematics of viewing films for their colour content. In separating colour content into ambience, skin and costume/artefact categories, colour use is made clearly visible as a powerful adjunct to the narrative. The process of data collection was shown to involve two different approaches to the study of films, both relying heavily on contemporary technologies. The ability to speed up or slow down the film promotes a different kind of viewing practice that is easily replicated, because access to the colour information becomes foregrounded in relation to the activity on screen. This allows intense or superficial scrutiny according to the requirements of the analysis. Viewing films for colour content also supplies a certain predictability about the narrative progression, because the colours used are replete with pre-existing concepts and associations that are accessible to and readable by their Australian audiences.

Four chapters of data analysis set the scene for interpretation of their colour symbolism. In Chapter 5 the structure of the study dickflicks was compared with the pre-existing structural analysis of a commensurate genre, the Western (Wright 1975). The similarities and differences between the Western structure and that applying to the action–adventure genre were established, and their binary relations examined. Colour use in the dickflicks showed how traditional ideas of the ultimate colour dichotomy – black and white – can be made to read as opposing concepts that transcend the basic notions of white-is-good and

black-is-bad. These films heavily promote such oppositions, relying on clear characterisations that allow for no goodness in the designated evil-doer, and an underlying goodness in even the most debased hero. Whilst black and white are the main colours through which the primary themes of these narrative films are played out, grey, blue and brown feature as alternative masculinities, with red an occasional visitor to denote some specific emotionally-charged element. Whilst the heroes and villains may be portrayed randomly in black or white, there is always an opposition of these colours in absolutist binary terms. Blue aligns with representations of order and obedience, brown with rigid independence and grey with uncertainty, regardless of which film is under review. Red similarly aligns with danger or damage (particularly to the hero), bloodletting and passionate women. Reading these binary relations through the use of colours established that there is also a clear distinction between the colours used on male as opposed to female bodies. An extension of costume differences, colours highlighted aspects of the characters' performances that were necessary to the films and featured a highly gendered representation. The variety of actions available to male and female characters appeared to relate directly to the variety of colours on their bodies, with male characters presenting as more stable in their representations than the females. Female characters were shown in a variety of emotionally-charged performances that linked to specific colour uses which differed from male characters in their scope and intensity.

Chapter 6 undertook a structural analysis of the chickflicks to determine the points of commonality between these narratives, establishing nine points of reference – the rom-hero/ine 'functions'. A distinct separation of spheres of conduct between male and female lead characters on this functional trajectory demonstrated that expectations about the ways in which they should respond to issues are similarly gendered. Rom-heroes are shown as present in the external, public worlds of the films and having to pass through an emotional, inner change in order to earn the right to the romantic conclusion. For rom-heroines the journey is in the opposite direction – they function within private internal worlds of fantasy and longing and must exert themselves in the public arena in order to attract the rom-heroes' attention. The interactions leading to the rom-hero/ine functions and the responses thereto create the comedic tension required to alleviate some of the stresses that are being portrayed on-screen. The formula that traces a rom-hero/ine trajectory through small triumphs to eventual heterosexual pairing is a simple one, complicated by the 'types' of rom-hero/ines in contention and the circumstances in which

they find themselves. This is possibly why the romantic comedies are set in contemporary environments rather than futuristic ones (such as the *Mad Max* dystopias), as audiences are expected to identify with the familiarity of the human emotions evoked. One character, Rhonda (*Muriel's Wedding*) provides a counter to this thematic trajectory, offering an alternative femininity, loaded with gender rebellion, and played out in colour symbolism. This important finding required closer inspection and was addressed in Chapter 8.

Following on from the rom-hero/ine functions, Chapter 7 introduced the binary distinctions relating to these. The male-female binary was the uncontested over-arching schema of the chickflicks, through which male and female characters were able to present different ways of attaining the romance. Of secondary importance was the internal-external binary which located the rom-hero/ines on either side of the films' reality – males essentially in the external state and females in an internal state, from which both must enter the opposing psychic spaces in order to satisfactorily complete the story. In this chapter the links between these male-female, internal-external positionings and colour use were exposed, demonstrating the variances in expression of these binaries in presenting gender – saying-doing and thinking-feeling being permutations that refine the characterisations. Non-masculine trinity colours appear on male bodies in these films, but they are generally muted, darkened versions, thereby contrasting with the brighter, lighter, more saturated colours on the bodies of the women. To some extent, these 'feminise' the male characters, particularly in creating nurturing aspects to their personas. Rom-heroines' appropriation of masculine-trinity colours, particularly achroma, concomitantly appropriates masculine performances, whilst gaudiness of colour links strongly to a vacuous femininity, concerned only with frivolous activities and lacking in reflective practices.

The special case of Rhonda (*Muriel's Wedding*) and her anomalous location at the male-female binary was investigated in Chapter 8. Here the case of a 'romance' between two heterosexual women is presented using the costume colours on their bodies as guides to the kind of performances that appear. For Muriel and Rhonda, the traditional masculine ideas of dominance and submission, so redolent of male-female interactions, are played with, twisted and reversed, in a dance of symbols and actions that ensure retention of the film's interest-value. Both women 'do' masculinity and femininity at different times and in different ways, so that by film's end they remain in an ambiguous space between genders,

ostensibly heterosexual, but bonded in the same way that the lovers of the other films are linked. Rhonda's role in particular sits across the male-female boundary, and the colours worn to enact the narrative provide both an alternate reading for this chickflick and an example of how Butler's (1990) notion of performativity is enacted in a scripted genre designed for female consumption.

Colour is seen here to extend from the black-white binary to binaries involving hues that bear little relation to the complementarities of the artist's palette. Red and green, visually opposing colours are juxtaposed against red and blue as a different set of binaries, whilst blue is also situated in opposition to purple. Red and pink form another binarist relation based on saturation, but for Muriel and Rhonda, pink and magenta are more evocative. The colour presentation of the two female leads of this film provide a gender play that is absent from the other chickflicks, and permits a reading of Rhonda's performativity as encapsulating rom-heroism as well as rom-heroinism. The colours are vital to these constructions in order to maintain the veneer of normalised heterosexual relations and prevent this film from absolute gender subversion.

9.3 Sociological Implications of the Study

Colour concepts in these films are based on emotionality and so offer a space for gender analysis based not on discourses but on non-discourses. Presentational symbols such as colour are taken in 'at a glance' (Langer 1979; Goffman 1976) and so are not subject to the rigour of conscious interpretation. This allows colour information to move directly into the viewer's unconscious, creating links between actions and representation that are not available through other means. The normalising experience of colour presentations in these films allows the colours to 'speak' for themselves, providing verisimilitude in the gender performances on the screen.

The characters' actions denote different ways of 'doing' gender (Butler 1990) and in all the study films, their links to colour themes propose specific ways in which this gender display is done. There emerges here a variety of potential performances that can indicate compliance with, resistance to or rejection of particular ways of doing in the construction of a gendered performativity. The inherent potentials may lay dormant or be exposed within the performativity elements that emerge as a performance, but they are suggested

through the use of colour. By presenting different 'types' of people through their costume colours, films reinscribe these links on the audience psyche. Such links can highlight and obscure, excite and defuse, and their purpose is to present each narrative as a 'true' reflection of everyday relationships.

Colours in films are not random elements – they have been deliberately chosen for their purpose by the director, costume designer, art designer etcetera, although the choices are not always conscious. Unconscious choices arise from social conditions of their learning. Perkins (1972) noted that viewers tend to anticipate information from the screen, a predisposition that rates colour as a device for tracking on-screen action and engaging and absorbing viewer attention. Everyday consciousness is profoundly influenced by non-discursive experience (Langer 1979) and this extends to the normative use of colours as symbols. This suggests that reinforcement of links between colours and human actions enters the human body as a docile truth, to be re-enacted in everyday life. These colour 'truths' are in turn reflected-reinforced in societies through their representation as gender relations in entertainments.

Much of the problem of colour lies in its ephemeral nature, as the product of reflected light and human perception rather than an objectified reality, and also because of its polysemy. Colour space recognition is nevertheless an important part of children's acculturation. It is the intrusion of colour in contemporary Australian life that allows for differentiation of social groups, and as Australia's population expands to include social groups previously excluded, the meanings attributed to colours will change to accommodate their concepts. At present, colour in films differentiates gender in such a way that males who adopt 'feminine' colourfulness are regarded as somehow less serious/logical/rational - in other words, less *masculine* in their activities. Conversely, filmic women who adopt the masculine trinity colours are seen as somehow *less* feminine, although this is closely related to colour's luminescence and saturation, rather than specifically to hue. The masculine trinity colours are muted, and when other colours appear in men's costumes it is rarely at the same brightness as the corresponding hue for women's clothing.

9.4 Directions for Future Research

Conclusion to the Thesis

Understanding of complex societies like Australia invites development of new tools and new theories which incorporate and account for differences in perspective. As a novel research project, this study has barely probed the implications of the colour-emotion-representation nexus for social life. Emotional experiences have elicited some little research in sociology, but colour's links to this realm have been entirely ignored. Yet colour permeates everyday existence and can have a profound impact on the tastes and experiences of daily living. Colour permits an illusion of individuality in relation to objects and their owners, and provides a means for their recognition within a diverse social setting. The meanings attributed to colours are thus associated with individual preferences as well as broader social concepts.

That this phenomenon remains unremarked in the academic literature points to the pervasiveness and ambiguity of 'colour'. Scientific analysis ranges from the philosophical to the physical, yet there is no definitive version that explains the colour phenomenon as it is experienced by the human being. Colour, it seems, is as much the result of individual psychic states as it is the product of hue, brightness and saturation. Colour is accepted as a part of the natural environment and has crept into human languages as a sign – of physical attributes of things, and of emotional states (Langer 1979). Yet we know that the colours seen by one culture do not provide the same focal space as the colours seen by another. Colour is prone to a basic social manipulation that ensures all cultures break the visible spectrum into oppositional colour spaces, but not the *same* spaces.

The colour spaces allocated to people have long been recognised as differentiating race (black, white, brown, red, yellow people) and class (an ever-changing but discernable history of binaries: bright versus dull, saturated versus unsaturated, monochromatic versus colourful costumes), but the links to gender have rarely been addressed. Butler's (1990) work on performativity and Foucault's (1977) work on bio-disciplines have demonstrated how everyday experiences and interactions are normalised to produce gender, and that this normalisation of the everyday promotes certain 'types' of people. But an investigation of the male-female binary in terms of colour is not as simple as the pink-blue phenomenon – adults signal their occupations, interests and moods through the use of colour and there is no universal prescription of meaning. The distinctions presented in colour use between different 'types' of films and between different 'types' of people represented within these films, has elicited little research.

Furthermore, the links between filmic colour representations and everyday understandings of colour concepts have not yet been investigated. For those feminists who have decried the lack of analysis of feminine conceptual spaces, and have called for a 'language' of emotions and feminine experience, this research into the colour-emotion connection could offer just such an analytical space. A 'language' of colour may provide insight into the internal world of experience just as it has uncovered the internal worlds of filmic characters. Current research into emotions as a means of social understanding would benefit from such an extrapolation.

Conclusion

Colour's use as a social cue to interaction is well documented for race and politics, but has not been linked to gender in the manner I have presented for Australia's most popular Australian action-adventure films (Chapter 4) and romantic comedies (Chapter 6). Colour's contemporary 'meanings' are reflected in these films, and link strongly to ancient and modern social prejudices that are recognisable by their audience (Garrett 2007). The basic 'colours' black and white have a long history of association, in black-and-white film, with the concepts of evil and good respectively, yet this coding must, of necessity, be extended across several hues in colour film. In this process, the clear demarcation of positive and negative characteristics disappears, and is replaced by different values.

Taking a cue from Wright's (1975) structuralist analysis of the Western film genre, I have sought to differentiate binary distinctions in Australia's most popular cinematic output. Selecting the films on the basis of primary generic appeal for men (action-adventures) and women (romantic comedies), I have produced a list of functional positions for the main characters that places them in various arrangements of oppositions. The hero/ines (of action-adventures) and rom-hero/ines (of romantic comedies) follow distinct trajectories through the film narratives which can be traced through the use of colour in each film, but these uses are also contextual – dependent on the era portrayed, the tenor of the plot, the gender of the main character and the interplay of the colours chosen.

Separation of rom-heroes from rom-heroines occurs along the same colour continuum as in the action-adventures – males wear predominantly masculine trinity colours, females have

no such restriction. The social shift in Western societies from men as the 'colourful' gender prior to industrialisation to a postmodern form of limited colour-choice for male costume is a reversal in social practices that is reinforced through film. Each activity undertaken by a character is 'explained', using colour symbolisms, to the still-masculine gaze of the 21st century, just as recognition of the major themes of good and evil are still-harnessed to black and white truths.

One of the features of the use of colour in films is the correlation between the gender to whom the film is marketed and the number, vibrancy and visual penetration of colours. The dickflicks display few colours which are more muted and less easily identified than those in the chickflicks, and fewer colours relate to easier binary separation of characters. Chickflicks have two primary characters, dickflicks one, so chickflicks must present both rom-hero/ines as sympathetic, whereas the villains and 'love-interests' of the dickflicks do not require this. The use of colour reflects this. Dickflicks provide the three traditional 'types' of women – virginal (white), maternal (blue) and seductive/dangerous (red) - and three 'types' of men – powerful (achroma), individualistic (brown) and logical-orderly (blue). Chickflicks produce a broad variety of both male and female characters, and so the colours used interweave meanings based more on context rather than definition of gendered 'types'. Nonetheless, the prevalence of the masculine trinity colours for male characters in both groups of films suggests that the performativity potentials of men are visually more limited than those of women, whose 'colours' can indicate a multiplicity of compounding and complicitous psychic positions. In other words, women have a greater abundance of performativity potentials available for their performances.

The colours on filmed characters bear similarity to the colours of men and women in everyday life, and carry similar emotional connotations. These links have never been addressed through either gender or film studies, but the emergent sociology of emotion is responding to the challenge of understanding emotions' links to social life. As colour is a powerful signifier of emotional state, I offer this contribution to that enterprise.

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Appendix A: Australian Blockbuster Colour Films – 1954-2009

AustralianTop-20 box-office colour films by year of release in Australia. Highlighted genre combinations (action-adventure and romance-comedy) indicate film choices for this study.

Source: Data presented here has been taken from the Internet Movie Database at imdb.com (genre and release year in Australia) and data supplied by mpdaa.org (place data from 1954-1991) and the Australian Box Office Index at boxofficemojo.com (1991-2010).

YEAR	PLACE	FILM	GENRES
1961	1	*The Sundowners*	Drama, Adventure
1966	2	*They're a Weird Mob*	Adventure, Comedy
1969	13	*Age of Consent*	Comedy, Drama, Romance
1973	2	*Alvin Purple*	Comedy
1974	16	*Alvin Purple Rides Again*	Comedy
1974	19	*Stone*	Action, Drama, Adventure, Crime, Mystery
1974	20	*Barry McKenzie Holds His Own*	Comedy
1975	3	*Picnic at Hanging Rock*	Drama, Mystery
1975	17	*Sunday Too Far Away*	Drama
1976	2	*Caddie*	Drama, Romance
1976	3	*Storm Boy*	Drama, Family
1977	14	*The Last Wave*	Drama, Adventure
1977	18	*The Mango Tree*	Drama
1978	16	*Newsfront*	Drama, History
1979	4	*Mad Max*	Action, Sci-Fi, Adventure
1979	13	*My Brilliant Career*	Biography, Drama, Romance
1980	7	*Breaker Morant*	Drama, History, War
1981	2	*Gallipoli*	Drama, War
1981	3	*Mad Max II: The Road Warrior*	Action, Sci-Fi, Adventure
1981	10	*Puberty Blues*	Comedy, Drama
1982	2	*The Man From Snowy River*	Drama, Family, Romance, Western
1982	12	*We of the Never Never*	Drama, History
1982	13	*The Year of Living Dangerously*	Drama, Romance, War
1982	20	*Far East*	Drama
1983	2	*Phar Lap*	Biography, Drama, Family, Sport
1983	16	*Careful He Might Hear You*	Drama
1983	17	*Hostage: the Christine Maresch Story*	Drama
1985	8	*Mad Max III: Beyond Thunderdome*	Action, Sci-Fi, Adventure
1985	18	*Wills and Burke*	Comedy
1986	1	*Crocodile Dundee*	Adventure, Comedy
1986	10	*Malcolm*	Comedy, Crime
1988	1	*Crocodile Dundee II*	Action, Adventure, Comedy

1988	4	*Young Einstein*	Comedy
1988	9	*Return to Snowy River*	Adventure, Drama, Western
1988	16	*Evil Angels*	Drama
1989	20	*The Delinquents*	Drama, Romance
1990	6	*Green Card*	Comedy, Romance, Drama
1992	1	*Strictly Ballroom*	Comedy, Romance
1993	7	*The Piano*	Drama, Romance
1993	17	*Reckless Kelly*	Comedy
1994	5	*The Adventures of Priscilla Queen of the Desert*	Comedy, Drama, Music
1994	6	*Muriel's Wedding*	Comedy, Romance
1994	17	*Lightning Jack*	Comedy, Western
1995	1	*Babe*	Family, Comedy, Drama, Fantasy
1996	12	*Shine*	Biography, Drama, Music, Romance
1997	15	*The Castle*	Comedy
2000	8	*The Dish*	Comedy
2000	4	*Moulin Rouge*	Drama, Music, Romance
2001	17	*Lantana*	Drama, Mystery, Thriller
2007	5	*Happy Feet*	Animation, Adventure, Comedy, Family, Musical
2008	5	*Australia*	Adventure, Drama, History, Romance, War

Note: As there were only 4 comedy-romance films in this cohort, it was extended to included *The Man Who Sued God* (2001) the next highest placed 'romantic comedy' (at position 26).

Appendix B – Plot Outline for the Study Films

Source: imdb.com (date and genre) and movies.com (commentary)

The Dickflicks

Stone (1974)

Genre: Action / Drama / Adventure / Crime / Mystery

Synopsis: An undercover cop named Stone (Ken Shorter) infiltrates an outlaw biker gang called the Grave Diggers, only to discover that he has more in common with the two-wheeled warriors than he previously though after a professional assassin attempts to set them up for a big fall. A prominent environmental activist has just been assassinated, and the police suspect that the Grave Diggers are withholding crucial information relating to the killing. Realizing that the Grave Diggers will never speak to regular policemen, the cops recruit Stone to ride with the gang and find out what they know. Accepted into the fold after saving the life of a grateful Grave Digger, Stone begins to respect the Undertaker (Sandy Harbutt) and his crew due to the fact that they operate by their own unique code of ethics. Later, as the Grave Diggers prepare to strike back against a rival motorcycle club, Stone suspects a set-up and attempts to convince them not to fall for it. Unfortunately for everyone involved, Stone was correct. When the violence finally erupts, no one is safe from the bloodshed that threatens to destroy the Grave Diggers, and consume Stone in the process. ~ **Jason Buchanan, All Movie Guide**

Mad Max (1979)

Genre: Action / Sci-Fi / Adventure

Synopsis: This stunning, post-apocalyptic action thriller from director George Miller stars Mel Gibson as Max Rockatansky, a policeman in the near future who is tired of his job. Since the apocalypse, the lengthy, desolate stretches of highway in the Australian outback have become bloodstained battlegrounds. Max has seen too many innocents and fellow officers murdered by the bomb's savage offspring, bestial marauding bikers for whom killing, rape, and looting is a way of life. He just wants to retire and spend time with his wife and son but lets his boss talk him into taking a peaceful vacation and he starts to reconsider. Then his world is shattered as a gang led by the evil Toecutter (Hugh Keays-Byrne) murders his family in retaliation for the death of one of its members. Dead inside, Max straps on his helmet and climbs into a souped-up V8 racing machine to seek his bloody revenge. Despite an obviously low budget and a plot reminiscent of many spaghetti

Westerns, Mad Max is tremendously exciting, thanks to some of the most spectacular road stunts ever put on film. Cinematographer David Eggby and stunt coordinator Grant Page did some of their best work under Miller's direction and crafted a gritty, gripping thrill ride which spawned two sequels, numerous imitations, and made Mel Gibson an international star. One sequence, in which a man is chained to a car and must cut off a limb before the machine explodes is one of the most tense scenes of the decade. The American version dubbed all the voices -- including Gibson's -- in a particularly cartoonish manner. Trivia buffs should note that Max's car is a 1973 Ford Falcon GT Coupe with a 300 bhp 351C V8 engine, customized with the front end of a Ford Fairmont and other modifications. ~ Robert Firsching, All Movie Guide

Mad Max II The Road Warrior (1981)

Genre: Action / Sci-Fi / Adventure

Synopsis: Director George Miller's follow-up to his own 1979 hit Mad Max is proof that not all sequels are inferior to their originals. If anything, this brutal sci-fi action film is even more intense and exciting than its predecessor, although the state of its post-apocalyptic world has only become worse. Several years after the deaths of his wife and child, Max (Mel Gibson) has become an alienated nomad, wandering an Australian outback that has fallen into tribal warfare conducted from scattered armed camps. After a road battle with psychotic villain Wez (Vernon Wells), Max meets up with the odd Gyro Captain (Bruce Spence), who takes him to the camp of a sympathetic group led by Pappagallo (Mike Preston). As Pappagallo's people are camped at a refinery, Max plans to take their oil -- more precious than gold in this world -- but eventually joins them to fight a band of marauders led by the evil Humungus (Kjell Nilsson). The stunning climax features a heart-pounding chase scene involving an oil tanker-truck and a frenzied rush for the coast, with Humungus and his forces in hot pursuit. Nilsson is a scary villain, with huge muscles and a sinister pre-Jason hockey mask, but the stunt work is the key here, and it is more flamboyantly dynamic than ever, edited at breakneck pace and staged with manic fury by Miller and stunt coordinator Max Aspin. Savage and kinetic, Mad Max 2 is a must-see for action buffs. ~ **Robert Firsching, All Movie Guide**

Mad Max III Beyond Thunderdome (1985)

Genre: Action / Sci-Fi / Adventure

Synopsis: About 15 years after the events of Mad Max 2, nuclear war has finally destroyed what little was left of civilization. Grizzled and older, former cop Max (Mel Gibson) roams the Australian desert in a camel-drawn vehicle -- until father-and-son thieves Jebediah Sr. (Bruce Spence) and Jr. (Adam Cockburn) use their jury-rigged airplane to steal his possessions and means of transportation. Max soon winds up in Bartertown, a cesspool of post-apocalyptic capitalism powered by methane-rich pig manure and overseen by two competing overlords, Aunty Entity (Tina Turner) and Master (Angelo Rossitto), a crafty midget who rides around on the back of his hulking underling, Blaster (Paul Larsson). Seeking to re-equip himself, Max strikes a deal with the haughty Aunty to kill Blaster in ritualized combat inside Thunderdome, a giant jungle gym where Bartertown's conflicts are played out in a postmodern update of blood and circuses. Although Max manages to fell the mighty Blaster, he refuses to kill him after realizing the brute is actually a retarded boy. Aunty's henchmen murder Blaster nonetheless, then punish Max for violating the law that "Two men enter, one man leaves." Lashed to the back of a hapless pack animal and sent out into a sandstorm, a near-death Max is rescued by a band of tribal children and teens. The descendants of the victims of an airplane crash, the kids inhabit a lush valley and wait for the day when Captain Walker, the plane's pilot, will return to lead them back to civilization. Some of the children, refusing to believe that Max isn't Walker and that the glorious cities of their mythology no longer exist, set off in search of civilization on their own. Max and three tribe members must then rescue their friends from Bordertown and the clutches of Aunty Entity -- a quest that ends in a lengthy desert chase sequence that echoes the first two Mad Max films. Spence also appeared in Mad Max 2 in a different role, that of the Gyro Captain. ~ **Brian J. Dillard, All Movie Guide**

'Crocodile' Dundee II (1988)

Genre: Action | Adventure | Comedy

Synopsis: An evil drug baron rears his ugly head in this sequel to the blockbuster Crocodile Dundee, kidnapping Sue so that Dundee will butt out of the Baron's affairs. Using outback strategy, Dundee attempts to rescue his girlfriend. Reversing the procedure of the first film, the story later takes the hero and heroine from America back to Australia, making Sue the fish out of water. In the interim between the two films, stars Paul Hogan and Linda Kozlowski became husband and wife. ~ **Hal Erickson, All Movie Guide**

The Chickflicks

Age of Consent (1969)

Genre: Biography | Comedy | Drama | Romance

Synopsis: James Mason is Bradley Morahan, an Australian artist far away from home and trying to prod his muse in the bowels of New York City. Disgusted with life in the big city, Bradley decides to return to his roots and heads back home to Australia. Once there, he decides to become a Gauguin primitive and sets up shop on a deserted island on the Great Barrier Reef. To his disappointment, however, he discovers the island is populated by a drunken old harridan (Neva Carr-Glyn) and her attractive granddaughter Cora (Helen Mirren). One look at Cora, and Bradley excitedly begins to mix his pigments, offering Cora a job as his model. Soon enough, Cora goes native and poses for Bradley in the raw. Love is, of course, in the air. But just as things seem to being going fine in every way, Bradley's old friend Nat (Jack MacGowran) appears on the island out of the blue and proceeds to rob Bradley blind. Barely recovered from the theft, Bradley must also deal with an irate grandma, who discovers that Cora has been posing nude for Bradley and has been keeping her earnings hidden from granny. Bradley's island paradise is shattered and he finds he has to deal with an old woman threatening to turn him in to the authorities for having a minor pose naked before him and his easel. The character of Morahan was based on real-life Bohemian artist Norman Lindsay, who later became the subject of John Duigan's Sirens (1994). **~ Paul Brenner, All Movie Guide**

Green Card (1990)

Genre: Comedy | Romance | Drama

Synopsis: Green Card fuses the template of a light romantic comedy with a classic fish-out-of-water scenario. In order to retain her beautiful rent-controlled Manhattan apartment, a beautiful, socially-conscious American woman (Andie MacDowell) has to be married, so she decides to marry a burly French composer (Gerard Depardieu), who is eager to earn a green card so he can stay and work in America. After the marriage, the couple doesn't live together, but when the government's Immigration agents begin to investigate the pair, they are forced to put up a charade to convince the authorities that they are truly in love. Of course, the charade eventually becomes reality. ~ **Stephen Thomas Erlewine, All Movie Guide**

Strictly Ballroom (1992)

Genre: Comedy / Romance

Synopsis: This wildly off-beat comedy is about a male dancer (Paul Mercurio) who refuses to follow the accepted rules of ballroom dancing and creates his own style of choreography, which infuriates the ballroom dancing establishment. Before he's scheduled to compete in the Pan-Pacific ballroom championships, he's forced to take up a new partner (Tara Morice), a beginner who initially seems without promise. With his help, she turns into an assured and wonderful dancer. Baz Luhrmann's visual style may be too bright, gaudy and exaggerated for some tastes, yet he treats his characters with compassion, which makes Strictly Ballroom such an engaging comedy. ~ **Stephen Thomas Erlewine, All Movie Guide**

Muriel's Wedding (1994)

Genre: Comedy / Romance

Synopsis: A socially inept young woman slowly learns to overcome her insecurities in this sleeper hit from Australia. The unconventional Muriel (Toni Collette) is deeply unsatisfied with her life, stuck in the nowhere town of Porpoise Spit and feeling rejected by her friends and family. Believing herself unattractive and worthless, she seeks meager solace in ABBA songs and fantasies of gorgeous weddings, with herself as the bride. Muriel's life takes a turn for the better, however, when she befriends the carefree Rhonda (Rachel Griffiths), who encourages her to take control of her life. Together, the two women

travel to Sydney, where a series of liberating experiences help Muriel develop self-esteem and take the first steps towards maturity. ~ Judd Blaise, All Movie Guide

The Man Who Sued God (2001)

Genre: Comedy / Drama / Romance

Synopsis: Directed by Mark Joffe, Australia's The Man Who Sued God centers around Steve (Billy Connelly), an ex-lawyer who is unable to collect insurance money for his destroyed boat. Deeming the accident an "act of God," Steve decides to sue the man at the root of his problem -- namely, God. Anna (Judy Davis), a jaded journalist who took a particular interest in Steve's case, decides to help him out on his quest to collect from the almighty. The movie raises a host of philosophical issues, some of which include who should represent God in court, who pays up should God be convicted, and the status of Steve's eternal soul. The Man Who Sued God also features Vincent Ball and Billie Brown. ~ **Tracie Cooper, All Movie Guide**

Appendix C: Dickflick Functions and their Relation to the Primary Protagonists

Note: Hero-function numbers appear next to their description of the action.

Stone (1974)

Stone

1 Rides bike to Gravedigger's pub
2 Confrontation with Toad – proves he can fight, if reluctantly,
3 Saves lives from assassin arrow, Voted into club pro tem
2 Makes breakfast drink for self and Amanda, quarrel over his moving in with Gravediggers
3 Goes with biker to join group; Admonishes biker for speeding, but keeps up
Enters underground fortress, Offered and rejects drugs
Initiation – try on biker garb (doesn't fit), admired as sex object
Initiation – held down for earring (biker girl licks blood); Initiation – beer shower
4 Rides up to front of biker formation
5 Challenge ride against Midnight
6 Loses by accident, bikers accept him
3 Interviews mechanic, short-order cook and nightclub owner about Gravediggers
4 Intervenes between Toad and tourist males; Blackhawks leader pushes him bike down - fight
2 Learns intimate details about Gravediggers from them – refuses drugs
3 Suggests dawn swim – strips naked with Gravediggers
4 Argues against Gravediggers heading out for a drink
5 Told by publican of grave desecration by Blackhawks
Warns Gravediggers of trap – left behind to raise alarm with police; Follows to cemetery
6 Claims assassin as prisoner,
7 Refuses Gravediggers revenge
8 Eating with Amanda, reminiscing
9 Gravediggers visit, attack him
10 Refuses to let Amanda ring for help (accepts punishment)

Assassin

1 Waits on balcony of Sydney Art Gallery to get good shot at politician
2 Lines up different kill shots
3 Shoots environment politician
4 Notices Toad, aims to kill, target gone
5 Gloved hand twangs line across road
6 Dark shape interferes with bike—explosion; Drives white Mercedes forcing biker over cliff
7 Meeting in black Mercedes with official in black-white, grey tie, Black shape fires crossbow at Gravediggers in pub, Visits official in office – reports about Gravedigger-Blackhawks fight, Visits evil mechanic to gather co-conspirators
8 Watches fish, waiting for others to arrive – guns handed around
At cemetery, gives instructions to co-assassins, hides behind headstones
9 Routed by Gravediggers, Recognised by Toad, Grabs gun, shoots Dr Death, runs, Caught by Toad, shoots him, others catch up and disarm him
10 Taken into custody by Stone

Mad Max (1979)

Max

1 Waiting at roadside for action, called to assist
2 Interceptor chase – Nightrider intimidated
3 Chase ends in crash – Nightrider dead
4 With Jessie & Sprog at home, hears Nightrider news on TV
5 Difference with Jessie over meeting with Goose
6 Introduced to super-8 car at work (Fifi eavesdropping)
7 Warned by Fifi of Toecutter's vendetta against him
8 With Goose chastising weekend bike motorist, gets call
9 Find assaulted male running through fields, Johnny-the-boy, assaulted girl
3 Discovers nightrider connection with Johhny-the-boy
4 Gives Goose bad news about court case,
5 Holds him back from assault
4 Rushes to hospital to visit hurt Goose
5 Appalled by Goose's state,
2 Discusses shock with Jessie; Visits Fifi to resign, given holiday instead
3 Buys dog from man at roadside; Driving into country with family
4 Stop at mechanic to fix spare tyre
5 Urgently leaves with Jessie after altercation with Toecutter
2 Contacts police over Cundalini's hand
3 Drives to May's, repairing fan-belt; Intimate moment with Jessie who goes swimming
4 Hears Jessie scream,
1 Jessie tells of dog's mutilation
2 Retraces Jessie's path; Hears gunshot, returns to May's, Jessie et al gone
Chases down road to abandoned car, despair over their deaths
1 Contemplating grief at home
2 Decides to put uniform on again
3 Visits mechanic, intimidates for information; Runs biker off the road in V8,
Invites Toecutter to give chase, Turns car around, runs through them again, 4 down
Watches Toecutter & Bubba ride off to assist Johnny-the-boy
4 Follows Toecutter, held up by heavy machinery on the road
5 Finds bike crash site, stops to investigate
6 Recognises Johnny-the-boy's bike
7 Run down by Toecutter & Bubba,
2 Reaches for gun, run down again
3 Gets gun & kills Bubba on his next run
4 Hobbles to car, watching Toecutter & Johnny-the-boy head in different directions
5 Catches up to Toecutter
6 Runs Toecutter into truck
4 Enters restricted zone, night driving
5 Comes across crash scene, finds Johnny-the-boy stealing from corpse
6 Handcuffs Johnny-the-boy to the crashed car, creates time bomb
7 Gives handsaw and instructions to Johnny-the-boy; Drives off – explosion,
8 Staring into space of madness, drives into the unknown

Toecutter

1 Bikers enter township to collect Nightrider's body
2 Intimidates railway clerk, troops intimidate couple in town
3 Give chase to young couple in red car, catch, assault
4 Bubba tells of Johnny-the-boy's arrest, sends him to collect
5 Gives Johnny-the-boy a lesson in manners with a gun
6 Gives Johnny-the-boy the order to set Goose alight, watches him burn
3 Intimidates Jessie,
4 Gets assaulted by Jessie who escapes
5 Follows to mechanic's, intimidates for directions
6 Finds Jessie at lakeside, lures dog away with whistle
7 Follows Jessie on return journey through forest
2 Threatens Jessie,
3 Sprog held captive
4 Forced into store-room with troops by gun-wielding May
5 Breaks out of room, gives chase to Jessie & May
6 Catches Jessie & Sprog with bikes
7 Jessie & Sprog run down & killed
8 Leaves club-house to steal fuel from tanker
1 Called by Johnny-the-boy about Max's running them down, leaves clubhouse
2 Finds Max's calling cards, leaves with Bubba
3 Runs Max down,
4 Watches as Bubba gets killed
5 Escapes in different direction to Johnny-the-boy
6 Followed by Max, runs into truck, killed (villain 'victory' is death)

1981 Road Warrior

Max

1 Set against murky skies, history given
2 Chased by bikers and cars – they try to shoot, crash instead
3 Stops at tanker wreck for fuel, wards off Wez & slave
4 Takes music box fallen from corpse driver's hand
Finds gyrocopter on land plot guarded by snake
5 Captured by Gyro Captain,
6 Dog helps distract GC –regains upper hand over him
1 GC tells of fuel processing plant
2 Drives captive GC to hilltop oversight of processing plant & Humungous' encampment, Sees Wez reporting to Humungous through binoculars
Eating dogfood from tin, gives tin to dog, GC tries to steal
Dawn escape attempt from plant, watches H's men give chase
3 Ties GC to log, Rescues captive, killing guard, Returns captive to compound
4 Made captive by survivor group, car confiscated/de-armed
5 Hears Humungous' offer to survivors
6 Frees self while survivors argue about H's offer
2 Gives music box to feral kid
3 Makes proposition to get tanker truck in exchange for fuel

Sneaks out at night with fuel, past H's camp
4 Finds GC gone, follows tracks, Makes GC carry fuel cans,
5 Return to gyrocopter, find body with ammunition, Loads gun, GC upset at bluff
2 GC flies them to truck rig site,
3 Gets fuelled up, Gives GC cuff keys,
4 Drives rig through biker camp to survivor compound,
5 Wez gets onboard
6 Makes it into compound, troops in pursuit
5 Takes over from injured guard fighting at compound wall
Recognised by Wez who escapes
3 Grateful survivors rescind suspicions, congratulate, gift of bullets
4 Refuses injured Pappagallo's request to drive rig and tanker
5 Fight with Pappagallo, knocks him down, Refuses to let feral kid leave with him
6 Drives out pre-dawn, chased by troops
7 Car driven off road, crashes, Crawls out to hide behind rock, raider kills dog
Car explodes, killing assailants
8 Max crawls way from crash site, Rescued by GC, taken back to compound
Clothes returned by feral kid
2 Offers to drive rig, survivors start break-out
3 Drives through camp, chased by troops, compound explodes
4 Shoots chasing car driver, Finds feral kid on board, pulls into cabin
5 Refuses Pappagallo's offer to jump to safety from tanker
6 Swings truck around 180 degrees
4 Pushes feral kid onto bonnet to retrieve bullet
5 Struggle with Wez for Kid
6 Crash head-on into Humungous' car, killing Wez also
7 Truck overturns, spilling load of sand
8 Marauders leave, Carries Feral Kid to safety
9 Rescued by GC in copter,
10 Returns to solitary life

Humungous

1 Seen giving instructions to his minions, gets information on Max from Wez
2 Arrives to propose exchange of prisoners/freedom for fuel
3 Prevents Wez from going berserk after slave's death by boomerang
4 Wakes to see Max's truck drive through camp, Wez on board
5 Gets out and loads pistol
6 Shoots at approaching Max & truck
7 Follows to compound with his troops, Tries to scale compound walls,
Beaten off by survivors
8 Night-long rant at survivors
9 Gives order for Max's car to be chased, Has Wez in chains, loads gun
Shoots gyrocopter, misses, Chases tanker truck
Kills Pappagallo with harpoon
10 Turns speed booster on, crashes head-on into Max's truck

1985 Beyond Thunderdome

Max

4	Wandering across desert with camel carriage
5	Carriage stolen by Jedediah & son
	Monkey throws out boots for Max
6	Wanders into Bartertown
2	Refuses radioactive water from street seller
	Offers to trade fighting skills for money
3	Removes weapons before being allowed inside to present offer to Auntie,
4	Recognises Jedediah & camels
	Taken aloft to see Auntie
5	Survives initiation test,
6	Employment offer made
2	Gets job shovelling pig-shit,
3	Meets Pig-killerand gets information
4	Attracts Master's attention about his vehicle
5	Forced by MasterBlaster to disarm his carriage
2	Accepts Auntie's task
3	Picks fight with MasterBlaster
4	Into Thunderdome, restraints applied
5	Begins to fight Blaster
6	Defeats Blaster, finds he is mentally handicapped and he can't kill him
7	Broke a deal, faces the wheel
8	Tied onto horse backwards & with disguise, loosed into desert
9	Horse collapses, sucked into sand pit, Monkey sent by Pigkiller brings water
4	Collapses, found by Savannah, Wakes in oasis, startled, tied up
5	Discovers childrens' story, Refuses Captain Walker title, or to fly plane
	Tells of wrecked world – Savannah defies him
	Shoots gun to scare Savannah, unsuccessful
6	Chases and punches out Savannah
7	Woken by child – Savannah and others have gone
2	Follows with three children
3	Finds Savannah and others
4	Children in danger,
5	Pulls children out of sandpit
6	All but one child saved
2	To Bartertown to rescue Master for the children's future
3	Aided by Pigkiller – leave in train engine & carriage
	Helps children discover the use of a gramophone
4	Fights off Bartertown boarders of the train
5	Wrests Master from Auntie
6	Rips arrow out of Pigkiller
7	Follows Jedediah Jnr into underground refuge
	Forces Jedediah to load plane with children
	Takes vehicle and clears flight path for plane
8	Jumps from vehicle before crash
9	Meets up with Auntie again
10	Left in desert injured

Auntie Entity

1 Receives visit from Max, tests him
2 Congratulates Max on survival,
3 Tells of MasterBlaster problem
4 Forced by MasterBlaster to declare him supreme to life embargo
5 Tells Max to pick fight
6 Oversees fight between Max & Blaster
7 Orders Blaster killed
Orders Max to the wheel – deal busted
Punishes Master by relocating him into pig pen
5 Rallies frightened residents from exploding Bartertown
Leads chase of train
6 Boards carriage and captures Master
7 Loses Master to Max
8 Leads troops into Jedediah's compound,
9 Chasing plane
10 Finds Max is prime antagonist, recognises kindred survival instinct
Leaves Max in desert

1986 Crocodile Dundee II

Mick

2 Dynamite fishing in harbour
3 Coastguard officers do not arrestor chastise
Brings fish to Sue in shower
1 Sue suggests he find a job
2 Asks about work at the pub, directed to Leroy
3 Does stationary delivery for Leroy
4 Walks out to talk to suicide
5 Slips at suicide's news of homosexuality
4 Home to Sue's call about kidnapping and meeting for mail handover
5 Visited by Detective, fobs him off
6 Catches police tail in men's toilet, gets information
4 At railway station finds criminal, passengers disembark
5 Uses tourist camera to blind criminal
6 Assisted to defeat criminal by two Japanese mistaking him for Clint Eastwood
1 Mick awaits response from Rico at home
2 Hood arrives with gun, Mick knocks him out
3 Hangs hood outside building upside down, gets information
4 Evades police by abseiling down building into dining room
2 Asks Leroy for introduction to local toughs
3 Meets Rat and crew, impresses them with knife skills
Leads convoy of cars towards Rico's mansion
4 Enters mansion whilst others distract guards
5 Knocks Miguel out with door, then Rico

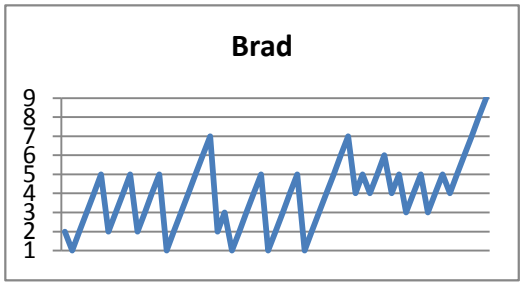
6	Rescues Sue, Greeted by Leroy, Rat (returns the jacket) and rent-a-crowd
2	Drops cooking eggs – replaces on plate, taken by Detective
3	Holds Sue out of bullet hail attack
2	Decides to head for Australia
3	Drops in on Walter, heads for 'Bilongamick'
	Shows Sue out of billabong swim his gold nugget
	On mountain-top retreat with Sue
4	Follows gunfire to Rico and captive Walter
5	Shoots captive Walter, shoots out vehicle tyres
6	Hangs Sue's bra in the trees to lure Oz baddie leader into a trap
	Instructs Sue to guard trussed-up baddie leader
	Mick bites chunk out of and throws captive baddie's hat into billabong
	Adds second captive to first, warns them Sue is protector, not guard
2	Takes Sue berry gathering, Uses woomera to call for help
3	Mixes paste of berries – stinks
3	Tosses berry past onto baddies, bats attack, lets Walter see him
4	Signals to Walter what direction to go in
5	Kidnaps Walter through crocodile attack ruse in front of Rico
6	Continues tailing Rico & Miguel (last 2 baddies ran away)
7	Notices smoke from Rico's fire
8	Captures Rico
9	Forces Rico to swap clothes as trap for Miguel (not seen)
10	Shot by Walter (disguised as Rico), Greets Sue & Walter

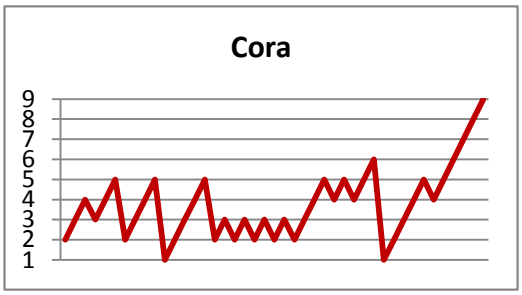
Rico

6	Photographed by Sue's ex killing a man point blank (prelude)
3	Greets kidnapped Sue in NY Mansion
4	Threatens Sue, forces her to ring Mick, tries charm on Sue, then threats
5	Dining with Miguel and Sue, both laugh at her insults
4	Waiting for Miguel to return from reconnoitre of house
5	Knocked out by Mick
1	In Australian shed, awaiting news of Mick's location
2	Flies into outback, Aboriginal man leaves on Mick's name
3	Threatens Walter to flush Mick out of hiding
4	Firing back at a hidden Mick who has shot Walter
5	Shooting wildly into the bush as bullock runs away with Oz baddie leader
4	Resting at billabong, another Oz baddie disappears into water
5	Unsure of Walter's tale of crocodile attack
	Uneasy due to woomera sound – Walter says it's a bird mating call
6	Drives off bat attack with gunshot
5	Suspicious of goanna replacement for another Oz baddie overnight
6	Sends Walter into water to find ford
7	Shocked by Walter's croc attack, Sets bush on fire,
8	Hides behind rock
9	Caught by Mick
10	Shot by Miguel (Rico disguised as Mick)

Appendix D: Chickflick Film Structures: 'Looping' of rom-hero/ine trajectories through the narrative functions (numbered 1-9).

1969 Age of Consent





Brad

2	DT	hurries to appointment
1	DESIRE	talks with agent about lack of inspiration/need for renewal
2	DF	sex in Brisbane
3	SUCCESS	finds celebrity on TV
4	DISRUPTION	Nathaniel makes contact – wants money
5	DF	to races with Nat, tries to avoid
2	DF	travels to island getaway with supplies, settling in, decorating
3	SUCCESS	explores isolated paradise
4	DISRUPTION	finds the island has other inhabitants,
5	DF	annoyed but responding to the island beauty
2	DT	sketching from reef viewing boat, sees Cora snorkelling
3	SUCCESS	sketches are good, happy with home decorations
4	DISRUPTION	Cora visits with fresh crustaceans
5	ST	bargains for seafood,
1	DESIRE	wants regular fresh protein supply
2	ST	asks Cora about supply of chicken
3	SUCCESS	happily cooking chicken
4	DISRUPTION	visited by policeman about Ms Marley's stolen chicken
5	DT	shares beer with the cop, pays Ms Marley for the chicken, scolds Cora
6	ST	accepts her motives, suggests modelling alternative,
7	DT	pays Cora for sand modelling,
2	ST	orders art supplies on mainland, bargains on behalf of Cora's catch
3	SUCCESS	relaxes at the pub, happy with himself
1	DESIRE	sketching Cora from boat
2	ST	asks her to swim nude
3	SUCCESS	happy with art result
4	DISRUPTION	Nat arrives after money/sanctuary
5	SF	accepts Nat's company reluctantly, watches him eat
1	DESIRE	frustrated at not working with Nat around (external constraint)
2	SF	promises Cora to get rid of Nat
3	SUCCESS	Nat's rape and decision to leave
4	DISRUPTION	discovers Nat's theft of money
5	DF	chases Nat, swimming after him

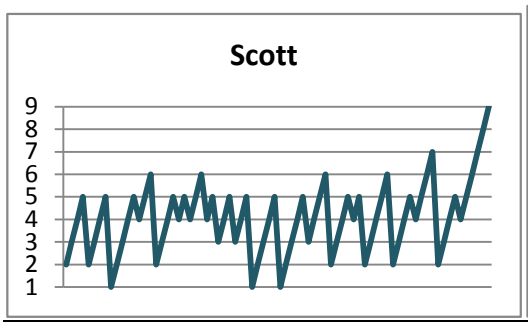
1	DESIRE	painting work resumes
2	ST	asks Cora to pose nude
3	SUCCESS	happy with resumed painting quality
4	DISRUPTION	grandmother interrupts, accuses him of molestation
5	DF	rescues his painting, pays grandmother off
6	DT	concerned about what to do next; goes to visit grandmother,
4	DISRUPTION	Cora rushes past; witnesses struggle and Grandmother's fall
5	DF	climbs down cliff to check,
4	DISRUPTION	grandmother dead,
5	DT	brings body up
6	SF	discusses with Cora ramifications of the death
4	DISRUPTION	policeman calls out
5	DT	goes to meet him while the dog and Cora 'find' the body
3	SUCCESS	fall theory accepted by the policeman, Cora chooses to remain on island
4	DISRUPTION	policeman returns money and art, Nat arrested
5	ST	drops charges, tells Nat off
3	SUCCESS	happy with his work, making cuppa
4	DISRUPTION	knocking, expects Cora but Isobel visits looking for Nat
5	ST	sends Isobel away
4	DISRUPTION	Cora visits, offers her money
5	SF	refuses money, tells of return of his property
6	ST	expressing joy at his handiwork, Cora gets upset
7	DT	follows Cora into the night water
8	SF	tells Cora of his returned inspiration and admiration for her
9	DF	Cora challenges him to show her, embrace

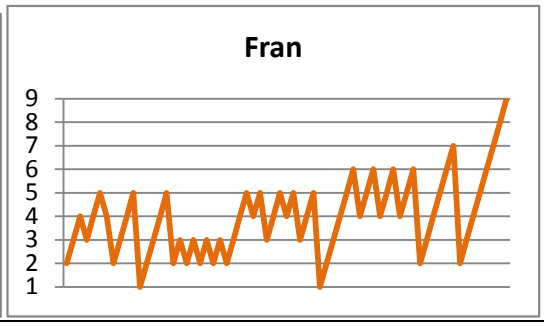
Cora

2	DF	steals from Brad's grocery store
3	SUCCESS	escapes detection
1	DESIRE	sells shellfish to bargaining Brad
2	DF	steals chicken
3	SUCCESS	checks savings hideaway, very happy with result
4	DISRUPTION	grandmother abuses her for lateness,
5	SF	defends herself, starts to quarrel
6	ST	stops quarrelling when grandmother uses emotional blackmail
4	DISRUPTION	scolded for stolen chicken by Brad
5	SF	defends herself from Brad's anger,
1	DESIRE	needs money to become a hairdresser
2	DT	accepts modelling offer, acting out the role
3	SUCCESS	paid for sand sculpture, Brad helps her bargain for her catch
1	DESIRE	rapt in magenta handbag
2	DF	buys handbag on impulse, tracks Brad to the pub
3	SUCCESS	returns to island, very DFoud of self
4	DISRUPTION	assaulted by boat skipper
5	DF	pushes skipper overboard
6	DT	throws him a rope
2	DF	pilots boat home, throws herself on her bed

3	SUCCESS	pleased with nude self examination in mirror
4	DISRUPTION	grandmother interrupts, angry
5	SF	fights back, grandmother backs down
2	DF	Cora removes dress whilst snorkelling/modelling for Brad
3	SUCCESS	happy with the money and the results of Brad's work
4	DISRUPTION	Nat turns up and Brad becomes anxious to hide his work
5	DF	has to sneak away on Nat's arrival, no work, no more money
2	DT	returns to night DFawning for work
3	SUCCESS	Nat gone, so modelling work resumes
4	DISRUPTION	grandmother intervenes, abuses both, Cora finds money gone
5	DF	fights with grandmother, grandmother slips, checks money bag
4	DISRUPTION	grandmother dead
5	DF	follows Brad's instructions
6	ST	screaming for help over grandmother's body on the beach
1	DESIRE	orphaned
2	ST	chooses to stay on the island
3	SUCCESS	happy to be allowed to do so
4	DISRUPTION	visits Brad and offers her savings, he refuses,
5	SF	upset at this, quarrels
4	DISRUPTION	Brad attempts to calm her
5	DF	runs into the water
6	DF	diving around Brad as he declares his need and admiration
7	ST	accepts his awkward apology, demands he do something to compensate
8	DT	awaiting Brad's response
9	DF	Brad dives in with her, they embrace

1992 Strictly Ballroom





Scott

2	DT	dancing in competition with Liz, boxed in, uses new steps
3	SUCCESS	escaped box-in, audience cheering
4	DISRUPTION	disqualified by Barry
5	SF	Quarrels with Liz, Wayne uninterested in new steps,
2	DT	dances with Les (coach), instructed to fix the issue, dances to Liz,
3	SUCCESS	Liz engages in the dance
4	DISRUPTION	Liz throws challenge,
5	DF	does new steps to Liz, she leaves angrily
1	DESIRE	alone, despondent and defiant
2	PA	tries new technique
3	SUCCESS	happy with dance DFactice result
4	DISRUPTION	discovers Fran watching him dance
5	SF	ridicules Fran's desire to dance with him
4	DISRUPTION	astounded by Fran's steps,
5	ST	requests more information/demonstration
6	SF	reconsiders their partnership
2	DT	takes Fran through dance, testing competencies
3	SUCCESS	dancing well together,
4	DISRUPTION	trials with a replacement dance partner – unsatisfactory
5	DT	continues coaching Fran's practice
4	DISRUPTION	trial with second unsatisfactory replacement partner
5	DT	continuing practice with Fran doing well
4	DISRUPTION	third trial with unsatisfactory replacement partner
5	ST	very pleased with Fran's partnership,
6	SF	tells of his history
4	DISRUPTION	dad Doug disrupts dance practice, escape onto roof
5	ST	watch Doug dance, asks Fran to remove glasses
3	SUCCESS	practice makes perfect, ready for competition
4	DISRUPTION	notices Fran's obsession
5	ST	tells Fran dance 'love' is only pretend
3	SUCCESS	congratulated at having found new partner
4	DISRUPTION	partner revealed as Tina Sparkle, Fran runs away
5	DT	follows and apologises to Fran, didn't know
1	DESIRE	Fran is envious of Tina's skill, Scott critically evaluates the performance
2	DT	takes Fran through Tina's dance steps
3	SUCCESS	dance attracts an appreciative audience

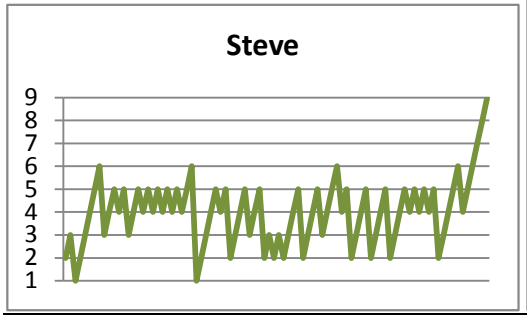
4	DISRUPTION	audience interrupts, Liz scoffs at Fran who trips
5	ST	refuses Tina as partner,
1	DESIRE	concerned for Fran after her fall
2	DF	follows Fran home,
3	SUCCESS	gets her attention
4	DISRUPTION	discovered by Fran's dad,
5	SF	declares Pasa Doble competence,
3	SUCCESS	dancing with Fran
4	DISRUPTION	demonstration laughed at,
5	SF	challenges back
6	DT	watches grandmother and dad demonstrate
2	DT	begins to learn the rhythm and steps
3	SUCCESS	accepted by the group as a dancer
4	DISRUPTION	home at 2 am, Shirley angry and abuses him
5	SF	engages in the quarrel
4	DISRUPTION	Shirley slaps him
5	DF	storms off
2	DT	practice at Fran's
3	SUCCESS	succeeds in learning the dance, kisses Fran
4	DISRUPTION	Barry tells about Shirley and Doug's history
5	DT	finds corroborating evidence in Doug's locker
6	DF	stunned by evidence
2	DT	out to dance with Liz, Shirley happy
3	SUCCESS	dancing well, lots of congratulations
4	DISRUPTION	Fran in beginners pointed out to him
5	DF	seeks out Fran
4	DISRUPTION	Fran quarrels with him, Doug insists on a chat, Shirley tries to intervene
5	DF	reacts to words 'life lived in fear'
6	DT	leaves dance floor to chase Fran
7	ST	apologises and convinces her to return,
2	DT	executes exciting entry to his performance
3	SUCCESS	they dance well,
4	DISRUPTION	Barry cuts the music and orders them off the floor
5	DF	prepares to surrender floor to Barry's demand
4	DISRUPTION	Doug claps rhythm, others join in
5	DF	responds to audience approval and encouragement
6	DT	concentration resumes on dance intensity
7	DF	music resumes, finale dance concludes,
8	DT	enjoying audience response, others join in
9	DF	kisses Fran, continue dancing

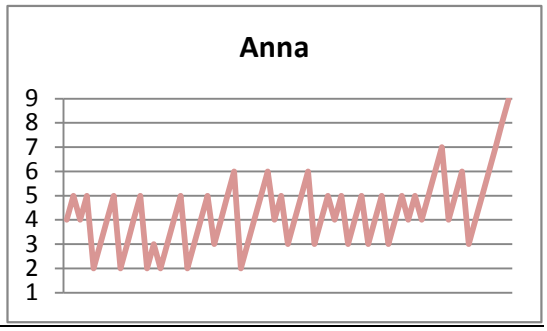
Fran

2	DF	in background at Waratah dance competition
3	SUCCESS	interviewed about Scott's performance
4	DISRUPTION	knocked over by Liz coming off the dance-floor
3	SUCCESS	given responsibility/recognition at the dance studio by Shirley
4	DISRUPTION	knocked over again by Liz who slips on the studio floor
5	DF	dashes out of the way
2	DT	dancing with Natalie
3	SUCCESS	given praise by Shirley
4	DISRUPTION	squashed behind door flung open by irate Liz
5	DF	hiding behind curtains watching Scott practice his new dance techniques
1	DESIRE	tells Scott she wants to dance with him at the Pan Pacific championships
2	SF	insists on his attention
3	SUCCESS	given a trial run with a basic dance Rumba
4	DISRUPTION	Scott takes over, ignoring her contribution
5	ST	attempts to tell of her skills, Scott ignores her
2	DF	stamps out her steps rhythm
3	SUCCESS	Scott very interested in new steps, they practice till late,
2	DT	critically watching the first of the trials,
3	SUCCESS	dancing practice with Scott
2	DT	critically watching the second trials,
3	SUCCESS	dancing practice improving
2	ST	comments on third trials
3	SUCCESS	given a new 'face' by Shirley,
2	DT	practice is becoming very good
3	SUCCESS	Scott reveals his history
4	DISRUPTION	Doug interrupts their practice
5	DF	relocate to the rooftop and watch Doug below
4	DISRUPTION	Scott asks her to dance without glasses
5	DT	dances without glasses
3	SUCCESS	ready to tackle State competition dancing, Scott walks her home
4	DISRUPTION	told that the dance of love is only pretend love,
5	ST	lies about her whereabouts to grandmother and father
4	DISRUPTION	ordered to attend fiesta following night
5	ST	lies to sneak out to dance competition
3	SUCCESS	greeted warmly by Shirley et al, thinks she is being congratulated
4	DISRUPTION	learns that Tina Sparkle is being mooted as Scott's hew partner,
5	DF	crying at lost opportunity
1	DESIRE	determines she can't dance like Tina, Scott thinks otherwise
2	DT	begin to dance with Scott,
3	SUCCESS	dancing well behind the curtains
4	DISRUPTION	family and Liz arrive, stumbles at Liz's derision
5	DF	tearful receipt of attention from others, castigation
6	ST	agrees to surrender Scott to his championship dreams,
4	DISRUPTION	Scott calls her away from fiesta,
5	ST	talks with Scott
6	DT	accepts Scott's apology
4	DISRUPTION	her dad discovers them

5	ST	tries to protect Scott,
6	DT	has to demonstrate pasa doble with Scott
4	DISRUPTION	laughed at by musicians, grandmother invites Scott in
5	DT	watching grandmother teach rhythm, father demonstrate/teach dance steps
6	DF	happy at Scott's acceptance by family and friends
2	ST	talking with grandma about lack of beauty
3	SUCCESS	dad recognises her as an adult, practice with Scott & family, Scott kisses her
4	DISRUPTION	dancing at Pan Pacifics with Natalie
5	SF	quarrel with Scott who is partnered by Liz, leaves with family
6	DT	receives Scott's apology and offer to return to dance
7	DF	accepts and returns to the dance hall
2	DT	begin to dance the pasa doble
3	SUCCESS	dancing acclaimed by the audience
4	DISRUPTION	Barry stops music, orders them off the floor, Doug begins to clap
5	DF	resumes the dance with Scott, audience claps time, Liz restarts music
6	DT	considers acclaim when dance is finished
7	DF	dancing to "love is all around" with family and friends
8	DT	they kiss
9	DF	continue dancing along with the audience

2001-71 The Man Who Sued God





Steve

2	DT	on trip home from successful fishing
3	SUCCESS	beats the storm to port, greeted by daughter Rebecca
1	DESIRE	remembers forgotten crayfish
2	DF	returning to the boat,
3	SUCCESS	haste to restart stalled dinghy engine due to oncoming storm
4	DISRUPTION	lightning strikes boat and it explodes, shrapnel pierces his leg
5	SF	Emergency removal of splinter, Jules and Les watch
6	ST	assures Les of insurance cover
3	SUCCESS	insurance assessor arrives DFomptly
4	DISRUPTION	told 'act of God' by insurance assessor, won't be compensated
5	SF	challenges local insurance manger, brother David, Jules overhears
3	SUCCESS	car loaned by Les to go to insurance head office,
4	DISRUPTION	remembering conversations with Jules and Rebecca
3	SUCCESS	finds parking spot outside office
4	DISRUPTION	given 'Act of God' excuse by insurance executive,
5	ST	threatens insurance executive with his crutch
4	DISRUPTION	thrown out of building, has a parking fine
5	SF	drunk, bemoaning fate to David over lunch
4	DISRUPTION	knocks Anna with his crutch,
5	ST	apologises, continues conversation with David
4	DISRUPTION	falls off his chair,
5	DF	upsets Anna's chair, strips her whilst helping her up, tips ice bucket onto her
4	DISRUPTION	gets slapped by Anna,
5	DT	eaves restaurant with David
4	DISRUPTION	cartoon and news article by Anna in newspaper read out by David
5	DT	makes abusive phone call to Anna
6	DF	heading home, sees message on church billboard,
1	DESIRE	reads meaning from the sign for his own problem
2	DT	turns around, re-registers, issues writ against the churches
3	SUCCESS	supported by Rebecca and Les but not Jules
4	DISRUPTION	media invades town,
5	DT	tries to escape,
4	DISRUPTION	found and recognised by Anna
5	DT	tries to boat away from Anna, helps her aboard after her dunking
2	ST	discussing his case with Rebecca and Jules
3	SUCCESS	relaxing with his dog in the caravan

4	DISRUPTION	Anna returns with picnic lunch,
5	ST	agrees to do TV show/interview,
6	DT	Anna coaching him,
4	DISRUPTION	they get lost in the studio
5	DT	retrace their steps
2	ST	begins interview, taking guidance from Anna
3	SUCCESS	charms audience and Cressida, offered more interviews
2	ST	begins court presentation
3	SUCCESS	the judge is interested in the case, to proceed,
2	ST	talks to media scrum outside the court
3	SUCCESS	at Anna's flat, considering next move
4	DISRUPTION	tries a move on Anna, warned off,
5	DT	settles back to discussion
2	ST	meets other potential litigants,
3	SUCCESS	meets Jerry at his club to discuss a deal
4	DISRUPTION	Anna disagrees with accepting the deal, leaves
5	ST	continues conversation with Jerry,
3	SUCCESS	hug reward for refusing the offer, news interviews more frequent
4	DISRUPTION	other litigants' cases overwhelming, seeks David's help
5	SF	quarrel with David over family responsibilities
6	DT	returning home by bus, sign on church makes him think
4	DISRUPTION	learns of attack on caravan park, Jules and Les want to move Rebecca to WA
5	ST	tries to talk them out of such a move, asks for sign he doesn't see
2	DT	back in Sydney, to Anna's for accommodation
3	SUCCESS	Anna lets him stay, supports his plan, to work with her next day
4	DISRUPTION	discovers David and Jerry lunching at restaurant
5	DF	serves David and Jerry fish
2	ST	planning strategies with Anna, through media scrum to court
3	SUCCESS	wins argument against insurance assessors (DFudence window),
4	DISRUPTION	media mob outside with Christian activists
5	ST	working on arguments with Anna
2	ST	presents litigant cases (Charity window),
3	SUCCESS	Anna helps plan next move, wins argument against clergy, both pleased
4	DISRUPTION	Catholic bishop takes stand (Temperance window) and argues well
5	ST	discusses new phase with Anna
4	DISRUPTION	Anna called to testify, discredited
5	SF	quarrel with Anna
4	DISRUPTION	both locked out onto court balcony
5	AC	visits church for guidance, then to see David
4	DISRUPTION	David antagonistic and tells him off
5	DT	visits synagogue, gets advice,
2	DT	returns to Anna's
3	SUCCESS	truce declared, apologises to Anna, discuss ways to a moral victory
4	DISRUPTION	kiss and sex
5	ST	Rebecca gives approval of Anna, Jules and Les supportive
6	DT	withdraws his case, giving reasons (Hope window), approval from the judge
4	DISRUPTION	cockatoo flies through smashed 'Hope' window
5	DF	hugs from Anna during recess

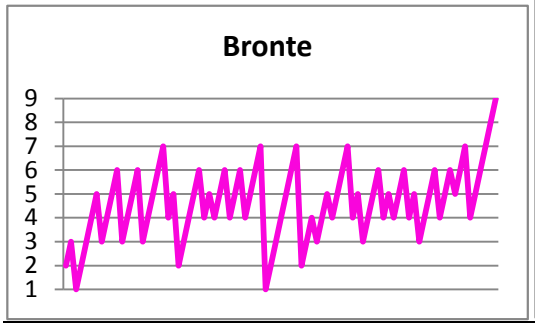
6	DT	judge hands down findings (Justice window)
7	ST	last words to media
8	SF	in dinghy with Anna, discussing book deal and future
9	DT	steering dinghy out of harbour with Anna and champagne

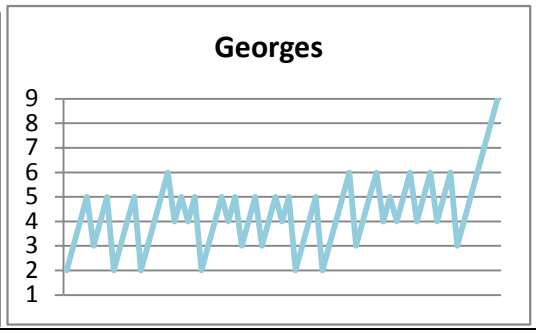
Anna

4	DISRUPTION	lunch with Hal upset by Steve's clumsiness
5	DT	tries to ignore Steve
4	DISRUPTION	knocked out of her chair, stripped, ice-bucket emptied into lap
5	DF	slaps Steve
2	ST	asks Hal for better reporter assignment
3	SUCCESS	given carte blanc to find a story,
4	DISRUPTION	amused by Steve's rude phone message,
5	ST	defends Steve's legal position re lawsuit on radio
2	DT	tracks down Steve
3	SUCCESS	recognition
4	DISRUPTION	falls into estuary while Steve tries to escape
5	DF	clings to dinghy and climbs aboard
2	DT	chooses Steve's story to follow up
3	SUCCESS	entices Steve to a lobster lunch, he agrees to media appearances
2	ST	coaches Steve for Cressida's show,
3	SUCCESS	happy with Steve's attention to her guidance
4	DISRUPTION	get lost in the studio
5	DT	retrace their steps till found
2	DF	giving interview response directions off-camera
3	SUCCESS	happy with Steve's performance, adopts management role
4	DISRUPTION	lots of mail from potential litigants, Hall gives a warning
5	ST	tells Steve about mail from other potential litigants
3	SUCCESS	Steve persuaded to listen to them
4	DISRUPTION	Steve tries to move in on her
5	ST	warns him off, they agree to work together
6	DT	listens to complainants' stories
2	DT	walking to Jerry's exclusive men's club with Steve
3	SUCCESS	succeeds in getting inside
4	DISRUPTION	tries to review Jerry's tabled offer, Steve appears interested
5	SF	quarrels with Steve and leaves
6	DT	waiting outside for Steve to emerge
4	DISRUPTION	learns he rejected the offer
5	DF	hugs him
3	SUCCESS	Steve doing public speaking under her supervision
4	DISRUPTION	Steve invites himself to stay overnight
5	DF	makes up a bed for him
6	ST	discussing the potentials of the case
3	SUCCESS	happy to see him sleeping on her couch next morning, both visit her office
4	DISRUPTION	Hal warns her off the story
5	SF	quarrels with Hal over the story
4	DISRUPTION	Steve insists they stop the car, gets out and accosts David and Jerry
5	DF	amused by Steve's serving them raw fish at their table

3	SUCCESS	support for Steve in the court-room (Prudence window)
4	DISRUPTION	news of wildfire near the city outskirts disrupts their preparation
5	ST	work on their arguments for court
3	SUCCESS	supports Steve at court (Charity window), triumphant expectations
4	DISRUPTION	Catholic prelate testifies, Hal sacks her
5	DF	carries plants out of office with security carrying her box behind her
6	ST	plans next move in court with Steve
4	DISRUPTION	called into the witness box
5	ST	gives evidence, defiant, quarrel with Steve over relevance of her evidence
4	DISRUPTION	locked onto court balcony
5	DT	at home alone
4	DISRUPTION	Steve arrives
5	SF	they declare a truce and decide to start again
6	ST	discuss the chances of a sexual relationship
7	DT	kiss and sex
4	DISRUPTION	checked out by Rebecca and meets Jules and Les outside court
5	ST	allays Jules' fears
6	DF	awaiting court responses to Steve's upcoming final speech (Hope window)
3	SUCCESS	shares success smiles with Steve at end of his speech
4	DISRUPTION	Hope smashes and cockatoo flies in and out again
5	DF	enjoying insurance discomfiture as judge sums up (Justice window)
6	DT	watches Steve's media performance on leaving court
7	DT	organises a book deal for Steve over the phone
8	DF	awaits Steve's response to her negotiations and management
9	DT	toast each other in champagne

1991-08 Green Card





Bronte

2	DT	buys a rosebud for a blind date at the Afrika café
3	SUCCESS	meets a stranger, gets marriage certificate, bids Georges farewell
1	DESIRE	desire exposed as a rooftop garden apartment
2	ST	interviewed for apartment
3	SUCCESS	gets lease, removes ring, garden project completed, celebration dinner
4	DISRUPTION	sees Georges as waiter
5	DF	tries to hide, orders food after uncomfortable interaction
3	SUCCESS	happy settling in at home, out dating Phil
4	DISRUPTION	Phil wants to see her apartment
5	DF	refuses, pushes him away
6	ST	interaction with doorman
3	SUCCESS	enjoying working in her garden
4	DISRUPTION	phone call from immigration
5	SF	upset that she cannot contact Georges, waiter gives her an address
6	DF	concerned about Georges' imminent visit
3	SUCCESS	Georges arrives and settles in, immigration interview proceeds
4	DISRUPTION	phone rings
5	DF	anxious to get Phil off the phone
6	ST	discussion with solicitor about what to do next
7	DT	welcomes Georges back to her flat with a gift of a fish for her pond
4	DISRUPTION	annoyed that he smokes, asks him to do it outside
5	SF	begins to nag him
2	DT	shopping for groceries
3	SUCCESS	directing his attention to her favourite brands
4	DISRUPTION	Georges invites Lauren for lunch, Mrs Bird demands answers
5	ST	attempts to deflect Mrs B's and Lauren's curiosity
6	SF	anxious about how well Georges and Lauren seem to get on
4	DISRUPTION	Lauren tells about her mother's trees and shows interest in Georges
5	SF	asks Lauren to leave, then quarrels with Georges
4	DISRUPTION	Georges warns her and accidentally breaks a picture frame
5	SF	angry, calls Georges names
6	DT	goes to her room, attempting to control emotions with breathing
4	DISRUPTION	Lauren rings about her mother's trees, invitation to dinner
5	ST	apologises to Lauren for her rudeness, declines invitation for

		Georges
6	DT	fresh from a shower, she approaches Georges to reconcile
4	DISRUPTION	discovers Georges has been gardening in her research patch
5	SF	quarrels with him and he walks away
6	DT	examines the vegetable seeds he has planted
7	ST	follows him to apologise, they agree to start over
1	DESIRE	tells Georges about her desire to green the city
2	DF	fiddling with her hair prior to dinner, Georges offers advice, she loosens it
3	SUCCESS	welcomed to the house, sits for dinner
4	DISRUPTION	Lauren arrives with Georges
5	DF	annoyed, wary and embarrassed about Georges' presence
6	DT	watches Georges charm Lauren's mother into giving up the trees
7	ST	at home they agree to work together,
2	DT	makes a bed for him, studying
3	SUCCESS	they exchange histories
4	DISRUPTION	acute awareness of Georges' presence whilst undressing
3	SUCCESS	enjoying creating a photograph honeymoon
4	DISRUPTION	parents arrive, along with a curious Mrs Bird
5	DF	attempts to get Georges out of the flat, fails
4	DISRUPTION	Georges and dad get on well
5	DF	keeping watch on dad and Georges
6	DF	surprised that dad likes Georges
7	ST	go to the park to study, getting on well
4	DISRUPTION	Phil waiting for her outside the building
5	DF	goes to Phil leaving Georges to act as a passer-by
3	SUCCESS	celebratory dinner with Phil feels wrong, picking at food
4	DISRUPTION	Phil follows her into her flat, Georges orders him out, revealing their secret
5	SF	abuses Georges and throws him out of the flat
6	DT	remembers the altercation
4	DISRUPTION	Mrs Bird inquires about Georges sleeping outside
5	ST	makes up reply, quarrels with Georges about Phil
4	DISRUPTION	both realise the time
5	DF	rushing to meet their immigration appointment
6	DT	revising their stories in the waiting room
4	DISRUPTION	to separate interview rooms
5	ST	careful to give correct answers
3	SUCCESS	pleased with her convincing performance, farewells Georges
4	DISRUPTION	immediate loss of pleasure as Georges walks away
5	DF	hurries home, upset
6	DT	ripe tomatoes suggest sadness,
4	DISRUPTION	musical piece arrives from Georges
5	DT	reads music score with invitation to meet at Afrika cafe
6	DF	deeply touched and relieved at his request
5	DT	hurries to the café
6	DT	long wait for Georges
7	DF	embrace and love declaration on his arrival
4	DISRUPTION	realises meaning of immigration presence
5	DF	tries to stop Georges leaving
6	SF	promises to meet again

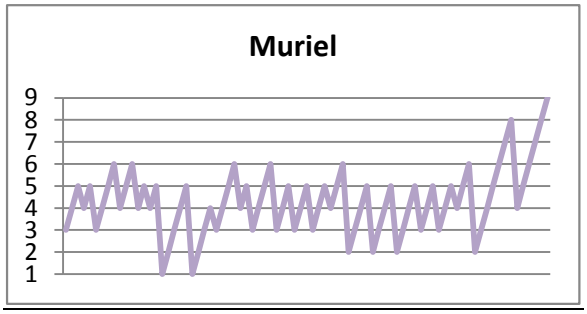
7	ST	asks about wedding rings
8	DT	put rings back on, kiss
9	DF	watches Georges leave after promise exchange

Georges

2	DT	meets Bronte at Afrika café for marriage
3	SUCCESS	post ceremony, exchange paperwork, farewell
4	DISRUPTION	sees Bronte at restaurant where he is their waiter
5	SF	is rude to her lover Phil, insists on making Bronte speak to him
3	SUCCESS	welcomed by the doorman,
4	DISRUPTION	Bronte highly anxious, quarrelsome
5	ST	helps to ease her anxieties, reminds her about her wedding ring
2	DT	holds her hand for the interview
3	SUCCESS	they give steady impression
4	DISRUPTION	Phil phones Bronte, she leaves to answer
5	ST	careful answers in Bronte's absence but suspicions aroused
2	DT	arrives with gift of a pet fish
3	SUCCESS	she accepts, good start to their co-habitation
4	DISRUPTION	Bronte upset at his smoking, coffee making
5	DT	grocery shopping
6	DT	learning about Bronte's favourite brands
4	DISRUPTION	run into Lauren
5	SF	invites her back for lunch
4	DISRUPTION	introduced to doorman's children as a celebrity, accosted by Mrs Bird
5	ST	careful conversation during elevator trip
2	DT	makes salad, charms Lauren
3	SUCCESS	squabbles with Bronte 'like an old married couple'
4	DISRUPTION	Bronte asks Lauren to leave
5	DF	lights cigarette
4	DISRUPTION	Bronte demands he take it outside
5	SF	they quarrel over Lauren's visit
3	SUCCESS	swings arms to indicate potential fury
4	DISRUPTION	accidentally knocks picture frame off the wall, smashing it
5	DT	cleans up the broken glass
3	SUCCESS	pleased with himself for having planted some vegetables
4	DISRUPTION	Bronte angry at his use of her experimental plot
5	DT	withdraws
4	DISRUPTION	Bronte apologises and tells him she is going out to dinner without him
5	ST	compliments Bronte on her attire, suggests she keep her hair loose
2	DT	arrives at dinner with Lauren
3	SUCCESS	obtains trees for Bronte, truce, serious study and exchange of history
4	DISRUPTION	acutely aware of Bronte in bedroom next door
5	DF	settles to sleep on the lounge
2	DT	writing notes about Bronte for his study
3	SUCCESS	having fun creating a 'honeymoon' in photographs

4	DISRUPTION	Mrs Bird tries to question him, Bronte's parents visit
5	DT	hides wedding certificate from dad
6	ST	confirms photograph as a holiday with Bronte
3	SUCCESS	accepted by Bronte's parents, good exchanges with Bronte in the park
4	DISRUPTION	Phil waiting outside the building for Bronte
5	DT	walks past as she greets him, pretending to be a pedestrian, turns to watch
6	DT	having dinner alone, settled to bed
4	DISRUPTION	woken by Phil following Bronte into the flat
5	SF	orders him out, revealing their secret
4	DISRUPTION	Bronte furious, throws him out of the flat
5	DT	sleeps on doorstep
4	DISRUPTION	woken by curious Mrs Bird
5	ST	pretends with Bronte it was an accident
6	SF	quarrels with Bronte
4	DISRUPTION	realise the time
5	DF	rush to keep immigration appointment
6	DT	revising information about Bronte
4	DISRUPTION	taken to separate rooms, fails the interview
5	ST	takes responsibility for the failure, does not tell Bronte
6	DT	accepts Bronte's wedding ring, farewells
3	SUCCESS	Bronte waiting at Afrika, kiss
4	DISRUPTION	immigration officials arrive to deport him
5	ST	confesses to Bronte,
6	PA	starts to leave, Bronte calls him back
7	DF	promises to write,
8	SF	returns her ring, vows exchanged to each other
9	DF	hug and kiss, walks to car, turns to look at Bronte

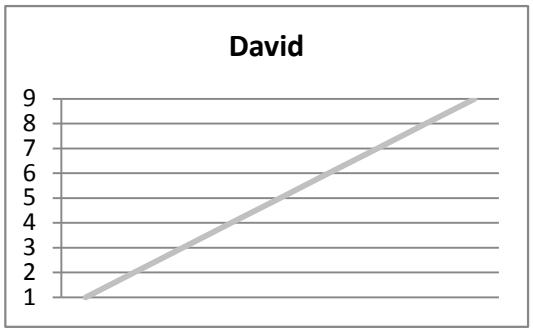
1994-06 Muriel's Wedding

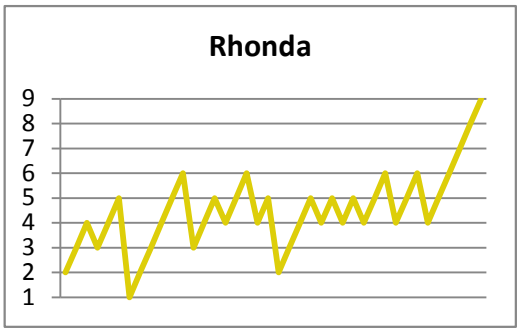


Muriel

2	DF	striving with others to catch Tania's wedding bouquet,
3	SUCCESS	ecstatic at her success
4	DISRUPTION	Tania, Cheryl and Janine, the bridesmaids, abuse her
5	DF	surrenders the bouquet to Cheryl,
4	DISRUPTION	gets bouquet thrown back at her
5	DT	wanders off to get some wedding cake
3	SUCCESS	congratulated on her catch
4	DISRUPTION	recognised by the store detective, discovers Nicole and Chook at sex
5	DF	watches the show
6	DF	unsure what to do about the information
4	DISRUPTION	arrested ad driven home to irate dad, Bill
5	SF	lies about having bought the dress, sent to find dress receipt
6	DF	despondent in her room to ABBA's 'Dancing Queen'
4	DISRUPTION	castigated by Bill in the restaurant
5	SF	tries to defend herself
4	DISRUPTION	Deirdre offers her a job
5	ST	she accepts
1	DESIRE	fascinated by wedding dress shop, desire revealed
2	DF	joins in discussion of Tania's disastrous wedding night
3	SUCCESS	assumes she is part of the group
4	DISRUPTION	the girls reject her
5	DF	bursts into loud sobs
1	DESIRE	told of Bill's cheque from mum, Betty
2	ST	advises Betty she needs a blank cheque
3	SUCCESS	at Hibiscus Island , noticed by Tania's group
4	DISRUPTION	Tania throws drink in her face, abused by others
3	SUCCESS	in dark glasses at night pretending to recapture her success feeling
4	DISRUPTION	recognised by Rhonda
5	SF	makes up a story about getting married to Tim SIms
6	ST	befriended, tells Rhonda about Chook and Nicole
4	DISRUPTION	Rhonda upsets Tania with the news
5	DT	partnering Rhonda in rendition of ABBA's 'Waterloo'
3	SUCCESS	win the contest, champagne and friendship sealed to ABBA's 'Fernando'
4	DISRUPTION	considers her failings, Rhonda supportive, Deirdre tells Bill of the subterfuge
5	DT	reviewing her situation on the drive home

6	DF	greeted by anxious Betty, Bill on his way, turns and leaves
3	SUCCESS	happy at work, Brice asks her out
4	DISRUPTION	Rhonda curious about fiancé's reaction
5	SF	makes up escape from controlling male, changes her name to Mariel
3	SUCCESS	enjoying her date with Brice, they return to her flat
4	DISRUPTION	Bill makes a televised plea for her to return
5	DF	corrects his pronunciation, then realises he can't hear
3	SUCCESS	ecstatic shrieking at prospect of sexual encounter
4	DISRUPTION	Rhonda's dates interrupt, Rhonda slumps down, unable to stand
5	ST	phones home to talk to Betty
4	DISRUPTION	told news – marital breakdown, police investigation, Rhonda's tumour
5	DF	finds her way to a bridal store, tries on a dress
6	SF	lies about dying mother, given a photograph to ABBA's 'Mamma Mia'
2	DT	accumulates bridal photos of herself in an album
3	SUCCESS	adopts support role for Rhonda, bride hobby continues
4	DISRUPTION	Rhonda discovers the album and confronts her
5	DF	bursts into tears and confesses about fictional Tim
2	ST	talking with Bill on the phone, luncheon date
3	SUCCESS	has earned Bill's grudging respect for her audacity
4	DISRUPTION	Deirdre arrives, their affair exposed, Rhonda's tumour returns
5	DT	searches personal columns
2	DF	follows up on David's ad
3	SUCCESS	Delighted with David, gets the job
4	DISRUPTION	Rhonda asleep, consequences dawn
5	DF	stares at her reflection to ABBA's 'Dancing Queen",
3	SUCCESS	wedding to ABBA's 'I do I do I do', Tania et al are bridesmaids
4	DISRUPTION	Rhonda angry with her desertion, David challenges her morality
5	SF	declares she always wanted to win
3	SUCCESS	watching home video of her wedding
4	DISRUPTION	news of Betty's death, Deirdre cleaning house, burnt backyard explained
5	DF	goes to talk with sister Joanie
4	DISRUPTION	told of Betty's suicidality
5	DT	watching Bill's self-obsession at Betty's funeral
6	DF	assimilating all recent shocks
2	DT	leaves funeral service
3	SUCCESS	mourns Betty, David comforts with kiss and implied sex
4	DISRUPTION	Muriel leaves David, returns ring and some of Bill's money
5	ST	talks with Bill about the future
6	SF	declines Betty's job, lectures Bill on his responsibilities
7	ST	apologises to Rhonda
8	DT	accepts Tania et al's derision
4	DISRUPTION	challenged by Rhonda
5	ST	answers honestly
6	DT	jubilant as they leave the house
7	DF	exchange look of love with Rhonda in the car
8	ST	confirming their future together
9	SF	farewelling porpoise Spit to ABBA's 'Dancing Queen'





David

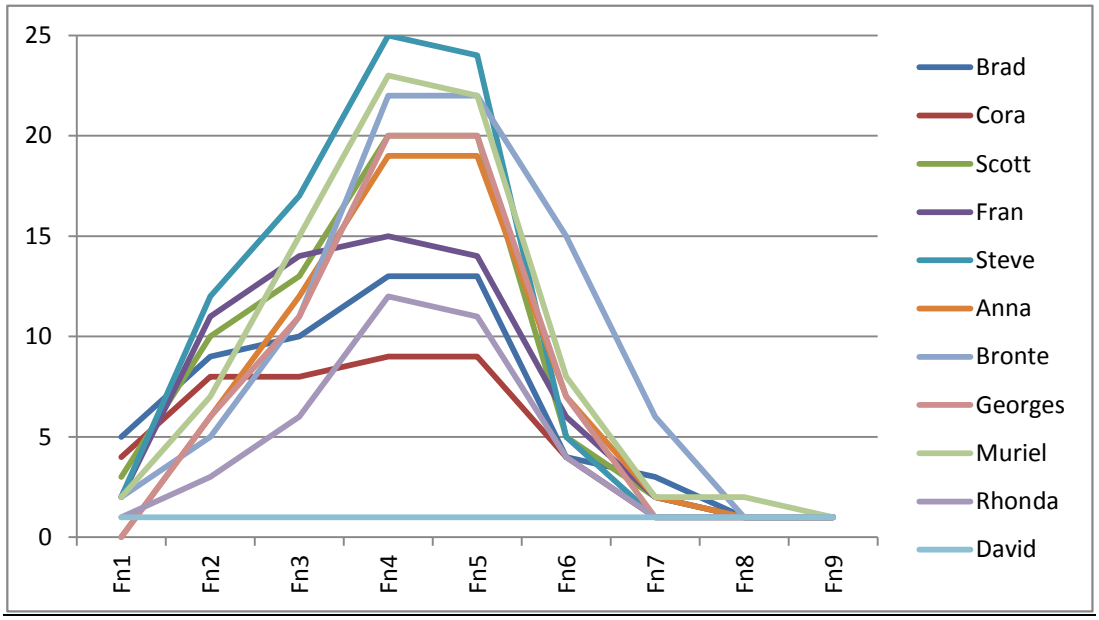
1	DT	swim training whilst waiting for response from the newspaper ad
2	DF	meets Muriel,
3	SUCCESS	not happy with the choice, manager is enthusiastic, marries Muriel
4	DISRUPTION	challenges Muriel's morality
5	DF	downstairs to swim at night
6	DT	waiting for Muriel outside the funeral service for Betty, comforts her, offers glass of water, kiss
7	ST	offers to keep the marriage binding, refuses return of money
8	DF	accepts Muriel's leaving
9	SUCCESS	a free man

Rhonda

2	ST	recognises Muriel
3	SUCCESS	befriends her, learns Nicole's secret,
4	DISRUPTION	disrupts Tania's holiday by exposing Nicole,
3	SUCCESS	triumphant rendition of ABBA's 'waterloo', they win the competition
4	DISRUPTION	Muriel admits low esteem
5	ST	supports Muriel, expresses admiration
1	DESIRE	tells Muriel she doesn't have a date
2	DT	checking out Brice from her dry-cleaning workplace
3	SUCCESS	conspiracy details from Muriel, 'hooks up' with two servicemen
4	DISRUPTION	collapses, told of spinal tumour
5	DF	physiotherapy and self-pity
6	SF	asks Muriel to stay with her
3	SUCCESS	at home, delighted with the cabbie
4	DISRUPTION	discovers Muriel's wedding album,
5	DF	tracks her down in bridal shop
4	DISRUPTION	confronts Muriel about her wedding, tumour returns
5	DT	smoking in the dark, tells Muriel the news
6	DF	asleep and unaware of Muriel's contract with David
4	DISRUPTION	mum wheels her to the front of the church
5	ST	quarrels with mum

2	DF	turns wheelchair about and finds a spot at the back
3	SUCCESS	has good view but not easily seen
4	DISRUPTION	Tania and the bridesmaids find her
5	SF	defends her right to self-control against Cheryl
4	DISRUPTION	Tania reveals her divorce from Chook
5	DF	watching ceremony intently
4	DISRUPTION	discovered by Muriel behind the church, smoking
5	SF	quarrels with Muriel
4	DISRUPTION	Tania et al promise to 'push her around'
5	SF	stands up for herself against their enthusiasm
6	ST	concerted effort to make Tania et al behaviourally self-aware
4	DISRUPTION	Muriel arrives and apologises
5	SF	starts to quarrel with her, challenges her
6	DT	considers Muriel's answer and her options
4	DISRUPTION	Tania challenges Muriel
5	ST	accepts Muriel's offer, tells Tania's group off,
6	DF	hurry to the taxi
7	ST	near-kiss with Muriel, apologises to mum
8	DF	look of love shared with Muriel
9	SF	farewelling Porpoise Spit

SUMMARY: Rom-hero/ine transitions through the 9 functions (see Chapter 7 for in-text discussion)**.**



Appendix E: Costumes for Muriel and Rhonda

Muriel's Wardrobe:

Costume 1: Yellow & black leopard print dress;
Long orange-brown hair;
Red lipstick.

Costume 2: White dress with Green/Brown print;
Gold hairtie and earrings;
Pink lipstick & nails .

Costume 3: Red/white striped jumper; No lipstick.

Costume 4: Blue/White/Grey patterned blouse;
Red lipstick.

Costume 5: White nightshirt; No lipstick.

Costume 6: Light Brown hat with Green & Magenta trim;
Green/orange/magenta/yellow/black striped top;
Blue, orange and magenta beads; Red lipstick.

Costume 7: Dark sunglasses; Red dress, scarf & hairtie;
Gold earrings; Red lipstick.

Costume 8: Violet cap; Blue & orange jacket;
Red earrings, top & bag; Magenta shorts;
Red lipstick.

Costume 9: Long blonde wig; White jumpsuit & choker; Pink lipstick.

Costume 10: White vest; Violet/magenta patterned top &skirt;
Pink/orange/black hairclips; Yellow beads;
Orange /magenta earrings; No lipstick;
Carrying her brown hat and a green/black patterned suitcase.

Costume 11: Red/green/black patterned top;
Blue pants; Dark blue vest; Blue beads;
Gold earrings; Pink lipstick.

Costume 12: Black jacket, top, bra & trousers;
Gold belt buckle; Gold earrings;
Orange lipstick & nails; Shoulder-length hair.

Costume 13: White wedding dress No. 1; white pearl choker; No lipstick.

Costume 14: Light blue vest; Black top;
White/red/yellow/orange/green striped pants; Pink lipstick.

Costume 15: Grey/white striped top; Dark blue vest;

Blue jeans; Dark sunglasses; Pink lipstick.

Costume 16: White wedding dress No. 2; Floral head-wreath; Pink lips.

Costume 17: Magenta dress; Black/white/red bag;
Black shoes; Gold earrings;
Black pendant; Pink lipstick.

Costume 18: White wedding dress No. 3;
Gold coronet; Gold & pearl drop earrings; Red lipstick.

Costume 19: Green/pink/red floral insert in a black dress;
Pink-orange lipstick.

Costume 20: Black undershirt;
Green/black/pink/white/blue/yellow/orange patterned dress;
Orange lipstick.

Costume 21: Black/brown patterned dress; No earrings;
Orange lipstick.

Costume 22: Black top; Black/grey patterned skirt;
Gold earrings; Orange lipstick.

Costume 23: Black dress; No earrings; Orange lipstick.

Costume 24: Brown top; Black pants; Orange lipstick.

Costume 25: Brown top; Black skirt with pink rose pattern;
Orange lipstick.

Rhonda's Wardrobe

Appendices

Costume 1:	Green Dress & beads, red lips
Costume 2:	Black-white glasses & top, red-black shorts, White-magenta bag, red lips & earrings
Costume 3:	Dark wig, white costume, pink lips
Costume 4:	Blue lit-former costume, Red lips (black in light), no wig
Costume 5:	Cyan uniform, yellow insignia, red lips & phone, Blue-yellow check tights
Costume 6:	Black bra-top and trousers, red lips
Costume 7:	Purple satin sheet, red lips
Costume 8:	White hospital gown, no lipstick, Blue-yellow-green curtains & bedspread
Costume 9:	Blue teeshirt, red/white insignia, Blue track-pants, no lipstick
Costume 10:	Purple bra-top, pink/red lips
Costume 11:	Blue jacket, red-white trim, Purple bra-top, pink/red lips
Costume 12:	Purple bra-top, pink/red lips, Red shorts
Costume 13:	White sleepwear, blue sheets
Costume 14:	Pink dress, red-magenta-yellow-green pattern, Purple hair-ribbon, pink/red lips
Costume 15:	White dress, blue-green pattern, pink lips, Red socks, brown boots