'The Problem With Realism and Naturalism in Cinema'

'The world in which you live from day to day is made from habit and memory. The perilous zones are the times when the self, also made from habit and memory, gives way. Then, if only for a moment, you may become something other you have been.' (John Gray, The Silence of Animals)

This quote from Gray pretty much sums up the entire polemic of my book on cinema (Film, Nihilism and the Restoration of Belief), but perhaps a lot more elegantly and concisely than me. I also didn't discover Gray's book, The Silence of Animals from which the quote is taken, until some time after the book had been published, otherwise I would almost certainly have included it. I believe that the world and the constructed selves presented by so many 'popular' films (classic continuity) are direct analogues of the everyday world and the selves made from habit and memory within it. However, I argue that certain types of film (what I call 'counter-sense films') are capable of creating moments where that world and self are overwhelmed, disrupted, disoriented, and overcome, allowing for something else - visions of different worlds and other selves - other possibilities for becoming. There are films that go beyond the orthodoxies associated with the dominant paradigm of popular cinema, and enable us to perceive things otherwise, that profoundly disturb our perceptual habits and patterns of thought, and suggest new ways of perceiving the world, new emotional affects and new ways of thinking.

However, in my paper today I want to focus on something other than these unorthodox 'counter-sense' films, and talk about something I think is very necessary, and which is the subject of the first chapter of my book - namely the power of classical continuity film. This analysis brings me into direct confrontation with two of the major cognitive and analytic film theorists - the philosopher Noel Carroll and the film theorist David Bordwell.

Arguably, the most prevalent and debilitating cinematic myth is that of realism and naturalism - where the cinematic world is taken to be an ontological analogue of a real world. How is it that film manages to achieve this? I think that the answer to this question lies in a detailed reflection on what makes up film's materiality (i.e. its essential photographic quality), together with filmic form and its peculiar ability to emulate normal and established perceptual processes in the minds of the audience. I am not going to spend any time today on any discussion of film and photography (which I do in the book), but concentrate my attention on film and the development of classical continuity. In classic Hollywood films of the 1930's and 1940's a set of clearly defined orthodox techniques emerged for establishing the filmic realm as an analogue of the existing world. These techniques became habituated, naturalised and established - operating invisibly and seamlessly within much mainstream film today.

The basic function of the continuity system is to create a smooth flow between different the different shots that make up the film. Early forms of cinema tended to emulate the fixed perspective of theatre, and consisted of longer static shots where numerous actions would unfold. As cinema developed it abandoned the theatrical aesthetic. Through being situated in a unified and consistent temporality in recognisable and definable spatial locales the assemblage of shots made for most conventional films began to be organised and edited primarily through the continuous dynamics of action narrative. This form of editing dynamic binds all of the depicted action into a tight chain of cause and effect where different events are linked through a transparently readable series of associative chains which occur in

ordered space and time. The space of each scene is constructed along an axis of action, where it is assumed that everything takes place along a discernible, predictable line. This ensures the perception of common space from shot to shot. Space is delineated clearly. As a viewer I know exactly where characters are in relation to each other and to the setting. I always know where a character is with respect to the unfolding narrative action. The space of the scene, clearly and unambiguously articulated, does not jar or disorient; such disorientation would distract me from the centre of the action (and, therefore, the narrative chain of causal associations). So powerful is my desire to follow the action flowing across the edits in classical continuity film that I tend to either ignore the cut between shots or am simply unaware of its presence. Psychologically the similarity of movement and milieu from shot to shot holds my attention as a viewer more than the differences resulting from the edits.

One of the enduring characteristics associated with classic Hollywood cinema is its insistence upon constructing continuity narrative on the assumption that the primary active forces are embodied within the individual characters who act as causal agents. Hollywood has refined and accelerated this fundamental narrative strategy to such an extent that it has become almost entirely 'naturalised' within the minds of contemporary audiences. Indeed, much contemporary film theory operates on the dubious assumption that the dominant narrative convention of classical Hollywood continuity cinema appears the way it does, and is so successful, simply because 'that is how the mind actually works'. However, it is surely just a convention that has such a powerful grip as to have become effectively naturalised in the mind of audiences.

Let's consider a sequence from an iconic Hollywood film that might be considered emblematic in this regard. The sequence is the opening sequence from Alfred Hitchcock's 1958 film Vertigo, which immediately follows Saul Bass's wonderful opening titles.

[Show Sequence}

The sequence self-evidently consists of a night-time rooftop chase in San Francisco. It begins with a close-up of an iron rung followed by two hands gripping it. The camera pulls back to reveal a figure pulling himself up a ladder onto a rooftop, and he runs out of shot. He is closely followed by a uniformed police officer carrying a gun. Within seconds the inferential association has been clearly established for the audience – this is a pursuit, in fact it is a dangerous pursuit signaled by both the height of the location and the police officer's weapon. The uniformed policeman is closely followed onto the roof by a plain-clothed figure (played by James Stewart) – the clear logical inference at this point being that he is the detective in the scenario. We then cut to a panning shot of the San Francisco cityscape (clearly signaled by such iconic locations as the Golden Gate Bridge visible in the shot), emphasising and underlining for us the perilous height of this pursuit. Two bullets are fired by the policeman during this part of the pursuit. We cut to a shot of the pursued figure leaping across a gap between buildings onto an adjacent roof and successfully pulling himself up and over. He is then followed by the policeman, who also leaps but is shown to slightly stumble and slip before also successfully pulling himself up and over. This logical sequence quickly initiates an immediate sense of suspense for we the audience realise that the figure of the detective now must also make this leap. In fact, as the detective leaps he stumbles, slips and is shown falling off of the roof. He is left hanging from a gutter by his fingertips. We immediately cut to a shot of the policeman who realises that the detective has fallen, and he looks back and makes the decision (a

seemingly natural decision for us) to go back and help. We are shown the detective hanging desperately from the gutter and staring down at the city several storeys below, and at this point Hitchcock introduces his famous 'vertigo' zoom shot as we are shown the first-person perception shot of the detective's vertiginous experience of heights which freezes him in terror. The policeman leans over and encourages the detective to 'give me your hand', but the detective is rigid with fear. The subsequent shots accentuate the extreme peril as we are shown the detective shot from above as he hangs from the rooftop. The policeman leans out further to try and reach him but slips and is shown falling to his death. With absolutely minimal dialogue, relying solely upon the logic of the edited sequence of images, Hitchcock manages to convey, at the very beginning of the film, all of the salient narrative information, as well as a good deal of suspense, terror and anxiety, in the most efficient and 'natural' way. By the end of this short sequence we know that the plain-clothed character played by James Stewart is a San Francisco police detective, that he has a incapacitating fear of heights, and that this incapacitation contributed to the death of a policeman. These three key pieces of information are absolutely vital for understanding the subsequent events of the film, and they are all conveyed through filmic sequencing alone. Crucially this sequencing is immediately accessible and cognitively transparent to audiences watching the film.

How do the conventions at play in a classic sequence such as this actually work, and how do they manage to present themselves as 'naturalised' realms of cause and effect? Classic Hollywood films function through psychological, behavioral and moral norms. They allow for easy identification by an audience, activating cognitive norms, associative patterns of thinking and behaving, and recognisable forms of identity and interpersonal relations. They solicit a desire for narrative coherence in reality – closure, pattern, symmetry, synchronicity and significance. Part of what makes classic continuity film appear invisible and, to some extent, natural, is its developed ability to draw upon a range of cognitive skills we have acquired for negotiating the everyday world and that are so familiar that they appear entirely automatic. Continuity editing is a powerful tool for reinforcing our cognitive and perceptual habits, rendering film as an organic naturalistic phenomenon. The classical Hollywood film world is marked by a high level of internal consistency where events appear to not be constructed for filmic purposes but as a pre-existing and tangible story-world that is framed and recorded from without. Such classical film narration usually involves the concealment of the means of production and creates an illusion of the passive, invisible and outsider observer who is watching a spectacle that appears not to have been artificially constructed but that pre-exists its formal and narrative representation in film. Hence, the ongoing significance of having a recognisable filmic milieu. The form that the action of the narrative takes for the spectator can be considered as a carefully constructed analogue of their natural psychology. Since the 1930's the practical and technical devices which are employed by Hollywood have become organised into a highly stable and robust paradigm, and, like all paradigms, have a tendency to become naturalised as the truth, or as reality itself. The stylistic conventions associated with this classical paradigm have become immediately and intuitively recognisable to most audiences. Within the dominant Hollywood tradition there is a continued obedience to a set of highly developed extrinsic norms which govern the formal construction of most films. The principal innovations, to the extent to which they exist, occur almost completely at the level of content, in terms of the stories which films tell within certain established genres, rather than form.

Consider the conventional art of cinematic realism in terms of its sequencing and narration. According to cognitive approaches, typical cinematic form engages important

aspects of our perceptual apparatus and cognitive associations that are already established for processing our understanding of the reality in which we function. The same cognitive architecture is activated by cinema as by everyday reality, and just as our abiding cognitive concern is with a search for coherent sense, the same goes for our relationship with film. According to such a view cinematic sequences are constructed through a variety of formal means for exploiting our 'natural' cognitive and perceptual dispositions. One of the most prominent advocates of this view of film is the American film philosopher Noel Carroll, who deploys a cognitive schema to comprehend the norms governing film perception and cognition. Carroll's approach identifies three major formal components that are utilised by film for successfully influencing and directing the audience's attention – 'indexing', 'bracketing' and 'scaling'. I want to look at each of these in turn.

Indexing occurs when the camera isolates filmic attention on a specific subject through movement, cut or zoom. For example, Alfred Htchcock, a master of the art of 'indexing', uses it very effectively in a number of sequences from Vertigo, as well Dial M for Murder, Rear Window and North by Northwest. In Vertigo, when the retired detective character of Scottie, played by James Stewart, is employed by an old college friend to trail his wife Madeleine, played by Kim Novak, the friend invites him to observe them at dinner at a restaurant called Ernie's so that he can subsequently recognise her.

[Show sequence]

In this sequence we move slowly from a close-up of Scottie sat at the bar to a wide shot of the entire restaurant before focusing upon the table where his friend and Madeleine are sitting. As they leave the restaurant Madeleine walks past Scottie and Hitchcock uses an indexical technique to isolate Madeleine's face in profile for Scottie. (There is a beautiful rhythm to the editing in this sequence) This technique for isolating this character's profile is used again later in the film when a now grief stricken Scottie spots a girl in the street who resembles the dead Madeleine. The technique is notably used again in the film when Scottie and Madeleine visit the Spanish Mission to recover the past which seems to be haunting Madeleine. Standing outside the Mission's chapel Madeleine insists on going in alone, and as she breaks from Scottie's embrace she stops and stares up at the chapel's tower before running into the chapel. We cut to an indexical shot of this tower. We then cut back to Scottie who sees her glance upwards and looks there himself. We cut back to another indexical shot of the tower and then back to a close-up of Scottie's face as he realises, too late, her suicidal intentions. Both of these indexical shots of the tower serve to clarify the narrative intentionality of the sequence, allowing the audience to identify with the thoughts and actions of the characters onscreen. The final example of indexing is in fact the key to Scottie's unlocking of the elaborate criminal conspiracy within which he has become enmeshed, and concerns the instance of Carlotta Valdes' necklace. Towards the end of the film when the grief stricken Scottie has made over the character of Judy to resemble the dead figure of Madeleine he recognises the necklace that Judy asks him to put on her as having belonged to Madeleine. As he recognises the necklace around Judy's neck Hitchcock provides a series of indexical flashback shots of the necklace appearing in the portrait of Carlotta Valdes, around Madeleine's neck and then around Judy's neck. It is the necklace which allows him to realise the truth that Judy and Madeleine are in fact one person, and that he has been hoodwinked all along by an elaborate criminal conspiracy perpetrated by his old college friend to murder his wife.

For Carroll this process of perceptual isolation and focus emulates the way our perceptual system actually functions in the everyday world, and is a powerful means for simulating the way our perceptual system is composed of successive shifts of attention that appear automatic and natural. A character's isolated perception of an object is emulated for us through a rapid moment of visual indexing, and more often than not this has the seamless appearance of according with the natural flow of our own perceptual expectations and habits. Although highly stylised and artificial, demanding a high level of technical innovation and post-production, indexing has emerged as a very successful means for ensuring the smooth and seemingly natural flow of images in film narartive.

In addition to the techniques developed with regards to 'indexing', the cinema is also able to direct our attention by 'bracketing' what it is that we are seeing on screen at any given point in time. By choosing to focus attention on specific objects, characters or events, the camera is able to edit out everything that is beyond the natural perimeter of the frame. Take, for example, the opening scene of Quentin Tarantino's Pulp Fiction, which famously depicts a conversation in a booth at a diner between two characters (played by Tim Roth and Amanda Plummer). For the purposes of this sequence the booth is bracketed off from the rest of the diner (which is, at this point, not narratively significant). Our attention is focussed entirely upon the two interlocutors. Later, as the film unfolds and the characters initiate a heist, the bracketing is loosened so that our attention becomes diverted away from the booth onto the diner as a whole. Bracketing provides an effective and flexible means for directing perceptual attention in film, and has become one of the cornerstones of classical narrative filmmaking. However, in addition to its role in directing perception, it has also become an effective means for implying exteriority and ontological continuity, thereby becoming part of the way film attains a sense of realism. The danger of artificially bracketing off a specific milieu is that one might easily isolate and hermetically separate a particular scene from its continuity with the outside world (e.g. as in a Beckett play, but in Beckett hermetic claustrophobia is entirely intentional). This creates a perceptual disturbance and disrupts the spectator's overall expectation of filmic realism. However, techniques have emerged to ensure that bracketing continues to imply exteriority and continuity. Two examples which demonstrate this, both taken from Alfred Hitchcock, are found in the bracketed apartment set of Rope and the rear of the apartment block in Rear Window. In both films the bracketing of a specific milieu is absolutely crucial to the success of the subsequent action. Yet with both films Hitchcock devised innovative ways to imply ontological exteriority and continuity. In Rope this is achieved by the shifts in light across the cityscape of the apartment window, together with occasional external sounds. In Rear Window there is an alley between apartment buildings which leads to a busy city street with a bar on the opposite side. Here Hitchcock allows us a limited and subtle view onto an imaginary external world (outside of the main filmic milieu of the apartment buildings themselves), which is indicated by passing traffic and pedestrians.

Bracketing has become one of the most powerful orthodox techniques for isolating perceptual activity to a specific filmic milieu, set of characters and objects, yet maintaing a sense of organic naturalism and ontological realism. By utilising this technique the filmmaker is able to indicate to the audience what is important at specific moments during the film. Everything outside the frame has been bracketed from the audience's attention, thereby emulating the seemingly natural perceptual process associated with the everyday. But it has also been harnessed to augment the overall sense of film realism by implying the ontological continuity of the bracketed filmic elements with the everyday world we all inhabit. The ontological continuum constructed by ordinary perception, where our ordinary

isolated perceptions are always incorporated into a totality, is emulated to some degree by this cinematic technique.

In addition to arguing that 'indexing' and 'bracketing' developed to control attention by isolating certain details over others in film, Carroll identifies the way that film manipulates the 'scale' of what an audience is looking at. Through scaling the director is able to fill the screen (and hence the audience's awareness) with whatever they deem necessary and appropriate. Consider, for example, Sergio Leone's famous technique of extreme facial close-ups in films such as Once Upon a Time in the West where the screen is filled with close-ups of character's eyes during tense gunfights. Scaling also enables the filmmaker to render what is less narratively significant much smaller and, as a result, a less likely object of audience attention.

[Show Sequence]

One of Carroll's most important insights is that the coordination of these visual techniques render most typical and conventional films, as they unfold from shot to shot, as not only easy to follow but as being structured in an entirely natural way and entirely in accordance with normal perception. The highly structured, dynamic and stylised film schema has the tendency to be a passive perceptual experience insofar as it naturally accords with our perceptual habits. This emulation of normal perceptual processes is also extended into cognitive associations. It is not merely a question of establishing a naturalistic perceptual trajectory but also an inferential and associative chain of cognition. Film emulates the tendency of natural cognition to be guided by inductive force. Most typical cinema will contain visual aspects where the inferential linkage is unavoidable and inevitable (i.e. passive induction), yet most will rely, to some extent, upon the viewer to actively arrive at an inferential hypothesis that consummates the sense a filmmaker intends to convey. There is a certain degree of autonomous cognitive activity being solicited by conventional films, which is often regarded as one of the major pleasures associated with film spectatorship. Hitchcock is often regarded as a master of this particular technique, emulating and manipulating the thought of the audience to a remarkably high degree. Filmmakers, Carroll argues, rely almost entirely upon established inferential associations and interpretational processes that we all employ to negotiate everyday reality. Hence, in order to successfully cognise a film narrative the operative assumption is that we utilise exactly the same kinds of beliefs, associations and inferential strategies that we normally employ with regards to everyday reality. This is Carroll's second crucial insight; it is not necessary to internalise a specific semiotic in order to comprehend film narrative Rather, most typical film can be approached in terms of ordinary and established patterns of reasoning and the employment of familiar and existing beliefs regarding human behaviour, motivation and action. This can still, however, be understood as a somewhat active process.

Carroll's view of normal film perception and cognition delimits film ontology to a narrow and restricted realm (i.e. as an analogue of the established familiar and habitual everyday), even within films that are presenting a fantasmagoric realm. Films which formally deviate from what he regards as typical are almost always consigned to being interpreted from within the established and orthodox paradigm, thereby enabling him to categorise their aberrance and deviation from the norm as being almost entirely driven by a desire 'to lay bare reflexively the structures that make the normal narrative motion picture experience what it is.' Whilst Carroll has no argument against this particular function, he appears

incapable of assigning to any film which deviates from the norm any other orientation than the normative. Those films which deviate from the norm, break the habits of perception, are consigned to that class of films which either form a reactionary impulse against the orthodox, or are concerned merely with reflexively exposing the mechanics which underpin that orthodoxy. This class of film, for Carroll, is almost entirely meta-cinematic according to - i.e. being merely films about films.

Films as puzzling and paradoxical as, for example, Alain Resnais' Last Year in Marienbad, Hiroshima Mon Amour or Je T'Aime Je T'Aime, or Michelangelo Antonioni's L'Avventura, or David Lynch's INLAND EMPIRE, are reduced to just being films that function through the way they frustrates our ordinary narrative expectations, in the way that they refuses to offer us not only the natural inferential associations at both perceptual and cognitive level, but also in terms of their narrative structure (or lack of one). Resnais' film Last Year in Marienbad, set in a chateau at Marienbad, tells the story of a man who approaches a woman claiming to have met and had a relationship with her the previous year, yet she claims never to have met him before. It proceeds through a series of ambiguous flashbacks and extremely disorientating temporal and spatial shifts. In this highly original way the film provides a fascinating exploration of the relationships between the different characters, constantly questioning the status of reality, memory and fantasy. Conversations and events are repeated in several places in the chateau and grounds, and there are numerous tracking shots of the chateau's corridors, with ambiguous voiceovers. However, for Carroll this film is merely consigned to being a reactionary film, anchored in a revolt against convention. All of these things may in fact be true but for Carroll they are not simply true but express pretty much everything there is to know and say about this enigmatic film. The film exists to bring us to a state of awareness regarding the way in which our established (and usually implicit) expectations assist us in following and organising films as they unfold, simply through the fact that these expectations are consistently frustrated and perverted. Such films as this do not elaborate either a separate and autonomous semiotic or alternative filmic reality since all they do, according to Carroll, is playfully subvert our given perceptual and cognitive apparatus. The effect of this is to provide an acute sense of awareness with regard to these faculties which are all too often hidden, implicit and automatic.

By drawing upon Carroll's cognitivist paradigm, the American film theorist David Bordwell has also produced some interesting work on orthodox film cognition and comprehension. Bordwell argues that comprehending a film is always a constructive activity on the part of the spectator, 'spectators participate in a complex process of actively elaborating what the film sets forth'. He acknowledges Carroll's point that such a process draws upon ordinary and everyday reasoning where one draws upon prior knowledge, makes informal and provisional inferences and, based upon the presence of inductive force, hypothesises as to what is likely to happen next. It is a matter of coming to understand the way in which films are deliberately designed to elicit the sorts of cognition that result in comprehension. In his recent work, Bordwell has focussed on seeing films as 'norm-driven' systems for providing spectators with clear cognitive cues. Such cues initiate a process of cognitive activity and elaboration, resulting in an ongoing process of inferential associations and hypotheses. The spectator always brings to the various cues that are presented within a film certain established knowledge which enables them to extrapolate and speculate beyond the specific information given in the cue. Similarly, there is an assumption that the spectator possesses some basic understanding of narrative structure which allows for some information to be taken for granted and other information to be understood as crucial exposition or as an important revelation. For Bordwell the film gains its effects 'only in

relation to a body of norms, sets of schemata, and the processes which the spectator initiates.' His active and constructive model of film comprehension, which relies upon the presence of certain knowledge, norms and schemata, does at least allow for the possibility that a spectator could go beyond the basic information supported by a film in order to arrive at their own interpretation. As Bordwell claims, 'what makes a film understandable is not necessarily exhausted by what the filmmakers deliberately put in to be understood.' Bordwell insists that the cognitive operation undertaken by the audiences of classic Hollywood cinema are not entirely passive despite drawing largely upon the habitual and the familiar. However, he acknowledges that such audiences have their cognitive processes activated, manipulated and controlled in a very strict and absolute way.

Classical narration demands that the spectator actively constructs the stylistic features being presented in a single way – what both Carroll and Bordwell regard as the 'natural' way. For example, one could not reasonably claim to reach the end of Capra's It's a Wonderful Life and still have reached the conclusion that George Bailey (James Stewart) would still be better off dead. With Capra's film there is a single truth to be arrived at. The spectator actively constructs form and meaning to a certain established and orthodox process of knowledge, memory and inference. Successful narrative films function by providing the spectator with a series of inputs that are needed to undertake the coherent associative chain of inferences and establish story. As we have already indicated, this is augmented through the formal techniques developed within cinema for managing perception (i.e. managing the flow of perceptual attention). This allows both Carroll and Bordwell to conclude that most typical films are accessible simply because they so effectively employ our natural perceptual and cognitive capacities. Thus the ontology of film is entirely analogous with the reality established by everyday perception and cognition operating in the everyday - the reality of film is an analogy of everyday reality.

Alongside Carroll's claims regarding the derivative nature of aberrant forms of cinema (discontinuous, counter-sense and non-linear forms of cinema such as Resnais' Last Year in Marienbad), Bordwell claims that alternative forms of cinema always mobilise, echo or trace classical narrative form in order to solicit different forms of perception and cognition. For both of these thinkers, in an unsustainable reductionist move, alternative cinematic forms are always subordinated to the pre-existing norms associated with the classical paradigm. The way in which both theorists anchor film perception and cognition so closely to the orthodox paradox means that something essential regarding cinema risks being lost. They refuse to consider film outside of the conventional paradigm and to consider the possibility that film has the capacity to construct an entirely separate and alternative semiotic, sense, ontology and epistemology. In my book I argue that film must be reconceived in opposition to this view, and claim that film has a range of intrinsic (albeit all-too-often underemployed) capacities for vertiginous affectivity, alternative realities and mystery which go beyond orthodox and habitual modes of perception and comprehension.

Film should not be restricted to the reproduction and formal expression of normal perception and cognition. Such a view operates first and foremost on an impoverished assumption regarding the nature of what cognition is in its totality, rather than seeing film as reproducing one mode of cognition amongst many. It also neglects the fact that film itself plays a role in the construction of this particular mode of thought. It rests on the view that the majority of narrative film is so successful simply because it adheres to the 'natural' order of human cognition. This view of cognition is underpinned by both naturalism and essentialism. By only ever appealing to the most generic, habitual and familiar ways of thinking, behaving, and being affected, too many films result in the mere activation of the

small 'I', the self that one already is. The activation of the larger 'I', the self that one might yet become beyond habit and established memory, requires an unfamiliar counter-sense, a trauma associated with formal and structural innovation, challenges to narrative norms and associations which are uncomfortable, troubling, disturbing, and involve concentration, learning to see things in new ways, a willingness to open oneself up to the new and to the different, and to discover new levels of the self, new forms of emotional, cognitive, visceral affectivity, new understandings of the self and its relation to others and the world.

All too often the cinema of counter-sense, as opposed to that of common sense, is just seen as the province of art cinema rather than an important element of popular mass culture. This distinction has become normalised, and it seems that it just is the case that difficult and challenging ideas, expressed in unfamiliar and challenging ways, will not have a mass audience. The assumption appears to be that mass audiences merely want the reproduction of familiar forms, activating and reinforcing the familiar small 'I'. This is the problem with realism and naturalism in cinema - it is a pernicious and dangerous cultural assumption which ignores the extent to which any new and innovative form (particularly in the cinema), that is perceived as anti-realist, non-naturalistic, counter-sense, unorthodox, and non-linear, contains its own pedagogy of seeing, interpreting and understanding. The naturalised (and patronising) assumption that mass audiences lack the capacity to engage with a new object's (i.e. a film's) implicit formal pedagogy is extremely restrictive and elitist. It suggests a sinister assumption regarding our capacity to activate and cultivate a larger self, by closing down any possible notion of a self other than what one already is, and has become through habit and memory. In conclusion, to reiterate Gray's point, and to return to the main polemic in my own book, something has to give if we are, both culturally and individually, to become something other than we have always been.